HOMELESS AT HOME

A Cultural Analysis of the New German Cinema

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Abstract

My thesis is concerned with national identity constructions in West German film 1961-1989. This research primarily works within the framework of a cultural studies (rather than a film studies) approach in which film has to be situated within a wider social context in order to be addressed, rather than articulated simply as a work of art which needs to be analysed for its own sake. Moreover, the national and the cinematic realm are conceptualised as imaginary spaces which overlap and constructively interpenetrate one another through complex narrative processes. To analyse films more specifically in relation to their national context, I have translated the abstract notion of national identity into a set of concrete parameters, these being spatial, temporal and social relations and identifications, which are then observable in films. It is thus claimed that, in a way that is similar to a film being essentially comprised of a setting, a timeframe and the interaction of its protagonists, a nation, too, consists of a homeland, a history/traditions and a people.

An analysis of films of the *New German Cinema* is considered particularly useful for exploring West German national identity constructions because its filmmakers pursued cinematic renewal in the service of social changes and thus their work is linked to other national reform efforts of the '1968' moment. At the same time, this critical praxis of filmmaking, which, regarding its counter-hegemonic orientation, is conceptualised as *Gegenöffentlichkeit*, was funded, promoted and internationally recognized as 'German culture'. This complex relationship between West Germany and 'its' national cinema which led to the production of highly charged narratives, is addressed through a large-scale and many-sided analysis of the *New German Cinema*'s social embedded-ness, its films' treatment of the topic of national identity, as well as of relevant production and reception issues.

As the main part of this analysis, I investigate which West German national identity constructions became discursively available to a national and international audience. I argue that in terms of identity this period can be understood as one of national estrangement towards the notion of what it was/is to be German. This experience of German identity as one of alienation is then placed within the context of an inward displacement from one's own history and culture, within the borders of one's own country. *Heimat*, in German, the quintessential term to describe one's geographical, social and psychological place of 'belonging', can be regarded as having lost this tripartite unity of collective reference, creating a situation in which individuals feel (or consciously decide to become) 'homeless' *at home*.

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PART ONE

Chapter One

Storyboard

1.1 Points of departure

The very first time I was confronted with, as Adorno (1998) once famously put it, 'the question: what is German?', was when I was twelve years old. At my school we were asked to write an essay entitled, 'Are you proud to be German?' Besides the peculiarity of the task as such, the difficulty with this seemingly open question was that, although not explicitly stated, we were expected to write *why we were not proud to be German* – a positive answer was, without a doubt, impossible. I do not recall what I wrote in the end, but I distinctly remember envying a classmate who put forward the argument that you cannot be proud of your nationality because it is not the result of your personal efforts. National identity thus seemed to be an arbitrary construct, which one was not to emotionally invest in. Instead, it needed to be rationally discarded. It was at this early point that we were made aware of the 'strangeness of being German' and started to develop a disconnected sense of self, floundering between national identification and disidentification.

In the years to follow, the question 'what is German?' stayed with me. In 1989, I experienced the fall of the Berlin Wall, an event which I remember watching on television and celebrating with my parents. Here I must add that I am from the former Western part of Germany. More precisely, I spent my youth in a small town close to Kassel which, before the Second World War, had been an important and beautiful place in the centre of Germany. By the end of the war, Kassel had turned into one of the most bombed German cities and after the country's division, it found itself very much in the national periphery – only 50 kilometres from the German-German border. Some members of our family remained on the other side of this border and I remember that we regularly sent packets with coffee, chocolate and clothes over to 'the relatives in the Eastern Zone'. Hence I grew up in, what one might call, a national liminal zone, part of the West but close to and still in touch with the East. This then led me to perceive of Germany as double and split, *Heimat* and *Fremde*. The term 'Germany' never quite seemed to describe a place, which actually is, but rather one, which has been and/or might be again. Correspondingly, calling the FRG '*West* Germany' was marking the loss of

what it implicitly referred to: the *East*ern part. Lack and absence rather than positive aspects thus crucially defined post-war German national identity.

In 1992 and as part of one of my first experiences abroad, my classmates and I were greeted by a crowd of French pupils shouting 'Heil Hitler!' on our first day of a school exchange with Montpellier/France. While probably being one of the most upsetting experiences related to being German overall, this was also a very new one in that, for the first time, we were confronted with a foreign interpretation of the question 'what is German?' In connection to France having been occupied by Nazi Germany during the Second World War, this definition of 'Germanness' was, somehow understandably, negative. More astonishingly for us in that moment was that we were equated with our grandparents' generation, which meant being ascribed a very past-oriented and fixed national identity. Yet crucially, this interpellation by strangers showed us that an answer to the above question was not only down to us but that national identities are negotiated between national 'Self'/'inside' and 'Other'/'outside'.

During my undergraduate studies in Lüneburg/Germany, I did a history module on the then flourishing 'Goldhagen debate'[1], which subsequently led me to dig up part of my family history. Thus I found a box of old photographs depicting my grandparents from the 1930s through to the 1950s. It contained their wedding photo, which, I believed at first, was slightly stained. On the lapel of my grandfather's jacket was a distinct black mark, which despite rubbing would not come off. I did not think about it any further until I found a second set of wedding photos in a special envelope. When I carefully looked at the image of my grandfather again, I discovered two little swastikas, presumably NSDAP party insignia, in the place of the stain. This, of course, meant that the blackening on the first photo had been done deliberately, supposedly after the end of the war, to hide his Nazi past, which by then had become utterly disgraceful. In this regard, the little black spot is a marker of the widespread anxiousness of my grandparents' generation to silence and suppress what happened between 1933 and 1945, and here specifically the Holocaust. Instead of working through their personal involvement in what, after the war, was widely regarded as one of the biggest crimes against humanity, my grandparents decided to cover it up – on the photo and within the family.

[1] This debate followed the publication of Daniel Goldhagen's book *Hitler's Willing Executioners* (1996) – a phrase that basically meant all Germans in the Third Reich.

To give an example, it was terrible to find out just how little my father knew about his father's wartime activities and that he had never asked about it either. I remember that in response I angrily demanded he should read *Hitler's Willing Executioners*. Yet, he answered, 'I cannot read it'. It was only after the death of both of his parents that he and my mother started to engage with what so crucially prefigured their (and our) lives. The box of old photographs thus turned out to be a Pandora's box from which a range of carefully concealed and unresolved post-war dilemmas sprang into my present, challenging existing family/inter-generational relationships along with hitherto secure identity positions. Beyond the purely private, they demonstrated the interpenetration of the personal lifestory (wedding, career, 'happy' family life, peace of mind, etc.) and the national history (NSDAP party membership, de-nazification, re-education, 'normalisation', etc.). National identity in this respect describes a subject position which is struggled over and emerges on the threshold between the personal and the national past and present.

For my postgraduate studies, I went to Great Britain, where I came across Leni Riefenstahl's film *Triumpf des Willens* (Triumph of the Will, 1935) – a skilful combination of National Socialist propaganda and art and, as such, a very distinct answer to the question 'what is German?' It intellectually and emotionally affected me deeply. I had fully prepared myself to despise the film for aesthetic and, even more importantly, ethical reasons. Yet, during the actual screening I found it nearly impossible to resist the powerful cinematic images. I was wooed to join in with the masses through the use of a rousing Wagnerian score, the always-moving camera and a knowing editing technique that mysteriously drew me in. In effect, Riefenstahl cinematically supplied a feeling of communality that, in my viewing experience, seemed to respond to the longing for a 'home' which had been lost. In this way, watching *Triumpf des Willens* was an emotional as well as an intellectual challenge which caused me to confront my uncomfortable desires about 'belonging' and 'home'. It also made me aware of the power of the cinematic image and its complex relationship with the national. A growing interest in national cinematic issues and the construction of respective identities within the specific German context in the following led me to take a closer look at films of the *New German Cinema*. This rebellious grandchild of Riefenstahl and other filmmakers of the Nazi era was part of the first reflexive, and thus necessarily haunted, post-war German generation which rather than staging narratives of 'homefulness' tried to come to terms with 'homelessness' – an attitude I felt I could relate to.

Having found sources which provided me with an exciting way into exploring the question 'what is German?', I embarked upon further research. And after reading the essay 'No Place Like *Heimat*: Images of Home(land) in European Culture' (1993) by Morley and Robins my thinking about notions of ambiguous national identification gained momentum. In the text, post-war West Germany serves as a case study for the authors' wider inquiry into European ideas of 'home' and 'homelessness'. More precisely, films, interviews and written accounts by several members of the *New German Cinema*, such as Wim Wenders and Edgar Reitz, and their references to the concept of *Heimat* are discussed. Regarding the latter, I discovered that the way in which these filmmakers express their 'Germanness' was very similar to my own personal experiences. They illustrate how the shared experiences/history of National Socialism, the Holocaust, the Second World War, the allied occupation/re-education and Germany's division, together produced a national sense of 'homelessness' and feelings of unease with regard to one's national identity. In Chalmers' words, 'Germany, ..., (was always) represented by its division, above all by the Berlin Wall, marking the absence of certainty about home: separation, expulsion, exile' (in Morley and Robins, 1993: 17).

Earlier this year and just after having seen the last part of Reitz's *Heimat* trilogy (2004), I encountered once more how '*unheimlich*' it is/can be to be German. Together with an English friend I visited Weimar, once the home of Goethe and Schiller as well as the temporary residence of Bach, Liszt, Wagner and Nietzsche. As such, it functioned as the cultural centre of Germany from the middle of the 18th to the late 19th[2] century and was, precisely because of this cultural heritage, elected the cultural capital of Europe in 1999. Moreover, after WWI, Germany's first democratic constitution was written and signed in Weimar which thus lent its name to the so-called Weimar Republic. To conclude, Weimar represents all that was/is good about Germany. Yet, right outside of this national high-place, one encounters the other side of Germany. This 'Other' is Buchenwald, a major National Socialist concentration camp situated on top of the local mountain, the Ettersberg, from where it overlooks the town. Previously, Goethe used to wander and write poetry here (for instance, his famous *Wandererphantasien*, 'wanderer fantasies'), while about 110 years later several hundred political prisoners and Jews were worked to death before being burned in facilities similarly to those in Auschwitz.

This metaphoric, as well as shockingly real, next-to-one-another-ness of 'good' and 'evil', 'insiders' and 'outsiders', democratic values and dictatorship, cosmopolitanism and Nazism,

[2] Goethe came to Weimar in 1775 and Nietzsche died there in 1900.

civilisation and barbarism, high culture and 'unculture' is, however, not the end of the Weimar/German (hi)story. Thus on the map of the camp, there is a spot called *Goethe-Eiche* ('Goethe's Oak'). According to the official Buchenwald website[3], these are the remains of an old oak which the SS had left standing while the camp was being built. Prisoners later called the majestic tree *Goethe-Eiche* in reference to Goethe's frequent visits to the area, which most likely led him to wander around the site of the later camp. Another website, which refers to a recent educational video project realised in Buchenwald[4], further suggests that in 1827 Goethe said, looking down from the Ettersberg: 'Hier fühlt man sich groß und frei, wie die große Natur, die man vor Augen hat, und wie man eigentlich immer sein sollte'[5]. Yet, as we know, within a century the place of Goethe's delight and his enjoyment of utter freedom turned into one of hundredfold distress and death within the confinements of the camp. And it is the horrifying results of these exclusionary national identity politics which have led to a displacement or, to some extent, even replacement of earlier notions of 'what is German'. Thus since the end of the Second World War, 'being German' has been significantly more about the Holocaust (i.e. Buchenwald) than about poetry, philosophy or music (i.e. Goethe, Nietzsche and Bach). It was Adorno then, who proclaimed the impossibility of poetry after Auschwitz. In this regard, it seems no coincidence that the concentration camp, a reality and representation of utter 'homelessness', is seated on top of the Ettersberg, overlooking and scenically overpowering Goethe's chosen 'home', Weimar, further down in the valley[6].

These opening remarks on the question 'what is German?' are meant to provide the investigation with a few initial thoughts on the issue of German national identity in the post-war era and its representation in visual media, most notably film. Their purpose is to illustrate how the national is crucially played out in spatial, temporal and social terms and to demonstrate how I came to be interested in doing research on this topic. As a preliminary finding, conflicting notions of 'Germanness' can be seen as existing alongside or on top of each other, producing ambiguous senses of the national and uncertainties about 'belonging'. Hence, part of the argument put forward in this investigation is that it is the particular

[3] http://www.buchenwald.de
[4] http://www.buchenwald-videoprojekt.de
[5] Approx. Trans.: 'Like the great nature one has in front of his eyes here, one feels great and free – just as one always should be.'
[6] Another 'non-coincidence' is the overt reference to the *Goethe-Eiche* in Hans Jürgen Syberberg's *New German Cinema* production *Hitler – ein Film aus Deutschland* (Hitler – A Film from Germany, 1977), which will feature prominently in the second half of the next section. The subtitle of part one of his film epic is, 'From the Cosmic Ash-Tree to Goethe's Oak and the Beeches of Buchenwald', and towards the end of this part, one of the actors tells a version of the Goethe-Oak story (Syberberg, 1978: 247, in the written version).

character of the post-war German *socio-temporal space* that frames the construction of respective national identities in films of the *New German Cinema.*

Statement of aims

More precisely, the overall purpose of this investigation is to analyse which national identity constructions become apparent in films of the *New German Cinema* in the period 1961 to 1989. This raises important questions about the films' setting, for instance: where exactly is the place called 'West Germany' and what does it look like? Is it depicted as a predominantly rural or urban space? How does it position itself in relation to the popular *Heimat* film genre of the 1950s and its idyllic representations of symptomatic German landscapes? What do we learn about the relationship between West Germany and the people who inhabit it? Are there any representations of the German-German border or the Berlin Wall and, if so, which narrative role do they play? How does West Germany relate to East Germany (its 'Other(ed)' half) and America (the 'Other' it tries to emulate)?

With regard to the films' temporality and their mode of narration, key questions are: do the protagonists of the *New German Cinema* live in the *now*, facing up to the demands of their present? How do they relate to their national and, intrinsically linked to that, their personal past, in particular Nazism and the Second World War? Are they characterised as mourning the Holocaust or as trying to forget about what they did or what happened in their name? How are processes of remembering and historicizing the past narratively negotiated? Which personal and which national future(s) do the West German individuals depicted in these films envisage for themselves and to what extent are they implicated with past and present (his)stories and experiences?

Considering representations of social aspects in *New German Cinema* productions, I will explore questions such as: who is rendered a national insider and what is her/his relationship to so-called outsiders in the films? Are there any substantial differences with regard to the depiction of different genders and their role in society? What about the social conditions that are shown to be characteristic of West Germany from a *New German Cinema*'s perspective? How do the narratives negotiate social conflict and which strategies of problem-solving do their characters employ? How important is the choice of certain types of actors/actresses for the creation of a *New German Cinema* 'feel' and in what way does it affect the relationship

between the films and their national and international audience? Is the spectator-protagonist relationship one of identification?

This main aim, which is concerned with analysing national identity constructions in films of the *New German Cinema*, will be predominantly addressed in the chapters three to five. It is supplemented by two additional objectives, which put forward contexualizing and theoretical aspects. The first one is to investigate the specifically national character of the *New German Cinema* and its productions, which is the focus of chapter two. The central questions here are: what is the societal role of the *New German Cinema* in West Germany? How does it position itself in relation to existing public discourses on national issues? As, biographically speaking, its filmmakers are of the same generation as the members of the 1968 student movement – what are the links between these two social groups? But also, how does the *New German Cinema* relate to the German cinema of the immediate post-war period? Who are the spiritual fathers of its filmmakers and what does that say about them and their work?

The second subsidiary aim is to explore ways of conceptualising these West German identity constructions in *New German Cinema* productions, using contemporary cultural theory and related philosophical and sociological approaches. Different from the first two aims, which are dealt with in particular chapters, this third aim runs through the thesis as a whole. In chapter one, the main question is: what can a cultural studies approach offer to the analysis of West German national identity constructions in films of the *New German Cinema*? How can concepts like representation, narration, identity and 'Othering' be made productive for the methodological requirements of this investigation? Chapter two then – despite its largely contextual focus – asks: how can the national identity of the filmmakers and their complex relationship with West Germany be theorised? Throughout chapters three to five, the central questions are: how can representations of place, time and sociality in *New German Cinema* productions be regarded as mediating a national sense of 'Self'? Is there a common thread which runs through this body of films and which might be explained in terms of national identity? If so, how can these self-narration processes be conceptually accounted for?

Throughout the following sections, the approach to these issues will be constantly refined in relation to the existing literature and, most notably, considering the investigation's concern with films of the *New German Cinema*. The next section will thus explore the contested categories of national cinema, films, and representations and assess their conceptual value

(1.2). This theoretical part is followed and complemented by a discussion in which the *New German Cinema* is placed under academic scrutiny. As part of this critical evaluation, the *New German Cinema* is conceptualised as a particular national cinema, involving a review of the relevant literature and, in relation to that, some initial reflections on the methodological framework of the thesis (1.3). The final section is concerned with methodological issues in a more systematic fashion as it expands upon earlier findings in order to develop a cultural studies approach to the *New German Cinema* (1.4). It finishes with a chapter outline of the thesis as a whole.

1.2 National cinema, films, and representations – contested categories

In this section I will critically explore the particular relationship between national identity and cinema/films/representations. Traditionally, this relationship has been conceptualised as one in which film is a powerful tool for the spread of nationalism (for example, Dodds 2000 and, albeit to a lesser extent, Schlesinger 2000). A heightened version of this tendency to assume an affirmative and uncomplicated relationship between the nation-state and (its) national cinema can be found in Ó Tuathail's work, where D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), Eisenstein's *October* (1927) and Riefenstahl's *Triumph des Willens* (Triumph of the Will, 1935) are considered to be, 'remarkable works of geopolitical propaganda' (Ó Tuathail, 1994: 540) and as such representative of a certain *cinematic nationalism*. He continues by arguing that, 'the shooting camera was from the beginning a weapon of war…' (ibid.: 541), a statement which is indicative of a 'reading' of cinematic productions as being highly ideological.

A philosophical approach

Lacoue-Labarthe comes to the question of nation and cinema from a slightly different angle by regarding cinema above all as a national artform (though with a distinct political dimension). More precisely, his philosophical approach is concerned with the overall 'tendency for the world – and the sphere of politics – to turn into cinema' (Syberberg in Lacoue-Labarthe, 1990: 66). He is particularly interested in a 19th century German tradition of thinking about the relationship between art, politics and the nation developed by Hegel, Nietzsche and others who considered the identification of politics with aesthetics as being the

essence of Germany's national identity and the basis for the *Kulturnation*[7]'s continued existence. In the early 20th century, Lacoue-Labarthe argues, this way of reasoning was taken up in philosophy by Heidegger and, more importantly for this discussion, in the musical arts by Wagner. Thus, the latter famously developed the concept of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, which translates as 'collective artwork' (Lacoue-Labarthe, 1990: 68). Conceptually, it means that different art forms such as theatre, architecture, opera, dance, painting and others are brought together in order to create a heightened version of what they are in separation from each other. Yet, beyond this artistic dimension the concept of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* satisfies national concerns. Here, Lacoue-Labarthe refers to Nietzsche's idea that, 'the artwork should be a celebration of the national community' (ibid.).

This approach can be seen as a logical extension of the argument made about an alliance of art/cinema and politics since it (theoretically and practically) includes the national as the realm in which both spheres realise themselves. Moreover, this notion of nation has to be understood as denoting an organic social being or *Gemeinschaft*[8]. In Lacoue-Labarthe's reading of the work of the aforementioned philosophers this, 'organicity...indicates a natural or physical determination of the community which can only be accomplished and revealed to that community by a technē – if not indeed by *technē* itself, by art' (1990: 69, emphasis in the original). Hence art in general and cinema in particular are bringing forth in national terms, making and re-making that of which they are a constituent part. In other words, art can be described as an ongoing creative process in which the national gains momentum in relation to its 'inside' as well as to its 'outside'. In conclusion, Lacoue-Labarthe relates art, politics and the national to each other in the following way, '...for a nation to present and recognize itself...is the political function of art' (ibid.).

Sociological approaches

Another valuable contribution to the study of national identity in relation to cinema, films and representations are the sociological studies of Gellner (1983), Anderson (1983) and Billig (1995). Their writings on nationalism and national identity have provided theoretical starting

[7] *Kulturnation* is a concept of the nation that, above all, centres on 'culture'. As such it is defined in contrast to the political construction of the *Staatsnation* or nation-state. Long before 1871, when Germany officially became a modern nation-state, German intellectuals had considered it to be a *Kulturnation*, which they felt they belonged to.

[8] The term refers to the widely used conceptual pair *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* which was coined by the sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies (1991). It will be discussed at greater length at the beginning of chapter five.

points for a considerable amount of current work on national cinema. In a nutshell, their accounts are primarily concerned with the internal dynamics of nation formation and/or maintenance, of which mediated communication is a crucial part. As a result, difference or 'Otherness' is rendered less important in terms of the construction of a national identity than self-induced processes from within. Anderson's approach in particular, conceptualising the nation as an 'imagined community' coming into being through the power of the print media, has figured as an important methodological source for various analysts of national cinematic issues (Schlesinger 2000).

In many cases, researchers have employed Anderson's theory by substituting 'cinema' for 'print media', especially since the notion of the 'imagined' seems to suggest its applicability to the realm of the visual. Examples are Carroll and Banes' study of the nation-building effects of Eisenstein's films for the Soviet Union (2000), Coates's investigation of Polish cinema and nationalism (2000), Chakravarty's analysis of representations of terrorism in Indian cinema (2000) and McLoone's examination of Irishness in Irish cinema (2004). A prominent critique comes from Schlesinger (2000) who disapproves of research on national cinema which narrowly follows the sociological model. Hence, while he recognises that, on the whole, Gellner, Anderson and Billig's theories of nationalism can be regarded as useful to analyse the constitutive structures of a nation seen as a communicative community, he maintains that external forces are often only accounted for in the form of references to Hollywood's hegemony with regard to other national cinemas. Therefore, he argues, that the *unimaginative* application of Anderson's concept to the study of national cinema often fails to appropriately address processes of growing complexity within national spaces today.

Higson (2000) takes Schlesinger's critique further as he radically questions the usefulness of a general theory of national cinema altogether. Instead, he proposes the analysis of national cinematic particularities and case studies. Thus, he claims, there is a range of ways in which a cinema can be national, which cannot be captured by *one* analytical approach. Revisiting Anderson, Higson argues that the notion of 'imagined community' (too) often leads to an understanding of the nation as bounded and coherent, homogeneous and rooted in a cultural as well as in a geographical sense (2000: 64-65). However, in his opinion Anderson's concept fails to adequately cater for cultural diversity and difference amongst people of a specific nation-state and the dispersion inherent in any modern national community caused by emigration and exile. Higson states, 'all nations are in some sense diasporic. They are thus

forged in the tension between unity and disunity, between home and homelessness' (ibid.: 65). The same degree of cultural hybridisation and perforation of borders, which apply to nation-states, Higson argues, can be noted for any version of national cinema. Furthermore, both a nation and its cinema are in flux and cooperate on a transnational level in terms of production, distribution and reception of cultural products. Yet although he criticises the concept of national cinema by questioning its analytical value on a theoretical level, Higson maintains that it is still very vibrant on a political level and can therefore not be dismissed altogether.

A cultural studies approach

In view of critiques such as Schlesinger and Higson's, Hayward (2000) justifies and promotes the continuing existence of national cinemas[9]. Hence, she declares them to be part of the nationalist discourse that represents – referring to Gellner and Anderson – a people's need for 'belonging' and 'wholeness'. Moreover, Hayward claims that the members of a nation generally fail to recognize its 'true' character, that is, seeing it as a set of power relations. Instead, she argues, they regard it as a timeless given and therefore can accept its (false) comfort. In this respect, nationalism is defined as, 'a fictional ... construction to ease the fear of alienation' (2000: 91). The main purpose of this national project then is, as identified by Hayward, the creation of a national history that produces a sense of national rootedness and continuity. Thus she, unlike her predecessors, does not stop at the level of conceptual criticism but also seeks to understand the common (sense) appeal of nationalism and national cinema.

A second line of Hayward's argument focuses on the text-context issue. Rejecting the often-assumed uni-linear relationship between film and nation, in which the first is claimed to be a 'window' to, or 'mirror' of, the second, she follows O'Regan's (1996) relational approach by defining national cinema as 'sets of relations between national film texts, national and international film industries and the films' and industries' socio-political and cultural contexts' (2000: 92). This definition opens the national to the international and stresses cross-cultural influences in the making of (seemingly) culturally specific films. Furthermore, Hayward opts for an interdisciplinary approach to the analysis of national cinemas (history, economics, cultural studies, politics, etc.) to ensure an appropriate investigation of this

[9] This is a stance which is not surprising as she is the general editor of the *National Cinema Series* for Routledge.

multifaceted phenomenon. Together, the relational and the interdisciplinary approach reveal an interest in power relations and an anti-essentialist orientation. This then translates into political concerns as the author considers the implications of, what I earlier called *cinematic nationalism*. By describing Hollywood's global hegemony as a form of colonialism in which, 'a post-colonialism is implicit' (2000: 100) she defines national cinemas as spaces for agency and resistance. More precisely, she argues that if nations are constructed and imagined in certain ways, they can be deconstructed and imagined otherwise. In this vein, she calls attention to the political possibilities of national cinemas, which lie in their liberating potential to dismantle power relations and show fragmentation.

An interdisciplinary approach

Having presented different approaches to national cinema, films and representations, I now want to critically assess how to employ these notions within my own work. Here, traditional accounts serve as a useful starting point since they establish a close relationship between a nation and its cinema. In response to the relative simplicity and one-sidedness of this line of argument, however, Lacoue-Labarthe's philosophical approach is important because it emphasizes the reciprocity of this relationship. Furthermore, rather than making general claims, the author firmly places his discussion of national cinema as political art in the particular history of German thought by which he stresses the specificity of national cinemas. Here, I would like to add Rentschler's (2000) view on the topic since it sharpens up Lacoue-Labarthe's argument regarding the special nature of the relationship between Germany and 'its' national cinema(s) while explicitly referring to the *New German Cinema*. He writes:

> Germany has enjoyed a privileged status in discussions about national cinema. No other cinema, in fact, has lent itself so consistently and productively to investigations into the relations between film and nationhood. New German Cinema, most critics would agree, constitutes the most recent chapter in this cinema's compelling and controversial saga (Rentschler, 2000: 260).

The analytical value of sociological accounts can be summarized in their conceptualisation of the nation as a communicative community in which cinema is seen as an arena of debate. This means that particular national identity constructions are negotiated and circulated on and through film whose specific *New German Cinema* format (and here especially the latter's subject matter) will be the object of analysis. Nevertheless, I share Schlesinger's critique of a 'narrow' approach to national cinematic issues since it effectively disregards the significance

of external voices. This criticism will be taken into account by considering the implications of symptomatic outside(r)s for the national inside(r)s. From Higson, I take on board the idea to carry out a particular national cinematic case study, which pays attention to internal tensions and conflicts (a position that ties in with Lacoue-Labarthe's focus on the meaning of cinema/art within the German context). Also, I agree with his justification for retaining the category of the national as, in spite of all criticism, it remains politically and intellectually influential. Most crucially, however, he made me aware that 'homelessness' (along with 'home') can be seen as a constituent national 'structure of feeling'.

The main points I retain from Hayward are her cultural studies perspective, according to which she defines national cinema as a set of power relations, and her attempt to understand and explain nationalist phenomena within popular culture. Yet more importantly still, she accounts for the dual mode of national cinematic representations in the form of hegemonic (i.e. Hollywood and mainstream) as well as counter-hegemonic films (i.e. anti-Hollywood and anti-mainstream, for example, art films). This approach is unique in that, instead of criticising the notion of national cinema but then bringing it back in through the back door for political reasons (as in, for example, the case of Higson's account), it opts for a complexification of the concept. By doing so, it makes space for what might be called a 'counter-hegemonic national cinema' – at first sight a contradictory alignment of the national, conventionally regarded as the hegemonic, with aspects of resistance that are usually defined in opposition to it[10]. Such a reading is adapted in the case of, for example, Steve Bell's cartoons[11]. These are seen as 'visual critiques' (Ó Tuathail, 1998: 11), which, 'illuminate or even subvert particular political practices' (Dodds, 2000: 84). And it is precisely the critical stance granted to these comic strips, which essentially informs films of the *New German Cinema*.

A filmmaker's contribution to the debate

To illustrate the appropriateness of the interdisciplinary conceptual framework laid out above, I will now demonstrate the *New German Cinema*'s counter-hegemonic orientation as well as its filmmakers' view on some of the other national cinematic issues discussed so far through an investigation of Syberberg's approach to filmmaking followed by a brief analysis of his (in)famous film epic *Hitler – ein Film aus Deutschland* (Hitler – A Film from Germany,

[10] Except for postcolonial cinema.
[11] Bell is the popular satirical cartoonist in the *Guardian* newspaper, commenting on geopolitical/national issues.

1977). This will show the complex relationship between theory (for instance, the works of Ó Tuathail, Lacoue-Labarthe, Anderson, Higson, Schlesinger, Hayward, and others) and artistic practice, as the filmmaker contributes to the debate on national cinema employing filmic means. Made in 1977[12], that is before any of the above essays and theoretical treatises were written and/or published, Syberberg's film can even be regarded as in some ways anticipating the discussion that preceded it here.

What is more, showing the conceptual relevance of an artistic production by rendering films of the *New German Cinema* as self-reflexive forms of inquiry serves as a programmatic move with reference to my overall methodology. More precisely, in this investigation I aim to combine, as well as break down, the boundaries between theory and film analysis in order to present findings which are both theoretically compelling and 'true' to the object of analysis, and which thus might present a refined way of looking at (West) German national identity constructions. Furthermore, I want to suggest that while theoretical and artistic articulations are different in style and convention, they correspond in their aim to answer pertinent methodological and social questions[13].

The written and extended account of *Hitler – ein Film aus Deutschland*[14] develops this last point further. Thus, in an essay which precedes the actual 'film text', the filmmaker discusses the possibility of 'Art as a Way out of Germany's Misery' (Syberberg 1978, title of the essay). Syberberg's programmatic statement critically refers to the problematic national (production) context experienced by directors of the *New German Cinema* individually (in public and/or private) and addressed collectively in their work (as a political act). Following Syberberg's analysis, his/their declared aim is to substantially change (West) Germany's material, ideological and socio-political conditions through the making of critical films. Yet, whilst Syberberg defines filmmaking as an artistic practice (similar to Lacoue-Labarthe's approach), he does not regard it as being disconnected from other social activities, such as university education and research.

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[12] The year was later referred to as *Der deutsche Herbst* ('The German Autumn') due to deadly events related to the *Rote Armee Fraktion* ('Red Army Faction'), a West German terrorist group operating at the time. A critical commentary on the events is provided by several *New German Cinema* directors who together made the film essay *Deutschland im Herbst* (Germany in Autumn 1977/78), which I will analyse at the end of chapter four.

[13] It is important to note here that while Syberberg's film can be seen an example of a generally critical 'genre', other *New German Cinema* productions are not always as essayistic.

[14] One year after the release of the film, Syberberg published a book with the same title. In addition to the film script, which is illustrated with shots from different parts of the film, it also contains, in fact even starts with, a seven-part essay on the relationship between art/cinema and the national/post-war Germany.

In the process of realising the mammoth project *Hitler – ein Film aus Deutschland*, he most notably formulates his task as finding an answer to the question, 'how can all the knowledge produced by sociology, psychology, and by all the social sciences as well as politics be combined, made into a film, merged and reduced to a common denominator?' (1978: 22). Here, Syberberg directly addresses the relationship between film and academic research, whereby the latter is (ideally) seen as crucially informing the former. In this sense then, filmmaking can be seen as knowledge production by other means, or even an extension of it, which crucially takes the specialised academic discourse out of its 'ivory tower' and translates it into popular narratives whose place is the cinema.

Regarding both intellectual activities, Syberberg privileges filmmaking as he claims that the 20th century has been the 'century of film, radio and projection' (ibid.), which makes film the most appropriate medium for the articulation and dissemination of socio-political concerns to a wider (i.e. national) public. More specifically, he says that (his) films expose, 'the truth behind the things through the beyond, yet, at the same time hyper-real[15] density of the cinematic fantasy' (ibid.) – an expression which bears much resemblance to Ricoeur's concept of visual fiction as being an, '"iconic augmentation" of the real' (1981: 202)[16]. Unlike Ricoeur, however, Syberberg can be considered as seeing film not only as an intensified version of reality but at the same time 'beyond' it.

'*Über*', a German preposition meaning 'above', 'more than enough' as well as 'beyond', refers to this dual quality of the fictional as a heightened state of reality which ultimately leaves the latter behind. Yet, rather than seeing that as a problematic quality of the fictional, Syberberg celebrates it as part of the 'epic, anti-Aristotelian' dramatic practice established by Brecht, in whose tradition he sees his filmmaking. Through this positioning, he sets himself apart from mainstream productions, which he describes as a 'boulevard-trivial version of the Aristotelian drama without any poetic and intellectual innovations for the past 50 years' (Syberberg, 1978: 28). In other words, Syberberg sees Brecht's concept of the epic theatre as the legitimate modern adaptation of the classic Aristotelian drama theory around tragedy and mimesis, which in its rejection still needs the latter as a crucial point of reference (*anti*-Aristotelian). In conclusion, Syberberg calls for the development of new narrative strategies

[15] The expression Syberberg uses, or in fact creates, in the German original to describe the character of fiction is 'überreal'.
[16] I will come back to Ricoeur's notion of fiction/representation in section 1.4.

based on the Brechtian principles of alienation and non-identification and his own notion of '*über*-reality'[17].

National cinema as a self-reflexive form of inquiry

Moving on from Syberberg's reflections on the theories and methods of filmmaking, I will now take a brief look at how these are expressed in his filmic practice. First, one has to note that *Hitler – ein Film aus Deutschland* is an unusual production regarding its format and content. Thus it consists of four parts, together around seven hours long, of which 45 minutes alone are filled with one of the main actors (André Heller) reading out a text. The film's aesthetic is eclectic and shows similarities to Alexander Kluge's collages[18], even though it is more stage-like than, for example, *Abschied von Gestern* (Yesterday Girl, Alexander Kluge 1965/6). This mode of non-linear narration, which tells the story of Hitler and Germany via a series of disjunctive scenes, does not offer a coherent account of why things happened the way they did in Nazi Germany. Instead, the scenes seem like an endless number of disorganised puzzle pieces, which together do not add up to a whole. Thus it is up to the audience to join the various parts together and to fill in the gaps with individual background knowledge where links are missing.

The film's apparent lack of structure is, however, met by the thematic coherence of the numerous scenes and episodes which explore the problematic relationship between art/cinema and national politics from different perspectives. Hence, Syberberg follows Benjamin and Brecht's call that, 'to the "aestheticization of politics" one must respond with the "politicisation of art"' (Lacoue-Labarthe, 1990: 61). In the film's take on this thesis, the figure of Hitler plays a crucial role. He is the 'artist-turned-politician' who exchanges realist painting for real party politics, before he then develops into a film-loving and filmmaking 'Führer'. This personal development is portrayed as being paralleled by a national one at the height of which the character Ellerkamp, Hitler's film projectionist, announces that the Third Reich has to be seen as a 'film' and Hitler as being 'the greatest film-maker of all time'. At the beginning as well as at the end of *Hitler – ein Film aus Deutschland*, a small girl makes three appearances: cuddling a stuffed animal dog with a Hitler face, wearing a dirndl (German folk costume) while playing with a puppet resembling Ludwig II (Wagner's benefactor), and

[17] This position significantly challenges Ricoeur's argument, which is still in favour of Aristotelian ideas, as we shall see in due course.
[18] These will be analysed at greater length at the end of chapter four.

finally being covered in rolls of film. Together, the child's three ways of being (represented) refer to the continuation of the Hitler/Germany story on film (consciously) and in everyday life (largely unconsciously) whilst they recapitulate the complex relationships between politics/history, nation/tradition and film/art dramatised in the *Gesamtkunstwerk* that is Syberberg's Germany.

In a self-reflexive and critical manner, Syberberg, it seems, anticipated that it would be quite demanding for his spectators to make sense of his unconventional cinematic endeavour. Consequently and in an attempt to engage them with the narrative process right from the beginning, the spectators are – in good Brechtian fashion – directly addressed and shaken up in their comfortable cinema seats and traditional/passive viewing position by the a series of narrators. The first and, for the purpose of this investigation, the most important one is a ringmaster who announces the programme for the evening, introducing the audience to the spectacles to come. By doing so, he establishes a national/cinematic dialogue between the spectators and 'their' filmmaker through the very film of which his character is a part and which could not have been more national regarding address and content. Clown-faced, he steps out of the darkness and into the spotlight, giving the following directions for use (of the film):

> Here are the rules of the game: There'll be no heroes, except ourselves. There'll be no story, only ours, our inside story... All who want to see Stalingrad again, or the 20th of July plot or the lone wolf's last days in his bunker or the Nuremberg of Leni Riefenstahl, will be disappointed. We aren't showing the unrepeatable reality ... This is a film for us. (...) I suggest each of us plays himself, acts here, in front of all, his own version of Hitler as he acts him still today, at home in his little room, before the mirror or on a motor cycle with swastika and Madonna as lucky charms on his chest, beneath his leather jacket as he drives against the wind... It's about the Hitler within us on a small budget, without sets, with slide projections and our imaginations, where everyone can join in. The world as a circus and as a fairground slide-show. So let's give him and ourselves a chance.

Having been introduced to the film in this manner, we, the audience, know that this *New German Cinema* production is not going to be a light film where one can lie back, relax and watch the story unfold in front of one's eyes. We are told that there will not be any story apart from the one that we carry within us and with which we are invited to come forth. Yet, we are also told that this 'inside' story is less of a personal or biographical account than part of a national(ist) project in which we, the German audience, participated and still participate as (anti-)heroes and heroines. Hence by having the ringmaster tell us that Hitler is 'our story',

Syberberg places every spectator immediately *inside* the story of the film. National Socialist victims and resistance fighters are not explicitly called upon, presumably because they can be regarded as in some sense *outside* of the story since they did not carry Hitler within themselves but had to face him as a deadly 'Other'. In this way, Syberberg addresses the silent majority in the darkness of the circus tent and/or the cinema – a black, anonymous, threatening mass with whom one finds it daunting to identify. However, 'this is a film for us', says the ringmaster reassuringly trying to ease the audience into the project of confronting their national demons and getting Hitler's skeleton out of grandpa's cupboard made of solid German oak. It is as if one can hear some of them think, 'Syberberg is not Hitler and thus not "the greatest film-maker of all time" but maybe that is precisely why we should trust him…' Some others probably leave at this point. Then, the ringmaster disappears and the show begins.

To conclude, in this theory section, the question 'what is German?' has been further explored through a thorough investigation of the relationship between nation and cinema in general and in particular the pre- and post-war German context which gave birth to the filmmakers of the *New German Cinema*, represented here by Syberberg. Different theoretical accounts proposed rather close interrelations between the cinematic and the national realm. More precisely, conceptualisations ranged from arguments about the instrumentalisation of the cinema for national(ist) purposes in rather traditional/philosophical accounts (1), and notions of the reciprocal/dialogical relationship between the nation and its cinema proposed in sociological writings (2), to an emphasis on the counter-hegemonic possibilities and practices of a national cinema stressed in cultural studies' investigations (3).

As will only be briefly mentioned here, the specific relationship between the *New German Cinema* and post-war Germany shows aspects of all three of these relationalities[19]. Thus films of the *New German Cinema* were exported by the West German state as 'German culture', representing post-war West Germany abroad (1). Besides, the *New German Cinema* engaged in an intense dialogue with its societal context as part of its filmmaking ethics (2). Finally, the narratives that were told by the *New German Cinema* were counter-hegemonic with regard to their structure and content (3). In Syberberg's *Hitler* film, recent German history is mobilised to open up a discussion about ongoing national issues, above all 'the Hitler within us' (1). A dialogical relationship with the audience is established through a direct and appellative form

[19] A more extensive treatment of the topic will be provided in the next chapter.

of address which invites the audience to get involved, for example, by having a narrator say, 'I suggest each of us plays himself' (2). A counter-hegemonic stance is taken by placing the film in a circus, a setting that, like carnival, symbolises a world upside-down and with the freedom to do anything that is or seems impossible 'in reality'. Here, the clown, often played as a fool who stumbles over his own feet has the power to challenge anyone in the audience. And even the most influential person outside of the circus tent feels uncomfortable in his presence (3). In view of that, Syberberg's film is an example of the specifically national character of *New German Cinema* productions as it forms a complex and multi-layered relationship with post-war West Germany.

1.3 The *New German Cinema* – a national cinema under academic scrutiny

Having made the transition from critical reflections on the relationship between nation and cinema to then see how these are explored by Syberberg in his landmark film *Hitler – ein Film aus Deutschland*, I will now look at how certain members of the academic community received and made sense of the *New German Cinema* (*NGC*) in national cinematic terms. To start with, however, it is important to note that none of the works, which will be discussed below, make explicit references to 'national cinema' as a contested category, if they mention the term at all. Hence, it seems as if once an author had chosen to write about the *NGC*, she/he had also (more or less consciously) decided that 'national cinema' was a useful category to work with. In short, the majority of authors in the field have stripped the notion of 'national cinema' – which I showed to be a contested area of inquiry in the previous theory section – of its surrounding controversy while making use of its descriptive and systematizing function[20]. Besides this lack of critical awareness, the literature surrounding the *NGC* can be largely divided into four main categories. These are biographical or *auteurist* approaches, film history approaches, textual approaches, and 'themes-and-issues' approaches. As far as the treatment of issues around national identity and film is concerned, it varies from category to category, as I will show in the following discussion.

[20] I want to add here though that some of the literature was written before the taken for granted category of the national became the subject of critical debates. Thus it was only in the late 1980s and after interventions from psychoanalysis, structuralism, semiotics and feminism had started to influence film theory and criticism that a variety of scholars engaged in thorough investigations of national cinema conceptualisations as such (Hjort and Mackenzie, 2000: 1-5).

Biographical/*auteurist* approaches

Biographical or *auteurist* writings, which focus on the life and/or work of a selection of critically acclaimed (and usually male) *NGC* filmmakers, have formed the most popular part of the secondary literature overall – a phenomenon which might be due to the eccentric and colourful personalities of figures such as Werner Herzog and Rainer Werner Fassbinder who lend themselves to such an approach. Examples are Gregor (1978), Sandford (1980), Franklin (1983), Phillips (1984) and Rentschler (1988). Focussing on only *one* male filmmaker, in this case Kluge, Wenders or Fassbinder, has been equally common as the writings of Elsaesser (1996), Lewandowski (1980), Braad Thomsen (1997) and Bromley (2001) demonstrate. By and large, these biographical/*auteurist* accounts are more celebratory than critical and thus will only serve as sporadic reference points in the following chapters[21]. An exception in this regard is Bromley's cultural studies investigation of Wenders's films. Here, the author uses films as 'cultural resources' (2001: 3) in order to explore 'the complexities of belonging and identity' (ibid.) – a unique approach which has crucially advanced my own methodological thinking about the cultural function of film[22].

Film history approaches

Film history accounts take a variety of formats. Yet, for the most part, these are exhaustive volumes on German film in general (e.g. Hake 2002, Jacobsen, Kaes, and Prinzler 1993, Koch 1985, Petermann and Thoms 1988, Pflaum and Prinzler 1992, Silberman 1995) which start off in 1895, 1920, 1945 or 1968 and then finish in the author's present. For the purposes of my work, they present a useful starting point because they give an overview of the larger developments that have taken place within the last/first 100 years of German filmmaking. Moreover, even though their mention of individual films and contextual issues is necessarily short, it was on the basis of reading these film history accounts that I selected around 90 *NGC* films for further examination. In the end, I studied 82[23], all of which figure briefly in my film chart in chapter four, while about half of them are analysed more closely throughout chapters three, four and five[24].

[21] I will, however, analyse the societal role of the *NGC* and the socio-political (self-)positioning of its filmmakers at the beginning of the next chapter.
[22] My cultural studies approach will be discussed in more detail at the beginning of the next section.
[23] Some films were not available to buy or borrow, neither in Germany nor the UK or the U.S.A.
[24] I would like to add here that my chosen method of analysis is not to consider the whole film equally. Instead, I typically focus on particular sequences, scenes, dialogues, etc.

The main weakness of these extensive film histories is their often-underdeveloped theoretical awareness and their relative lack of analytical value. A good, or rather disappointing, example is Hake's (2000) book, which sells itself as 'the first comprehensive English-language account of German cinema from the beginning to the present' (ibid.: 1). Yet, while the author initially asks many important and thought-provoking questions about the relationship between cinema and nation, she concludes her introduction by saying:

> The following comprehensive overview of German cinema from the beginning to the present does not attempt to answer any of these questions. However, the individual chapters present a number of interweaving and overlapping narratives that open up a space for contemplating possible approaches (ibid.: 6).

These remarks indicate that Hake's writing is scarcely informed by her critical awareness of the issues surrounding the concept of national cinema. Possible answers are left to the readers themselves and what follows is just another film historical approach presented in a rather descriptive and not sufficiently critical manner.

The first of a few film history accounts that deserve special mention is Frieden, McCormick, Petersen and Vogelsang's (1993) book. Regarding the time of its publication, it is an *overdue* feminist intervention into the male-dominated field of film criticism concerned with the *NGC*. As such, it aims to, 'refract the history of German cinema, with all its contradictions, through the specific category "gender"' (ibid.: xi). It has inspired my own work to engage with gender issues and the work of female *NGC* filmmakers, especially in the analytical chapters three, four and five. The most recent book on the topic is Knight's (2004) introduction or self-proclaimed 'short cut' to the *NGC*. Towards the end of this account, issues around national identity and film are briefly referred to (ibid.: 89-92). Unfortunately, the author's evaluation of the concept's 'mythical' qualities remains rather sketchy and separate from the rest of the book. It somehow seems 'tacked on' and thus is not very convincing methodologically. Elsaesser's (1989) *New German Cinema – a history* is the most compelling and complex account concerned with a variety of aspects that together made up the phenomenon *NGC*. In short, these are production issues, the role of the filmmaker, representations of national German history and the West German present, international responses and, as the declared focus of the investigation, spectator-related issues. Unfortunately, the vast amount of diverse material is not always well organised and lacks coherence at times. In this respect, the title of the conclusion 'the absent centre' can be seen as an appropriate description. I will, however,

occasionally refer to this account in the course of my following investigation since it provides interesting insights into a range of *NGC*-related issues.

Textual approaches

Textual accounts, which provide a close reading of a small sample of 'film texts', are the least common among the available literature. Within this category, Schacht (1991) offers a unique exploration of the *NGC* genre anti-*Heimat* film in which he analyses and categorises five productions between 1968 and 1972. More precisely, the author focuses on notions of 'provinciality' as portrayed in these critical narratives. Yet, while this investigation is of some interest in relation to the specific spatial matters discussed in my chapter three, it is very limited in its scope with regard to the *NGC* output overall. Corrigan's (1983) examination of the dialogical nature of the relationship between the *NGC* and Hollywood uses close textual analysis of nine (in the first edition six), as he claims, 'specific texts by canonical directors' (ibid.: xi) with these being made between 1972-77. While my work is only marginally interested in the Hollywood-*NGC* relation, Corrigan's book serves as a useful example for the fruitfulness of close film analysis. This applies even more so to Kaes's (1989) account, which is a critical historical examination of five films made between 1976-84 by well-known and critically acclaimed *NGC* filmmakers. Yet, the author is not concerned with the *NGC* as such; instead he regards the films as related but different 'discursive events' (ibid.: x). Since these are regarded as the result or starting points of certain debates in society, his approach can be seen as an illustration of the sociological model. More precisely, these 'filmic discourses' (ibid.: xi) largely focus on, 'Hitler and the Holocaust, German identity and "Heimat"' (ibid.), which further connects with certain aspects of my own work. However, my critique of his, as well as the other textual approaches, is their use of a very small number of films. There are a large number of *NGC* directors (male and female), who in their filmmaking address a wide range of relevant issues, and I want to argue that, if one seeks to explore German national identity issues through film analyses, it is not enough to focus upon such a small sample.

Themes-and-issues approaches

The last category, which comprises, 'themes-and-issues approaches' (Elsaesser, 1989: 1) is the most diverse one, yet, at the same time the one that, overall, holds the most innovative and recent work. Bronnen and Brocher (1973) explore how filmmaking in West Germany is

crucially implicated by the reigning economic conditions in the 1970s. Knight's (1992) feminist study complements Frieden, McCormick, and Petersen's (1993) work by looking at issues around female *NGC* filmmaking from an international perspective. Rentschler (1984) offers a critique of the *NGC* as an 'unproblematic success story', which, he argues, is often told by US-American authors. In contrast, he carefully examines the context(s) from which the *NGC* emerged, concentrating on the struggles it was facing at home, to produce an account that emphasizes the particular 'situatedness' of the *NGC*. Wenzel's (2000) approach at first seems somewhat tangential in that he uses films which, rather than being *NGC* ones, belong to the category of art cinema. However, his work is interesting in methodological terms. Thus he conceptualises film as 'memory space' which describes an open discourse of images and signs. As such, it provides a useful way of thinking about narrative processes in some of the less conventional films – a discussion which will be taken up at the end of chapter four. Bergfelder, Carter and Göktürk's (2002) large collection of essays serves as an overview of a variety of *NGC*-related topics. These are loosely grouped together under the headings of 'popular cinema', 'stars', 'institutions and cultural contexts', 'cultural politics' as well as 'transnational connections'. On the whole, this first group of so-called themes-and-issues approaches contains texts which, rather than being central to my work, focus on features of the *NGC* which are more or less secondary to my argument. Hence I will refer to these writings occasionally to make a specific point but, overall, they will remain largely in the background.

I will conclude this literature review with the most intriguing works in this mixed category, that is, in relation to my work. Santner's (1990) account articulates the mourning of (West) German intellectuals in the post-WWII era (for example, *NGC* filmmakers) with Western poststructuralist/academic experiences in the 1980s. Moreover, he regards the two as being linked through the Holocaust which, in the form of Auschwitz, is described as the 'trauma to European modernity' (ibid.: 8). Now, while the Holocaust and certain poststructuralist ideas are obviously very relevant to my investigation of (West) German national identity issues, I do not share Santner's broader European perspective. Instead, I have chosen to focus on the specific German context, which means that I am only considering European/international aspects as far as they have an influence on the post-war German (cinematic) realm.

Meurer's (2000) predominantly materialist approach is interested in the way in which filmmaking in East and West Germany is shaped by the political economy of both countries.

An analysis of four lesser-known films made between 1979-89 which, 'dramatise politically sensitive subject matters that were typical of the time' (ibid.: 9), is tacked on. Again, I would argue that an analysis of four films (two from each part of Germany) is not sufficient to produce a convincing argument about *Cinema and National Identity in a Divided Germany* (the title). However, it has to be noted that Meurer is the only author who attempts a comparative study of German film and identity. In my own work, for example, East Germany or the GDR only features in the form of West German representation of it[25]. Thus despite its analytical shortcomings, Meurer's book has to be recognized as an important contribution to the existing literature.

Davidson's (1999) book is, broadly speaking, a post/neo-colonial interpretation of the *NGC* combined with a genre approach, which exclusively considers productions that are 'set outside West Germany (and, indeed, Europe)' (ibid.: 6). The author's main argument is that the development of the *NGC* is set in a neo-colonial framework in which the West substitutes its former physical domination with intellectual discourse. In this view, the *NGC* is regarded as 'recreating an "othered" German identity in order to integrate Germany into the West more fully' (ibid.: 9). This ultimately means that the notions of 'Germanness' constructed in the films are seen as essentially shaped by post/neo-colonial national and international interests – a very fascinating argument which, however, uses an entirely different body of films and bears little resemblance to my own questions. Thus even though Davidson and I are both interested in processes of 'Othering'[26] and notions of 'homelessness', he considers them as part of a conventional post-colonial investigation in which these identity issues are understood as the outcome of ethnic struggle and displacement or 'deterritorialization'. My investigation, on the other hand, is concerned with 'homelessness' *at home* – an identity position which is the result of internal and national rather than external and international developments.

In view of the above categories and their respective studies of the *NGC* in terms of national cinematic and identity issues, my approach does not neatly fit into just *one* of them. To be more precise, my subsequent investigation starts with a discussion of historical as well as biographical/*auteurist* aspects in chapter two, which set the scene for the following film analytical work. In the chapters three to five, the attention shifts towards national themes and issues which are addressed textually, that is through an analysis of a substantial number of

[25] These are analysed in the 'border' section of chapter three.
[26] The category of the 'Other' and processes of 'Othering' are explored in more detail in the next section.

symptomatic *NGC* films[27]. Hence, my approach is a combination of themes-and-issues and textual elements with an excursion into historical and biographical/*auteurist* subject matter. This then is, what I call, an integrated or *con-textual* approach, which is fundamentally working within the parameters of a cultural studies methodology.

1.4 A cultural analysis of the *New German Cinema*

In this last part, I will bring together the arguments made in section 1.2 and 1.3 in order to elaborate on the notion of a cultural studies analysis of the *NGC*. To begin with, my study of national cinematic aspects is particularly concerned with the relationship between cultural *texts*, here a certain body of film, and its complex spatial, temporal and social *context*, here post-war West Germany. More precisely, this context-oriented method of drawing on film as a 'cultural resource' (Bromley 2001), as opposed to focussing solely on its artistic qualities in a largely de-contextualising manner, works primarily within the scope of a cultural studies approach (rather than film studies). In view of that, film has to be situated within a wider social context in order to be addressed, rather than articulated simply as a work of art, which needs to be analysed for its own sake. In this vein, the discussion of filmic aspects will be limited to the ones which are seen as being immediately relevant to the ongoing investigation.

The circuit of culture

To develop this idea of a cultural studies film analysis further, I draw upon Johnson's 'circuit of culture' (1996: 75-114) as a model of a cultural studies approach from which a range of methodological aspects can be deduced. Johnson defines 'production', 'text', 'reading' and 'lived cultures' as different moments of the 'circuit of culture' united through processes of 'production', 'circulation' and 'consumption' of cultural products. He stresses the dependency between the different moments and their indispensability to the circuit as a whole. At the same time, he points to the distinctiveness of every moment resulting in its characteristic impact on the cultural process (ibid.: 83). When one considers the simultaneous production, circulation and consumption of cultural products, culture becomes a site of conflict and struggle over meaning. This then leads to certain cultural processes and objects acquiring hegemony over others, which might re-act to the former by means of resistance. As such,

[27] A slightly more detailed account of what happens in the individual chapters is provided in the chapter outline at the end of this chapter.

Johnson's circuit of culture is useful to conceptualise a contextualised and multifaceted study of culture which also, though more implicitly, considers power relations.

In the case of my study of national identity issues using film analysis, one enters the circuit at the moment of text. This means to investigate the films' different aspects, for example, their plot, mode of narration, usage of stars, *Mise-en-Scene*, montage, as well as their sound and music, etc. in order to get a sense of them as cultural products. However, as my analysis, similar to Kracauer (1947) and Kaes's (1989) accounts, is 'not concerned with German films merely for their own sake' (Kracauer, 1989: x), this textual analysis has to be situated in the particular West German context. Furthermore, if one assumes a close relationship between text and lived cultures one has to inquire into processes and agents which relate the two moments to one another. Here, notions of representation, narration and identity formation as well as the role of the filmmaker come into view.

To start with, however, I will concentrate on textual matters (since the analysis of film texts is, methodologically speaking, the main focus of my subsequent investigation) by outlining the ways in which the cultural function of films can be conceptualised. In this way, I intend to move beyond passive and merely secondary conceptualisations of imagination, often captured in the metaphor of films as mirrors (employed, for example, by Kracauer 1947, Pleyer 1965, and, even though to a lesser extent, Ferro 1976), in order to emphasize the proactive side of the imaginary. This means that I see processes of imagination as being an integral part of reality and not just existing beside or in addition to it.

<u>On imagination and fiction</u>

In order to develop this argument further, I turn to Ricoeur (and later to Hall) and his critique of existing concepts of imagination which necessarily lie at the centre of any discussion of fictional issues (and national ones as the discussion of sociological writings on the national demonstrated). Within these narrow and, according to Ricoeur, misconstrued accounts, images are perceived of as having a merely virtual character and being confined to the existence in people's minds. Besides, the image is regarded as being only of a secondary nature, derived from a reality 'out there'. Ricoeur meets these prejudices by arguing strongly for the (re-)organising power and counter-hegemonic potential of imaginations and their productive reference to the world. He writes:

> The image is not enclosed within the mind,...it has a distinctive intentionality, namely to offer a model for perceiving things differently, the paradigm of a new vision. Against the second prejudice, it must be said that fiction is not an instance of reproductive imagination, but of productive imagination. As such it refers to reality not in order to copy it, but in order to prescribe a new reading. (...) In this sense, all symbolic systems have a cognitive value: they make reality appear in such and such a way. (1981: 292-293)

Ricoeur thus argues for the proactive character of fiction/imagination, emphasizing that its common sense conception, which regards it as being solely virtual and only existing in the minds of people, is a misguided one[28].

Another issue that defies the metaphor of film as a mirror of reality is the representational quality of fiction and its inherently interpretational tone. To illustrate this point I will discuss Ricoeur's (1981) understanding of 'fiction as "mimesis"', which sets out to subvert the common sense perception of fiction as merely mirroring reality or 'copying some already existing model' (ibid.: 292). In the course of his argument, Ricoeur draws upon Aristotle's concept of mimesis within which the aim of fiction (with specific reference to tragedy since seen by Aristotle as the quintessential type of fiction[29]) is regarded as 'creative imitation' of human action (ibid.).

Following Aristotle, Ricoeur thus refutes the seemingly passive and secondary character of fiction, often leading to a devaluation of the fictional in relation to the 'real', and instead stresses its productive side. The act of imitating is then described as predominantly directed towards the meaning and logical structure of lived experiences rather than towards their effectivity. Hence fictions and their respective authors/producers are accredited agency within the realm of human activity. Their particular function is specified as being metaphoric and meaning making: 'tragic *mimesis* reactivates reality... in accordance with its magnifien [sic!] essential features. *Mimesis*, in this sense, is a kind of metaphor of reality. Like metaphor, it places before the eyes, it shows by "signifying the thing in activity"' (1981: 292, emphasis in the original).

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[28] As demonstrated above, cultural theorists such as Gellner, Anderson, Billig and others, have increasingly drawn from this notion of the imaginary as 'bringing forth' in their respective conceptualisations of nationalism within which they focus upon the imagined character of the nation-state (the 'real') as opposed to essentialist notions of the latter.

[29] ...and (with reference to my study) arguably the closest to film.

Interestingly, Ricoeur then proceeds to relate the mimesis inherent in dramatic productions to the one within the visual arts claiming they would both result in 'an "iconic augmentation" of the real[30]' (1981: 202). This ultimately suggests that the meaning of human activity is often easier to understand and grasp by analysing artistic productions than by investigating real life events since the former in comparison to the latter disclose a heightened sense of what it means to be and to act in the world and further justifies the approach of my particular project. In a similar way, Benjamin (1983) in his concept of 'actuality' declares art to be the predominant site for historical knowledge production. 'Actuality' here is understood as an artistic method of temporal montage whose point of reference is neither aesthetics nor propaganda but the organisation of societal experience. The aim is to make history the object of active knowledge production for the recipient – an approach that bears traces of Brecht's concept of the epic theatre.

On representation and narration

Ricoeur's philosophical concern with the complex interrelatedness of the two conceptual pairings imagination/action and fiction/real translates into contemporary cultural studies terminology as the issues of representation. To bring this cultural studies approach to bear on the discussion about the cultural function of film, I will now briefly consider some relevant aspects of Hall's work, which will take the argument further. In his introduction to *Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices* (1997) Hall stresses the inherently process-like character of representation. This aspect of the concept, which can be seen as relatively marginal within Ricoeur's account, is, as the title of Hall's anthology suggests, central to the argument of the latter. It is further developed through Hall's conceptual emphasis on cultural practices rather than 'a set of things' (i.e. novels, paintings, pieces of music, etc.) – an approach which at first glance produces some methodological problems for this investigation since film, too, can be described as 'a thing' or cultural product. However, as I will show as part of the discussion around the specific character of the *NGC* (2.3) the latter can equally be understood as a cultural practice.

Through his accentuation of practice Hall here, in a way similar to his 'encoding-decoding model' (1981), highlights the agency of people, or rather participants, within the cultural process as a whole, in which he describes meaning as given or constructed within a certain

[30] The real: in Ricoeur's terms 'the human world of action' (1981: 202).

context of use. More specifically, he says about representation, 'it is by our use of things, and what we say, think and feel about them – how we represent them – that we *give them a meaning*' (Hall, 1997: 3, emphasis in the original). According to this, representation is a way of actively making meaning of the world around us and ultimately also of ourselves. However, besides the meaning-making inherent in 'using things' (in the wider sense of the word), there is a second dimension to this cultural practice, which might be called 'narrative'.

'The narrative function'[31] is then to (self-)reflexively make sense of using or having used things, which in other words means to recount and meaningfully organise past and present lived experiences. Here, it is important to note that instead of simply *presenting* events in a chronological order (a concept similar to the above discarded mirror imagery), narratives essentially *construct* the setting, the timeframe, the protagonists, and other elements of a (his)story[32] in order to produce a coherent account of what it is/was all about. Hall takes account of this aspect of representation by saying: 'In part, we give things meaning by how we *represent* them – the words we use about them, the stories we tell about them, the images of them we produce, the emotions we associate with them, the ways we classify and conceptualise them, the values we place on them' (Hall, 1997: 3, emphasis in the original). As such, narratives are a crucial form of cultural representation, which 'can make sense of events, explain them...' (Johnson, Chambers, Raghuram and Tincknell, 2004: 120). Linking this notion back to the circuit of culture, it is practices and acts of narration which mediate and go between the moments of text and lived cultures. In the case of analysing films of the *NGC* in national cinematic terms, it will be interesting to see to what extent these, in the first instance, narratives might also be considered to contain elements of a social practice[33] and thus, to complete the previous quote, '...compose a basis for action' (ibid.).

On identity

An issue, which in many ways is linked to the discussion of representation, is that of identity. Hence, it is through acts of narration that diverse objects, practices, events and people are joined together in a process of individual and/or collective identity formation, which is concerned with issues around 'belonging'. In light of this, identity can be regarded as an

[31] The title of Ricoeur's (1981) account.
[32] This does not mean that places, times and people do not exist otherwise. Instead it refers to the understanding that they have no inherent meaning in themselves and are only imbued with the latter through acts of narration.
[33] An analysis of the social function of the *NGC* and its film(making) will be provided in the next chapter.

ongoing narrative about the personal as well as the communal self, constantly evolving and in process, endlessly told and re-told. This particular conception of identity is generally referred to as the anti-essentialist approach. It has been developed within contemporary cultural theory, especially in the works of Bhabha (1990), Gilroy (2000), Hall (1996) and, though largely part of his film analytical praxis, Bromley (2001). With regard to my investigation of West German national identity constructions, this anti-essentialist mode, which calls attention to narrative rather than biological or psychoanalytical aspects of identity formation, methodologically responds to what I earlier described as an integrated approach with a strong textual element.

Besides their focus on narrativity, anti-essentialist notions of identity argue against common sense conceptualisations that emphasize unity, authenticity, stability and duration. Instead, the above authors suggest a model that describes identity constructions as inherently process-like, multi-voiced, imaginary and constantly shifting. Since their approach recognizes elements of change, it draws attention to the historicity of developments and practices and thus requires any analysis of identity to be thoroughly contextualized. More specifically, and in relation to my own work, this brings us to an understanding of national identity as a historically specific product of particular power relations at a definite time and place. Again, this ties in with the *con-textual* approach I have chosen and leads me to emphasize that the national identity constructions, which will be analysed in the course of the following investigation, are unique to the post-war West German context and deeply embedded in the latter's spatial, temporal and social conditions[34].

An important general dynamic and common feature of the formation of different social identities in different cultural contexts, however, is the so-called 'Othering' (Hall, 1997, pp. 223-277). This process, which includes the marking of, most notably, gendered, sexual, class and racial differences, is described as leading to the creation of a constitutive outside, the 'Other'. On the flipside, these largely exclusionary strategies are central to the creation of a positive and meaningful inside, also called the 'Self'. Yet, here I want to go one step further and argue that in spite of the 'Other' and the 'Self' being (constructed as) binary opposites, the 'Other', too, can be regarded as a necessary part of the 'Self' – an argument that alongside their more common conceptualisation as directly oppositional modes proposes a rather intimate relationship between the two identity positions. Moreover, qualities that are part of,

[34] These will be discussed at greater length at the beginning of the next chapter.

or lie at the core of a certain 'Self' can under dramatic circumstances turn into characteristics of an 'Other', while remaining attached to the same person and/or social group. An example of this might be the 'Nazi'[35] who represents a way of 'being in the world' that was seen and promoted as central to the German 'Self' under National Socialism. After the Second World War, and especially during the war-crimes trials, the personification of Nazism in the form of its leading agents was literally removed from the national 'inside' as they were then perceived of as being 'outside' of the national cultural realm. 'Nazi' came to represent an identity position that post-war Germany wanted to move away from, thus rendering it 'Other' in relation to the new West German 'Self'.

In the case of national identities more generally, the 'Other' can take a multiplicity of forms. To give a few examples, Said focuses on the portrayal of the cultural 'Other' to the West (traditionally called 'the Occident') in his study on *Orientalism* (1978); Yuval-Davis inquires into the relationship between *Gender and Nation* (1997); E. P. Thompson investigates *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963); and Hall analyses, 'The Spectacle of the "Other"' (1997) in racial terms. In my own work, the national 'Self' will be explored through an analysis of various spatial, temporal and social identities and identifications in which certain 'Othering' processes play an important role. Methodologically speaking, this means that the study's themes-and-issues element is applied as an organising device in relation to the textual, which is also reflected in the overall structure of the investigation as will be demonstrated in due course.

The story so far

To conclude, Hall's alternative to Ricoeur's notion of the productive character of imagination is to conceptualise representation as making-meaning and to link it to processes of identity formation. Yet, while Ricoeur understands fiction as being a heightened form of reality, explaining the fictional in terms of its relation to the real, Hall's account refers to the narrative quality of all cultural practices, which, different to Ricoeur's conceptualisation, renders reality as being a fundamentally culture-imbued realm. On the other hand, both authors similarly argue that imagination/representation and fiction/narration are processes which shape society,

[35] Of course, this is a stark simplification and I am fully aware that in other contexts this stereotyping might be considered inappropriate. However, in this case I am not making a claim about national characteristics as such, but instead I want to use Nazism as an example to argue that this ideology created a national 'Self' which after its disappearance came to be deemed unacceptable and even criminal.

in that they produce cultural knowledge (Ricoeur) and inform cultural practice (Hall). Yet, while for the philosopher Ricoeur this marks the end of his inquiry, since the production of knowledge (as an answering of a pertinent question) is seen as an end in itself, the cultural studies scholar Hall, who regards knowledge as relative and socially constructed, needs to enquire further. He then focuses on signifying practices and acts of narration as the basis for identity formation – identity being a category which Ricoeur is not concerned with as such but which figures prominently in my following investigation.

In order to define my methodological point of departure more clearly, I now revisit Johnson's circuit of culture to present a refined and *NGC*-specific version of the film circuit sketched out earlier. Here, *NGC* productions are analysed in terms of West German national identity constructions, whereby the latter are effectively regarded as simultaneously inhabiting the realms of text and lived cultures as well as constantly travelling between the two. The first process, which relates the two sites to each other, centres on the activity of the filmmakers (a specific social group) whose function can be seen as to reject or produce, as well as to select and frame certain, possibly even conflicting, versions of national identity within their films[36]. The second process, which makes the circuit complete, evolves around the audience (another social group), which is exposed and exposes itself to the filmmakers' work. Within this process of reception the spectators engage with the national identity versions put forward by the filmmakers so that their readings will feed back into the discursive availability of particular national identity constructions within the societal realm[37]. In this respect I would like to stress that my analysis does not intend to make a generalising claim about a collective West German national identity between 1961 – 1989[38]. More exactly, I understand the national space as a site of difference and struggle over meaning and power. Thus, I am aware that films of the *NGC* only (re)present a few versions of national identity constructions prevalent at their time of production/reception, which then again only reached a small part of the West German society.

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[36] (Auto)biographical aspects as well as ideological and socio-political production matters (in a wider sense) will be addressed in the next chapter, where the nature of the cinema movement and the respective role of the various filmmakers associated with it are analysed.

[37] Reception issues are, albeit to varying degrees, considered in the chapters three, four and five and as part of the investigation's overall concern with identity and identification strategies. More specifically, reception and identification matters are dealt with in the last section of chapter five where the star system of the *NGC* is set apart from its Hollywood counterpart.

[38] A further explanation about the chosen timeframe of my study will be given at the beginning of chapter two.

If we assume a reciprocal relationship between film and society using contemporary cultural theory and philosophy, then an appropriate investigation of the cultural narratives produced by the *NGC* requires an examination of textual as well as contextual aspects. Accordingly, my cultural study of the *NGC* aims to comprehend the relationship between the films of the *NGC*, their historical moment of appearance (including references to the past and future) and critical responses in their aftermath. However, since we have little way of knowing about the films' social (and psychological) impact during their time of production and release – in the case of my study the *NGC*'s influence on West Germany's socio-cultural condition between 1961 and 1989 – the following investigation will largely focus upon one side of this dialogue. This approach regards the films as programmatic interventions as well as articulations of particular lived experiences and imaginings made discursively available by the *NGC*, a cultural formation lead by a group of West German intellectuals.

Towards a working structure

I will now briefly outline the categories of my analysis. This look behind the scenes is in some sense a response to the relative lack of methodological clarity which I found in the majority of the relevant literature. Hence, I noticed that even though there is a considerable body of literature on post-war West German film concerned with questions of national identity much of this work suffers, I would argue, from an under-development of the concept of national identity in general and with regard to the specific German context. Hence, the term is often merely used as a self-evident expression translated as, for example, 'what it would mean to be "German" after national socialism' (Fehrenbach, 1995: 6). More disconcertingly, this common sense approach can also function as an essentialism in disguise, since the same author declares herself to be interested in 'the *nature* of the new German nation' (ibid.: 7, my emphasis). Overall, one is often left to wonder what it means that a certain film 'deals with national identity issues'.

Taking this as my starting point, I asked myself precisely that question. As illustrated in my opening section (1.1), I then realized that the notion of national identity has a spatial, a temporal and a social dimension. In other words, I regard space, time and sociality as ontological dimensions of the nation. As an outcome of this first operationalisation, I decided upon the three analytical categories of space, time and sociality, which then became the basis for chapter three, 'The Unsettling Setting', chapter four, 'A Matter of Time', and chapter five,

'Relative Strangers' (the chapters' structure and content is outlined below). I thus want to argue that, similar to a film being essentially comprised of a setting, a timeframe and the interaction of its protagonists, a nation, too, consists of a homeland, a history/traditions and a people. In West Germany's case, obvious issues, which immediately spring to mind and which can be organised in those terms, are the German-German division or the Berlin Wall (place-related), fascism and its legacy for post-war West Germany (history-related), and the Holocaust, the 1968 student movement, and RAF terrorism (sociality-related).

In view of the fact that place, time and sociality are still sufficiently abstract parameters, I decided to introduce each analytical chapter by exploring why these specific concepts matter to an investigation of national identity issues generally and in particular with regard to the post-war West German context. The consequence of this second operationalisation was the development of concrete parameters, which then became observable in films. In this way, each chapter offers a new perspective on West German national identity constructions in films of the *NGC* while at the same time developing the argument further. Regarding my use of sources, the investigation considers a rather large sample of films and cuts across genres, filmmakers, and production dates – a method which I regard as the most appropriate way of addressing *my* questions. Thus, in the face of the vast amount of creative output made over more than 25 years, it seemed unjust to reduce an analysis of national identity constructions in *NGC* productions to an examination of 'the usual suspects' and/or their work. Instead, I wanted to make space for the rich multiplicity and complexity of voices, often hidden behind the unified *NGC* façade.

Outline of chapters

Throughout the following chapters, the question 'what is German?' or, more accurately (as taking the anti-essentialist argument into consideration), 'what did it mean to be German *then* and/or *for them*?' will receive a number of related spatial, temporal and social responses. At times, these will assume the form of (seemingly) conflicting notions of 'Germanness' existing at the side or on top of each other and thus producing ambiguous senses of the national along with uncertainties about 'belonging'. Here it is important to note, however, that the loss of 'home' and the condition of 'homelessness', which are frequently described as universal or modern phenomena (for example, Berger in Morley and Robins 1993), will be examined in the form of analyses of symptomatic West German narratives and practices. Thus, I would

argue that while the German post-war experience is deeply embedded in a general European/modern one, it also has a special quality, which is what interests me and will be explored in the thesis as a whole.

Chapter One: As we have seen, this introductory chapter offers an account of how the author came to be interested in the topic and states the aims of the investigation. It explores the debate around national cinema and reviews the existing literature on the *NGC* in order to carefully place the argument. In addition, it discusses methodological issues around and beyond the circuit of culture to illustrate the investigation's cultural studies approach to film. A breakdown of the categories of analysis and an outline of the overall structure of the thesis complete the chapter.

Chapter Two: This contextualising chapter is positioned between the opening discussion of theoretical and methodological issues and the specific film analyses in part two. It starts by exploring the national context of post-war West Germany and then looks at the *NGC* and its filmmakers in artistic, political, and social terms. The main aim here is to set the scene for the film analytical sections and to demonstrate the filmmakers' complex engagement with (West) Germany and German questions.

Chapter Three: This first film analytical chapter investigates the role of spatial issues in post-war West German national identity constructions. More precisely, the analysis focuses on filmic representations of the national 'inside' as (anti-)*Heimat*, the German-German border and/or Berlin Wall, as well as significant national 'outsides' in the form of East Germany/the GDR and the United States of America.

Chapter Four: This second film analytical chapter examines senses of time and temporality in films of the *NGC*. Starting with an analysis of depictions of the past in a number of history and memory narratives, the investigation then moves on to an examination of imagined presents in temporal border narratives. Possible futures are assessed through an analysis of 82 film endings, before the investigation considers uncategorisable or hybrid senses of time in film collages.

Chapter Five: This third and last film analytical chapter analyses the importance of social matters regarding West German national identity constructions. Similar to chapter three, the

investigation largely focuses on an examination of nationally relevant insiders and outsiders and their impact on the national sociality overall. In addition, reception and identification issues are addressed through an analysis of the *NGC*'s star system in relation to Hollywood.

Conclusion: This final part briefly summarizes and then discusses the findings from the chapters two to five. It finishes with an outlook on German reunification and the impact it might have had on post-1989 national identity constructions and filmmaking. The emergence of a new group of German filmmakers is referred to in order to suggest areas of future research on German national cinema.

Chapter Two

Establishing Shot[39]

2.1 Framing it

In accordance with my *con-textual* approach outlined in the previous chapter as well as following on from the more general discussions around national cinema, I will now explore a number of contextual parameters crucial for an understanding of the particular relationship between the *NGC* and post-war West Germany. Some of the issues such as, for example, the interventionist character of *NGC* productions have already been mentioned or hinted at. However, a more substantial analysis of relevant socio-cinematic aspects is needed in order to recognize the specifically national character of the *NGC*. In this chapter, I will start by looking at certain developments, moments, events, and debates that are concerned with and can be seen as characteristic of the post-war West German society overall. After this historical section (2.2), the investigation takes a biographical turn (2.3) by exploring *NGC* filmmakers as an integral part of their national sociality. Following this largely contextual examination, I will again end on a distinctly 'textual' note (2.4). Hence, similar to the use of Syberberg's film *Hitler – ein Film aus Deutschland* (Hitler – A Film from Germany, 1977) in chapter one, I will analyse Wenders's *Der Stand der Dinge* (The State of Things, 1982), as an artistic self-portrayal and a comment on the *NGC*'s socio-cinematic status.

First, however, I want to address the time frame of my following investigation, which, as mentioned earlier, encompasses the years 1961 – 1989. Regarding my questions, both dates enclose a unique period, marking significant socio-political and cinematic themes in the course of 20th century German history: division, fragmentation and reunification. In 1961 the Berlin Wall was erected – an incident which further 'cemented' the already existing socio-political split between East and West Germany and made it now nearly impossible for certain social groups of the Eastern part to travel West. Although of less importance, this societal drama was matched by a cinematic one. The West German film industry at the time was in a

[39] The expression 'establishing shot' is a technical term for a camera shot which sets the scene in the sense that, from a bird's eye view, it shows parts of the spatial, temporal and social context in which the narrative is situated and where the story subsequently starts to unfold, usually combined with a 'zooming in' on the protagonist (see, for example, the opening sequence of the *NGC* film *Der Willi Busch Report* (The Willi Busch Report, Niklaus Schilling 1979), as analysed in chapter four.

deep crisis. By the late 1950s, West German cinema was nearly bankrupt due to a number of negative developments within the film industry after WWII. The unfortunate results were the making of aesthetically less attractive films that did not differ much from television productions, which explains the relatively poor reception of these low-budget productions (Seidl, 1987: 25-46).

As a reaction to this socio-political and cinematic crisis a group of young West German filmmakers, who had been successful at international festivals, claimed the death of this outdated form of German cinema and announced the birth of a new one (thus the title *New German Cinema*). They expressed their cinematic aims and intentions most notably in the Oberhausen Manifesto of 1962. Figures such as Kluge and Reitz were amongst the founding fathers who formulated and signed the declaration, later followed by Fassbinder, Herzog, Sanders-Brahms, Wenders and others. The core period of the *NGC* existed roughly from the mid or even late 1960s to the early 1980s. However, whereas the beginning of the movement is widely agreed upon (the years following the official foundation), its end is often disputed. According to some critics the *NGC* concluded in 1982 with the death of Fassbinder – its spearhead (Rentschler in Jacobsen, Kaes and Prinzler, 1993: 286), others are less explicit about its conclusion but see it fading after Reitz's *Heimat* series in 1984 (Elsaesser 1989). For my study, I have chosen the year 1989 as the end point since it can be seen as quite a distinct socio-political *and* cinematic landmark symbolizing the closing stages of an era of separation and the beginning of a unification process for Germany and its filmmaking with the fall of the Berlin Wall.

2.2 Post-war Germany: a divided country after the Holocaust

Since 1989, a large amount of historical work on the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) has been published as German reunification brought the ongoing post-war era to an immediate close, turning it into a time period of its own. In this vein, historians such as Broszat (1990), Conze and Metzler (1993), McAdams (1993), Kettenacker (1997), Thränhardt (1997), Volkov (1990) and others, have written on a variety of political, cultural, and social aspects regarding, what is mainly referred to as, the FRG. In the following, however, I will mostly draw on Fulbrook (1999) and Knischewski's work (1996) since both authors explicitly focus on German national identity issues, as illustrated in the titles of their publications, *German National Identity after the Holocaust* and 'Post-war National Identity in Germany'.

Engaging with these historical accounts, I realised, that in order to understand the origin and impetus of the question 'what it means to be German after the Second World War' and its relation to the *NGC*'s socio-cinematic orientation and practice, one has to start slightly earlier than 1961. In some sense, everything regarding post-war West Germany starts in 1945 with the end of WWII, Germany's defeat and/or liberation (an issue which remained contested at least until 1985, see below) and the country's occupation by the allied forces. During the occupation period, most of Germany was divided into four zones, the American, British, French and Soviet sector, while a substantial part of its Eastern territory was instantly cut off and put under Polish and Soviet rule. The beginning of a 40-year long (hi)story of Germany's division began.

In the sectors, the allies embarked upon a so-called 're-education' programme, whose aim was to confront the German people with their immediate Nazi past and to turn them into useful future democrats. A famous and well-documented example is the incident of American forces opening the recently liberated concentration camp Buchenwald[40] to the people who had lived less than ten kilometres away from it: in the villages surrounding it and in Weimar, the town that lay at its feet. Far from being a voluntary exercise, the German population was forced to join guided tours and to see what most of them had claimed not to know before (Fulbrook 1999). The hitherto largely silenced and hidden genocide of the Jews became thus visually and narratively positioned at the centre of Germany's recent Nazi past and identified as the critical challenge to its post-war present as well as to any possible future. The Holocaust started to *hit* 'home'.

In addition to these shock tactics and strategies of direct confrontation, the re-education programme, too, contained more subtle methods. As such, it was specifically concerned with German arts and culture, and here most notably with film and the press. Hence, allied forces firmly controlled large areas of media production, distribution and reception – not only on the level of content but also on a personal/production level. This meant that only those individuals who could prove that they had not been members of the Nazi party could (initially) apply for a licence. In this way, the allied forces aimed to stop the perpetuation of fascist residues while at the same time encouraging the dissemination of democratic ideas. This restrictive policy was further complemented by the promotion and import of American,

[40] Mentioned at the end of my opening remarks under 1.1.

British, French and Soviet material, which provided examples for acceptable national imaginings and practices. It again accentuated the close (and in the case of Nazi Germany highly problematic) relationship between visual media representations and national identity constructions.

Tightly linked to the policy of re-education was the programme of 'de-nazification' which during the time of allied occupation complemented the former but then went into a second and more prominent phase between 1958 and 1965 (Fulbrook 1999). As part of this policy, former Nazis were tried in specifically set up courts and, if convicted of being war criminals, had to serve a sentence in de-nazification camps either in Germany or abroad. If people were cleared of the accusations, however, they could resume a 'normal' life, which meant to be allowed to engage in public activities in an unrestricted manner. Here, it was first the allies but then West Germany itself who, by 1963 in 141 different trials (ibid.), were trying to come to terms with the atrocities of the country's Nazi past. Yet despite being a long legal battle which lasted for twenty years, it generated very ambiguous and in part problematic results.

Evaluating these legal de-nazification efforts it can be said that, on the one hand, the trials helped to bring some of the terrible details about the workings of the Holocaust to public attention; on the other hand, however, they served to portray the latter as a crime committed by certain individuals. Thus, rather than concerning Germany as a whole, a relatively small and definable number of people were charged with the Holocaust. This scapegoating and its representation, for example in Ahrendt's (1963) famous portrayal of the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem, largely prevented a collective working-through by singling out and punishing well-known perpetrators. In other words, due to its extreme complexity and scope the issue of the Holocaust turned out to be beyond the reach of mere legal measures. In this vein, rather than being the endpoint of the de-nazification process (in a wider sense), the end of the Auschwitz trial in Frankfurt in 1965 marked the beginning of its third phase, which was characterised by the use of socio-political means by a considerable number of societal groups and agents, for example, the *NGC* and the student movement.

Alongside re-education and de-nazification, the division of Germany progressed from a temporary split into four occupation zones to the foundation of two separate German states in 1949: the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), comprising the American, British and French zones, and the German Democratic Republic (GDR), formerly the Soviet zone. Still, despite

their formal sovereignty both German states remained – even though in a reduced fashion – under allied control until the official reunification in 1990. This settlement of the German-German division, along with the loss of some of the Eastern territory, had wide-ranging social consequences, for instance, '12 million refugees and expellees left their homes in the east of the former German Reich or fled the Soviet zone/GDR' (Knischewski, 1996: 129-130). Partly due to this large-scale East-West migration of German people, the Berlin Wall was erected in 1961 to stop East Germans from moving westwards[41]. It further diminished West German hopes for re-unification as it 'cemented' the German-German division once more, only this time due to the doings of the 'Other' Germany. The unity of the German nation and its territory had ceased to exist, and the Cold War additionally separated the two ideologically.

In West Germany especially, Knischewski argues[42], this led to growing post-national sentiments and the favouring of substitute identities. Thus, typical for West Germany in the 1950s and early 60s was its low national pride, its growing orientation towards Europe, its self-association with Western/American values, and the identification of anti-communism as an important element of a West German political agenda. For East Germany, Fulbrook states, even though in a rather simplified manner, 'the perpetrators had gone west, the victims were redesignated or disappeared (as a category if not in reality), the resistance fighters lived on and enjoyed power in the new antifascist state' (1999: 78). In this regard, East and West Germany positioned themselves very differently in relation to the German Reich, their Nazi past and the Holocaust. More accurately, the GDR rejected any responsibility for the war crimes committed in the name of Germany between 1939 and 1945 whereas the FRG, 'saw itself as standing in continuity and as legal successor of the German Reich within the borders of 1937' (Knischewski, 1996: 133). Hence in addition to the split in national, territorial and ideological terms, the past/history as well as responsibilities and identifications necessarily linked to it were not shared but asymmetrically divided.

In 1968, following the erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961 and the end of the Auschwitz war crimes trial in 1965, West German students, artists and socio-political pressure groups joined in with the reform movement that swept through large parts of Europe at the time. Yet, whilst West German activists (in the wider sense) shared many of the reforming aims put forward by their colleagues in other countries, they had distinctly national ambitions too. Hence, the FRG

[41] In the terminology of GDR officials the Berlin Wall was euphemistically described as *Antifaschistischer Schutzwall* ('anti-fascist defence barrier').
[42] ...and my school exercise at the beginning of the last chapter testifies...

of 1968 saw the emergence of a specific cultural formation, which, amongst a repertoire of international topics, addressed the issue of failed *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*[43]. This critically national approach was taken in order to expose fascist residues in West German society, for instance, structural and personal continuities in the realm of politics, the economy and jurisdiction between the Third Reich and the FRG.

In other words, the sons and daughters of the war generation, which post-war had proven to be predominantly silent and 'unable to mourn'[44] the(ir) Nazi atrocities, demanded a critical (re-)visiting of Germany's recent national past – a paradigm shift in historical and national consciousness. Yet, in national terms, this backward-questioning tendency was complemented by a distinctly present-oriented, as well as forward-looking, one. For instance, the students and likeminded others formed the so-called *Außerparlamentarische Opposition* ('Extra-Parliamentary Opposition', in short: APO) because they felt inadequately represented by the West German government at the time. To give a well-known example, Heinrich Lübke, then the president of the FRG, had been an engineer for the Nazis and Kurt-Georg Kiesinger, the chancellor, too, had been a member of the Nazi party. In this way, the APO took the debate out of the distrusted politicians' hands and handed it over to the West German public themselves. Their aim was to involve the latter in a process of relentless self-reflection and open debate about 'what it means to be German'.

On a political level, this (re-)orientation was expressed through the FRG's recognition of the GDR's state sovereignty in 1972 – even though this move could simultaneously be seen as an attempt to re-establish and intensify the relationship between the two German states in the face of continued separation and uncertain reunification. Unmistakably clear, however, the GDR officially abandoned any reunification efforts in 1974 by taking this aim out of the national constitution (while it remained an essential part of the West German *Grundgesetz* ('Basic Law') which considered the FRG to be only a temporary construction). On the whole, German reunification politically/practically as well as in terms of national imagination moved into a seemingly insurmountable distance in the mid-1970s. Yet, without national unity the notion of an all-German identity became untenable, too. Consequently, the question of 'what it meant to be German' had to be divided into an East and a West German version. Hence in addition to defining themselves in relation to (or against) their unified national predecessor,

[43] A widely used term which is commonly translated as 'coming to terms with one's past'.
[44] As observed by Mitscherlich and Mitscherlich in their famous psychoanalytical study *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern* (1977).

Nazi Germany, both 'Germanies' now had to face the 'Other' Germany in a similar way in the present. As I will show, this proved to be a very difficult task and thus the struggle to make sense of the FRG was to continue until German reunification in 1989.

A first attempt at answering the FRG question was in some sense the legacy of the cultural formation around the 1968 moment. It contributed to the new focus on National Socialism in the history curricula of schools and universities and to a general restructuring of higher and further education. It was an expression of the emerging change in attitude that saw anti-fascism as equally if not more important than national unity. In the field of media/art, the 1968 reformers made their presence felt in a range of innovative productions whose critical approach complemented the political and academic work of the APO members because it also, although with different methods, pursued societal change[45]. Knischewski even argues that, 'the intellectual Left managed to achieve cultural hegemony in parts of the media and the education system for a considerable time' (1996: 137).

Yet for some, the societal changes were unfolding too slowly and did not go far enough. Thus a group of radical political activists around Ulrike Meinhof, Andreas Baader and Gudrun Ensslin moved beyond democratic means in their pursuit to change West German society. They called themselves, and their peers, the *Rote Armee Fraktion* ('Red Army Faction', in short: RAF), often also referred to as the 'Baader-Meinhof group', which resorted to terrorism in order to expose, as they claimed, the FRG's fascistic visage masked by capitalism. Besides planting bombs in shopping centres and issuing statements about their view of post-war West Germany which they saw as being run by 'the Auschwitz generation', that is their parents, their most symbolic and memorable deed was the kidnapping in 1977 of Hanns Martin Schleyer, at the time the head of the national West German employers' association. As a symbol of capitalist power in the present, along with a personal Nazi past, he embodied the link between Nazism and FRG capitalism and stood for personal and structural continuities between both 'Germanies'. He was finally killed – for being a capitalist leader, 'the boss of the bosses', an 'old Nazi', and a despised father figure. In psychoanalytic terms, this deed can be read as a variation on the Oedipus theme: the murder of the powerful father which is atoned for by the (self-)killing of the children[46].

[45] It is on the side of these critical voices that the filmmakers of the *NGC* positioned themselves, as the discussion in the following section will demonstrate.

[46] The core of the RAF (Baader, Ensslin and Raspe – Meinhof had already died in May 1976) were found dead in their prison cells in the autumn of 1977. The question whether it was suicide or murder has never been fully resolved.

In the 1980s, the philosopher Peter Sloterdijk called the recurring debates and scandals concerned with German history, and particularly the Nazi past 'Rituale der Labilität' ('rituals of instability') in which, according to him, West German society achieved 'das Stärkste Wir-Gefühl' ('the strongest We-feeling') (cited in Koenen, 2001: 190). A landmark event in this respect was the speech which Richard von Weizsäcker, then president of the FRG, gave on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War, the 8th May 1985. Here, the long debate about how to interpret the 8th May 1945 was finally settled when von Weizsäcker described it as a liberation of the German people. For many, however, this was too narrow a view of things as other important elements, such as the loss of *Heimat* for millions of Germans living in the East and the beginning of the German-German division, were not taken into consideration.

The most famous example of West German attempts at *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* was, however, the *Historikerstreit* ('historians' debate') which started in 1986 and was widely publicised in West German newspapers and political magazines. Initiated by Ernst Nolte, the debate unfolded as a dispute between conservative and leftist historians about the singularity of the Holocaust and its place in history. Since it was not discussed exclusively in academic circles but within the mass media, it became a societal rather than an experts' debate, which once more stirred up interest in the Nazi period. As such, it subsequently led to the development of various local history projects along with the planning of numerous memorial sites whose scope suggests something like 'a boom in commemoration' (Knischewski, 1996: 141).

Besides these past-centred debates dominated by historians and politicians, there were other, more present- and future-oriented efforts to make sense of post-war West Germany. With regard to this, I want to refer specifically to the philosopher Jürgen Habermas and his concept of *Verfassungspatriotismus* ('constitutional patriotism') which he promoted as a possible solution to the West German dilemma. Thus, taking on board the division of Germany and, in connection with it, the impossibility of an all-German national identity as discussed above, Habermas proposed to substitute the allegiance to a nation (Germany) with that to a nation-state (the FRG) – an idea which became very influential amongst the intellectual left and the liberals (Knischewski, 1996: 139). In effect, it encouraged people to dissolve the emotional bond with an imaginary but unreachable 'home' and, as an alternative, to adopt a stance

which recognises and celebrates Western democratic values epitomized in the West German constitution. This national consciousness rising under the primacy of the political not only helped to develop a positive self-image of West Germany, it also set the latter ideologically apart from East Germany. Regarding the problematic question of 'what it means to be German', it offered a post-national/pro-constitutional alternative to the former exclusively national conceptions, which, especially in the form of the Nazist model, had answered the German question in highly problematic and untenable terms. However, as a largely rational and integrative concept inextricably tied to Western democracy, one might question to what extent it could really replace the emotionally charged notion of national identity which conventionally calls for uniqueness and almost inevitably contains traces of irrationality.

To conclude, the two most significant national reference points for West Germany were the country's Nazi past and its divided present. In emphasizing this dual situatedness of post-war West Germany, my investigation sets itself apart from the unanimous Holocaust focus of studies such as Kaes (1989), Santner (1990), Fehrenbach (1995) Fulbrook's (1999) and others. Alternatively, I want to argue that it was the related occurrence of Nazism *and* Germany's subsequent division which significantly shaped post-war West Germany's sense of self. Yet due to the combined experiences of extended military occupation, allied re-education and de-nazification accompanied by territorial/societal division, the post-war West German quest to define an acceptable post-fascist identity was, and still is, very problematic. One might even wonder whether this West German state whose national territory/borders, political system, culture and role in the world were created and highly regulated by external forces actually represented 'Germanness' or rather an estranged form of it.

Recurring public debates concerned with *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* illustrate the process of trying to come to terms with the Nazi past to this day. They were often stirred up and considerably shaped by children of the 'Auschwitz generation' (RAF terminology) who organised themselves in social reform as well as radical groups such as the 1968 student movement, the APO and the RAF. The *NGC*, as will be demonstrated in the following sections, relates to these self-styled agents of societal change in complex ways. Thus rather than being a cinema movement per se, its members engaged in a critical filmmaking practice which addressed pertinent social issues using cinematic means. Founded in 1962 and slowly declining in the late 1980s, the *NGC* spans nearly three decades in which its films knowingly

challenged existing notions of 'what it meant to be German' while staging national identity constructions of *post-Holocaust* and *post-unity*.

2.3 The *New German Cinema*: community service against the grain

As alluded to in various places during the previous section and in chapter one, the directors of the *NGC* might be usefully characterized 'as a generation' (Knight, 1992: 2). Born during the Second World War and growing up in a divided Germany, key *NGC* filmmakers such as Fassbinder (*1945), Herzog (*1944), Sanders-Brahms (*1940) and Wenders (*1945) (Kaes, 1989: 76, 140) belonged to the first West German post-war generation that was rebelling against its (often Nazi) parents – literally and symbolically. Their critical feature filmmaking, which was often (auto)biographically inspired (Frieden et al, 1993: 6), grew out of an intense inter-generational struggle as the preference for certain formats, for instance anti-*Heimat* film and social critique/melodrama, indicates. Elsaesser comments on this quality of *NGC* films arguing that, 'during the 1970s the cinema in West Germany was seen as a privileged medium of self-representation' (1989: 207). With reference to Johnson's circuit of culture (in Storey, 1996: 75-114), these (auto)biographies can further be regarded as mediating between the two moments of lived cultures and text in the form of generational/personal history/experiences which are passing through the filmmaking subject. In the course of this process of narrative realisation, the *NGC* generation's lived experience (in the widest sense) was transformed into situated knowledge and cast on celluloid – the generation's medium of choice.

In addition to these notions of the *NGC* as a generation as well as a self-representational practice, its members can further be conceptualised as agents in their historical context. This is not to suggest marking out single figures/'men' in order to celebrate them as creative heroes or *auteurs* (as is done in some of the biographical/*auteurist* writings). Quite the opposite, I want to argue that the *NGC* should be considered as part of the socio-political movement whose focal point was identified as the 1968 moment in the last section. What is more, since belonging to a generation is more or less a 'given', it is the representational and social interventionist quality of the *NGC* that I want to focus on in the following. Thus this section aims to explore the particular relationship between the *NGC* and post-war West Germany through a further investigation of the specifically national character of the *NGC* (an issue already taken up in relation to Syberberg's film *Hitler – ein Film aus Deutschland*) and the societal role of its filmmakers.

Film *and* politics

To begin with, I want to argue that the films of the *NGC* can be broadly categorised as social interventions since they used the medium's capacity to make narratives for change and resistance discursively available to a mass audience (nationally as well as internationally). It is important to note here though that, as opposed to (pre-)WWII productions, these films were not straightforward political propaganda but rather fictional texts, composed in a range of different ways (formally as well as in terms of their story content). Accordingly, the *NGC* has to be seen as a political/artistic endeavour within which diversity (in the form of complex articulations) was held together by the aim to create new films for a new society. In this vein, film can be theorised as a practice that is part of a social process. In Turner's words, 'film is a social practice for its makers and its audience; in its narratives and meanings we can locate evidence of the ways in which our culture makes sense of itself' (Turner, 1993: 3). Yet *NGC* filmmakers were not content with simply describing the status quo, since their social practice was geared towards societal change as the following quotation by Fassbinder demonstrates:

> My films are often criticized for being pessimistic. In my opinion there are enough reasons to be pessimistic, but, in fact, I don't see my films like that. They developed out of the position that the revolution should take place not on the screen, but in life itself, and when I show things going wrong, I do it to make people aware that this is what happens unless they change their lives. If, in a film that ends pessimistically, it's possible to make clear to people why it happens like that, then the effect of the film is not finally pessimistic. I never try to reproduce reality, my aim is to make mechanisms transparent, to make it obvious to people that they must change their reality (cited in Braad Thomsen, 1991: ix).

Even though the concept of film as social practice links with both Ricoeur's understanding of the proactive nature of imagination and Hall's notion of the identity-productive character of representation, it will now be extended and appropriated in terms of the specific requirements of my investigation of the *NGC*. To be more precise, the concept of film as social practice needs politicisation as most *NGC* filmmakers, akin to Syberberg and Fassbinder's example, responded to Benjamin and Brecht's call for the politicisation of art, a methodological decision that needs to be conceptually accounted for. This brings me to Sieglohr's account in which the author describes the *NGC* as a 'public sphere'. She argues that, 'the New German Cinema functioned in West Germany throughout the 1970s primarily as a public sphere – a forum for debating contemporary issues – rather than within the realm of entertainment' (2000: 83). With reference to Elsaesser (1989), Sieglohr supports her claim by indicating the

alliance between the *NGC* and members of the 1968 student movement. Thus, she argues, *NGC* filmmakers got involved in so-called 'special interest events' organised by the students while the latter went to see *NGC* productions.

Sieglohr's account is particularly notable in as far as it clearly distinguishes between cinematic mass entertainment and productions of the *NGC* – an approach that sets it apart from other analyses. Moreover, it points to the intellectual character of the *NGC* reflected in the films' university audience and their directors' contribution to ongoing academic debates. Nevertheless the term public sphere, which the author introduces to describe this societal function of the *NGC*, is still too general and too broad to capture the very specific social role of the *NGC* in West Germany. Besides, it loses some of the momentum that the concept of film as social *practice* conveyed. Alternatively, I propose to use the term *Gegenöffentlichkeit* (Negt and Kluge 1972) which might be translated as 'anti-' or 'counter-public sphere'. Thus, apart from its conceptual value, its use by Kluge, one of the *NGC*'s founding members who, parallel to his critical filmmaking, engaged in academic writing on film and social issues, makes it a concept worth considering.

The concept of *Gegenöffentlichkeit*, as developed by Negt and Kluge in *Öffentlichkeit und Erfahrung* (Public Sphere and Experience, 1972), contains a critique of the reigning public sphere. What is more, it rejects the idea of the modern public sphere as an all-inclusive, non-hierarchical, democratic phenomenon. It thus can be read as a critique of Habermas's thesis in *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* (The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, first published in 1962). There, Habermas describes the bourgeois public sphere as being on the rise throughout the 18th and 19th century, increasingly allowing for individuals to participate in discussions about matters of 'common concern', previously the monopoly of the church and state authorities, and establishing 'the public as in principle inclusive' (1989: 37). The 20th century then, in Habermas's terms, marks the destruction of the bourgeois public sphere's rational, democratic, and dialogical function through capitalism. However, Negt and Kluge reject this line of argument as an unacceptable romanticisation of the modern public sphere. They argue that the capitalised public sphere does not destroy the bourgeois public sphere but instead is an expression of the latter's hegemony[47].

[47] In fairness to Habermas, in his more recent work *Between Facts and Norms* (1996) he refines his earlier conception of the public sphere by distinguishing between 'formal' regulated bodies, that is institutions such as parliament, and 'informal' unregulated elements, for example, demonstrations and spontaneous events. Perhaps, one could see that as an indirect response to his earlier critics.

More precisely, *Gegenöffentlichkeit*, according to them, comes into being where the existing rules and boundaries of the reigning public sphere are pushed to the limit and/or exceeded to voice what otherwise would remain silent. In this vein, *Gegenöffentlichkeit* denotes a social practice with distinct emancipatory aims. By means of voicing dissent, it puts counter-hegemonic pressure on the reigning public sphere to open up and integrate hitherto under- or non-represented minority perspectives. Alternatively, *Gegenöffentlichkeit* can establish itself as an oppositional practice largely separate from the dominant mode and existing alongside it. Finally, *Gegenöffentlichkeit* also names a group of agents and recipients who participate in this socio-critical practice. Here the production and reception of certain media, such as radio, the press, film and others play a crucial role. It is this articulation of representational and social interventionist elements, which above was discussed as an essential feature of the *NGC*, that identifies the latter as a *Gegenöffentlichkeit* in its own right.

Slightly before Negt and Kluge's publication, the term *Gegenöffentlichkeit* was introduced to the West German context by the *Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund* ('Socialist German Student Union', in short: SDS) and the above-mentioned APO in the late 1960s (Spehr 2002). To be more precise, these groups saw their political practice as a form of *Gegenöffentlichkeit* that was aimed at mobilising the general public to break what they saw as a monopoly of the ruling classes to define societal life. In pursuit of this radical democratisation project, they particularly strived for the transformation of institutions that shaped and controlled public opinion. Thus they wanted to educate the public and transform the 'instruments of capitalist propaganda' into tools for the self-representation and information of everyone. Yet, besides these reformist aspirations, the SDS, the APO and fellow political activists such as the *Kommune 1* (a group who tried to live their revolutionary ideals) also applied subversive action to shock and shatter people's common beliefs and everyday life routines. For this purpose, the development and use of alternative media was of crucial importance because it facilitated the distribution of education and protest material/footage aimed at social change.

As a final point, the concept of *Gegenöffentlichkeit* usefully combines notions of public intervention, political resistance, national concerns and the use of critical media. In this vein, it seems to be a very appropriate concept to describe the societal function of the *NGC* within post-war West Germany. Still, I am aware that *Gegenöffentlichkeit* is a historically specific category which certain parts of the 1968 student movement, namely the APO and the SDS,

introduced to describe themselves and their political project and which was then developed further theoretically by Negt and Kluge. This means that one has to distinguish between the desire, aspiration and theoretical wish of a particular socio-political group captured in the expression *Gegenöffentlichkeit* and my aim to conceptualise the *NGC* 35 years later. Hence I will enquire to what extent the self-proclaimed *Gegenöffentlichkeit* composed of APO, SDS, *NGC*, and others can in fact be appropriately described as such – a question which will be pursued in the following discussion.

Film *as* politics

To discuss the *NGC* as a socio-cinematic phenomenon which brought about profound changes within its post-war West German 'setting', the *old* German cinema and its production context have to be understood as a crucial point of departure for the *NGC*. In particular, I want to refer to the so-called *Heimat* films, a quintessential German genre that regarding production and reception figures dominated the 1950s' cinematic scene in West Germany (Seidl 1987). It was the uncritical and aesthetically, as well as narratively, dated national identity constructions at the core of these films that the *NGC* set out to challenge and counter. To start with, many *Heimat* films were refashioned colour versions of productions made in the early and mid-1930s (Westermann 1990), a factor which rendered them indicative of socio-cinematic continuities between Nazi-Germany and its post-war West German successor. In narrative terms, *Heimat* films perpetuated an unproblematic sense of community, which was rooted both in the past and in tradition. In addition, the films were set in a bounded space, which predominantly took the shape of a rural idyll. The rural community and its place were then portrayed as timeless and given, thereby alluding to essentialist notions of communality. Finally, the films' realist mode and linear plotline called on the audience for identification with the protagonists who were usually caught up in romantic and happy ending love stories[48]. Yet what exactly constituted the *NGC*'s cinematic and socio-political critique of these older productions and how did it manifest itself?

First, one has to note that the *Heimat* films' kitsch aesthetic and their intentional or unintentional refusal to problematise the post-war West German society in relation to its Nazi-past produced a confrontational stance amongst a group of young German filmmakers who were enjoying success at international festivals. As a reaction to what they perceived as

[48] A more in-depth discussion on the topic of *Heimat* (in film) is offered at the beginning of chapter three.

being a socio-political and cinematic crisis, the directors of what was to become known as the *New German Cinema* declared the death of *Papas Kino* ('Dad's cinema') and announced the birth of a new one[49]. In the Oberhausen Manifesto of 1962 they called for structural reforms within the national funding system which would provide the basis for a non-commercial cinema that recognized the powerful role of narratives in people's lives and hence in society. Moreover, they pointed out that they did not agree with the (his)stories that had been told by their predecessors about Germany, referring to West German filmmakers of the immediate post-war years.

In effect, the feature films which they subsequently made were in deliberate contrast to the reactionary *Heimat* films and much less part of a mass form of popular culture customized for entertainment purposes. On the contrary, *NGC* productions became an important critical and nationally, as well as internationally, audible (though not dominant) voice geared towards artistic and socio-political change (Elsaesser 1989). For instance, between the end of the 1960s and the late 1970s the *NGC* produced a number of so-called anti-*Heimat* films within which the *Heimat* film format was radically under attack, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter. Hence the *NGC*, contrary to the escapist tendencies of former productions, turned *towards* society in an attempt to critically analyse and challenge ways of 'being in the world' which to them seemed to be symptomatic of post-war West Germany. The formation of a cinematic *Gegenöffentlichkeit* got underway.

While the *old* German cinema represented a crucial point of artistic departure for the *NGC*, the post-war West German society was its chosen point of socio-political intervention. Therefore, the investigation will now briefly return to some of the key features of the *old* German cinema's societal context against which the *NGC* positioned itself and which it wanted to change through its films. As discussed in the previous section, West German post-war society between 1945 and 1965 was a community dominated by escapism, silence about the Second World War and in particular the Holocaust, withdrawal from political issues in general, the inability to mourn, re-education through the allied forces, the consolidation of the German-German division, and a desire for light entertainment and distraction – together a societal framework within which *Heimat* films became the most popular feature film genre.

[49] In actual fact, this group of filmmakers first called themselves the *Young German Cinema* (in the following YGC, largely seen as being between 1962 and 1968), before they regrouped and renamed themselves in the late 1960s (see, for example, Sieglohr 2000). They then became the *New German Cinema* which continued to exist until the mid-1980s. However, in cinematic terms the early years are seen as being far less significant than the later, more productive and much longer period.

However, it was precisely this society and its cinematic articulation the *NGC* rebelled against, and that not alone. Founded in 1962 the *YGC/NGC* was followed by the student movement in 1968 (together with other social reform movements such as the peace movement and second wave feminism) and shortly after by the terrorist RAF. This shows a concurrence of different social groups and practices (including the *NGC*) concerned with transforming or – in the case of the terrorists –destroying existing ways of being German at the time. As a result this social climate of change and upheaval produced an ever-growing, multi-voiced *Gegenöffentlichkeit* which expressed itself in a variety of forms.

To be more precise about this crossover of alternative social forces and their exchange of ideas that occurred in West Germany in the 1960s and 70s, I will now turn to a person who can be seen as the epitome of this counter-hegemonic formation. This is Holger Meins who started off as a filmmaker, then became a political activist, and finally turned to terrorism. To begin with, Meins was a political filmmaker who studied at the prestigious West German film and television academy (dffb) in West Berlin from its opening in 1966 to 1968. During that time, he produced a number of short feature films as well as agitprop films such as *Über die Herstellung eines Molotow-Cocktails* (About the Production of a Molotov-Cocktail, 1968) – a film title which in itself already discloses the politically radical attitude of the film's maker. Another example of Meins's strong conviction of the political nature of filmmaking was his involvement in the drafting and distribution of the leaflet cited below at the film academy in the same year. In order to take a stance and thus to attach greater importance and credence to their message, Meins and some of his fellow students also signed it. An extract of it read as follows:

> This is an invitation and call for an extraordinary meeting of socialist filmmakers on the occasion of the international Vietnam congress in West Berlin. We have to understand filmmaking as a way of taking part in the fight for the revolutionary change of the existing society towards a socialist one. In the bourgeois-capitalist society, film is necessarily reactionary due to the political economy of the system. Unadmittedly, it reproduces the existing power relations (in Sami, 1988: 18).

Meins's films became increasingly shown and discussed at SDS gatherings, for example, by means of which he increasingly moved beyond filmmaking as a discursive social practice and towards narratives of transformation, which were expected to have a more immediate effect than the earlier feature films. In the following years, he became more and more involved with the West German student movement and in 1969, he moved together with other activists into the *Kommune 1*. From 1970 onwards, he completely stopped filmmaking and focused solely

on direct political action, which finally led him to become a member of the RAF from 1970 until his death in 1974. His intriguing biography (Conradt 2001), compiled and presented by a filmmaker and former dffb colleague of his in the form of a documentary film as well as a written account, strikingly demonstrates that a wide range of well-known and influential West German intellectuals had known and worked with Meins. Together, they had been actively involved in the national project concerned with challenging and changing post-war West Germany in one way or another.

For example, Peter Lilienthal, a filmmaker associated with the *NGC*, taught Meins at the dffb. Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet, who were also members of the *NGC*, met Meins during his time at the film academy. They became friends and dedicated their film *Moses und Aaron* (1974) to him, as he died on the day they finished the editing. Wenders, a key *NGC* director, worked with Meins on his first feature film *Summer in the City* (1970) and included a dedication to him in the opening sequence of his later film *Der Amerikanische Freund* (The American Friend, 1976). Rudi Dutschke and Otto Schily, activists of the APO, went to Meins's funeral in 1974 where Dutschke famously raised his fist at the coffin and exclaimed, 'Holger, der Kampf geht weiter!' (Holger, the fight continues!) Later, Schily was one of the lawyers who defended the RAF terrorists in court. Moreover, together with Hans-Christian Ströbele, who met with Meins when the latter was forced to live in hiding, Schily co-founded the West German Green Party and is today Minister of the Interior while Ströbele is also still a member of parliament. Peter Schneider, spokesperson of the West German student movement, met Meins through the later RAF terrorist Jan Carl Raspe and became his friend. Finally, together with Ulrike Meinhof, Andreas Baader and Gudrun Ensslin, Meins belonged to the core of the RAF and died in prison as a consequence of a communal hunger strike.

It is the significance of these personal ties that is emphasized in the documentary film *Die frühen Filme* (The Early films, dffb 1996), a historical film project which was realised on the occasion of the dffb's 30th birthday. In its opening sequence a voiceover says:

> Founded in 1966, the events and protagonists of the student movement initially had a formative influence on the dffb. With Hartmut Bitomsky, Harun Farocki and Gerd Conradt the left of '68 was studying here; with Holger Meins and Philip Sauber[50] it was the RAF; Helke Sander represented second wave feminism. Their films showed a heavy involvement in political issues and were concerned with the weak; they were following reality and occasionally taking flight from it.

[50] He was later killed in a police raid in Cologne in 1975 – only one year after his fellow 'filmmaker-turned-terrorist' friend Holger Meins.

Besides this personal network, which shows the *NGC* as part of a vocal *Gegenöffentlichkeit* and at the centre of the powerful counter-hegemonic formation in the West Germany of the 1970s, the film *Deutschland im Herbst* (Germany in Autumn, Fassbinder, Reitz, Kluge et al 1977/8) serves as a cinematic representation of the *NGC*'s interest and engagement in its societal setting. Drawing from documentary as well as fictional sources, the highly topical teamwork effort addresses some of the pressing issues which had been brought to the fore by the death of four leading RAF members in the autumn of 1977. In search of answers, the filmmakers pursue quite different paths. Kluge, for example, sends off a fictional character, the history teacher Gabi Teichert, to find some answers. Fassbinder on the other hand, digs in the past himself, whereby his personal history becomes closely articulated with West Germany's national past when he discusses personal/political matters with his mother (a well-known West German actress who appears in many of his films). And it is in this short, yet, in my view, symptomatic scene in which male-female, mother-son, actress-filmmaker and pre-war – post-war relationships are played out simultaneously at the kitchen table, that the situation of post-war West Germany is compellingly depicted as a complex dilemma on many inter-connected levels[51].

NGC: embedded or 'in bed with' West Germany?

The ongoing analysis of the *NGC*'s specifically national character and its relationship with West Germany will now turn to the investigation of a final set of relevant issues. Firstly, the *NGC* was in many ways deeply embedded in West German society and history as it reworked actual events of its time, for instance, the so-called German Autumn of 1977 in *Germany in Autumn* (*NGC* teamwork 1977/8) and the earlier RAF trials in Stuttgart-Stammheim in *Stammheim – The Trial* (Reinhard Hauff 1985). Moreover, it portrayed key figures of German history, i.e. Ludwig II and Hitler, as in the two Syberberg epics *Ludwig – Requiem for a Virgin King* (1972) and *Hitler – A Film from Germany* (1977). It also used a range of contemporary literary texts by important West German authors, namely Heinrich Böll and Günther Grass, as the basis for several films, for example, *The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum* (Volker Schlöndorff 1975) and *The Tin Drum* (Schlöndorff/Margarethe von Trotta 1979). In addition, it commissioned other authors such as the well-known poet and novelist

[51] For a more detailed analysis of the film *Deutschland im Herbst* see the end of the next chapter.

Peter Handke, to (co-)write film scripts (in this case mainly for, and with, Wenders, e.g. *Wrong Movement*, 1975, and *The Goalkeeper's Fear of the Penalty Kick*, 1972).

Secondly, in opposition to the rather hidden and implicit way of dealing with national identity issues in West German films between 1945 and 1962 (if not escapism as in the case of *Heimat* films), films of the *NGC* show a more direct treatment of the topic as indicated, for example, in the analyses of Syberberg's *Hitler* film and the *NGC*'s teamwork effort *Germany in Autumn*. In both cases, the filmmakers' work discloses the recognition of a complex relationship between text (film) and context (society) and rejects a position that reduces the means of media representation to a purely one-sided reflection. Instead, the dialogical nature of fiction and its role as a constituent part of society is stressed. In a more emphatic fashion, Fassbinder and Meins's radical approach understands the film-society relation as an intensely political one which the filmmaker has to be acutely aware of. According to them, s/he has to utilize her/his creative potential and social power in a responsible and future-oriented way, that is, to work towards societal reform or even revolution.

Thirdly, the *NGC* received significant state funding due to a far-reaching restructuring of the West German film funding system (Sieglohr 2000) which demonstrates a close and direct link between national politics and art in the late 1960s. Although public sponsorship did not make the *NGC* a propaganda instrument, it nevertheless indicates the vital interest of the, then, representatives of the West German state to promote films of the *NGC* as German culture. For the majority of filmmakers this posed a serious dilemma as they found it difficult (if not impossible) to negotiate the receipt of funding from the establishment with being part of a subversive *Gegenöffentlichkeit*[52]. Unaware of (or, more likely, unimpressed by) those artistic whims influential film critics and state officials self-confidently labelled the *NGC* 'German culture' which implies that they saw it as representing (West) Germany in an appropriate way. This domestic response to the *NGC* corresponded with the critical acclaim it received abroad. Hence internationally, it was hailed as the second great German contribution to world cinema after German Expressionism in the 1920s (ibid.). Its films were very successful, especially in Europe and the USA (slightly more so than within West Germany itself). And for nearly two decades foreign critics unanimously referred to the *NGC* as Germany's national cinema.

[52] This apparent contradiction is largely neglected in the existing literature and not much addressed by the filmmakers themselves either (as if they saw it as a potentially discrediting issue which could lead critics and audiences to question the authenticity of their films). However, as it is a very important question the next section will offer Achternbusch and Kluge's perspective on the topic followed by an analysis of Wenders's film *Der Stand der Dinge* (The State of Things, 1982) which in part deals with precisely these concerns.

In view of the above, one can conclude that the *NGC*'s 'Germanness' was only partly self-ascribed. Thus the reaction of West German cultural ambassadors, such as the Goethe Institute who embraced it to boost the national and international confidence in an emerging new Germany, proved at least as important. International voices joined the celebration as the positive reaction of art critics and film scholars quickly rendered the *NGC* a worthy object of study. This national cinematic 'coming into being' through self-representation, and inside, as well as outside, recognition once more depicts the *NGC* as a personal, political and artistic project which usefully summarises some of the above discussions. Moreover, it foregrounds the next section's exploration of personal matters around the issue of *NGC* filmmakers in society as well as *their* views on filmmaking, Germany and their role within both realms.

Considering anti-*Heimat* productions, Holger Meins, *Deutschland im Herbst* and the specific national identity of the *NGC* more broadly, its socio-cultural role can be described as follows. *NGC* filmmakers (together with members of other social movements at the time) belonged to the post-war generation which had been born during or shortly after WWII and which was in search of adequate forms of articulating their frustration with their parents' failure to confront the problematic past, while at the same time working towards a changed society. In the course of their work, they produced film essays on issues that according to them had to be confronted and talked about. Thus the *NGC* broke the silence and invited dialogue into a society that – even though formally a social democracy – still suffered from authoritarian and even Nazi residues. In this respect, the *NGC* had a democratising influence on West Germany as it contributed to a crucial national *Gegenöffentlichkeit* which prepared the ground for further changes. In order to achieve this, its films frequently employed an anti- or non-identification strategy (similar to Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*) to engage in a dialogue with the audience and make them aware that they had a responsibility to get involved in the national meaning-making process[53].

To conclude, regarding the *NGC*'s influence on West Germany's socio-cultural condition between 1962 and 1989, it can be said that by means of adapting a particular political stance, which then was translated into the production of corresponding narratives and generic forms, films of the *NGC*, which, as I have suggested, might be conceptualised as *Gegenöffentlichkeit*, opened up a space for dialogue in a largely silent community and made an agenda of issues to

[53] This issue is further explored at the end of chapter four.

be worked through discursively available. Moreover, as the *NGC* was the first socio-political movement of the 1960s to occur in post-war West Germany it could even be regarded as an avant-garde for social change. Still, it is interesting to note that in comparison with the (pre-) WWII situation the use of film for societal purposes remains – while, of course, being turned from a propaganda instrument into an 'against the grain' tool. Hence, agency and focus are decisively shifted from Nazi officials perpetuating fascist ideology (hegemony) to critical filmmakers participating in an alternative public sphere (counter-hegemony). This de-nazification/democratisation of film in the form of its function as a *Gegenöffentlichkeit* brings the discussion now to the filmmakers themselves and their (inter-)national role.

2.4 The filmmakers: at home in exile

In the previous section, which largely focussed on the national relevance of the *NGC* and its productions, the discussion already entailed references to the role of its filmmakers. The *NGC* was not portrayed as a homogenous and anonymous film factory but as a programmatic endeavour in which a wide variety of likeminded individuals came together to intervene in their societal and cinematic context. Yet unlike Meins, who as a trained filmmaker went into political activism, they were largely self-taught[54]. Film schools or academies were only established from the mid-1960s onwards and as a result of the changes within the West German film system instigated by members of the *NGC* such as Kluge. Their commitment to film was an expression of their belief in the socio-political potential of this artform/practice. Thus they perceived film to be an effective political tool and more appropriate to gain people's support than the violent and often deadly shock tactics of RAF terrorism. Sieglohr says in relation to this political dimension of the *NGC* that, 'within this larger context [she talks about a 'climate of political upheaval'], specific cinematic cultural policies gave radical left-wingers the opportunity to make films' (2000: 83).

Syberberg, with productions such as his *Hitler* film an example of political filmmaking, refers in his writings to the social responsibility of every citizen in general and of the filmmaker in particular. Thus he describes film as a public good, a position that holds the state responsible for cinematic matters. Furthermore, he calls the cinema 'the most recent and, in my opinion, favourite child of democracy' (1978: 57). In this alignment of West German democracy and its national cinema, the *NGC* again is firmly situated in the realm of politics while also said to

serve a public/national interest. This primarily political understanding of cinema and film, which almost suggests a 'de-aestheticisation' of the latter, is supported by Sieglohr's verdict that 'political activism rather than auteurist self-expression may be seen to be the motivating force for many' (2000: 85). And it is this primacy of the political over the artistic which I want to draw upon when I now consider the writings of Gramsci (1971). This turn to Gramsci adds to and complements the previous discussion on *Gegenöffentlichkeit* because it helps to conceptualise the role of *NGC* filmmakers in West German society by providing the argument with a new category: that of the 'organic intellectual'.

To begin with, one has to note that the definition of intellectuals in Gramsci is a functional one. He distinguishes between 'traditional' and 'organic' intellectuals, whereby the former are referred to as the professional kind, usually located within the university and other research and/or educational institutions. In contrast, organic intellectuals are not regarded as obtaining their position through specialised training, profession or title. Thus, Gramsci argues, they acquire their intellectual status solely by means of their social function, which is being representative of a particular social group. In terms of organic intellectuals, their societal role can be further described as being in charge of shaping their group's conception of the world and their position within it. This particular mode of thought may relate to the hegemonic one in several ways: strengthening it, negotiating the group's social position in a not quite equal dialogue with it, fundamentally challenging or countering the hegemonic. In the case of the *NGC*, its filmmakers can be seen as organic intellectuals for social change and new/critical ways of constructing a post-war (West) German identity.

With the intention of exploring the filmmakers' ideas on film/filmmaking in relation to society/social change in post-war West Germany more directly as well as to take account of relevant voices besides Syberberg's and (though to a lesser extent) Fassbinder's, I will now take a look at the group's commissioned, post-*NGC* representation of itself and German film generally in *The Night of the Filmmakers* (Edgar Reitz 1994)[55]. In this (self-)reflexive, wordy documentary film, which forms Germany's contribution to the British Film Institute's television series *Century of Cinema* (BFI TV 1994), various former *NGC* members talk about film and social aspirations while critically evaluating to what extent they, and others before

[54] A famous exception is Wim Wenders who went to the 'Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen' (HFF) in Munich.
[55] To some extent, this filmic account reiterates material from the earlier compilation *West German Filmmakers on Film: Visions and Voices* (Rentschler 1988).

them, were able to fulfil them. There are two points which are particularly noteworthy since they relate to earlier discussions, yet, more importantly, also introduce new aspects.

It is Wenders who specifically addresses the complicated relationship between German filmmakers and their audience(s) under the heading 'the power of images'. He argues that due to the Nazis' (mis)use of the medium, film and its spectators became estranged from one another. This then, according to him, lead to 'a mutual distrust between the filmmaker and his viewing audience'. Comparing it to other issues, such as production or distribution, Wenders says that overcoming this lack of trust on the side of the spectator was the greatest challenge the filmmakers of the *NGC* had to face. However, despite tremendous efforts, Wenders concludes that he and his colleagues failed to re-establish that trust and so in effect, the post-war West German audience developed considerably more trust in pictures from somewhere else than in their own. Combined with the omnipresence of pictures in general (another point made by Wenders) this means that the *NGC*'s potential audience chose identification with the 'Other' over a possible self-identification – a choice which suggests that national self-estrangement or even existential 'homelessness' are somehow easier to bear than national guilt.

The second point, put forward by Herzog, further develops Wenders's argument about the audience's national estrangement and ties it to that of the filmmakers themselves. Thus he describes his generation as 'a fatherless generation' and himself as 'an orphan'. Alongside this personal/autobiographical 'homelessness', Herzog refers to a deep-seated professional one. He argues that fascism caused a cultural wipe-out which, amongst other things, interrupted the German tradition of filmmaking called German Expressionism as it forced leading Jewish-German filmmakers, such as Fritz Lang, abroad (mainly to Hollywood). This exodus of German filmmaking talent can, according to Sanders-Brahms, further be regarded as a typical example of self-destructive tendencies within German history. In response to this human, as well as cinematic tragedy made in Germany, Herzog and other *NGC* filmmakers felt culturally and professionally closer to their (partly exiled, partly emigrated) grandfather generation, which included famous directors such as Murnau, Lang and others.

More precisely, Fassbinder, Herzog and Wenders identified themselves and their work with international directors and film scholars outside of (West) Germany instead of looking for

mentors at home. These, in many ways 'substitute parents'[56] then played a vital role in the creative development and self-stylisation of their *NGC* 'sons' who adopted them for artistic and political reasons. Fassbinder, for example, chose Douglas Sirk (aka Detlef Sierck) as his substitute father (Fassbinder 1975). Sirk, who was born in Denmark and later married a Jewish woman, had received his cultural education in Germany. Subsequently, he worked as a director in various theatres in Bremen, Hamburg, Chemnitz and Leipzig until the Nazis took over. Having made a few UFA films, he emigrated to the USA in 1937, where he succeeded as a filmmaker in Hollywood. In the 1950s, he became famous for his melodramas such as *All That Heaven Allows* (1956)[57] and *Imitation of Life* (1959) in which he critically depicted the US American society of his time.

Herzog chose Lotte Eisner to be his artistic mother. Eisner, even more so than Sirk, embodied a Germany and its filmic tradition that was largely lost to its grandsons. Hence she was the leading expert on (German) expressionist film, a Jewish émigré in Paris, befriended by Murnau and Lang and an assistant of Henri Langlois, the father of the Nouvelle Vague (France's new cinema movement). By recognising Herzog as her 'son', she established crucial links between a variety of seemingly irreconcilable, national/cinematic sides: German Expressionism and the *NGC*, grandfathers and grandsons, France and Germany (two former war enemies and still slightly hostile neighbours in the 1970s), Jewish and (West) German people, and two radical film movements of the time. Herzog initiated this highly symbolic reunion after his completion of his *Kaspar Hauser* film in 1974, when he went to see Eisner who was life-threateningly ill. It seemed the abandoned child had arrived just in time to get some sense of 'home'. However, Herzog's example also highlights the theatricality and performative character of this 'substitute parenting'. Thus, he walked all the way from Munich to Paris with the film cans in his backpack (Elsaesser, 1989: 215) – a dramatic 'homecoming' *act* which took him three weeks and ultimately renders his adoption procedure a well-calculated and effectively staged promotion event for himself, Eisner and the *NGC*.

Wenders chose, as Elsaesser puts it, 'the non-German, Hollywood misfits Sam Fuller and Nicholas Ray' to be his 'substitute fathers' (1989: 230). However, in contrast to his *NGC*

[56] Elsaesser talks about Lotte Eisner as the 'super-mother' and the 'substitute fathers' Sam Fuller and Nicholas Ray (1989: 215, 230) whose relationship with their *NGC* 'children' is explored in the following.
[57] This early American melodrama by Sirk later inspired Fassbinder to shoot *Angst Essen Seele Auf* (Fear Eats the Soul, 1973). What is more, Fassbinder realised his film as homage to Sirk's US-based story, producing a 'Germanised' version of it set in late 1960s West Germany. For a more detailed analysis of this Fassbinder film see chapter five.

colleagues Fassbinder and Herzog, Wenders did not just admire them from afar or have a brief symbolic encounter with them. Instead, he worked with them on a number of film such as *Der Stand der Dinge* (The State of Things, 1982, with Fuller), *Der Amerikanische Freund* (The American Friend, 1977, with Ray) and, of course, *Lightening Over Water* (Nick's Film, 1980, with Ray). Especially in the last film, Wenders and Ray got as intimate as two people can get by Wenders making a film about Ray dying. Thus Wenders established very close professional, as well as personal, relationships with his American 'fathers' in which the boundaries between life and film seemed to break down and disappear.

Along with the adoption of foreign outsiders as their substitute parents, Fassbinder, Herzog, Wenders, and also Syberberg frequently suggested that they might leave (West) Germany, too (even though none of them ever did). As the only possible alternative, they went into, what one might call, 'inner emigration' – a term typically used to describe the survival strategy employed by a range of organic intellectuals for internal resistance during the Third Reich. Hence, despite their oeuvre being destroyed (for example, in public book burnings) and they themselves being banned from further writing, painting, etc., these intellectuals remained in Germany. There, they secretly carried on with their work (for instance, the painter Emil Nolde and his famous series *The Unpainted Pictures*) instead of emigrating to continue life and work elsewhere (e.g. Heinrich and Thomas Mann who went to France and the USA). Their work was often smuggled outside of Germany, printed and published abroad as well as smuggled back into the country in small numbers. This form of emigration, which takes an ideological and inward form rather than a physical and outward-oriented one, was chosen by people who either could not leave Germany or who preferred to stay there in order to witness and resist the developments at home firsthand.

If applied to the life and work of Fassbinder, Herzog, Wenders, Syberberg and others, the notion of inner emigration gains a completely new dimension as the expression, originally used to describe silenced protest, is essentially re-appropriated to describe a different and very vocal form of resistance. To be more precise, one can argue that the filmmakers of the *NGC* made their inner emigration public by making films about existential 'homelessness' in West Germany and programmatically positioning themselves outside of the national hegemonic realm. In doing so, the Nazi inheritance of post-war Germany became exposed in that it caused individuals, families and ultimately the nation to suffer from a lack of identity, commit suicide, or resort to terrorism. Regarding organisational changes, the individual's struggle

against the national indirectly voiced from the position of a silenced victim, was replaced by a powerful cinematic movement which openly talked about ongoing processes of victimisation within the realm of the national and confronted its audience with new narratives about Germany and themselves. This meant a face-to-face dialogue rather than a warning whisper from afar and, together with its growing critical acclaim abroad, ultimately shifted the culturally defining power from the national hegemonic centre to its margins. One could even say it lead to an over-representation of the self-proclaimed outsiders and their 'homelessness' as the *NGC* side of the national *Gegenöffentlichkeit* continued to grow. Thus, inner emigration was turned from a survival into a narrative strategy, again breaking down boundaries between life and film.

To complicate the picture of the *NGC* filmmakers as self-made social heroes, I want to briefly address the seldom-mentioned issue of the *NGC* filmmakers' class and family background. As Straub puts it in an interview at the time, 'we were privileged, coming from bourgeois families' (in Bronnen and Brocher, 1973: 35). Hence ironically, the West German middle-class provided their children with the economic and cultural capital to confront the national hegemonic realm of which they were a constituent part. Another *NGC* filmmaker, Werner Schroeter, illustrates this point by referring to his eighteen months of university studies and the start of his filmmaking, both of which were financially supported by his parents who also paid for his entire living expenses (ibid.: 157). Yet, instead of regarding that as a paradox, one could argue that while the second generation was creative and busy coming to terms with their parents' unresolved issues, the parents, due to qualms of conscience, felt that they somehow had to assist them, and if not ideologically, then at least in (seemingly neutral and invisible) monetary terms.

The West German state did the same. Having failed to initiate mourning work on a national level themselves, the government and its institutions, such as the Goethe Institute and the German embassies, promoted and actively invested in the *NGC*. In Elsaesser's words, *NGC* productions came to function as 'official representations, sanctioned and sponsored by a country that has had difficulties in profiling itself' (Elsaesser, 1989: 303). By doing so, the state and its representatives effectively removed their residual responsibilities to deal with national identity issues and passed them on to the filmmakers of the *NGC*, an agenda re-setting which lead to the displacement of the national question from the dominant public sphere to a smaller *Gegenöffentlichkeit*. As mentioned above, these politics in turn produced

ethical problems for the filmmakers who found themselves caught between state subsidies (which enabled them to live and work) and their counter-hegemonic filmmaking practice (which they engaged in to survive emotionally).

While touring America in the late 1970s, Herbert Achternbusch voiced his artistic/political discontent by saying that, 'every time we [he refers to Kluge and himself] make a film, [we] barely have the strength to pull away from the slimy embraces of all these forward-looking idiots' (in Elsaesser, 1989: 301). Regarding this very emotional statement by Achternbusch, one can argue that *NGC* filmmakers were desperately trying to protect themselves and their work from being seen or, even more problematic, becoming too closely articulated with the interests of the West German state. Consequently, as in this case, public appearances such as interviews were seized as welcome occasions to openly address the (apparent) contradiction between state sponsorship and subversive filmmaking, voicing discomfort with the situation and re-stating the ideological differences between *us/NGC* and *them/*the state.

What's the state of things, Wim?

These tensions between financial and pragmatic considerations, born out of the necessity to make a living and the aspirations to have a career, and one's organic intellectual/emotional integrity/survival, only achievable by remaining true to one's artistic and political principles, is exemplified in Wenders's *Der Stand der Dinge* (The State of Things, 1982)[58]. It is the story of Friedrich, a German émigré in Hollywood, who is struggling to complete the filming of his futuristic remake of *The Searchers*, which he is shooting in Portugal with American money and an American/European cast. He is out of stock, and waiting for further material slowly drives the actors and the supporting staff insane. Friedrich's wife and daughter are part of the crew, a fact, which, however, does not add a 'homing' touch to the set-up, since their family life is far from idyllic. Due to these personal and, as it appears, for him even more important filmic difficulties, Friedrich decides to fly to the office in Los Angeles. In order to keep his

[58] There are a number of *NGC* (self-)representations, productions with an autobiographical touch, or films with an artist at the centre of their story. These include Achternbusch's *Das Andechser Gefühl* (The Andechs Feeling, 1974 – the male protagonist is a poet played by the director himself), Helke Sander's *Die allseitig reduzierte Persönlichkeit – Redupers* (Redupers 1977 – the female protagonist is a photographer played by the director herself) or Wenders' *Falsche Bewegung* (Wrong Movement, 1974 – the main protagonist is a writer played by Wenders's alter ego Rüdiger Vogeler). However, *Der Stand der Dinge* is one of the few, if not indeed the only, *NGC* production which so entirely revolves around the figure of a film director and his/her work (a less typical example, which in fact is more of a humoresque, is Reinhard Münster's *Dorado/One Way* (1983)). In view of that, Wenders's film offers a rare (self-)representation of a symptomatic *NGC* filmmaker and his take on filmmaking, realised in an *NGC* film itself.

project alive, he needs to persuade his runaway cameraman Jo to come back to Portugal and get in touch with his producer Gordon who has supposedly left with the money. After talking to Jo who by then has clearly abandoned the project, Friedrich eventually gets hold of Gordon whom he finds living in a caravan, trying to escape from the people he owes money to. In this last scene or showdown between Gordon and Friedrich, the audience is presented with a heated discussion about different philosophies of filmmaking and the overall role of the filmmaker (linked to notions of film praxis). Yet despite moments of harmony and friendship, the passionate debate has a fatal ending which points to the irreconcilable differences between the German/European and the US-American film culture.

In what follows, I will investigate the different aspects of this, the film's central dialogue, paying attention to aesthetic and formal, as well as personal and political issues. Before I start, however, I want to analyse the narrative representation of Friedrich, the émigré German filmmaker, which is set apart from that of his US-American colleagues Jo and Gordon. This approach might offer certain insights into what Wenders believed to be the particulars of Friedrich's, and with him his own, (West) German national identity and how the latter corresponds to and/or manifests itself in their filmmaking. First, in a dialogue between Friedrich and his wife the audience learns that he is emotionally dead.

She: I don't understand your feelings.
He: To be honest, I don't have any.
She: Did you ever have any?
He: I don't have feelings. That's what people have always accused me of.

However, this rational self-description, according to which Friedrich claims to have no emotions whatsoever, is challenged by a dialogue in a later scene. Thus, in LA with Jo, he is talking about the film project when the discussion slips from an initially professional into a more personal mode:

Friedrich: What's going to happen with our film?
Jo: From the year dot. Dream a new dream. Come up with something else.
Friedrich: I have many dreams – nightmares…
Jo: Nightmares! Don't be scared.
Friedrich: It's already getting dark.

Here, Friedrich reveals to Jo that he suffers from angst-ridden dreams, either actually or metaphorically speaking. This confession indicates that it might not be feelings in general that he lacks but more specifically feelings of love. The incapability of enjoying intimacy with his

wife further renders Friedrich an essentially lonely character, unable to bond with an 'Other'. In this light, his family identity appears to be a rather insignificant one for him and is effectively outweighed by his identity as a German émigré. He says, 'there is no home for me anywhere – not in any city or country'. Thus, rather than through 'belonging' (to his wife and child) he defines himself through 'not belonging' (to his family, a city, or country). Having left/lost 'home' and not having found a new one, can be seen as the determining factor of Friedrich's 'being in the world', which is represented as centring on lack, loss and absences rather than positive aspects of well-being.

The only way he seems to be able to cope with his condition of (self-)abandonment is by screening his nightmares, which means to get them out of his head. In this respect, filmmaking is depicted as a valuable tool for working through one's personal/national traumas. And maybe that signifies the only, yet for Friedrich the, ultimate bonding experience – to share his nightmares about the world with an audience he believes is able to identify with his visions. It also links back to Herzog's statement about filmmaking: 'It's not only my dreams. My belief is that all these dreams... are yours as well. And the only distinction between you and me is that I can articulate them' (quoted from the 1995 programme notes of *Woyzeck/Heart of Glass*). This notion of film as being constitutive of a community of existentially 'homeless' (West) German émigrés abroad and, in inner emigration, at home leads me to the analysis of the showdown between Friedrich and Gordon in which further aspects of film(making) are addressed.

Gordon and Friedrich's re-examination of their (work) relationship starts with the former's fervent objection to Friedrich's black and white aesthetic. He argues that if he had produced the same film with an US-American director and an US-American cast in colour he would have been back on track in a few months. During what follows, 'black and white' comes to symbolise Friedrich's attitude to film which is existentialist regarding the subject matter and composition of the narrative, shows arthouse qualities and has political ambitions, is self-reflexive and demanding to watch, and is told in a deeply melancholic and past-oriented mode. Gordon further complains about Friedrich's sheer refusal to tell a conventional story. Friedrich in turn justifies his 'realist' (Gordon's term) approach by arguing that stories have too many rules, which ultimately renders them dead. Yet while he thinks that death is the greatest story of all, a dead story is the opposite of what he wants to achieve. Thus, he asks

'why walls' and calls for 'more space between the people', which, according to him, can carry the narrative, and, more importantly, keep it alive[59].

At first glance, his creative motto might be seen as an expression of a positive and liberating approach to life and its narration in film, while looked at more closely it seems to be rather strongly linked to Friedrich's problematic personal situation. In this sense, his films can be regarded as offering autobiographically inspired representations of people who are existentially lonely or out of touch with themselves and the world. In short, Friedrich's approach is in many ways representative of that of many *NGC* productions (as will be demonstrated in the various film analyses to follow in the three subsequent chapters) – even though it has to be noted that Wenders's tone has a self-ironic enunciation here.

In contrast to Friedrich, Gordon is largely depicted as a stereotypical US-American film boss (except for his caravan existence). As such, his position is one of 'colour', which means that he sees film as essentially being a tool for entertainment purposes. In accordance with that, he favours firmly grounded and well-crafted fiction, which is different to the audience's dreary everyday life stories. Not the representation of reality but distraction is what he calls for when he shouts at Friedrich 'fuck reality'. Dissatisfied with their artistic cooperation so far, he emphasizes a number of times that he initially asked Friedrich to make a popular film. He continues by stating that to him this task seemed straightforward and relatively easy to accomplish since they agreed to produce a re-make of the already popular Western *The Searchers*. However, through Friedrich's 'digging deep', as Gordon disparagingly remarks, the filmmaker in effect sabotaged the producer's prospects of being in a position to have an accessible and highly sellable film on his hands.

Having produced, as it appears, an unmarketable film is not only a financial disaster for Gordon (in the present) but also a high professional risk (with regard to future projects), since it might jeopardise his career in the film business. Furthermore, he is on the run (in the present and possibly in the future), living in a caravan instead of a more suitable, secure and comfortable accommodation. What is more, a caravan, being a mobile habitat, is the opposite of 'home', according to a later Wenders's comment on the notion of the American Dream: '"Mobile" is said with pride and means the opposite of "bogged down"... (or) "stuck".

[59] The open structure and anti-identification strategy, which are alluded to here, form the programmatic base for Kluge's film collages and other more experimental *NGC* narratives which will be closely analysed at the end of chapter four.

"Home" means "at home", "where you belong"... (whereas)... what *makes* make it a home in the German language is the fact that it's fixed somewhere' (1989: 144). Applying this quote by Wenders to his earlier depiction of Gordon living in a caravan, one has to conclude that the film producer is as 'homeless' as his German filmmaker friend – only in a 'dreamy' American way[60].

Friedrich's black and white and Gordon's colour attitude to film and life then become further defined in relation to one another. Hence Friedrich's increasingly evident inclination to death (as the greatest story), exemplified in his remark 'death is good', stands in striking contrast to Gordon's celebration of love, disclosed in his reply 'only love stories are even greater'. However, between love, which in some sense marks the beginning of life, and death, its irrevocable end, there is the struggle for survival, which both Friedrich and Gordon are heavily caught up in with regard to their personal and professional lives. In conjunction with this, their film *The Searchers* comes to serve as an allegory for Friedrich and Gordon's existential search for 'home' and themselves. More precisely, Friedrich's *The Searchers* features a group of people who in the face of death are struggling to survive but finally make it. The happy ending is marked by a child saying, 'now we have found a home'.

Yet, neither the German filmmaker nor the US-American producer survive th(eir) film. Quite the opposite, both men are shot as they embrace each other as friends, seemingly overcoming their artistic differences. Nevertheless, whereas Gordon simply dies, Friedrich, who at that moment is still alive, gets out his film camera and uses it against the attacker in self-defence: like a weapon or tool for survival. When he is shot soon after, the filmic device, rather than having secured his master's survival, demonstrates its superiority in relation to the filmmaker. It has outlived his reality as it will outlive any reality to come. In this respect, film here is doubly associated with death. First, embarking on the making of *The Searchers* ultimately led to Friedrich and Gordon's deaths. Secondly, the film outlives its makers (which it would have done in any case even if they had died a natural death years later). At the same time, the 'real' ending is not as pessimistic and diametrically opposed to its filmic version as it seems. Thus it does not necessarily confirm that Friedrich is right and death is greater than love. More appropriately, it shows that in this case there was an absence of love (between Friedrich and his wife as well as between him and Gordon), which made it easy for death to finish the(ir)

[60] This motif of living in a caravan as an expression of a character's existential 'homelessness', which is soon after followed by his death, was earlier explored by Herzog in his film *Stroszek* (1977) and will be analysed at the end of chapter three.

story. And then again, it was only in the moment of death that the 'homeless' Friedrich and Gordon, who where essentially out of touch, touched base and each other[61].

To conclude, Wenders's *The State of Things* is a film, which, although still produced under the label of the *NGC*, already looks back and critically reflects upon the movement and some of its key features. Made in 1982, the year of Fassbinder's death, which by some is regarded as marking the end point of the *NGC* (Rentschler in Jacobsen, Kaes and Prinzler, 1993: 286), it is a knowing and self-reflexive commentary. Thus, it is fully aware that Friedrich's idealism (which in many ways is the *NGC*'s own) has not succeeded in fulfilling self-defined, yet impossible tasks, such as building a 'home' without walls or, in the case of, for example, Syberberg and Kluge, enticing a mass audience through storytelling that has largely abandoned conventional narrative rules.

However, the film also shows affection for the huge effort, the considerable personal and professional risks, the overwhelming honesty and genuine concern with film and national matters, the will to change ways of narration and along with them people's 'being in the world', as well as other unique qualities that went into *NGC* productions. In the following chapters, I will, in a similar way to Wenders, adopt a critical as well as sympathetic stance towards the *NGC* films that I have chosen for further analysis. This approach seems appropriate due to the intellectual as well as emotive character of the colourful black-and-whiteness of the touching (self-)portrait these organically *in touch* and personally *out of touch* filmmakers paint of, in their opinion, the state of things (and people) in post-war West Germany.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored a range of contextual issues which are crucial in setting the scene for the following analysis of national identity constructions in West German film. I began by taking a close look at the post-war German society between 1945 and 1989. Here, I examined allied occupation, re-education and de-nazification policies which dominated German life in the immediate post-war years. In relation to that, I closely examined the deepening division between East and West Germany in physical as well as ideological terms

[61] The *NGC*'s complex portrayal of death as being a, in many ways, productive force/incident is thoroughly explored throughout the whole of chapter five.

which culminated in the erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961. After that, I moved on to pay particular attention to the core period of the *NGC* with the 1968 student movement, the APO, RAF terrorism and the German Autumn of 1977. Finally, I considered von Weizsäcker's speech in 1985, Habermas's concept of constitutional patriotism, and the historians' debate of 1986. Together these developments and events were then regarded as symptomatic efforts to come to terms with a national past played out in a variety of military, legal, educational, terrorist, political, intellectual/academic and (although in this section only hinted at) artistic terms. Yet despite the fact that these numerous attempts at *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* differ quite a lot on a formal level, at the core one finds the Holocaust and the German-German division whose memory and reality drove and dominated West Germany's sense of 'Self'.

Following on from this discussion of the wider social context, I turned to the examination of the complex relationship between the West German society and the *NGC*. At first, I explored Turner's relatively general notion of film as social practice and how it relates to the *NGC*'s critical praxis of filmmaking, before turning to Sieglohr's more specific account in which she describes the *NGC* as a public sphere. Nevertheless, only Negt and Kluge's concept of *Gegenöffentlichkeit* seemed to capture the social as well as the political aspects of *NGC* filmmaking adequately. The subsequent discussion of socio-political and cinematic changes within West Germany then illustrated this understanding of the *NGC* as pursuing cinematic renewal in the service of social changes, if not being the latter's avant-garde.

In the last section, I zoomed in on the *NGC* filmmakers themselves whom, using Gramsci, I conceptualised as organic intellectuals. More precisely, they can be regarded as organic to social change as well as to a generation and the people who do *not* 'belong'. From their expressive self-representation in writing (Syberberg) and as part of a documentary film about the *NGC* (Herzog and Wenders), one could gather that they regarded themselves as having inherited a difficult relationship with their national audience due to the Nazis' (mis)use of film. The investigation then shifted to the filmmakers' national estrangement as exemplified in Fassbinder, Herzog and Wenders's choice of non-German artistic parents. The notion of inner emigration was introduced to describe their national identity in terms of their self-proclaimed outsiderness in relation to post-war West Germany's national hegemonic realm. Wenders's commentary on 'the state of things' further illustrated this all-pervading sense of exile or 'homelessness' which he placed at the symbolic centre of *NGC* filmmaking.

This careful stocktaking of my contextual findings was important since it marks my point of departure and thus crucially prefigures the subsequent film analytical investigations. Starting with a chapter on place, followed by one on time and another one on sociality, West German national identity constructions will be explored from three distinctly different, yet at the same time closely linked, angles. I decided to begin with an analysis of place-related issues which functions as a foundation study for my overall investigation. In this way, chapter three establishes an analytical grid which is then complemented and extended by the following two chapters. Besides, the setting seemed like the obvious place to start.

PART TWO

Chapter Three

The Unsettling Setting

3.1 Conceptualisations of place and its relation to national identity issues

In the light of some of the recent globalisation debates and their respective theoretical frameworks, modern ways of life seem to be less spatially bound and borders more permeable due to increased global mobility and the ever-present electronic media. Concepts such as 'deterritorialisation' (Held et al 1999), 'space-time compression' (Harvey 1989) and 'mobility' in its various forms (Appadurai 1996) invoke a world of flux in which the individual is in transit. In contrast, these accounts of globalisation are challenged by other approaches which emphasize the prevailing significance of space by drawing attention to the process' inherent 'inequality' (Allen and Hamnett 1995), 'reterritorialisation' tendencies (Sassen 1998) which appear simultaneously with deterritorialisation, and the still widespread nationalism (Anderson 1991) as part of, or existing alongside, the globalisation process. Thus generally, it can be noted that the importance of space for people's 'being in the world' today is increasingly called into question.

However, with regard to this particular analysis the concept of place seems rather more appropriate than that of space because the former provides, unlike the purely geographical and mere abstract notion of space, a structure of feeling that corresponds with the significance of a particular location. This is not to overlook the political and economic layers involved in the construction of both space and place but to take an approach that privileges the social, the category on which I want to focus in the following. In relation to one another, 'place is space to which meaning has been ascribed' (Carter, Donald and Squires, 1993: xii). According to this definition, the realm of the national can most certainly be understood as a place since it is highly loaded with meaning, emotionally invested in by its inhabitants to the extent that a significant part of them – in the extreme case of war – would be prepared to die for it. And is not the latter the ultimate proof for the meaningfulness of an entity – the fact that under certain circumstances people would consider its existence more important than their own lives?

In moving from a general notion of place to its particular national version, it is necessary to ask what constitutes a national place and sets it apart from other kinds of place? Here I would like to suggest three basic elements, whose examination in relation to a range of films of the *NGC* will structure my analysis in this chapter: 1. the national place as such (or the national 'inside'), 2. national borders which mark its limits, distancing it from surrounding countries as well as give it its shape and position it on the map (the inter-national zone/threshold), and 3. other national entities, for example, neighbouring countries which impact upon the national 'inside' plus its borders (the national 'outside'). Yet in addition to these spatial concerns the notion of place contains an emotional dimension connected to the meaning that has been ascribed to particular places. For my analysis I conceptualise national places as complex sites of struggle over meaning, which can be seen as national symbols, sometimes in overlapping or conflictual ways. More precisely, I will examine 'senses of place', which in Gillian Rose's words describes 'the way people think and feel about places' (Rose in Massey and Jess, 1995: 88).

This understanding theorises places as partly constructed by certain people at a historically specific time by means of their imagination and emotional investment, which brings me to reflect upon the relationship between place and identity. Here it is again Rose who offers a useful framework to analyse place-related identifications (ibid.: 89-96). She distinguishes between 'identifying with a place' (which sees the place as symbolising qualities with which the individual or the community can positively associate), 'identifying against a place' (which describes the process of defining oneself as dependent upon a place one relates to negatively) and 'not identifying' (which renders place unimportant in terms of self-identification).

Before starting to analyse the sense of place which can be ascribed to (West) Germany, it is useful to briefly reconsider the distinction between 'Germany as a legal and political entity, a Reichsstaat, and Germany as a romantic ideal, a "Heimat"...' (Buruma in Morley and Robins, 1993: 14); the first Germany has resonances with notions of space in the way discussed at the beginning of this chapter and the second Germany refers to the meaning of the place called 'Germany'. Being concerned with the latter, I will proceed to take a closer look at *Heimat*[62], which has been a highly symbolic place in the German national imaginary for centuries. However, the concept does not easily translate into English. Therefore, let me start by examining the term's literal meaning. Historically its origins lie in the Indo-Germanic root

[62] For further discussions on the topic of *Heimat* (in film) see Boa and Palfreyman (2000) as well as Kaes (1989).

'kei' which means 'to lie' and 'to rest'. In the Germanic and the Gothic language the expression 'haims' can be linked to the terms 'village', 'place of living', or 'house', which correspond to the English 'home' and the German 'Heim'. Further to this, the suffix 'at' at the end of the term 'Heim*at*' supplements the idea of 'home' with a quality which can be described as 'security', 'belonging', and 'trust' (most often within the family circle). Family circle is a useful expression in this context as the idea of *Heimat*, in the words of Morley and Robins, is 'drenched in the longing for wholeness, unity, integrity. It is about community centred on shared traditions and memories' (Morley and Robins, 1993: 7)[63].

Interestingly, the words 'Heimat' and 'Heim' were widely used during the Germanic migrations (around 300BC, settling around 300 years later) whereas after the settlement of the different tribes the words' importance decreased (Westermann 1990). Thus it seems to me that the extensive use of the term 'Heimat' indicates a longing for it – marking a state of 'not yet'. In this sense *Heimat* has resonances of a felt nostalgia for a state of place that, conceivably, never was and, possibly, never will be. On a less emphatic level it describes the intense emotional attachment to the place one would feel as one's starting point in life, a place of birth, an origin to which one is strongly connected.

At the beginning of the 19th century, the hitherto rather local[64] connotations of the word 'Heimat' were expanded by the emerging Romantic Movement which linked it to ideas of *Volkstum* (national traditions, folklore) and *Naturlandschaft* (landscape). In the course of the 19th century, the term 'Heimat' became further nationalised through its growing use in countering (as a dualism) notions of *Fremde*: '...one of the crucial dimensions along which the term 'Heimat' is defined is by contrast to all that is foreign or distant' (Morley and Robins, 1993: 14). *Fremde* thus refers to a sense of distance or foreignness. Moreover, Germany's development from a primarily agricultural to an industrial society raised a new awareness of what *Heimat* could mean. In medieval times, within a relatively stable and static population, *Heimat* was not an issue. Only through industrial modernization with its increasing need for mobility within the workforce and the migration of workers from the countryside to the expanding cities did the term became more pertinent to the condition of the German people, especially those who were displaced from their families, villages and homes

[63] The social dimension of the concept of *Heimat* which becomes apparent here is absolutely crucial and thus will not be neglected but dealt with at greater length in chapter five.
[64] I mean by this that the term had a more 'private' meaning. It was understood at a local level rather than being linked to ideas of a national consciousness.

by the rise of industrial capitalism. In this regard, the use of the term 'Heimat' marks a loss or lack – a condition of, what one might call, 'not any more' or 'maybe never'.

It was in response to these changes that in 1890, the German Heimat Movement appeared. Dominated by the conservative middle-class it articulated a position that saw the protection of *Heimat* as the essential countermeasure against industrialism, internationalism and foreign cultural colonisation. The term became increasingly linked to the countryside and rural areas, which were praised for the rootedness of their inhabitants – that is the farm people who were still connected, emotionally and physically, to their land. Thus again, after having been shown to bear references to settlement and birthplace, *Heimat* was tied down, metaphorically speaking, and emphasized as a place fixed in space, an immobile entity that does not travel. The German forest, the mountains and the rurally imprinted countryside turned into important symbols of *Heimat*. At this point the landscape was seen as being *Heimat*, and *Heimat* as being equivalent to the nation. As a result of this development the large industrial cities, suffering from increasing pollution, overcrowding and the perceived modern and 'unnatural' ways of living encountered within them appeared to be the counter-image of *Heimat*.

During the Nazi era *Heimat* became part of the nationalist rhetoric of 'blood and soil' and in that sense 'Germanised'. It was propagated as a mythical place solely calling to Germans and inaccessible to foreigners, especially Jews. To put it rather crudely, images such as Aryan people in traditional costumes, singing and dancing (folklore) or working (preferably engaging in practices characteristic of rural areas) became typical representations of this dream of purity and were advertised in the media of the time. Thus *Heimat* acquired a racial and spatial exclusiveness, developing into a symbolic bond between Germans and their specific idea of 'home', which in other words meant, 'the murderous exclusion of anything "un-German"' (Morley and Robins, 1993: 17).

Finally in the 1970s[65] the concept of *Heimat* was revived by leftwing activists who used it to mobilise against the growing centralism and urbanism within post-war West Germany by referring to rural and ecological ways of life as an alternative. In the course of this 'back to roots' movement the concept of *Heimat* was politically redeployed and, as a result, made an apparently unproblematic ideological transition from the political right (under National

[65] The *Heimat* films of the 1950s, whose occurrence falls between the concept's appropriation by the Nazis and its revival in the 1970s, will be explored in the next section. Thus they contribute less to the ongoing theoretical reflections upon *Heimat* than they serve as cultural representations of it in the form of a popular film genre.

Socialism) to the political left. This shows how deeply rooted notions of *Heimat* still were within the post-war West German imagining. Thus they could be easily revitalised after their exploitation by the Nazis unlike so many other terms, concepts, practices etc. that due to their Nazi usage were (psychologically and practically) banned from being mentioned or performed in the post-war public sphere. It further suggests that *Heimat* occupies a central place in the construction of a German national consciousness and thus cannot be erased without a feared loss of identity. The seemingly apolitical perception and employment of the concept of *Heimat* within the political arena, which considering its Nazi appropriation and the number of critical debates in post-war West Germany is quite surprising, however may be symptomatic of this particular structure of feeling which will be subject to the following investigation.

To conclude, the different layers of *Heimat* derived from the concept's rich and complex history, together provide a web of multiple meanings some of which were still prevalent at the time of the *NGC* or remain even today. In the following film analyses I want to explore the ways in which certain film productions refer to, rework, problematise and challenge *Heimat* – the quintessential sense of the place called 'Germany'. Having established a theoretical framework for an analysis of symbolic places and their role in terms of national identity constructions, I will now turn to the specific case of my investigation: sense(s) of place – namely, West Germany between 1961 and 1989 – as expressed and represented in a range of *NGC* films. I will start with an examination of the national 'inside' by analysing (anti-)*Heimat* conceptions (largely to be found in a genre called anti- or new *Heimat* films[66]) under 3.2. This is followed by an investigation of border depictions (especially between the two Germanys) in section 3.3, and concluded by a look at national 'outsides' (in particular East Germany and America) in 3.4.

3.2 The national inside: re-thinking *Heimat*

Making a transition from theoretical reflections upon *Heimat* as a way of making sense of the place called 'Germany', I will now turn to an examination of its representation in cultural texts of the immediate post-war era in order to expose the ideological framework against which the productions of the *NGC* programmatically positioned themselves. The main focus of the subsequent investigation will then be to analyse some of the means employed by

[66] For an introduction to this genre see D. A. Schacht's PhD dissertation *Fluchtpunkt Provinz* (1991) in which he analyses some of the key anti-*Heimat* productions of the *NGC*.

filmmakers of the *NGC* to express a critical attitude towards the concept of *Heimat* as presented in *Heimat* films whereby it will be interesting to see whether or not the reworking of 'this traditionally reactionary genre' is possible and convincing (Morley and Robins, 1993: 10).

The *Heimat* film genre can be regarded as an intrinsically West German phenomenon of the reconstruction period, since in terms of production and reception figures it became the dominant feature film format of the 1950s FRG while at the same time not producing any interest abroad. Well-known examples are Hans Deppe's *Schwarzwaldmädel* (Black Forest Girl, 1950) and *Grün ist die Heide* (Green Is The Heath, 1951). Both films are, together with several other *Heimat* film productions, remakes of films from the 1930s. In the case of these two particular films, they refer back to productions made in 1933 and 1932 (Westermann, 1990: 157) – a fact which, apart from form and content, already indicates the rather backward-looking tendency of the *Heimat* film genre.

As far as the actual *Heimat* film setting is concerned, it is exclusively rural: small villages that are usually located within an archetypal German landscape – typically the Black Forest, the Lüneburg Heath, or the Alps. In *Schwarzwaldmädel* the Black Forest is presented in the vein of an enticing commercial. There is an extensive observation of nature, reflected in portrayals of (locally famous) black fir trees, blossoming cherry trees, gentle hills, enchanting valleys, flowers along the path, gurgling rivers, and sunlight shining through the trees. The impact of this is heightened by the fact that *Schwarzwaldmädel* was the first German colour film after WWII. *Grün ist die Heide* is, as the title already suggests, placed in a different natural environment – the Lüneburg Heath – but besides this geographical difference there are many similarities between the ways in which the setting is dealt with in both films. The depiction of both locations is artificially brightened: everything appears idyllic, tidy, pure and beautiful. The importance of landscape shots within these films becomes apparent through their frequency and wide takes. And to make the countryside even more appealing the city lurks in the background as a counter-place to the rural milieu.

Following the brief reference to two prime examples, the dramaturgic function of the setting in *Heimat* film productions can be described in this way: certain regions which in both the (West) German self-understanding and according to international perception are seen as 'typical German', are depicted as paradisal refuges. *Heimat* is portrayed as a desirable place

full of life and growth, harmonious relationships between humans and nature (care and protection), people's embeddedness in a traditional environment, warmth and light (it is always spring or summer in the films), birds singing and music in the background – altogether symbolising notions of wholeness, purity, happiness, fulfilment and peace.

An icy climate

In Achternbusch's films, such as *Das Andechser Gefühl* (The Andechs Feeling, 1974), *Die Atlantikschwimmer* (The Atlantic Swimmers, 1975) and *Servus Bayern* (Bye Bye Bavaria, 1977), the typical *Heimat* film format is radically under attack. In order to demonstrate this with regard to senses of place I have chosen to analyse a scene from *Servus Bayern* in which a Bavarian poet is interviewed by a TV journalist about his work, his regional identity and his 'glacier theory':

Journalist: Do you know Bavaria well?
Poet: In Bavaria, 60% of the population are anarchists and all of them vote for the CSU[67].
Journalist: Do you cope with being in Bavaria?
Poet: It is very cold in Bavaria. I have experienced a winter which lasted from 1945 to 1969 – my school years.
Journalist: I know your Bavarian glacier theory and if you were less successful I would say it was the figment of the imagination of a stay-at-home artist who cannot afford any fuel.
I will briefly explain this to the audience: In your opinion the whole of Bavaria is covered with snow and ice, or in other words, under a glacier. This means, metaphorically speaking, that the people of Bavaria have the kind of ice within themselves that lies in Greenland.
Poet: In Greenland there is more ice, however, not as much as here.
Journalist: To elaborate a bit further on your idea, I have to add that you regard this massive iceberg as being surrounded by a green belt, the so-called 'verge of life', on which you see yourself. Now my question: Is it possible that you understand this little about life because you cannot record any more on your memo pad? What do you do on this narrow verge except for writing books?
Poet: I offer resistance.
Journalist: With or without a weapon?
Poet: By hand.
(...)
Journalist: Have you never thought about emigrating?
Poet: This region has ruined me and I will stay until this becomes noticeable.
Journalist: *(Laughing)* This country never gives anything away.

[67] Christian Socialist Union (CSU): conservative party and Bavarian version of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU).

(...)

Poet: *(At the end of the film, the poet travels to Greenland and concludes)* That is the beauty of writing – breaking ice and melting ice. (Shortly after he is killed by a hunter who has followed him all the way from his hometown to Greenland.)

This short piece of dialogue is a rich cultural text and picks up on many of the themes that I will investigate in this section as well as throughout the following two chapters. However, I will focus here on issues of place which in the case of the above passage means to examine its most obvious and, at first sight, seemingly most dubious narrative element: the poet's 'glacier theory'. According to this surreal, sociological concept developed by the film's protagonist (played by Achternbusch himself), Bavaria and the majority of its people are – to put it rather crudely – frozen in space and time, as a result of ice age conditions in one of the two Southern parts of West Germany.

Obviously, this social theory is not to be taken literally but is meant as an allegory of the state of things in this particular county of the FRG which is often regarded as quintessentially German (especially from abroad). Its cold atmosphere, as proclaimed by the poet, makes it a place without life and natural growth, hostile to any kind of movement, progress or change. Furthermore, the icy climate might also be seen as referring to the emotional conditions of this very place, marking an absence of love and closeness between its people, which again alludes to a lack of warmth and communality. Thus Bavaria (and if seen as a *pars pro toto*, then the whole of Germany) is a frosty island of loneliness and, ultimately, death with no more than a narrow threshold of hope surrounding it, on which the poet positions himself. A change for the better can thus only come from the *outside* of the 'inside', the arts, since artistic production (and here specifically writing) is described as a proactive force, which, growing out of the heightened awareness of an outsider's position, offers the possibility for critique and peaceful resistance. From within society there seems to be no possibility for escape or change.

It is interesting also to note that the 24 years of winter, which the poet refers to as his school years (personal history), are at the same time the period between the end of the Second World War, 1945, and the second year of the student movement, 1969, (national history). Thus the immediate post-war era can be interpreted as a long-lasting phase of stagnation on many levels (political, cultural, social) with consequences for the individual as well as the nation, which was finally shaken ('the ice was broken') by the critical voices of students, intellectuals

and artists. In this case, 'ice' also has connotations of silence and concealment, which ends or hinders ongoing debate and dialogue and thus the development of new and further knowledge as well as understanding.

Finally, a glacier can also be seen as part of a natural disaster, the so-called 'ice age', heavily endangering all forms of life in the reach of its occurrence. Its common sense notion is that of an ever-increasing climate change in the course of which the temperature drops to a life-threatening degree and as a consequence wipes out a whole range of species. In the context of the above passage it is important to note that the metaphor of the glacier renders the state of Bavaria/West Germany a catastrophe brought about by destructive forces and thus implying that its condition is beyond the control of its inhabitants, since not even the roots of this misfortune seem to be fully known. This perception of a society being, metaphorically speaking, 'buried under a glacier' can be regarded as highly culturally pessimistic or even fatalistic. Nevertheless, this overt determinism stands in striking contrast to the idea of a 'verge of life' which presents a sense of place opposed to the one offered by the glacier allegory, because from the former the artist as an active agent and conscious of the problems of his society offers resistance and carves out a space for intervention, however much this is questioned by the journalist who ridicules his conception of writing as an oppositional means and implies that he has doubts as far as the actual societal knowledge of the poet is concerned. Thus the glacier/verge-of-life juxtaposition raises questions about social determinism versus agency by looking at the crucial relationship between the two key players: the individual and society.

In conclusion, while the dialogue displays a negative view of society it also stresses the creative power of the artist, and here specifically the writer, to influence, transform or even awaken society. The symbolism of this bears resemblance to the story of Sleeping Beauty who was condemned by a wicked fairy to sleep for many years until she was finally woken up by a knight who fought his way through and brought her back to life. Similarly, the glacier theory portrays society as a victim, which has been put in a deathlike position by evil forces and can only be rescued by a particular person, in this case an artist/writer/intellectual. However, unlike Sleeping Beauty Bavaria/West Germany (at least in this narrative version) is not as fortunate since its saviour is killed before the rescue could be completed. Another interesting detail is that the poet/potential rescuer is shot dead by a hunter, a representative of

narrow-minded provinciality and traditional culture as in *Heimat* film, who then preserves the status quo.

In effect, anti-*Heimat* elements such as death, winter/coldness, conflict, absence of love, ironic tone and surrealist inserts (for example, the glacier theory and the ending of the film), which are all spin-offs of the ice metaphor, contribute to the film's anti-*Heimat* sense of place epitomized in the deadly tension between the outsider hero and his anti-community. In this vein, they are key narrative devices of a *NGC* film whose overt complexity, self-reflexivity, social criticism and tragic ending stand in striking contrast to the formulaic, uncritical, and happy ending *Heimat* film productions. Furthermore, anti-*Heimat* mocks *Heimat* and turns it inside out by re-appropriating central elements of the popular post-war genre in order to offer a radically different perspective on the place called 'Germany' – so much so that the loyal *Heimat* film audience is left in a state of shock.

No feast for the ears

Another famous *NGC* production set in Bavaria/West Germany which can be classed as anti-*Heimat* (even though stylistically very different from Achternbusch's *Servus Bayern*) is Peter Fleischmann's *Jagdszenen aus Niederbayern* (Hunting Scenes from Lower Bavaria, 1968/9) which I will analyse in terms of sound. At first sight, this approach might seem quite unusual: examining senses of place via an investigation of filmic sound. However, in the case of this particular cultural text I want to argue that the specific use of, mainly, background sound and its relation to the visual dimension of the film can be seen as a key narrative strategy to create a complex anti-*Heimat* setting and with it an idea of what it might mean to live in a rural environment or, more specifically, in a little Bavarian village in West Germany in the 1960s.

Since the use and function of sound are quite significant right from the start I will in the following produce a soundscape from the first fifteen minutes of the film, which then allows for a further analysis of these sound images, paying special attention to anti-*Heimat* elements.

Audio[68]**:**organ play, singing of a hymn, (part of a) Catholic mass in Latin
Visual[69]**:**in a Catholic church: the priest, obedient village people repeating Latin expressions and phrases, violent biblical scenes on the wall of the church

[68] Acoustic dimension of the film
[69] Visual dimension of the film

Audio: ringing of church bells, hints of people talking but the sound of the church overpowers the individual voices
Visual: three men talking in front of the church

Audio: crying of a baby
Visual: in a living room: an old woman setting the table

Audio: (to the child in a demanding voice) 'Be quiet! Now, be quiet!'
Visual: half-hearted attempt to calm the child down, no affection

Audio: gossip and scornful laughter from many sites, exchanging of rumours
Visual: market place: people everywhere

Audio: (behind a woman's back) 'She doesn't have a sense of shame!'
Visual: hostility, people looking down on widow who did not keep to the supposed period of mourning after her husband died, treating her as an outsider

Audio: noise of a bus engine, big hello
Visual: arrival of a public bus at the market place, a 'forlorn son' (Abraham) returns

Audio: inquisitive questions and comments from everyone, however, only silence from his mother; he himself is relatively quiet, answers politely what he has been asked but actively only addresses her
Visual: like running the gauntlet: people forming a narrow walkway through which Abraham has to go in order to get to his mother who does not even look at him but more or less ignores his presence (looking the other way, pretending that she does not hear him); thus he is obviously disappointed and also a bit helpless

Audio: (a woman with a provocative voice implying the mother's complicity) 'Well, I guess you know where he's been?!'
Visual: the same woman goes off to hit her (probably) grandson who got his Sunday clothes dirty by riding a little children's cart and falling off

Audio: soft folk music with yodelling
Visual: in a pigsty: pigs laying on straw, urinating, playing, sniffing

Audio: exited screaming of pigs, young woman saying: 'Go on, go on!'
Visual: feeding time: the pigs are led to the trough, directed by the young woman using a wooden stick

Audio: sound of a tractor engine; people shouting because of the noise, still hardly audible; aggressive and impatient tone
Visual: preparation for the harvest on the farm of the mayor: workers (men, women and children) gathering, putting the engine together, faces shouting, aggressive and stressful atmosphere

Audio: gossip about Abraham (behind his back), child's crying, and again increasing tractor noise
Visual: the people who work in the fields climb into the wagon; a child has brought a frog and gets slapped for it

Audio: short and crude dialogue between Abraham and the young woman (Hannelore, another outsider), as she wants to know if he still likes her: unromantic tone of both voices

Visual: Hannelore climbs up to Abraham, talks to him, tries to kiss him but he pushes her away

Audio: demanding call of Hannelore's mother, folk music (instrumental), gabbling geese

Visual: Hannelore leaves Abraham to his work to follow the others to work in the fields

Audio: tractor noise, loud and demanding whistling, shouting

Visual: Hannelore climbs onto a tractor; men on a building site are trying to get her attention; hardworking people in the fields

Audio: gossip about Abraham, pressurising and inquisitive questioning of his mother who answers reluctantly, tractor noise, derisive laughter and the loud blast of a jet fighter

Visual: lunch in the fields: everyone is circling around Abraham's mother, eating, and mistreating Hannelore (men – provoking her, trying to get her drunk and kissing her; women – looking down on her or turning a blind eye)

Right from the start, the film disrupts the expectations and watching habits of an audience lured into thinking they are watching a *Heimat* film by the title *Jagdszenen aus Niederbayern* (Hunting Scenes from Lower Bavaria), implying a generic classic rather than the film's actual challenging critique.[70] The sequence starts with a religious scene, introducing the first sound images: organ playing, Latin murmur, singing of a hymn and ringing of church bells. In relation to these *over*-tones (in a hierarchical sense) individual *under*-tones are either not uttered (i.e. silence and ritualised language in the church) or mainly inaudible (e.g. the men's voices which are drowned by the church bells). All in all, this opening sequence of the film demonstrates the authoritarian character of the Catholic Church and its silencing effect on a rural community. This can be regarded as an anti-*Heimat* element since church depictions in *Heimat* film productions have a rather decorative and romanticising function, often serving as a background for wedding or Christening ceremonies.

Out of the constrained space of the church, the members of the community immediately enter the public sphere of the village: gossiping behind each other's back, exchanging rumours and laughing scornfully. Thus the 'outside', which is generally perceived as offering rather more

[70] Regarding the spectators' expectations, I gained some empirical data by asking a friend's parents to tape this film for me (I was in Britain when it was shown on German television in 2002). As both are passionate *Heimat* film fans, and misled by the title, they decided not only to tape the film for me but to watch it, too, being very surprised not to have heard about it ever before. However, after the first half of the film they switched off their TV and told my friend that I was probably mistaken in wanting a copy of this film as they saw it as being truly unpleasant and disturbing, in short: not a *Heimat* film at all.

breathing space than a claustrophobic 'inside', is portrayed as equally sealed off for the inhabitants of the village regarding their freedom of speech and behaviour. More precisely, through public interaction and dialogue, communal morals and values are enforced upon everyone and the people who do not conform are singled out (Abraham, the young widow, Hannelore). Therefore, the public space, rather than representing a harmonious 'we' as in a *Heimat* film, can be seen as deeply compartmentalised according to rigid social codes and rules, limiting the extent to which the individual can make sense of the place independently.

Even though, strictly speaking, the utterances mentioned above do not count as merely sound, I would like to make a case for considering them as 'noise'. Firstly, they are articulated in a very heavy Bavarian accent which sometimes, even for a German audience, is difficult to understand. Secondly, it can be argued that there are different qualities of language: if poetry is arguably the most elaborate form of linguistic expression comparable with classical music, then the gossip, rumours and scornful laughter in a Bavarian accent are, apart from swearing, some of the most simple and primitive[71] types of verbal communication, comparable to noise. Thirdly, these utterances have a silencing effect on the voices of outsiders and add a generally hostile tone to the setting of the film. Thus the function of language in this film stands in striking contrast to *Heimat* film productions in which high German is used to exchange kind words.

In addition to religion and the public space, the sphere of work is represented as noisy: there are farm noises such as the sound of tractors and other agricultural machines, screaming pigs, gabbling geese, and the shouting of the farm workers. Hence in opposition to the portrayal of country life in *Heimat* film as being romantic and leisurely, *Jagdszenen aus Niederbayern* highlights that hard physical work has a formative influence on people's lives in a village. Everyone takes part in the harvest in different ways: the men watch over the machines and do the work which requires the most physical strength; the women support the men and provide the food for meals in the fields; the children, depending on their age, help the women. Thus Fleischmann forcefully establishes the rural as a realm of labour, constitutive of specific forms of communality in which the individual is firmly positioned according to gender and age.

[71] This is not to be taken as a value judgement.

At the end of the soundscape a jet fighter emerges literally out of the blue (sky), its engine producing a loud blast and as a result overpowering all noises on earth, such as the ones coming from the machines, the shouting and so on. There are several ways of making sense of the jet fighter in the context of this narrative. To begin with, it can be seen as a metaphor for evil forces keeping humanity in check – a reading that bears resemblance to the previous analysis of the glacier. Furthermore, the jet fighter can be regarded as signifying the state's control over its citizens since this particular type of plane is part of a nation's air force (at least in the Western world at that time). Yet in the specific case of post-war West Germany it might also refer to the country's rearmament and therefore be a signifier of a reawakening of national pride and regained strength. Lastly, it is questionable whether it is actually a German jet fighter. It could be a British or American one as well, given that both countries maintained military forces in Germany (some even until today). If the latter is true, than the jet fighter indicates a prevailing allied hegemony over Germany's territory and people even 24 years after WWII, raising issues of national agency and independence. In any case, the jet fighter refers to higher forces, be it on a national, international or metaphysical level and as a consequence adds a second layer of control to the one on the ground, consisting of religion, work and social values, and leading to an over-regulation of the individual's life world.

At last, in contrast to all the noise described above there is also a remarkable silence as far as pleasant sounds like birds singing, joyful laughter or the utterance of fondness and devotion is concerned. Only folk music is used a few times in the background but more as an ironical citation than to depict traditional togetherness in a positive way. Thus different to the glacier theory discussed above, there is not even a verge of life, which surrounds the village and bears the possibility of change for the better. This ascribes to the rural community an antagonistic sense of place, which, by leaving no room for beauty and love, sets itself apart from the *Heimat* film version.

A hunting ground

In the following analysis I will investigate the displacement of one of the central characters of the *Heimat* film genre, the forester, by the figure of the hunter/poacher in another three typical anti-*Heimat* productions, Uwe Brandner's *Ich liebe dich, ich töte dich* (I Love you, I Kill You, 1971) Volker Vogeler's *Jaider – der einsame Jäger* (Jaider – The Lonely Hunter, 1971) and Reinhard Hauff's *Mathias Kneissl* (Mathias Kneissl, 1971). By doing so, I will focus on

the consequence of this figurative replacement and the respective characters' importance in perpetuating specific senses of place.

However, in order to set the scene let me first turn to a prime example of the *Heimat* film hero: the forester in *Grün ist die Heide*. Firmly positioned in a rural community, he is a mediator between the realm of nature and the social sphere, looking after the forest and its animals and protecting both (for example, from the poacher who in general is portrayed as a misguided loner) while at the same time acting according to the interest of the community of which he is part and to which the forest belongs. He is a civil servant with a good salary and a romantic little house in the forest, who controls, regulates and administers the wilderness (bearing resemblance to a civilising practice). In essence he is a caretaker and preserver who, far removed from the actual act of killing, enjoys being out in nature, watching 'his' animals. He shows respect for God's creation, be it an animal or a human being. His occupation is much more than a job for him: it can be seen as a way of life. In relation to his peaceful mission, his rifle seems to be no more than a decorative insignia of power, rather than an actual instrument for taking a creature's life.

In *Ich liebe dich, ich töte dich* the *Heimat* film saint is fundamentally challenged. To start with he is a hunter and not a forester which changes his relationship to nature in the sense that he is not a caretaker or preserver of the forest and its game but an active pursuer of a certain kind of animal, in this case wolves and wild dogs. Furthermore, he is not employed by the community but acts on his own behalf, representing individual freedom and independence instead of security and alliance to a larger social whole. Through the way he dresses (black leather jacket and appearing like a member of a motorcycle gang) he presents himself as a rebel, not wanting to belong to a community. Thus while the forester in *Heimat* film is associated with the realm of civilisation (society and culture), the hunter in this *NGC* production can be seen as part of the natural world (wilderness).

Another major difference between the two figures is that the forester's rifle only has an accessory character whereas the hunter actually uses his gun to hunt down and kill (first animals but then also humans), perpetuating an aura of aggression and violence instead of peace and harmony. Besides, the hunter kills for money as the mayor pays him for every

wolf/wild dog he shoots and brings to his doorstep[72]. Hence the forest is no longer portrayed as a realm of peace (inhabited by deer) but of menace (it is the home of wild dogs/wolves) in which the hunter is the biggest beast of prey (or the wolf of the wolves). At the end of the film, a poacher is captured and executed by two policemen in front of the mayor's house whereupon the hunter shoots both guardians of the law – a situation which marks a societal shift from civilisation to nature since civilised means of communication and interaction are left behind by the use of overt violence. More precisely, this killing of first the outlaw and then the representatives of law and order can be read as indicative of a state in which nature prevails over civilisation.

In *Jaider – der einsame Jäger* (a historical narrative set in the late 19th century and based on documentary material) the character in question is not even a hunter but a poacher, the very figure usually opposed to the forester in *Heimat* film productions. Still, he is called 'the lonely hunter', inviting the audience to sympathise and identify with him. To further add to the complexity and ambiguity of this figure, Jaider has not always been an outlaw but once was a well-integrated member of society, working for the establishment. More precisely, he was a soldier as is revealed in a dialogue between the local earl and one of his colonel's during the opening sequence:

> **Colonel:** I've heard he [Jaider] has never missed so far.
> **Earl:** We ourselves have trained him as a sharpshooter in the military.
> **Colonel:** Did he serve?
> **Earl:** Yes, he served within my regiment. He was present at Versailles. There he went for the peasants who shot from behind at us. He got decorations and medals for that. But he never pinned them on…

A few minutes later we learn that after the war against France he turned down the job of the county hunter offered to him by the local earl. Hence Jaider can be seen as someone who made a transition from following the command of the ruling class by being his country's defender in times of war (positively identifying with his country), to being an outlaw, opposed to the very aristocracy he served before (identifying against his country). In other words, he moved between different social and geographical spheres – from an insider *outside* to an outsider *inside* – alluding to different senses of place which changed over time, highly influenced by transformations regarding the relationship between the individual and society.

[72] Although one could argue that by doing so he also secures the community, this is clearly more of a by-product than an end in itself as far as the hunter is concerned.

Jaider's loneliness which bears resemblance to notions of 'homelessness' is not a marker of his victimhood but instead the result of his rejection of working for the establishment, making him an active agent similar to the hunter in *Ich liebe dich, ich töte dich*, although even slightly more independent since Jaider completely breaks off his bond with society. Together with his comrades (other outlaws) he is hiding in the forest, which provides shelter, food and refuge and hence functions as a replacement for society. His leaving of the social sphere for being part of a natural anti-world can be interpreted as the decision of a disappointed insider choosing wilderness over civilisation[73].

Thus in several ways, *Jaider – der einsame Jäger* moves beyond *Ich liebe dich, ich töte dich.* While poacher and police are killed in the last scene of the latter film, in narrative terms marking a solution to the plot and hence closure, 'hunting humans' can be seen as the pretext (or even subtext) of the first production since it is a general theme throughout the film (Jaider pursues and is at the same time pursued by the earl's hunter). Jaider is portrayed not only as a hunter/poacher but also as a killer who at first shot people in the name of his country, then proceeded to shoot game and, as outcome of the final showdown, kills the hunter for personal reasons – an analogy which aligns again national and individual issues. All in all, Jaider can be seen as a preliminary terrorist, using killing as a means of expressing his feelings towards the state: patriotism (as a soldier) and hate (as an outlaw).

Finally, making Jaider (a hunter/poacher and killer) the viewpoint character with whom the audience is meant to identify instead of the earl's hunter, Jaider's opponent, who in the end is even killed by him, indicates a redefinition of the main *Heimat* film protagonists. The effect of this narrative strategy is the production of senses of place which are radically different to the ones of its generic counterpart. Instead of a harmonious social whole, notions of a deeply divided and deadly zone of conflict are advocated, within which the rebel successfully overcomes institutionalised power.

The third anti-*Heimat* character (modelled after a historical figure from the late 19th century), *Mathias Kneissl*, is a poacher who also commits crimes such as robbery and theft. In opposition to the hunter in *Ich liebe dich, ich töte dich* and the hunter/poacher in *Jaider – der einsame Jäger*, he never actively chose to be an outlaw but was more or less forced into the

[73] This change of mind and allegiance lies in the narrative's past and belongs to a time which is not covered by the film. Hence, one can only speculate about Jaider's reasons for going into, as one might put it, self-prescribed exile.

role of the criminal/outsider by poverty and unfortunate circumstances. However, although he is an outlaw he is not as lonely as Jaider since large parts of the region's population openly sympathise with him and his situation. Moreover, they actively help him to survive in the social and geographical no-man's-land he is compelled to inhabit, by providing him with food and shelter.

Increasingly, during the course of the film, he becomes a local celebrity and an identification figure for the poverty-stricken rural community, well-respected by men and adored by women. This affectionate appreciation goes as far as people risking their own lives, lying to, and hiding him from, the police, fervently voicing their approval of him and his (although illegal) actions in public. Hence his presence as an outlaw induces chaos and upheaval in the previously stable feudal structures. However, none of these developments are actively caused or led by him. More exactly, he functions on the one hand as a 'screen' onto which people's dreams and aspirations are projected and on the other as a catalyst for their anger and criticism regarding the politics and, questionable, ethics of the ruling class. As a result, their stylisation of him as a Robin Hood like fighter for justice and rights empowers them and opens up potential spaces for resistance and agency while at the same time leaving no space for him to make decisions himself. In this respect, *Mathias Kneissl* lacks the agency and independence of the two protagonists in *Ich liebe dich, ich töte dich* or *Jaider – der einsame Jäger*. Rather he can be regarded as doubly victimized: the aristocracy pursues him for committing crimes as well as challenging the social order, and the rural public appropriates him for their political aims.

In the end, his lack of agency and autonomy renders him relatively powerless, especially as he cannot fully identify with the project of the socially deprived who made him their hero. Effectively, this weak bond between corresponding marginal forces leaves the social hierarchy untouched. In contrast to the above two figures *Mathias Kneissl* is caught by the police, put in prison and finally sentenced to death while civil unrest dies out. However, whereas in *Heimat* films the capturing of a poacher is usually part of a happy ending since it comfortingly restores the social order of the film along with reassuring the audience's value system (good wins against evil), in the case of this film the audience is left with a feeling of anger and unease as the social conflict – the driving force of the film – could not be resolved. Finally, *Mathias Kneissl* is represented as a partial victim of wider social structures and not as a disturbed and isolated individual (the stereotypical portrayal of a *Heimat* film poacher)

which makes social problems appear a lot more complex than in *Heimat* film productions and thus impossible to solve by only eliminating one key player.

Leaving to never return

As a consequence of the inviting portrayal of spatial components within *Heimat* films, its settings function as a means of integration and attraction. For example, in the case of *Grün ist die Heide*, a Silesian refugee and his daughter come to stay with relatives in West Germany having lost all their possessions as a result of WWII. Although at first a range of conflicts arise, especially surrounding the figure of the father who suffers from an existential 'homelessness' on various levels, the friendly village people and their fairytale landscape eventually succeed in making the foreigners feel 'at home' again, transforming them into completely assimilated members of their rural community.

In contrast to these positive senses of place perpetuated in *Heimat* film productions the redefinition of the same socio-geographical sphere in considerably negative terms in anti-*Heimat* accounts, as analysed above, causes a change in function regarding these narrative elements. Thus, rather than representing traditional, rural places as having a vitalising, homogenising and stabilising effect, anti-*Heimat* films show them as being paralysing and numbing (*Servus Bayern*), ugly and claustrophobic (*Jagdszenen aus Niederbayern*), de-civilising and ultimately deadly (*Ich liebe dich, ich töte dich*, *Jaider – der einsame Jäger*, *Mathias Kneissl*). Consequently, these different but altogether unappealing qualities of provinciality lead in a range of films to dreams and acts of leaving 'hellish' home.

In Schlöndorff's historical anti-*Heimat* ballad *Der plötzliche Reichtum der armen Leute von Kombach* (The Sudden Wealth of the Poor People of Kombach, 1970), based on an authentic record of a court case in 1825, a group of peasants and day labourers together with a hosiery hawker, plan and carry out a robbery of a weekly money transport to sustain themselves and their families. They are former serfs who in Hessen, a mid-western county of Germany, were set free and allowed to own land after 1820. Yet poverty, as well as a lack of education and orientation, have a decisive influence on their new lives and make them again highly dependent on their local prince. As a result they all dream of emigrating to America, a faraway country they know little about[74]. Nevertheless, they imagine it to be 'the land where

[74] The same narrative pattern can also be found in *Mathias Kneissl*.

milk and honey flows' and where they could be free at last. To contextualise their plans and motivation, a voiceover tells the audience that, in the 19th century, ten percent of Hessen's population left their homeland for their country of dreams, making rather vague but positive senses of place seem more worthwhile to actively invest in than the life-threatening actuality of one's birthplace.

However, although the group's robbery is successful their ultimate plan fails. They are found out by the police since, being poor and highly dependent, they are unable to hide the money. Only the hosiery hawker escapes the punishment, a fact which he himself justifies by saying that whereas the peasants are bound to their land and thus to their country and its leader, he himself is free and can take his possessions wherever he likes: money and freedom travel but not soil and attachments. In this respect, the socio-geographical outsider has a massive advantage over his associates who are too intertwined with the feudal system and its spatial manifestations to get away unnoticed. His relative 'homelessness' can therefore be seen as a privilege because it provides him with the opportunity to leave the seemingly futureless Germany for its counterpart, America, the embodiment of the future.

To conclude, the film seems to suggest that the only way to survive a hostile society is to be an outsider like the hosiery hawker who, disassociated from soil and the ruling class, can move freely. He is the only survivor, since everyone else involved in the robbery either commits suicide or is sentenced to death. Thus the issue of this film is not 'belonging' but the desperate attempt to disconnect from the so-called 'home' as a means of survival. However, the relative failure to do so reveals to what extent the place holds sway over its inhabitants making it nearly impossible for them to disengage.

Reitz's *Heimat* series (1984) shows fewer anti-*Heimat* qualities than the films discussed so far, and thus it would be more appropriate to class it as a *critical Heimat* film production. It is set in the Hunsrück region, the poorest area in (West) Germany, between the end of the First World War and the beginning of the 1980s. In the course of the eleven part series, two of the male protagonists leave (at different times and for different reasons) Schabbach, their rural birthplace and the film's so-called *Heimat*.

In the first episode, Paul, the son of the blacksmith, returns from the First World War, which implies his earlier leaving of the village (probably not voluntarily) to serve his country as a

soldier in France, a choice that was made *for* him. Being a very sensitive and aware young man, this experience leaves him traumatised and unable to completely reintegrate. Thus although he physically comes 'home' his mind seems to wander off at times. During the following years he is the first in Schabbach to heavily engage with the new communication technologies, i.e. radio and gramophone (which can be seen as means of emigrating in one's mind). On the surface, he gives the impression of being 'at home' with himself (he starts a family with Maria) but then at some point recognises his existential 'homelessness' by suddenly leaving the village for America, without saying goodbye and looking back. He seems to feel the need to completely break off his bond with Schabbach since for him *Heimat* as a sense of place does not make sense any more. In other words, he realises that being 'homeless' *at home* is more painful than being 'homeless' *in the Fremde* where 'homelessness' makes sense and, seemingly paradoxically, 'belongs'.

His first effort to revisit the *Heimat* he left behind is frustrated by the outbreak of the Second World War. His second attempt in the 1970s is more successful. He arrives in Schabbach with a big American car and his black driver. However, coming back from America is rather different from his earlier return as a soldier. Whereas the first time he was welcomed back as a full member of the rural community, the second time he is constantly referred to as 'the American', an expression which clearly renders him an outsider. He is associated with his new country of residence, which was part of the alliance that fought and won against Nazi Germany and, after the Second World War, became a wealthy superpower which every nation tried to emulate. This shows that his family and the other village people see his past decision to leave Schabbach for a life in the US as a betrayal of their idea of *Heimat*. They avoid asking why he went and thus protect themselves against any kind of criticism regarding their own position or their beloved *Heimat* ideal. Calling him a foreigner, someone who does not know what things were/are like, they secure their powerful position of being insiders, disguising their ignorance as expertise.

Hermann, Maria's youngest son, leaves the village in the 1960s to become a professional musician in Munich. In many ways Hermann's escape from provinciality seems to have a similar motivation to Paul's. Like Paul, Hermann does not feel 'at home' in Schabbach any more (although for different reasons). His first love, for an older woman (Klärchen, a refugee who never fully integrated and eventually left Schabbach again) was thwarted by the people's narrow-mindedness; and the musical career he aspires to is only possible in the city. Thus,

neither on an emotional nor professional level is there a future for him in the village. In response, Hermann, like his father, realises one day that he has become an outsider in his most intimate surroundings, the place he calls *Heimat*. Similar to his father before him, Hermann finally recognises this change of state he is in by consequently moving on, which means moving away.

However, both also keep in touch with Schabbach and return to the place sooner or later, although only for visits or short stays. Their subsequent in-between role in relation to *Heimat* marks a state of 'not belonging', even though they are not foreigners either. This condition is less chosen but rather attributed to Paul and Hermann after they leave Schabbach, since the disapproving rural community (as a kind of revenge) reacts with exclusion. For future visits their role is limited to that of guests or half-foreigners, indicating that they will never fully belong again. Once *Heimat* is lost, it seems, there is no return possible (Reitz in Morley and Robins, 1993: 7). This marks an interesting change of function regarding the concept of *Heimat* and the place it refers to in the course of these characters lives. For the person who leaves, *Heimat* as a central place in one's lived experience becomes a memorial place.

This relationship between the individual and his/her *Heimat* to some extent bears resemblance to Plato's *Myth of the Cave* (though admittedly exaggerated) with *Heimat* being the cave with its prisoners and shadows. Even though in contact with the outside world through modern communication technology, Schabbach is still a highly self-contained world of its own, exercising a great deal of power over its inhabitants. However, a few individuals are able to free themselves from the chains of provinciality. They leave their *Heimat* for the city or even another country and get to know the world outside. Coming back to tell the people in Schabbach about their experiences away from 'home' they are hardly listened to because leaving *Heimat* is more than leaving a place. It means leaving behind a certain uncritical naivety about its constitutive elements as well. Thus the 'home'-comer is always a threat to the ones who stayed on/*behind*, embodying alternative but not recognised ways of life and the possibility of leaving.

Finally, there are also parallels with Achternbusch's social model. Similar to his poet who resides on a verge of life surrounding Bavaria, Paul and Hermann, the characters who are portrayed as the most perceptive and creative ones in the village, eventually leave Schabbach as they feel stuck and too restricted in the way they lead their lives there. Metaphorically

speaking, America and the city function as their 'greenbelts'. Thus both, Achternbusch and Reitz, position the artist or intellectual outside of, but nevertheless touching on, *Heimat*, trying to penetrate this seemingly hermetic sphere.

3.3 The border, the in-between space: division and fragmentation

Surprisingly (or maybe not), there are very few *NGC* films between 1961 (the year of the 'cementation' of the German-German border in the form of the Berlin Wall) and 1989 (the year of the German reunification) that deal with depictions of the border between East and West Germany. In the relevant literature this topical neglect is met by a virtual non-existence of book chapters or articles on border issues. Even the work of acclaimed film experts and critics such as Elsaesser (1989), Corrigan (1994), Kaes (1989), Hake (2002), Pflaum and Prinzler (1992), Sandford (1980), Franklin (1983) and Phillips (1984) does not address but instead adds to this 'eloquent' silence by not fully acknowledging the few films which do provide a problematisation of separation, border, and above all, the Berlin Wall. If border issues are mentioned at all they are usually referred to in passing, as for example in Elsaesser's account: 'In the films that deal with borders and border-crossings, with journeys, exiles and exotic adventures, with America in Europe, or with a divided Germany, historical traumas are never far away' (1989: 216).

This quotation, which in the book leads on to a discussion around symptomatic individuals and their relationship to the post-war West German society, strikingly illustrates how the by-passing of border issues is articulated with deep-seated 'historical traumas' or, in other words, the overpowering past one has not yet come to terms with. Hence, most *NGC* films and the literature surrounding them are still largely dominated by Holocaust-related issues[75]. As a result, the narration of the German-German border or the Berlin Wall which problematises the complex past-present relationship between post-war West Germany, its Nazi predecessor and the Allied Forces is not given much scope. Pflaum and Prinzler (1992) speculate that the relative lack of border representations might be due to the Cold War situation within which neither East nor West Germany dared to upset either side of the Iron Curtain. Ironically, the

[75] The issue of an almost unanimous Holocaust focus in contemporary film and academic work concerned with questions of West German national identity links back to the historical discussion at the beginning of the last chapter. There I argued that a German post-war sense of self had to be seen as shaped by the combined experience of a Nazi past and a divided present, or rather the rejection of both.

authors exacerbate this absence by only providing rather brief plot summaries of a couple of films alongside a few short references to others productions.

In the following section, this thematic absence is addressed by examining three symptomatic, yet relatively neglected 'border narratives'. Made in the late 1970s and early 1980s, they provide a complex treatment of the topic of separation, border, and the Berlin Wall, placing the German division at the core of their story. This is to say that the Berlin Wall and the German-German border are the anti-*Heimat* elements which I will focus on in this section (as opposed to the centrality of wholeness in *Heimat* films). I have chosen Niklaus Schilling's *Der Willi Busch Report* (The Willi Busch Report, 1979), Helke Sander's *Die allseitig reduzierte Persönlichkeit – Redupers* (Redupers, 1977)[76], and Reinhard Hauff's *Der Mann auf der Mauer* (The Man on the Wall, 1982). Analysing the films in the above order will lead the investigation gradually closer to the element in question and thus to the evaluation of its significance for the post-war West German context: from being *close*, then *at*, to finally *on* the Berlin Wall/border.

Periphery takes centre stage

In contrast to most of the *NGC* films, Schilling's *Der Willi Busch Report* (The Willi Busch Report, 1979) is an ironic humoresque about a small town close to the German border (Friedheim in Hessen), the role of the local newspaper (*Werra-Post*) and the never-ending efforts of a publishing family to sustain the paper and with it themselves (Adelheid and Wilhelm Busch – brother and sister). Right at the start a skilful collage with voiceover is presented to establish the film's geo-political context and link world politics and individual existence as follows[77]:

> **Global level:** *(documentary material in black and white)* There are Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin in Yalta in February 1945. During the conference of Yalta they discussed what to do with Germany after its defeat. They did not reach an agreement, but all three

[76] From the two *NGC* films set in Berlin and concerned with border issues Sander's *Die allseitig reduzierte Persönlichkeit – Redupers* (Redupers, 1977) was chosen in favour of Wenders's *Der Himmel über Berlin* (Wings of Desire, 1987) for two reasons. First, it adds a crucial female perspective to the investigation of the *NGC*'s border politics. Secondly, Wender's famous film has been the object of so many analyses (see, for example, Bromley 2001) that it seemed more appropriate to include a less known, yet in terms of this discussion at least equally valuable film.

[77] The bold headings and the italicised descriptions of the visual dimension of the film in brackets are not part of the voiceover but structuring and analytical devices inserted by the author.

were heavily convinced that Germany would have to be split into various parts in order to provide for the future.

European level: *(a European map is cut into two with a pair of scissors)* Very soon after the end of the war a strange line grew dividing the middle of Europe.

National level: *(the actual feature film footage starts with the portrayal of the German-German border)* A border that became increasingly impenetrable by the day shoved certain villages and cities of a country from its centre to its remotest periphery.

Personal level: *(the camera circles around a male figure dozing in the grass)* And that is Wilhelm Busch.
(...)

Economic level: *(the camera continues to be on the protagonist)* With the birth of little Willi a slow decline of the *Werra-Post* began. Although Herman Busch (Willi's father) managed to manoeuvre his paper with great effort through National Socialism and the war, he soon had to realise that this new border, which was literally on his doorstep, had cut him off from two thirds of his market.

Local level: As a result, the once lively Friedheim turned into an eventless provincial town.

This initial commentary shows how distant political decisions (conference in Yalta) between three men (Churchill, Stalin and Roosevelt) can shape the character of a whole continent (Europe), which again affects the condition of the nation-states belonging to it and (especially in the case of Germany) their inner structure down to the level of towns (Friedheim) and finally the everyday life of their inhabitants (Willi Busch and his *Werra-Post*). In this respect the filmmaker proposes a direct line between Yalta and Friedheim, Churchill/Stalin/Roosevelt and Willi Busch, the conference of Yalta and the economic position of the *Werra-Post*. Thus, place is conceptualised as the effect and representation of a complex network of power relations (with the primacy of the political), which interact on different levels. The voiceover relates distant places, people and events to each other, reveals hidden links and asks the question of centre and periphery within a world portrayed as governed by leading states*men*. In view of the latter, these opening comments stress the constructedness of place according to geo-strategic considerations, which in the Friedheim example move a town from the core to the margins of its national frame of reference. In conclusion the opening sequence of the film suggests that a sense of place is not static but dependent on political decisions and alliances which change over time.

The rest of the film explores the relationship between a decisive change of a sense of place occurring in West Germany in the aftermath of WWII – from being centred around wholeness (pre-war) to imaginations which focus on notions of border and division (post-war, Cold War)

– and its appropriation by the media/Willi in the case of the *Werra-Post*/Friedheim. Hence the plot evolves around the co-dependency of a place and its media representation in the following way. Given that a local newspaper is only as interesting and significant as its place of production, Willi desperately tries to simultaneously transform Friedheim's sense of place and improve the situation of the *Werra-Post*. His strategy is to (literally) create media events in an eventless provincial town so that he can fill his paper with sensational stories, which will then attract more readers and thus help to sell it. In other words, he strives for a re-centralisation of peripheralised Friedheim by means of media representation to effectively strengthen the position of the *Werra-Post*.

At first, Willi claims that there is a five year old girl in Friedheim who is able to predict the future in general and German reunification in particular. Secondly, when an old friend and former colleague of his unexpectedly dies of a heart attack in his hotel room, Willi blows up the harmless incident into a spy affair. Shortly after, another two deaths follow (a dentist and Willi's gardener) and things become a lot rougher and city-like in Friedheim. Eventually, Friedheim makes it into the headlines of the big national newspapers and thus moves to the centre of the media's interest, becoming renowned as 'the nest of spies'. With its various spectacles the town then increasingly turns into a media site attracting eight buses every day, which carry pilgrims to the child prodigy. As a result, the *Werra-Post* comes out daily instead of three times a week due to a dramatic increase in its print run.

This main part of the film can be regarded as problematising and elaborating the political framework outlined in the opening sequence. The Second World War and its consequences have a decentring effect on Friedheim's post-war sense of place, which Willi tries to subvert for personal reasons, although with decisive side-effects. However, his resistance and agency in this film are restricted to an initial 'invention of traditions' since the media and tourist industry soon take over and the narratives take on a life of their own. Still, he (in his role as a local journalist) is the catalyst, facilitating the emergence of a new sense of place. During the process of changing Friedheims's image through the creation of spies and fortune-tellers as a means of reviving its inhabitant's interest in their hometown, not only his newspaper profits. Also the place as such, which is geographically marginalized, moves into the centre of media attention. This re-centring of Friedheim, however, is only possible as border and division can be seen as indispensable elements of a post-war German sense of place. More precisely, the Friedheim case functions as an example of a shift in self-narration after the division of

Germany which can be called 'the (re-)centring of the peripheral'. Thus world politics at first had a marginalizing effect on Friedheim's sense of place, before notions of border became central to post-war Germany's sense of place, subsequently providing the town with the opportunity to regain significance in the regional, as well as the national, imaginary through the production of border narratives.

Regarding the portrayal of the German-German border there are constant visual and verbal references to it. The mayor of Friedheim, for example, apologises for his town in advance when a new teacher arrives by saying, 'we are a bit remote here'. Willi's girl-friend shouts full of anger: 'bloody fence! I can't stand the sight of it any longer!' Quite the opposite, Willi hardly talks about or even mentions the border but instead constantly gazes at it through his binoculars. In this respect, the border can be seen as fetishized with Willi permanently observing what happens on the other side. Considering Mulvey's concept of the 'male gaze' (1988) the East (GDR) is thus feminised and objectified[78] – which explains why Willi's girl-friend reacts so furiously at the sight of it.

Hence the 'fence' is not only a cut-off-point, a dividing line or a negating factor but also productive in the sense of arousing one's imagination and curiosity. The border says 'no' and 'yes' at the same time. It says 'no' on a spatial level, peripheralising Friedheim's geo-political position and de-centring it within a national context. It says 'yes' on a narrational level since it serves as a pretext for reunification dreams and spy stories, which, articulated by the *Werra-Post*, draw on existing Cold War narratives that circulate within post-war Germany at that time. The latter appropriation of discursively available senses of place whose key component or symbolic centre is the border re-centres Friedheim as a representation of typical lived experience within the FRG.

Finally the narrative can be divided into three temporal spatialities, which refer to different senses of place: 1. The pre-war period – it constructs a pre-history for the narrative, which

[78] This theme reappears in Hauff's *Der Mann auf der Mauer* where it is broadened, however, to incorporate an objectified and feminised view of both East and West Germany, depending upon the relative perspective of the protagonist at the time, as he constantly crosses the border. In addition, it can be seen in Wenders's *Der Himmel über Berlin*, where the Berlin Wall can be read as a border between the spiritual life of Bruno Ganz's angel and the earthly existence of the woman he silently observes then falls in love with. Here her character can be seen as the traditional (or biblical) female paradigm, in which feminine virtues are earthly, physical and thus sexualised. This being in opposition to the masculine and spiritual character of the angel.

involves the representation of Friedheim as being a central place, full of life and confidently rooted in a geo-political framework. 2. The immediate post-war period up to the beginning of the film – through spatial changes within Germany, Friedheim is peripheralised, leading to the place's decline in terms of significance. It becomes ruralised and eventless and thus effectively lacks narratives to tell about itself. It becomes a non-place. 3. The time period of the film – Willi's activities result in Friedheim's repositioning in the centre of the national imaginary: the periphery takes centre stage. The town is increasingly urbanised, eventful and mediatised.

In effect, the two processes responsible for shifts in Friedheim's sense of place are *peripheralising* and *re-centring*. Thus alongside the anti-*Heimat* element of the border, the film offers a second spatial component which is anti- in relation to notions of *Heimat* since it simply does not exist in conventional *Heimat* narratives: the periphery. Whereas *Heimat* films are merely concerned with wholeness and the German 'inside', border narratives take division and fragmentation into account which – again in relation to *Heimat* films – has a considerably de-romanticising effect. Still, the girl's reunification forecast refers to rather hidden but still available and active dreams and desires for wholeness and *Heimat*.

An art(ificial) wall

With Sander's film *Die allseitig reduzierte Persönlichkeit – Redupers*[79] (Redupers, 1977) my analysis of West German border narratives moves to Berlin, the city which was divided by the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961. It is a story about a West Berlin photographer, Edda Chiemnyjewski, who juggles single-motherhood, a demanding job and her involvement in a communal arts project. Being a member of a women's group of photographers she combines her rather private and individual artistic production with forms of cooperative political commitment in general and feminism in particular.

Starting off with a drive through the city and alongside the wall with its graffiti, the film first shows the Berlin Wall as an indispensable component of the protagonist's everyday life experiences in this particular part of West Germany which happens to be situated in the Eastern part of the country – isolated like an island. In this respect, the wall is a constant

[79] The title of the film suggests an East-West dialogue: *Die allseitig reduzierte Persönlichkeit* ('The wholly reduced personality'), short Redupers, is a reference and inversion of the GDR's flowery phrase *Die allseitig verwirklichte sozialistische Persönlichkeit* ('The wholly fulfilled socialist personality').

reminder of this artificial situation: that one is *outside* the West German territory but still *inside* its political realm. This notion of Berlin's so-called 'special status' (an expression often used in West German political rhetoric), which in some sense can be seen as a euphemism for non-place, is further elaborated by a short scene in which the postman brings Edda a letter from the USA on which the sender has written:

> Postmaster: Berlin has a special international status; it is neither in West Germany nor in East Germany. Still, I hope you can find West Berlin and deliver the letter. Meanwhile I suggest that you go to see Carter in the White House to find out where Berlin really lies.

Thus in the vein of *Der Willi Busch Report* the film starts off by drawing attention to the influence of world politics on the construction of a particular German sense of place. However, Berlin's special status in political terms has become normality for the people who live in the city. Whenever she leaves the house, Edda sooner or later encounters a segment of the wall and when she is at home and listens to the radio there is news about people trying to overcome the wall (East-West refugees). The symbolism of the Cold War and Germany's division is ubiquitous, a reality which renders the wall virtually invisible. Berlin's inhabitants have learnt to cope with their unique living situation, which to a certain extent meant to allow the exception to become the rule. Only some writings on the wall articulate a clear sense of unease and anger in relation to their 'means of communication'. Then again these voices are countered by the mélange of radio stations (East German, West German, English, American, French, etc.), which broadcast their programmes to the population of Berlin, making it a place where cultures, countries and opinions meet rather than are kept apart.

In addition to (passively) being an aspect of lived experiences, the Berlin Wall becomes aesthetically appropriated and thus made productive in the communal arts project of Edda and her colleagues. Funded by the local government its aim is to document the city of Berlin (of which the wall is an essential part) using photographic means. During the preparatory stages the women discuss the city's function and image along with its representation in the media in order to develop their own rationale for the project. However, there are conflicting arguments held by different members of the group. Should the photos be socially critical (serving the public: ethical position) or advertising (pleasing the financial backer: avoiding censorship)? They finally agree on their selection criterion, this being the photos' function as a means of critical intervention in the public domain, whereby the artists consciously risk public censorship and the prohibition of a planned exhibition.

Exemplary for this political understanding of art as an alternative public sphere is Edda's photo series, which has three sections: 1. What is similar in East and West? 2. Where does the wall 'have holes', i.e. where is it transparent? 3. The 'newspaper' character of the wall. Hence contrary to Willi who (mis)uses the media for personal purposes, the female photographers' actions and artistic interventions are guided by strong feelings of responsibility for the wider Berlin public. They ultimately seek to establish a dialogue with their audience – an aim they try to achieve by creating different 'contact zones' to facilitate an exchange of ideas between their work and potential recipients. Thus art becomes a specific form of communication which (in the sense of Achternbusch's poet) can break ice in the form of silence.

Firstly, they photograph writings in various forms (especially inscriptions on the wall, such as graffiti), which are available to Berlin's public. Through this they answer these people's call for communicative interaction and take it further by giving it space in their artistic production which again, as the latter are publicly exhibited, addresses the original call. Secondly, they do a border performance on a vantage point at the wall itself whereby they install a white curtain which, drawn apart, reveals the other side of the wall (from their perspective, East Berlin). By means of this theatrical production they draw attention to the 'performativity'[80] of reality (in this case the wall dividing East and West Berlin) and its social constructedness. Thus, they question the ongoing 'Othering' process as a result of which East Berlin, which looks very similar to the Western part of the city, is rendered, or produced as, different instead of the same.

Between her different artistic appointments Edda is dealing with a range of job and family related tasks such as driving aunt Gretchen back to the border. The latter is a so-called 'grey panther aunt' (grey panther: euphemism for pensioner[81]) who brings jeans from the West to the East (lack of availability) and cheap potatoes from the East to the West (financial reasons). Exchanging goods between the two sides of Berlin, she constantly crosses the border, repeatedly (re-)establishing and maintaining a link between East and West – a messenger and communicator between two cultural spheres which she simultaneously inhabits, hence negating and penetrating the wall. Furthermore, aunt Gretchen can be seen as

[80] This concept introduced by Butler describes the relationship between discourse and the meaning of bodies/things as being indissoluble. Thus the author defines the 'performative' as 'that discursive practice which enacts or produces that which it names' (1990: 13).

[81] Certain groups of people, i.e. pensioners and children, were allowed to freely move between East and West Germany since the risk of them not returning was seen as relatively small by the officials.

a residue who, besides linking geographical spheres, also connects temporal zones. She was born and experienced Germany as a whole (as opposed to Edda who grew up with the division) and thus carries within her the hope of a German reunification in the future.

On a different level this time-space symbolism is repeated through the presentation of Berlin as a building site. There are heaps of rubble everywhere – a sight which bears resemblance to the typical *Trümmer* film (rubble film) setting right after the Second World War. These generic references link this film of the late 1970s – a time of firmly established geo-political separation of the two Germanys – to productions of the late 1940s – made a generation ago when the division had not yet been completed. However, besides this link to the past a building site is always also a metaphor for the future: something new is just about to be realised; the current state is transitionary. Thus by referring back to the image of a united past the building site and its rubble then project a hopeful future, which might entail reunification.

In conclusion, whereas *Der Willi Busch Report* made by a male director depicts men as dividing forces (Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin) or individually-resistant egoists (Willi) *Die allseitig reduzierte Persönlichkeit – Redupers* made by a female filmmaker portrays women as uniting forces (aunt Gretchen) or dialogue-initiating collectivists with a political mission (Edda and her colleagues). Hence both films reproduce quite traditional gender roles in relation to different social realms – geo-politics and business as the sphere of men and art-politics and family as the female area of interest – and can therefore be regarded as complementary narratives. In the end, both films stress the productive side of the border/wall while at the same time (although their protagonists reveal different motivations) propagating an atmosphere of hope: reunification seems possible.

No-man's-land

Reinhard Hauff's *Der Mann auf der Mauer* (The Man on the Wall, 1983) is the only film to explicitly mention the Berlin Wall in the title, indicating that notions of separation and division lay at the core of the narrative. More accurately the position of a particular man *in relation to* this specific type of border and the issues surrounding it seem to be of crucial importance, which reveals that the film engages with relational issues or positionalities. In many ways the narrative that follows then represents a very radical way of making sense of

the place called Germany as the relationship between the spatial and the social is constructed as a particularly intimate one.

At the beginning of the film a young man in East Berlin (Arnulf) gazes through his binoculars at the other side of the city – a scene that bears resemblance to Willi's border gazing. Thus again, using Mulvey (1988), place is feminised and objectified. However, whereas Willi looks East, Arnulf is looking westwards – signifying that either part of Germany can be similarly identified with female traits in relation to the male gaze from beyond the fence/wall (a variation of the gender-place relationship which finds its most common expression in the bond between the soldier and the country he fights for). Besides this implicit feminisation of place, there is also a reaffirmation on the level of dialogue presented immediately after the silent gaze when Arnulf tells his wife Andrea that he wants to go and live on the other side.

> **Andrea:** You leave me.
> **Arnulf:** No, I leave this state.
> **Andrea:** That is the same.
> *(silence)*
> **Arnulf:** *(instead of saying goodbye)* Always remember, they [the two parts of Germany] will get back together.

Having finally made it to the West (after 18 months imprisonment for his illegal attempt to leave the country) Arnulf tries to call Andrea without getting through to her. He says to himself: 'I will re-establish the connection. Don't worry, Andrea, we will get back together.' Thus he repeats the words he used to express his hope for a German reunification to talk about his and Andrea's future which at that point of the film associates him with West Germany and her with East Germany – two parts of an item which have been split apart and then lost contact with each other.

Shortly after, Arnulf meets another women, Victoria, who is West German and has prejudices against East Germans (she calls him arrogantly *Zoni* – short for 'from the Eastern Zone'). Hence she can be seen as being out of touch with the other side of Germany/herself. They start having an affair while Arnulf's homesickness grows stronger and stronger. Finally, he runs to the wall, climbs up, balances for a while on the top and then jumps to the Eastern side of it. Back in East Germany he is immediately captured by the border police and afterwards interrogated by the *Stasi* (short for *Staatssicherheitsdienst*: 'State Security Service') who point out to him that his reintegration into the GDR will not be unproblematic since he attempted five times to cross the border so far. They ask: 'you are constantly trying to cross

the border, either from East to West or from West to East. Where do you really want to be?' 'On the other side.' Here Arnulf's existential 'homelessness' becomes obvious for the first time. When he initially arrived in West Germany he associated himself with the West, then Victoria clearly addressed him as part of East Germany, and back in the East he is told that he does not fully belong there either since he once fled the country and several times before attempted to do so. Exploiting his helplessness the 'Stasi' people convince him to work for them which subsequently provides him with the opportunity to move between the two sides (similar to aunt Gretchen in *Die allseitig reduzierte Persönlichkeit – Redupers*).

In the following time Arnulf intensifies his relationship with Victoria who at some point coincidentally finds a photo of Andrea in his pocket. Looking at the other woman she realises that the two of them are wearing the same earring (she in her right ear and Andrea in her left one), which in her case is a talisman once given to her by Arnulf. This metaphor can be read as Arnulf splitting a pair of earrings to show his equal love and commitment to two woman and the respective side of Germany they represent – a gesture through which he redefines separation as unification. He associates two female strangers (the literal embodiments of East and West Germany) with one another and by doing so anticipates the German reunification on a symbolic and individual level.

Getting increasingly curious, Victoria finally agrees to visit East Berlin, a decision that Arnulf answers by saying: 'you have accepted it for far too long. You only know half of yourself. The things you are always looking for here but can never find are on the other side.' He thus indicates that a personal reunification is just about to happen with her (the West) meeting the East and – although not intended by Arnulf – Andrea. The latter happens in a café in the East. There, Arnulf first sees Victoria and steals her passport, which he then slips into Andrea's purse to provide her with the opportunity to leave East Germany. Through this incident the two women meet, get to know each other, go to Andrea's flat and undergo a personality change for one night. Victoria becomes Andrea and stays in the East and Andrea becomes Victoria, spending the night with Arnulf in the West.

Thus Arnulf comes close to achieving on a personal level what still seems far away on a political level: the reunification of East and West Germany. However, he believes that he is chosen (in a religious sense) to bring these two versions of the same back together again. Hence he refers to himself as 'Moses' at different stages throughout the film, comparing the

German and the Jewish situation and associating the Berlin Wall with the Red Sea. At first we learn about his fascination with the biblical story of Moses and the people of Israel as he reads a book called *The Divided Sea* while being in prison. After his arrival in West Germany he 'preaches' to fellow refugees from Eastern Germany to get involved in his project of working towards the German reunification, 'we are four millions in the West'. And to back up his call for action he talks about the Jews in America (who, according to him, are refugees and live in a diaspora just like him and his Eastern associates). He says: 'look at the Jews in America! They go for the *whole* thing'. Even though he does not manage to get people involved he carries on with his 'reunification mission', driven by visions about the wall's sudden opening followed by him leading the reunited German people (in Moses style) to freedom. Moreover, he sprays 'Moses' on the Berlin Wall and founds a pirate radio station, which he calls *Moses 2, Channel 3 – the station for the four million GDR-emigrants in the FRG*. The first broadcast is a speech by Arnulf addressing the West German public:

> We are a group of democratically oriented communists and address you for the first time. Our aim is infinitive. We herewith declare Germany to be a united and inseparable republic; because it is better to die in the desert than to serve the people of Egypt. However that means: withdrawal of all foreign troops[82], out of the pacts[83], tanks into the Amazon, peace on earth. We have to tear down the walls between us, by which I mean to destroy all circumstances within which the individual is a despicable and tortured human being. As long as there is a wall, Andrea, we will never, our true face,...

This speech shows Arnulf's desperate attempt to make his voice heard more forcefully and to a wider audience (choice of radio as a medium of mass communication), to gain support ('we are a group') bridge the political systems in East and West Germany ('democratically oriented communists'), to get beyond the claustrophobic limitations he experiences in many ways in both parts of Germany ('infinitive'), to achieve reunification once and for all ('united and inseparable'), to describe the German experience as diasporic, comparable to the one of the people of Israel (Egypt reference), to get rid of allied control ('foreign troops'), to finally achieve peace ('peace on earth') and thus in effect to free the individual from inhuman living conditions in order to be at ease with oneself and become whole again – making, as in *Der Willi Busch Report,* a link between world politics and individual existence.

[82] This can be read as a call for 'decolonising' (West) Germany, addressing the issue that even today there are a large number of American and British soldiers in various army bases all over the country.
[83] This refers to NATO (for West Germany) and the Warsaw Pact (for East Germany).

Still, in the end he has to realise that despite his efforts and tricks there is no way out of the dilemma – neither on an individual nor a national level. Hence he again chooses to climb onto the wall, as it appears to be the border whose diasporic or in-between sense of place he can most identify with (more so than with the ones provided by the Eastern or Western part of Germany). Balancing on the wall he concludes, 'we have to begin to become nobody', a solution which seems to suggest forms of post-nationality and thus moving beyond identifications with particular places since the latter proved to divide and exclude at least as much as they united and included, promoting closure rather than openness[84].

3.4 The national outside: reflecting back from other places on the national inside and its borders

In the anti-*Heimat* and border narratives analysed so far, the national 'outside' is usually assumed, implied or referred to, because the 'inside' as an imagined place with spatial limitations only makes sense in relation to different kinds of 'outside'. Thus the two main West German 'Others' in relation to issues of place, East Germany and America, have already been mentioned in passing and as objects of dreams and desires. In the following investigation I will reverse the above line of vision and look from the outside towards the inside as well as at the outside in the inside's place. Accordingly, this section brings the analysis back 'home': from anti-*Heimat* to the border to anti-anti-*Heimat*.

East is West

The only depictions of East Germany available in *NGC* films are those embedded in border narratives. This relative lack of narrating the GDR as a place with its own distinctive set of meanings is, along with the small amount of border narratives itself, understandable within their Cold War production context. However, contrary to the issues surrounding the portrayal of the German-German border, in the case of GDR representations the concern was less to take sides but rather to accept the existence of East Germany by providing narrative accounts of it. This artistic strategy was in tune with West German foreign policy, which, as discussed above, only in 1972 officially recognized East Germany as an independent nation-state. Yet,

[84] Besides his promotion of Germany's physical 'decolonisation' on the radio, Arnulf here formulates the idea of 'decolonising' the German mind. This ultimately means to erase the existing national, i.e. *Heimat*, imagination in order to be able to picture a new German way of 'being in the world'.

even then, reunification was still the overarching aim not be undermined by the filmic production of narratives about East Germany which (re)presented the German-German division as a given fact – a line of argument, which explains the virtual absence of explicit GDR depictions in post-war West German cinema. This is quite remarkable as it shows in this case how national politics appear to have had some ideological bearing on at least parts of the *NGC*, as West German filmmaking was, intentionally or unintentionally, involved in the construction of a West German narrative largely cleansed of notions of division and the struggle for reunification. Nevertheless, exceptions to this rule are the border films analysed above which along with their border representations at least to some extent make sense of East Germany.

To begin with, I return to Schilling's *Der Willi Busch Report*. In this film most of what is shown from the Eastern part of Germany is the border as such and some rural landscape, which lies beyond the 'fence'. Thus on the whole East Germany is represented as a void, a blank screen onto which Western dreams and desires can be projected. This passivity, plus Willi's gaze, further leads to a feminisation and objectification of the GDR suggesting that the 'passive' East lies there only to be colonised and conquered by the West. Still, besides being productive through stirring up the Western hunting instinct, the East appears as a space rather than a place. It does not seem to offer a distinct set of meanings and hence it gives the impression of a place from which identity has been drained.

In Sander's film *Die allseitig reduzierte Persönlichkeit – Redupers* East Germany is portrayed as considerably productive in terms of a sense of place although in a relatively cliché-like fashion. More precisely, the GDR is rendered as the fatherland of the workers and the motherland of the hope for women. However, instead of being visually expressed these significations are provided on the level of background sound. While doing her daily work Edda listens to East German radio stations which broadcast reports on feminist topics and other political issues. Hence intellectually and ideologically there seems to be a considerable understanding or even an agreement between the West German artist and East German social policies. Moreover, as part of her contribution to a communal arts project Edda compares East and West German city sites whereby she uses the means of photography to establish striking similarities between the two 'Berlins', raising the question of similarity and difference. As a result, in this film East Germany becomes a rich cultural text, which bears resemblance to the West and opens up the possibility for a constructive inter-German dialogue and exchange of

ideas on the basis of complementary senses of place. Still, it has to be pointed out that this film, too, is gazing Eastwards (through the artist/photographer's lens) thus again offering a noticeably Westernised perspective of the East Germany which softens to some extent the otherwise critical and self-reflexive content of this production.

Finally, Hauff's *Der Mann auf der Mauer* provides the most elaborate account of the GDR in the *NGC* productions that I have analysed. To start with, East Germany is the protagonist's 'home', although one that he soon leaves for the West. Thus, similar to certain anti-*Heimat* films' portrayal of the West as 'hellish' home (for example, in Reitz's *Heimat* series and in Schlöndorff's *Der plötzliche Reichtum der armen Leute von Kombach*), here the East, too, is a place to be left (only in this case for the West and not for the city or America). Predictably (for a Western film), Arnulf's decision to emigrate to the West and leave his wife is not elaborated on since his wish to do so seems to be a taken for granted fact, articulating the FRG's sense of superiority in relation to the East and thereby responding to the audience's expectations. Nevertheless, after some conflictual encounters in the West, Arnulf becomes homesick and finally returns to the East – a turn within the storyline which to Western spectators must have been very unexpected. What follows then are again quite stereotypical depictions of the East as a *Stasi*-state, controlling and manipulating the individual. However, through the gender-place identification the two parts of Germany are finally characterised as (cor)responding versions and parts of one another where West Germany calls the shots, maintaining itself as the point of reference for East Germany and not the other way round. Similarly, to make a man from East Germany the driving force in this film seems to be a narrative strategy that aims to subvert the image of the GDR as a place characterised by passivity, as presented in *Der Willi Busch Report*. Yet, Arnulf's activity is a solitary struggle, not supported by either side and in the end neutralised by individualism, opposing political interests and a lack of vision in/between East and West. Thus both Germany's are represented as anti-*Heimat* places, making the Berlin Wall seem the most appealing and authentic place to be.

Overall, East Germany is not seen as a country in its own right but solely in relation to West Germany, functioning either as a desired, unknown, similar or complementary part of the 'Self'. Thus it is not realised as an independent 'Other' with its particular sense of place but regarded as derived from and definable only in relation to the West. The only exceptions are a number of relatively stereotypical references related to its political system which are more

telling in terms of a West German self-understanding than revealing an East German sense of place. In effect the GDR is portrayed as less than the West, as something that is missing from the FRG to make Germany a whole again.

The dream of America comes true

Following on from a number of anti-*Heimat* films, the protagonists in Herzog's *Stroszek* (1977), three West German misfits, decide to seek their fortunes in America. However, contrary to the majority of anti-*Heimat* film heroes with a similar purpose, they succeed in emigrating to their country of dreams which then is not only referred to, as for example in Edgar Reitz's *Heimat* or Volker Schlöndorff's *Der plötzliche Reichtum der armen Leute von Kombach*, but depicted as a place with a very specific set of meanings ascribed to it. Regarding the narrative structure, the first part of the film takes place in West Germany and introduces the audience to the three main characters, whereas the second part is set in America; and it is the latter's sense of place which I will focus on in the following analysis.

After arriving in one of the major American cities, the three rent a car and drive to the countryside where one of them has a nephew (Clayton) who has invited them to stay with him. Subsequently, they get introduced to rural America. They are told that there has been a murderer going round in the little town; hence a farmer is missing. Besides, there are two farmers who harbour hostile feelings towards one another. They have an ongoing fight about a piece of fallow land, which neither rightfully possesses, each begrudging the other's claim and aggressively policing the competitor. Moreover, the ubiquity of guns is striking. Men are constantly armed either for hunting purposes (we see two men with a dead deer) or for individual protection. The countryside as such appears desert-like, as it is dry, dusty and relatively empty – overall not a particularly attractive sight.

In this introduction of America there are obvious parallels to anti-*Heimat* films in the way the rural is portrayed. It is a hunting ground with not only one but many hunters and one of them being a killer; tensions between certain members of the community do not only have unpleasant consequences but are severely limiting (in terms of space and agency) if not life-threatening; the countryside does not give a leisurely impression but instead is a site of work and privation. Thus the three protagonists arrive at a place, where usually people would aim to depart from since it can be regarded as hostile, deadly, restrictive, work-dominated and

altogether unappealing. In that sense, America is presented as a heightened anti-*Heimat*, which clearly surpasses its West German version.

After a while the three order a readymade house, which is delivered to the sound of American country music – the US version of German yodelling and folk songs. At first this new home seems to create a space for intimacy, happiness and 'belonging', especially since two of the characters grow closer together. But then the winter comes (literally): a change in the story's tone, which is prefigured by the three and Clayton walking on a frozen lake, leads to tensions between the members of the group and, as a result, first doubts are voiced: 'I imagined America to be different. I thought I could quickly become rich by working hard.' Money, or rather the lack of it, turns into a problem when they cannot keep up with paying the instalments for the house. Finally this leads to a disintegration of the small community as people slowly slip back into the roles they used to inhabit back in West Germany.

In this middle or main section of the second part of the film, everything centres around the purchase of a 'mobile home', an expression that in itself is a contradiction since mobility and 'home' are conflicting concepts (Wenders in Morley and Robins, 1993: 14). As outlined in the introduction to this chapter, the concept of 'home' or *Heimat* contains notions of rootedness, referring to 'a place fixed in space, an immobile entity that does not travel' (ibid.: 4). Besides, the idea of a mobile and thus easily obtainable 'home', which can be bought and paid for bit by bit like any other consumer good, is opposed to *Heimat*, a sense of place which evolves between a place and its people. More accurately, as outlined in the exploration of the concept's history, it refers to a very specific German experience and understanding of place-society relationships. In this respect, *Heimat* is not an international or even global sense of place but needs to be seen as strongly nationalised or, more exactly, 'Germanised', finding its 'Other' in *Fremde*. For these three West Germans then, America is *Fremde* and can therefore never be *Heimat*. Even though they have their house, the wider cultural context denies them integration on many levels and singles them out as foreigners. Hence their (mis)understanding of *Heimat* as being about the possession of a house (a rather capitalist interpretation of the concept) proves to be too narrow and short-sighted and consequently leads to only a brief moment of feeling at 'home'. Without its German framework a 'homely' sense of place is not sustainable.

The ice metaphor again is another anti-*Heimat* citation in the vein of Achternbusch's glacier theory, thus connecting Bavaria and America by ascribing Bavaria's/Germany's senses of place to the latter, indicating further similarities between the two. Therefore, when one of the characters comments 'I imagined America to be different', this can also be interpreted as 'I imagined America to be different from West Germany, *but it is not.*' Accordingly, America signifies in relation to West Germany – similar to the GDR – sameness and difference.

In the end, their mobile home is taken away from them by the bank (accompanied by the same country music) and one member leaves the group. The other two watch the departure of their house. Afterwards, without any money but equipped with a gun and angry about the loss of their entire possessions, they rob a store. The arrest of one of them follows shortly after while the other one escapes with Clayton's car. Having nothing more to lose, he abandons the car, which continues to drive in a circle, and enters a chair lift. On his way, he watches a dancing chicken, a rabbit in a fire engine, a piano playing chicken and other animals, which are kept in boxes for entertainment. Going uphill in the lift, he shoots himself.

In this final sequence of the film the main character, Stroszek, leaves America (and with it life as such) for good. His unsuccessful search for *Heimat* has come full circle (symbolised by the movement of the car). He left West Germany since he did not feel a sense of 'belonging' and thought of America as being the embodiment of his dreams. However, as the dream became reality the place which had been thought of as a possible *Heimat* substitute turned out to be just as much of an antithesis (Morley and Robins, 1993: 14-15). This leaves Stroszek with no *Heimat* option. He cannot stay in America but a return to West Germany seems equally senseless. Realising his existential 'homelessness', he frees himself from the sway that *Heimat* holds over him by committing suicide. This portrays America again as a deepened anti-*Heimat*. Whereas the journey from West Germany to America can be classed as physical emigration the transition from America to a state of death is rather an ontological one. The latter ends his physical existence through which he finally overcomes the spatial limitations of material life, which he could not make productive. Death renders place unimportant as it negates space.

To conclude, rather like the portrayal of East Germany, America is represented as 'Self' and 'Other' in relation to West Germany. Containing a variety of anti-*Heimat* elements in an intensified manner it is more anti-*Heimat* than West Germany itself. On the other hand, by

being essentially *Fremde* due to its spatial (geography) and cultural (consumerism, mobility, capitalism, language, etc.) distance, it is a definite 'Other' to West Germany. For Stroszek, America is no solution to his unfulfilled longing since it is either not similar enough or too similar to West Germany to become his *Heimat*.

Travelling homewards

Whereas with *Stroszek* the analysis moved from West Germany to America it will now return 'home' with Philip Winter and Alice. The 'tour guide' of the travel homewards is Wenders[85], a *NGC* filmmaker particularly concerned with journeys (Morley and Robins, 1993: 24-25). Two examples of his 'travel films' are *Alice in den Städten* (Alice in the Cities, 1974) and *Im Laufe der Zeit* (Kings of the Road, 1976) which already through their titles reveal a clear anti-*Heimat* position. With the city and the road as primary sites of reference the narratives place themselves contrary to the predominant portrayal of rural villages and nature/landscape in *Heimat* films. To explore notions of travel in terms of their specific senses of place I will join Philip and Alice on their journey from America to (West) Germany.

At the beginning of the film Philip Winter, a photojournalist, is travelling through America by car. He continuously takes pictures for a photo story about the country's landscape, which is to appear in a (West) German magazine. However, he is past his deadline, broke and thus decides to go back to (West) Germany. In the following sequence – although still in the States – he gradually re-enters (West) Germany. He sells his American car and nods when the salesman asks him 'are you going home'; he buys the (West) German newsmagazine *Der Spiegel* ('The Mirror'); he talks to a contact person from the journal he works for and announces his plans to go back; and finally he goes to the airport, buys a ticket and meets another two (West) Germans, Lisa van Dam and her daughter Alice, who are desperate to go back as well. The night before Philip leaves America he visits a friend with whom he discusses his sense of place:

> **Philip:** I lost touch with the world.
> **Friend:** You did that long ago. You don't have to travel across America for that. You lose touch when you lose your sense of identity. And that happened long ago. That's why you always need proof, proof that you still exist. You treat your stories and experiences as if they were raw eggs. As if only you experience things. That's why you keep taking these photos.

[85] For a further discussion on Wenders and his films see Bromley (2001).

For further proof that it was really you who saw something. That's why you came here. So someone would listen to you and the stories you're really telling yourself. It isn't enough in the long run.

Philip: That's true. Taking polaroids is a sort of proof. Waiting for a picture to develop, I'd often feel strangely uneasy. I could hardly wait to compare the picture with reality. But the picture never caught up with reality.

Friend: You can't stay here.

Philip: I went on as if I were possessed.

Friend: You really are out of touch. I don't want you to stay.

In this dialogue Philip's existential 'homelessness' is portrayed as a result of the specific relationship between his sense of 'Self' and his sense of place whereby identity and feelings of 'belonging' are presented as tightly interwoven with one another ('You lose touch when you lose your sense of identity.') Moreover the film raises questions about the function of reality (authenticity) and storytelling (narrative construction) in shaping senses of place or, in other words, the individual's experience of 'being in the world'. It suggests that the latter consists of both real events and their photographic and narrative representations. In the case of Philip, however, his sense of place is out of balance and he is therefore out of touch. He favours the imaginary without paying enough attention to everyday life. This then leads to an alienation from the world around him – a lack of contact that he fills with storytelling through which the fact that he is out of touch can be 'narrated away'. However, this only works as long as the silent (and often even absent) listener does not become a challenging questioner who demands access and contact on the level of interpersonal communication (in the above scene, his friend) and, if denied, responds with not sharing her place (which again links the sphere of the 'Self' with that of place).

After some complications caused by unresolved problems between Lisa and her partner, Philip and Alice are on their way to (West) Germany without her. They stop in Amsterdam, a transient place. It is Alice's former 'home', after having lived in (West) Germany and before moving to America, and now an in-between place for both of them which they co-inhabit before finally returning 'home' to (West) Germany. However, 'home' is less *Heimat* than expected since they cannot arrive at it but have to keep travelling. The point of physical arrival and supposed end of their shared journey becomes its actual starting point and departure (in terms of senses of place). They are in search of Alice's grandmother's place since her mother fails to get to (West) Germany and Philip needs or wants to move on which means detaching himself from Alice to finish his story. Thus again he makes an effort to escape from the 'outside' (shared lived experiences in relation to a particular place) to the

'inside' (imaginations based on representation). But Alice becomes a link between (West) Germany (which is portrayed as a series of places of temporary residence) and his individual existence as she makes him look at it closely in order to find her grandmother's house. When they eventually find it, the point of imagined arrival again does not mark an ending but a redirection and continuation of their travel since Alice's grandmother has moved and left the place. Thus where 'home' was is no longer there: the meaning and location of it has changed over time which leaves the two travellers 'homeless' and forces them to continue their search for (now a new) 'home'.

In the end the bond between place and individual is recreated. The film's last scene is an ever-widening aerial shot within which the protagonists blend into the (West) German landscape. This merging between the two spheres symbolises a re-embeddedness of the traveller and with it the prospect of a re-ascription of meaning to the place called 'Germany'. However, Philip and Alice also part before the end of the film and hence it is questionable if he (without her) will carry on with dialoguing or fall back into internal monologue. And one last thought: his second name is Winter (winter), which in the light of Achternbusch's glacier theory means being *stuck* in time and place and thus casts doubt on Philip's role as a constructive sense-maker.

Looking closely at this travel film, parallels with the above border narratives become apparent. Both kinds of narrative invoke a sense of place, which is transitional, fragile, and in process. In view of that, experiences of travel (mobility) and border (division) can be seen to produce similar senses of place. Their anti-*Heimat* texture is a precondition for a deep longing for contact and wholeness. And again it is the female (in this case the little girl) that provides for the possibility of re-unification – not between East and West Germany but between the latter and Philip. He sees (West) Germany again through the eyes of a child which means interpreting the place in a different, an innocent way – an experience which makes space for new senses of place freed from the baggage of the past.

3.5 Conclusion

Throughout this chapter I have investigated different anti-*Heimat* conceptualisations within a range of *NGC* films. According to my findings *Heimat* can be seen as an old but still active national symbol, which, regarding narrative accounts of West Germany, functions in several

conflicting ways. This makes it necessary to move beyond Rose's categories of identification, as these seem to be too clear-cut to describe the senses of place available in the films analysed above. Whereas anti-*Heimat* films show a tendency to identify against traditional German *Heimat* portrayals, border narratives transcend a purely oppositional stance. In effect, one could argue, border narratives establish an anti-*Heimat* setting in order to promote a sense of longing for particular *Heimat* attributes such as wholeness and thus, to some extent, still identify with this residual sense of place. Finally, the views on East Germany, America and the experience of travelling back demonstrate the limitations of *Heimat* alternatives or substitutes outside of West Germany by presenting these places in comparison as somehow inferior or too different. This renders the protagonists' return as inevitable or, if not possible, remaining as fatal.

For this reason, the German-German border or Berlin Wall, described as a 'new national symbol' (Morley and Robins, 1993: 17), is still to be seen in relation to the old concept of *Heimat*. More precisely, it is a programmatic anti-thesis on its way to synthesis, questioning the possibility of *Heimat* while at the same time preparing the ground for a new version of it. Therefore, the 'new' is not a stable but rather a transitionary national symbol since people invest in its removal far more than in its maintenance. In the case of America, in anti-*Heimat* films often dreamt of as a *Heimat* substitute, a similarly ambiguous sense of place is revealed. Thus it seems to be either too similar to West Germany or too far removed from it (culturally and geographically) to function as a solution to the *Heimat* issue.

In conclusion, the place called '(West) Germany' is presented as a site of struggle over meaning, a sense which includes, excludes and combines notions of *Heimat* and anti-*Heimat* as well as inside, border and outside. In this respect, an existential 'homelessness' is probably the sense of place, which can be described as the most uniting feature of the films discussed above, rendering places 'no longer the clear supports of our identity' (Morley and Robins, 1993: 5). This does not mean that, in Rose's terms, we move towards a 'non-identification' with place but rather towards its complexification. Accordingly, West Germany's post-war sense of place appears to be still considerably influenced by past imaginings, which situates it in a post-*Heimat* position as it has not (yet) produced new, non-*Heimat* related narratives of itself.

In conceptual terms this means understanding the relationship between place and identity as an ambiguous one since positive and negative identifications give rise to both 'homelessness' and the desire for an as yet unrepresentable 'home'. This uncomfortably hybrid form of a sense of place emerges through the interplay between the traditional *Heimat* imaginary and post-war German reality (e.g. the Berlin Wall), which in many ways can be regarded as its antithesis. Thus a sense of 'homelessness' *in hope for home* is the result of the attempt to not let go of either and to see (contemporary) reality as a transitionary phenomenon which has to share its identificatory function with seemingly timeless forms of place-related imaginaries. However, these contradictory senses of place seem to a large extent irreconcilable and cause conflicting feelings about 'home' which can be maybe best described by Faust's exclamation, 'zwei Seelen wohnen, ach, in meiner Brust![86]' Reality pre-empts and *Heimat* prevails – a pairing which causes the individual to be caught between different forms of identification while simultaneously inhabiting them.

[86] Approx. Trans.: 'Two souls, ah, inhabit my breast!'

Chapter Four

A Matter of Time

4.1 The importance of time and temporality for an understanding of German national identity

Moving on from the preceding chapter on place, the following discussion will focus on temporal issues in relation to the national. Hence I see this chapter as a continuation and further elaboration on the topic of national identity rather than as a completely separate argument. Besides, in many ways – although rather implicitly – time has already been part of the preceding analysis. The development of the categories *old* national symbol and *new* national symbol, although primarily concerned with conceptualising the function of certain spatial components, also makes an analytic distinction which operates along temporal lines by juxtaposing *old* and *new*. Furthermore notions of anti-*Heimat* only work in relation to earlier *Heimat* ones and are as such examples of narrational changes over time, which stress the sequential character and interdependence of generic developments.

In order to elaborate on this relationship between place and time I would like to refer here especially to Lowenthal's book *The Past is a Foreign Country* (1985) in which, as the title indicates, spatial and temporal experiences generally are described as intrinsically linked. Further he says: 'we are at home in it because it *is* our home – the past is where we come from' (ibid.: 3-4). Here, Lowenthal applies the commonly spatial metaphor of 'home' to describe a certain quality of the past, which suggests that the latter might be usefully understood as a *temporal space*. In this vein then, I will proceed from the investigation of notions of place, which focused on the concept of *Heimat*, to an analysis of its temporal counterpart: nostalgia. And in a similar manner to the way in which I examined *Heimat* through the interplay of national 'inside', border, and national 'outside' I will look at conceptualisations of nostalgia via the intersection of the three different and, in Western thinking, dominant modalities of time which simultaneously also build the categories of the following analysis: past, present and future.

At this point it might be useful to briefly elaborate on my understanding of the national as not only a spatial but also a temporal concept and thus shed some light on its specific relationship

to time and temporality[87]. To start with, it has to be noted that a national consciousness along with its corollary, the nation-state, is a modern phenomenon, which can be seen as a condition for, as well as a consequence of, capitalism and liberal forms of political organisation (even though not all nations are capitalist and/or liberal). Furthermore, it represents a specific notion or imagination of space, time and community. Hence the idea of the national has to be seen as historically specific and not a 'given', an understanding shared by a variety of sociologists, cultural theorists and historians such as Billig (1995), Gellner (1983), Anderson (1988), Hobsbawm (1992), Morley and Robins (1993) and Wright (1985). Wright claims, for example, that 'the nation is the modern integration par excellence, and it is in the service of the nation that public images and interpretations of the past circulate' (ibid.: 24). In this phrase, Wright neatly establishes the relationship between nation, time/temporality, identity, images/film and analysis whose interconnectedness lie at the core of this chapter.

Having introduced the time-boundedness of the national I will now continue by looking at specific national senses of time. A useful starting point for this seems to be Bhabha's work[88] who in his essay 'DissemiNation: time, narrative and the margins of the modern nation' (1994) distinguishes between two dimensions of time, 'pedagogical' and 'performative' time, which, according to him, together build the 'double and split time of national representation' (ibid.: 144). Within this theoretical framework pedagogical time refers to a sense of time that is articulated in chronological beginning-to-end narratives, regarding 'people as historical "objects"'(ibid.:145), and supplying society with a 'pre-given or constituted historical origin in the past' (ibid.). Moreover, these narratives are seen as collectively shared, homogenising, characterised by a centred causal logic and thus responsible for a sense of certainty, coherence, continuity, and 'belonging'. Bhabha then stresses the identity-constituting function of pedagogical time with reference to Kristeva's concept of 'double temporality' and Fanon's idea of 'occult instability' (ibid.: 153). To be more precise, in her essay 'Women's Time' (1986) Kristeva introduces the idea of a 'process of identity constituted by historical sedimentation' (ibid.). Similarly, Fanon states in his essay 'On National Culture' (1969), in

[87] Akin to the relationship between space and place, I understand temporality as a historically/personally specific sense of time (e.g. nostalgia) which is intrinsically linked to national/individual meaning-making processes. This resonates with Ricoeur's (1984) distinction between 'phenomenological time' or temporality, which he describes as the 'time of the soul', and 'cosmological time', which he regards as the 'time of the world'. In the subsequent sections, I will primarily use the expression 'narrative temporality' to emphasise that the temporality of the films under analysis is one constructed *in narrative*.

[88] I have chosen Bhabha, because his account considers national identity issues as necessarily linked to narrative and temporal processes. This ties in with some of the earlier discussions around identity and narration in chapter one and will be further substantiated by the introduction of Ricoeur's 'circle of triple mimesis' (in Kearney, 2002) in the following section.

Bhabha's reading of his work, that a national culture comprises 'pedagogical knowledges' and 'continuist national narratives' which commonly make use of stereotyping and realism and represent the national past as a series of events which 'truely' happened (ibid.: 152).

Performative time, on the other hand, is described by Bhabha as non-sequential, ambivalent, problematic and disjunctive and, 'questioning the homogenous and horizontal view associated with the nation's imagined community' (ibid.: 144). Hence it disturbs pedagogical time and proposes instead of narrative synchrony a sense of time which is unsettling and disruptive, as well as repetitious and recursive. This concept again relates to Kristeva and Fanon's work and leads Bhabha to conclude that performative time produces a 'loss of identity' (ibid.: 153) and/or 'cultural undecidability' (ibid.: 154). Thus, according to Bhabha, Kristeva claims that this second temporality causes a 'loss of identity in the signifying process of cultural identification' (ibid.: 153). Correspondingly, Fanon offers a fundamental critique of the fixed and stable forms of the nationalist narrative which are characteristic of the pedagogical. Instead he puts forward the notion of the 'zone of occult instability where the people dwell' (Fanon's phrase) and where a multiplicity of heterogeneous national temporalities are articulated through the narrative/temporal practice of the people – a national 'being in the world' which Bhabha calls '*instability* of cultural signification' and which is characteristic of the situation of anti-colonial struggle (ibid.: 152-153). To characterise the relationship between pedagogical and performative time Bhabha remarks that the former 'surmounts' the latter which suggests that pedagogical time is dominant over performative time in terms of constructing a national temporality. At the same time the pedagogical has to be seen as being always supplemented by the performative.

This approach to national time as 'double and split' resonates with my preceding analysis of senses of place as being struggled over, conflicting and intersecting, and it is the aim of the following investigation to see to what extent Bhabha's concept based on Fanon's postcolonial and Kristeva's feminist temporalities can shed light on a particular West German sense of time as articulated in a range of *NGC* films. Yet to work through the relationship between the pedagogical and the performative it will be necessary to introduce further material which I intend to do at the beginning of my actual film analysis section.

Before I turn to *NGC* films and their temporality more explicitly, I would like to come back to the concept of nostalgia. In Lowenthal's words, 'nostalgia is memory with the pain removed'

(1985: 8). In this way, it describes an emotional relationship between past and present that although marked by a decisive loss, which possibly takes the form of an active act of forgetting, produces positive feelings. When the author adds a little later that nostalgia 'reaffirms identity' (ibid.: 13) it suggests that an identity construction in temporal terms includes memorising as well as forgetting. In a different passage the author claims that nostalgia is the dominant mode of relating to the past in Western culture which, if one follows Bhabha, links it to the pedagogical (a sense of time deeply concerned with the past). In this vein, nostalgia is definitely to be regarded as a sense of time with pedagogical qualities.

The following film analyses will investigate to what extent films of the *NGC* show nostalgic tendencies and if, and how, they make space for this *Heimat*-related sense of time. Yet, it will be even more interesting to examine the degree to which different narratives construct and convey a performative sense of time, which then would be necessarily anti-nostalgic. Hence, if we assume an implicit interconnectedness between notions of place and time, and, linked to that, a correspondence of *Heimat* and nostalgia, the narrative temporality related to anti-*Heimat* could be described as anti-nostalgia. However, as, by definition, the performative is not exclusively *anti-* in orientation, the following investigation might discover a temporal condition which has yet to be defined.

To move forward and thus towards an answer to the questions just raised I will now consider the relationship between films of the *NGC* and time. To start with, I want to state what I am *not* looking for in the films which I have selected for further analysis, and that is concrete or absolute representations of time (clock time). Nonetheless, as far as measurability is concerned, it is interesting to note that the majority of the films in question are overly long, by which I mean longer than the typical 90 minutes feature film length. Besides, some *NGC* directors became famous for their long shots (e.g. Wenders) or other montage techniques such as collage (for example, Kluge). Thus timing and pace (editing) are issues to which these filmmakers devoted particular attention in order to frame their stories as meaningful in very specific ways.

These stylistic devices and formal modes of narration are worth being analysed alongside issues of content since they convey temporal conceptualisations of national representations via the composition of significant moments. Thus a filmmaker can decide between cutting a scene short or letting it last, slowing a sequence down or speeding it up, using flashbacks or

prefiguration techniques, in order to create a narrative of closure or one of openness. Finally, these moments and strings of narrated time are made into a film by the use of certain strategies that logically and temporally order the different fragments chronologically, kairologically[89], episodically or seemingly without any order.

The association between the *NGC* and issues of time is so deep that many film titles include a time-referent, for example: *Stunde Null* (Zero Hour, Edgar Reitz 1976), *Im Laufe der Zeit*[90] (Kings of the Road, Wim Wenders 1976), *Abschied von Gestern*[91] (Yesterday Girl, Alexander Kluge 1965/6), *In einem Jahr mit 13 Monden* (In a Year of 13 Moons, Rainer Werner Fassbinder 1978), *Deutschland im Herbst* (Germany in Autumn, Teamwork 1978), *Die dritte Generation* (The Third Generation, Rainer Werner Fassbinder 1979), *Der Händler der vier Jahreszeiten* (The Merchant of Four Seasons, Rainer Werner Fassbinder 1971), *Herbstmilch* (Autumn Milk[92], Joseph Vilsmaier 1988).

It is interesting to note that just by looking at these film titles conflicting modalities of time become apparent. 'Zero Hour' – this term marks the end of the Second World War – 8th May 1945 – and thus at the same time the point of departure for post-war Germany; symbolically it is the starting point of a new national calendar; as a defining date the title conveys a historical sense of time. 'In the Course of Time' – this turn of phrase sounds like a slow journey with no specified point of arrival and hence has people drifting through time; it describes time as a process and seems to illustrate a popular German proverb which goes: 'Der Weg ist das Ziel'[93]. 'Goodbye to Yesterday' – this temporal leave-taking can be regarded as a clear point of no return in relation to the past because otherwise the film would be called 'Auf Wiedersehen Gestern'[94]. 'In a Year of 13 Moons' – this astronomical term denotes one in a series of exceptional moments in our calendar comparable to the 29th February, only it is even rarer and less regular in its occurrence; moreover, the title refers to the moon as time-giver instead of the sun and, as a consequence, can be seen as challenging the socially dominant view on time; its promotion of lunar time, as opposed to solar time, simultaneously discloses a preference for cyclical/circular over linear time and female over male time. 'Germany in

[89] Kairological (as opposed to chronological) time: Kairos was the Greek God of 'timing, of opportunity, of chance and mischance, of different aspects of time (...) Time qualitative'. Kairological time thus signifies 'the spirit of a particular moment' (Griffiths, 1999: 21).
[90] Lit. Trans.: 'In the Course of Time'.
[91] Lit. Trans.: 'Goodbye to Yesterday'.
[92] Approx. Trans.
[93] Approx. Trans.: 'The means constitutes the end'.
[94] Approx. Trans.: 'See You Again, Yesterday'.

Autumn' – this expression again marks a defining date in post-war West-German history; it works as a synonym for the events of the autumn of 1977, when the three remaining RAF terrorists, Gudrun Ensslin, Jan-Carl Raspe and Andreas Baader, were found dead in Stuttgart-Stammheim's high security prison and the question arose: was it suicide or murder? Symbolically, the phrase invokes the image of a country close to its 'fall' or end of existence since, in the course of a year, autumn comes before winter; besides, through its recourse to the seasons, the title again alludes to cyclical/circular and thus female time. 'The Third Generation' – this term is a subtle historical reference, by omission, as it means more fully 'the third generation *after WWII*' which is the post-1968 generation; symbolically speaking, the title can be seen as another cyclical/circular time-reference portraying life as recurring sequence alternating between old and young, death and birth, parents and children – a process which describes the endless (generational) reproduction chain of life. 'The Merchant of Four Seasons' – this expression signifies capitalist/linear/male time consciousness in the vein of Ford's famous motto 'time is money'; in doing so, time becomes a manufactured good or resource which can be traded; however, aside from the capitalist time aspect, the title once more contains an allusion to cyclical/circular/female time represented by the returning seasons of the year; together, the antagonistic pairing of capitalist and cyclical time, with the former being rationalist and the latter being spiritual, suggests an irresolvable conflict between two temporal world views/philosophies of life/gendered spheres. 'Autumn Milk' – this term stands for a traditional agricultural product as well as a common form of subsistence food in earlier times and it is, as such, a subtle historical reference to rural everyday life before and during the Second World War; this then raises questions about a rural/past-oriented lifestyle versus a city/future-oriented lifestyle whereby the rural temporality seemingly follows Rousseau's call 'back to nature' with its slowness, tradition, periodicity and fertility; it is worth looking closer at the two components of the title: milk and autumn; milk on the one hand, is an original secretion, a bodily fluid with nurturing qualities which is produced by the female (generally the mother) as the result of having given birth; autumn on the other hand, has threatening connotations as a natural before-death metaphor within the circle of life; together both terms signify heightened cyclical/circular/female time while simultaneously indicating problematic tensions – maybe to do with the idiom's innate past-ness – which might be best captured in the metaphor of the milk which has turned sour.

It already becomes apparent from this brief analysis of some selected *NGC* film titles that there are complex temporalisations and time conceptualisations at play. This suggests that the

notion of nostalgia can only be a point of departure in the following analysis but will be almost immediately complicated by a range of different senses of time. In terms of organisation I propose a fourfold structure for this chapter. Firstly, I will analyse senses of the past followed by an investigation of senses of the present. Subsequently, I want to examine senses of the future and, to conclude, I aim to turn to an exploration of, what I want to call, uncategorisable or hybrid senses of time.

I am aware that this structure largely represents the dominant Western way of thinking about time as a threefold phenomenon. However, as with nostalgia this framework is only meant to be a starting point that can be seen as justified through the expectations of the audience and its temporal hegemony in Western societies of which Germany is an important part. Moreover, I will allow for the films to both transcend the above categories (past, present, future) internally and to the extent that they work outside of them (creating a fourth category for temporal hybrids). Thus it will be possible to evaluate the senses of time which will become apparent in the analysis of the films in relation to Bhabha's categories of pedagogical and performative time as their temporal transgressiveness will indicate 'belonging' or 'homelessness'.

4.2 Looking back: senses of the past

Memory, history and fiction can be regarded as different 'modes of access to the past' (Lowenthal, 1985: xxii), which are made available to a national public through a range of narratives, for example, oral interviews, written accounts and visual representations. In the following section I will use a range of *NGC* productions as entrance points to these different ways of relating to and knowing about the German past. However, I do not intend to judge or evaluate the films according to the truth-value, which might be found in the content of their memorial and historical representations. Rather I am interested in the sense of time they convey and construct. It is important to note here that there is no such thing as a 'given' past since, from a present point of view, memory and history are constantly reinterpreted and complemented but also forgotten and erased. Hence the past can be regarded as in certain ways produced by the present; and it is this sense of past which is underlying and governing a variety of *NGC* films concerned with issues around memory and history that I wish to draw out by analysing these fictional narratives.

Memory or *being orientated towards the present*[95]

Remembering is both an individual and a collective way of, not only mentally but also emotionally, relating to one's past. Individual and collective memory form a complex and possibly problematic relationship – they might be congruent, divergent or incompatible – depending on how the individual relates to the national, in the case of this analysis. Whereas the national provides dominant memories and, thus, sets the scenes to be remembered, the individual can either conform with this memory canon or instead belong to a marginal and alternative memory space. Furthermore, there can be, even within the dominant mode of remembering, tensions between different memory fragments as well as between remembered and forgotten elements. Yet however conflictual, memory is an important constituent of a person's as well as a nation's identity as it provides 'us' with a sense of continuity: 'the sureness of "I was" is a necessary component of the sureness of "I am"' (Lowenthal, 1985: 41) Thus memory works generally, but is additionally often also (and this is especially true for collective memory) mobilised, towards a sustaining of identities. In terms of its organisational mode, memory is 'kairological' and associative rather than chronological and linear. It narrates the past through defining moments which provide the remembering subject(s) with particular life options and further construct the present 'I' or 'we'.

To be more precise about its social function or identity work, memory is a faculty which makes sense of the past by collapsing a multiplicity of impressions and events into a small number of dominant memories. However, this process of meaning-making is contingent and its outcome depends on the demands of the present. Consequently, memory is nothing fixed and finished but undergoes constant revision and change. Thus, as a way of 'being in the world' the act of remembering can be characterized as *being orientated towards the present.* In doing so, memory makes the present liveable and meaningful and a future conceivable.

Memory narratives: female ways of dealing with the past

From the *NGC* films that deal with temporal issues or, even more specifically, with the past only two follow a format which might be called 'memory narrative': *Deutschland, Bleiche*

[95] This type of expression, which I will use at various points in this chapter, denotes a state of experience related to processes of narrative/temporal identity formation (yet, it is not to be seen in relation to any particular body of theory, i.e. Heidegger). As such, it will be used much more loosely to make sense of the complex narrative temporalities in *NGC* past, present and future films, which could not be expressed otherwise. This is to say that it was difficult to avoid abstractions.

Mutter (Germany Pale Mother, Helma Sanders-Brahms 1979) and *Malou* (Jeanine Meerapfel 1980). However, besides representing a similar orientation towards the past on a rather general level, their specific narrative implementation of the memory concept is quite distinctly different. To illustrate this point I will firstly analyse *Deutschland, Bleiche Mutter* and then turn to an examination of *Malou* since the latter's narrative structure seems to be more radically *memorial* than the former. Overall, I will focus in both films on the analysis of their respective modes of narration rather than investigating the films' plot or stylistic devices in any great detail[96] since it is the narrative/temporal composition of the memory narrative within which a particular sense of time is disclosed and constructed.

The film *Deutschland, Bleiche Mutter* begins in the 1930s as the young Lene decides to marry Hans, a decision largely influenced by the fact that he is not a member of the Nazi party. However, he is soon drafted and sent to the front. After spending a number of years in the military, witnessing and participating in brutal atrocities, Hans becomes bitter and coarse. Lene has his child, Anna, while she is alone during the war years, and they undertake a journey across the country. When Hans finally returns from a P-O-W camp after the war, he has become alienated from the two women, and thus the family is unable to resume a 'normal' family life. Lene begins to drink, acquires facial paralysis and finally attempts to commit suicide. Anna does not know her father, and it is difficult for her to accept him when he returns from the war. Also, her mother begins to reject her, forcing her to grow up quickly and virtually alone. These experiences, as we will see, scar the child for life.

This tragic family story is narrated by Anna (in a voiceover), the daughter of the two main protagonists Lene and Hans. Hence on the one hand, Anna is outside or even 'above' the story as she is the omniscient narrator who comments from a position of temporal distance and seemingly emotional detachment. On the other hand, it is the story of her parents and thus at the same time the story of her childhood, which puts her right at the centre of the narrative. Moreover, comments such as 'Mögen andere von ihrer Schuld sprechen, ich spreche von der meinen'[97] show that there is a deep emotional involvement and desire to communicate on her part. Thus, her narrating of her own 'beginning' and the familial and social circumstances into which she was born bears resemblance to the therapeutic process of mourning work. These two roles then, the narrating 'Self' *above* the story and the performing 'Self' *in* the story are

[96] A quite elaborate analysis of *Deutschland, Bleiche Mutter* can be found in Kaes (1989: 137-160).
[97] Approx. Trans.: 'May others speak about their guilt, I speak about mine.'

connected via a third one: the remembering 'Self', dialoguing *between* its narrating and performing 'Self'.

The three ways of relating to the story, namely narrating, performing and remembering, can further be seen as three versions of a present-past relationship played out in this particular memory narrative. The *narrator* is firmly situated in the present, but she lends her voice to the past (the tempus of fairy tales) and oversees a whole life story. The *performer* is securely rooted in the past with no possibility of knowing about her future. Her importance for the story is not based on knowledge (as in the case of the narrator) but on experience gained in the life story's past which at the same time is the performer's present. The '*memoriser*' is the most complicated narrative/temporal category of the three. Physically positioned in the present, for the time-span of the film she mentally and emotionally re-lives her past experiences as a child while at the same time (as the voice of the narrator indicates) being an adult woman.

Interestingly though, the memoriser seems to know about events from even before her birth, such as the (love) story of her parents which she calls 'the story of my beginning'. About her birth more specifically she says, 'when they cut me from you, Lene, I fell onto a battlefield'. This intimate knowledge about a range of lived experiences concerning her parents before her actual existence as well as own experiences as far removed as her birth illustrate a merging of discourses, or in Gadamer's words a 'merging of horizons' (1975), into one memory narrative (the film as a whole). More precisely, the first discourse is her own internal one within which memory fragments derived from experience (against the darkness of forgotten moments) highlight defining moments in her life story. This personal inner dialogue then can be seen as having merged with moments which (might) have been experienced by her at some point, but due to certain mental and emotional processes were forgotten, or have never been experienced by her at all. Instead, the latter were made available to her through a (re-)telling by 'Others', i.e. her parents, society, etc. and have now become inseparable from her own – a process which leads to a merging of individual with familial and societal/national discourses. This complex working of memory is illustrated by the 'prefiguring' (Ricoeur, see further below) of *her* life story by means of her parents falling in love, which is subsequently re-told by her as if she then was already part of *their* story.

The memoriser's narrative/temporal role according to the above analysis can then be described as bridging the narrative/time gap between the narrator and the performer. Through a continuous voiceover she, who is part of the present, is simultaneously part of the past. Thus, in the narrative, *three Annas* interact with one another: the narrator, the performer and the memoriser – a tripartite unity that bears resemblance to Kearney's concept of 'human agency' within the 'two-way passage from action to text' (2002: 151). Here he distinguishes between the 'agent as *author*, *actor*, and *reader*' (ibid., emphasis in the original) three dimensions of narrative construction and meaning-making shared between producer, enactor and receiver of a 'text' which in the case of my above analysis of *Deutschland, Bleiche Mutter* collapse into one: Anna the *narrator/performer/memoriser* – a narrative/temporal hybrid[98].

This fragmented mode of narration, comprising three narrative/temporal components, further resonates with Ricoeur's 'circle of triple mimesis' as laid out in Kearney: 'the *prefiguring* of our life-world..., the *configuring* of the text... and the *refiguring* of our existence...' (2002: 133). Similar to Kearney's agency model these three figurations of life-world and text can be seen as related to the categories of temporal narration I introduced in my analysis of the memory narrative *Deutschland, Bleiche Mutter*. Only the formulation in verb form (instead of agents) stresses Ricoeur's understanding of narration as process.

However, the *prefiguring* can be ascribed to the memoriser who – although not having experienced it personally – recalls the (love) story of her parents in a memorising fashion as the story of her beginning. Looking back, she appropriates their love story for the meaning-making of her own life story by drawing upon the parents' recollections as part of her own memory. The *configuring* belongs to the narrator's faculty as she constructs the story out of the memory fragments which the memoriser offers her. Here the meaning-making of the personal life story is continued on an intensified level as these rather disconnected individual memory pieces are woven into a coherent narrative to provide the narrative/temporal 'Self' with a sense of unity. The *refiguring* again can be seen as part of the narrator's functions, as she not only tells her life story but here and there comments on it in view of her present situation which inserts a narrative/temporal distance between her past story and her present life. One of these remarks can be found right at the beginning of the film where she comments

[98] The narrative/temporal hybridisation connects this memory narrative to the films analysed in the penultimate section of this chapter which present 'uncategorisable or hybrid senses of time' and which, as will be shown, are memorial, too, albeit in different ways.

on marriage, 'I didn't marry – I've un-learned that from you'. Here she goes far beyond the film's diegesis since the ending of the film cuts off when she is still a young girl. However, besides being narratively and temporally removed both positions are also strongly connected: without her familial childhood experiences her present situation might be distinctly different.

Combined, Kearney and Ricoeur's narrative models are effective in re-thinking and further theorising my analysis of the narrative strategies of the film *Deutschland, Bleiche Mutter*. Together both approaches allow me to show that this particular memory narrative combines components which are usually attributed to processes within and around narrative activity. Hence its mode of narration seems to break down the boundaries between time and narrative, inside and outside, text and context as well as narrator, performer and memoriser. In doing so, it conveys a complex sense of time, which, even though fragmented, also provides a sense of narrative/temporal unity which MacIntyre calls the 'narrative unity of life' (in Kearney, 2002: 151).

However, what does this mean for the construction of narrative/temporal identities? It is again Ricoeur who suggests a basic divide between a narrative identity characterized by process and promise – 'ipse-self' – and another narrative identity which is fixed – 'idem-self' (in Kearney, 2002: 152). In my narrative model of tripartite unity derived from the analysis of the film *Deutschland, Bleiche Mutter* it can be argued that there is a sense of process and promise in the way that all three narrative components, narrator, performer and memoriser, intersect and overlap in the course of the narrative as a whole. Yet it is this, albeit disrupted, working towards a narrative unity bound together by structural necessities (a film like every other narrative has a beginning and an end) that provides the narrative with continuity and creates a sense of fixity. Ultimately, the *three Annas* are facets and modulations of one. Thus the memory narrative *Deutschland, Bleiche Mutter* can be regarded as presenting an *ipse* as well as an *idem* sense of 'Self'. It is this hanging onto something like a core or centre of the story that brings me to my final evaluation of the film's mode of narration.

Besides its narrative complexity there are also some structural components which show that the film, besides its generally innovative approach, does not fully live up to its transgressive potential. For example, the plot development is fairly linear with no major ruptures, moving from the parents' meeting just before the Second World War through to the middle of the 1950s. In addition, its integration of national references by use of which the personal story

becomes a piece of German pre- to post-war history positions the memory narrative close to a historical one like Reitz's *Heimat* series. This then shows how boundaries between memory and history are blurred, held up firmly only by the voiceover, the autobiographical 'I' which claims the story belongs to her.

In conceptual terms, one can conclude that the film's memory fragments display a performative character (in Bhabha's sense) while being, however, intertwined with history elements of a more pedagogical quality. In effect, the articulation of these two narrative temporalities, even though with a strong emphasis on the performative, is indicative of the relationship between the pedagogical and the performative as being less of an antagonistic than a contingent one. In this way, both dimensions of time signify one end of a continuum on which representations of the national can be positioned.

The second memory narrative, which I will now analyse in terms of its specific mode of narration, is the film *Malou*. Here the memorial character of the narrative is not created through voiceover but instead is invoked through the use of relics and flashbacks which interrupt and penetrate the film's present storyline. At the opening of the film the female protagonist Hannah is sitting in the middle of a room with old objects and photographs scattered around her when Martin, her husband, comes back from work. It soon becomes apparent that not only is their relationship in a deep crisis but that they also relate to the past in quite different and conflicting ways. Hannah seems obsessed with her personal past, in particular with her relationship to her mother, while Martin gives the impression that he is neither concerned with this previous part of her life nor with any issues regarding his own past. In this respect, her, as well as his, relationship with the past can be seen as problematic already in their own right, but together her obsession and his denial make a narrative/temporal basis for *their* story seemingly impossible. As a result, Hannah leaves Martin shortly after, in search of her mother's past, which, in von Trotta's words, can be described as the story of her beginning.

In the light of Ricoeur's narrative identity model, Martin appears to personify the fixed *idem*-'Self', deeply rooted in the present and 'blessed' with an apparent sureness of who he is, whereas Hannah plays the exactly opposite narrative/temporal role – she represents the 'homeless' being-in-process, the *ipse*-'Self', in search of herself. Hence the beginning of the film in which Hannah has something like a narrative epiphany, recognising the prefiguring of

her *present* life through fragments of her mother's *past* life story, introduces the audience to her struggle to understand and come to terms with her present 'Self'. Accordingly, the first two scenes – the arguing couple at home (two people who are not 'at home' with one another at all), and her departure from this temporal and personal fixity (symbolised by her husband) – characterise the plot of the film as a representation of complex configuring and refiguring processes which move the narrative from present to past and back.

Having decided that finding out more about the story of her beginning matters greatly to her overall life story, Hannah visits her mother's grave in Sulzweiler (a small West German town), a place that simultaneously signifies 'beginning' and 'end'. It is the very first narrative/temporal site Hannah travels to on her journey into the past and the final narrative/temporal location on her mother's journey into the future. As a consequence the mother's burial place marking her finished transition from life to death and hence a point of self-completion becomes a stimulus for the daughter's departure from fixity to animation and thus a process of self-development.

Hannah's next move towards the mother/her past takes her to Strasbourg, the town where her mother was born, and again a place which can be read in narrative and temporal terms. The time the mother spent there frames the story of her beginning from birth to adulthood, experienced in full but now for her daughter only partly accessible. However, different from the grave, a place that bears witness of a life without having been a part of it, Strasbourg is a memorial place where Hannah can find or sense traces, knowing that her mother lived, breathed and loved there. Still, being in this French city close to the German border with French as well as German-speaking inhabitants in which her parents (a German Jew and a French Christian) fell in love reinforces her 'homelessness' even more. She recognises that her identity crisis in the present relates to her parents' problems in the past when her mother, who was then in a similar situation to her now, became her identification figure – a 'spell' which Hannah desperately tries to break by going back (to Strasbourg and in time) to be able to go back to Martin in Berlin and her present life.

These mother-daughter relationships are worth having a closer look at. Von Trotta's narrator says, 'I didn't marry – I've un-learned that from you', a statement which suggests that the temporal distance between *then* and *now* can be simultaneously understood in terms of a qualitative lifestyle difference. This means, regarding the daughter's current situation, that she

has learnt and moved on from her parents' negative experiences in the past. On the other hand, throughout the film it is never revealed to the audience to what extent and how exactly her life differs from the one she seems to object to so deeply and, therefore, one might assume that, instead of a constructive life improvement (e.g. choosing an alternative partnership for life), the present situation of the daughter is characterised by a state of loss or unfulfilled promise (as she simply deleted marriage from her plan for life), which renders the present an incomplete past.

Conversely, in Jeanine Meerapfel's memory narrative, direct comparisons and even strong analogies between the mother, Malou, and her daughter, Hannah, are central to the story itself. Thus, Hannah sees strong parallels between her present life and her mother's past life. Her mother gave up her country of origin, France, her friends in Strasbourg, her language, French, and her Christian religion in order to be with her future husband. Different to her, Hannah's father lived in Germany with his family, whereas her mother was an orphan, spoke German, which was only her second language, was Jewish, a faith she converted to in order to marry him, and he also earned the money for the family, while she became completely dependent on him as a young mother and housewife. After the break-up of the parents, this series of events and decisions then rendered Hannah's mother culturally and existentially 'homeless'. Knowing these past fragments about her mother, Hannah is afraid to repeat her mother's mistakes in the present. She grew up in Argentina, with her first language being Spanish, and is now married to a German in West Germany speaking German as her second language and realising that she is 'homeless', too. At one point she talks about herself as being German, born in Strasbourg, raised in Argentina and now living in Berlin. Hence she can be seen as *doubly* 'homeless': a spatial and a temporal hybrid.

This, in *Deutschland, Bleiche Mutter* rather implicit and in *Malou* fairly explicit, treatment of the mother-daughter relationship resonates with the temporal organisation of the narrative. More precisely, the prominence of generational issues on the level of the story, which convey a cyclical understanding of time, contributes to a mode of narration whose underlying logic of 'being in the world' is development through 'modulation' (an expression which I borrow from music theory to describe a process of thematic repetition combined with formal variation). This leads me in the following section to analyse some of these narrative/temporal signifiers of developmental cyclicality.

Already in their titles both films refer to a metaphorical and/or autobiographical mother figure. *Deutschland, Bleiche Mutter* uses a more generalist approach, associating Germany's meaning as a country with the role of a mother[99]. *Malou*, on the contrary and in a distinctly personal vein, carries the name of the mother of the female protagonist. In both films then mother-daughter relationships are the driving forces of the story as the daughters recognise and narratively act upon the parents', more precisely the mother's, prefiguring function in relation to their own life stories. In the case of *Malou* the daughter finds herself confronted with similar challenges regarding her living situation and marriage to the ones that her mother had to face before she was born – an issue which poses the question of eternal recurrence. As a possible answer the narrative suggests that emotional suffering in the form of problems and traumas are passed on from generation to generation if not resolved or worked through (in a sense like a familial or social neurosis). An example for this condition might be the lack of mourning the war generation became accused of[100] – in the film the generation of the mothers – and the mourning work which was consequently left to their daughters/the filmmakers[101].

To conclude, *Deutschland, Bleiche Mutter* and *Malou* are memory narratives about *present* identity processes closely articulated with *past* experienced and/or memorised story fragments that are re-lived in the course of the film in order to work through individual crisis situations. Thus in both films the cyclical re-telling can be seen as a therapeutic working-through in which case the filmic remembering process can be described as *being orientated towards the present*[102]. Finally I do not want to move on without emphasizing that both memory narratives are *female* ways of dealing with the past. Made by female filmmakers and centred on identity issues arising in generational relationships between mother and daughter, these two films are unique in their mode of narration and distinctly different from a whole range of history narratives made by their male colleagues (as I will show in due course). Hence it has to be noted that acclaimed female directors of the *NGC* chose to make films particularly concerned with the temporal in relation to the construction of identity and by doing so created narratives

[99] It is interesting to note though, that the working title of von Trotta's film was *For Lene* (Kaes, 1989: 145) – an expression equivalent to *Malou* and far more personal than *Deutschland, Bleiche Mutter,* which shows a more historicizing orientation.

[100] See, for example, the highly influential psychoanalytic study *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern* (Mitscherlich and Mitscherlich 1977).

[101] Generational issues between the 'Auschwitz generation' and their children have been explored in chapter two.

[102] In the section on uncategorisable or hybrid senses of time I will come back to memory issues by analysing films which can be described as 'memory spaces' (Wenzel 2000). These differ from memory narratives in that they are not constructed to represent the workings of memory processes as such but instead to reach out to the audience. To be more precise, these films' aim is to open up a dialogue about national matters, in which the audience is invited to come forward (metaphorically) with their individual memories.

in which they convey a cyclical sense of time that nevertheless is directed towards a solution and hence a moving-on – a combination of cyclical and linear elements which I described as modulation. In many ways, and as already indicated at the end of the analysis of *Deutschland, Bleiche Mutter*, this sense of time – modulation – can be understood as a narrative/temporal articulation of performative and pedagogical components whereby in the case of the above memory narratives the performative side clearly outweighs the pedagogical.

History or *being stuck in the past*

In many ways 'doing history' can be seen as a social practice which fulfils a similar function to remembering. In an act of (re)narration it reduces the past's infinite number of narratives to a culturally hegemonic sample whose specific thematic and formal composition is most likely to serve the interests of a certain community regarding the construction of a particular group identity. In relation to one another it can be argued that both processes, remembering and doing history, are intrinsically linked through a *double* prefiguring. More precisely, memory is ideologically and narratively prefigured by history since history provides memory with ways of making sense of itself. On the other hand, history obtains part of its resource material out of which it constructs its narratives from memory[103] and is, as such, materially and narratively prefigured by memory.

In terms of national identity, history as a means of cultural reassurance comes to play a similar role to memory in times of crises. Thus, 'historians say that the idea of history can be a symptom of cultural insecurity: heritage becomes important when cultures in turmoils of change are losing their traditions' (Griffiths, 1999: 60). However, as doing national history has since the birth of the nation-state been regarded as a practice of great importance one could even conclude that the nation as imagined community with invented traditions sees itself generally *at all times* – and hence not only in turmoils of change – as being in danger of disappearance[104]. Secondly, we need to pose the question of what happens if it is – as could be argued in the German case – history itself that causes turmoils of change rather than providing cultural stability in the form of positive heritage. To give an example, I refer back to von Weizsäcker's speech in 1985 which was given to mark the 40th anniversary of the end

[103] Here I am especially thinking of oral history methods and practices.
[104] In this respect, Billig's (1995) concept of 'banal nationalism', which is concerned with the maintenance of nation-states, is useful because it demonstrates the strategic ubiquity of national signifiers in modern everyday life. One example he gives is the weather map on television, which shows us the size and shape of our country. Hence, according to him, the nation is constantly 'flagged' as to remind us of its existence.

of the Second World War. As mentioned earlier, on that occasion the then West German president finally defined the 8th May 1945 as a day of freedom rather than defeat for Germany. This point of arrival after two generations of societal struggle shows how long and difficult the process of beginning to come to terms with WWII and especially the Holocaust proved. Thus in the period between the end of the war and the beginning of the *NGC* there was both an inability and a lack of desire for historicizing this defining period of the recent German past.

More specifically, and in view of my following analysis, it can be claimed that the period of German history between 1939-61 has generally impacted upon the films of the *NGC* in the form of a prefiguring which provoked a range of filmmakers to creative responses in many ways. The *NGC* thus made multiple ways of relating to, dealing with and working through this period of recent German history discursively available and, as such, responded to their present existence – 1962-89 – as a way of 'being in the world' which was *stuck without the past*. However, despite this general prefiguring of the *NGC* by German national history there are films that offer a more explicit treatment of the topic of history. And it is these works, classifiable as 'history narratives', which I will examine in terms of their narrative differences in comparison to one another and to the above memory narratives. Here I want to note that while the only two films which met the criteria of being memory narratives turned out to be made by female directors, the five films which qualify as history narratives are made by male filmmakers. By investigating narratives of 'the perpetrator', 'the victim' and the 'normal person', further gender specific senses of the past will become apparent.

History narratives I: male ways of dealing with the past in narratives of the perpetrator

In films about perpetrators such as *Das Spinnennetz* (The Spider Net, Bernhard Wicki 1989) and *Aus einem deutschen Leben* (Death is My Trade, Theodor Kotulla 1977) the protagonists are young men who, as believers, took an active part in WWI. Socialised into a society at war within which the aristocracy as the ruling class was a strong point of reference for these men in terms of lifestyle and power, they subsequently fail to reorient themselves in the Weimar Republic, which in relation to the empire of Wilhelm II is characterized by deep socio-political transformations. Along with these societal changes their own personal life plans and aspirations are shattered and become anachronistic within an instant. From being a soldier, which in militarised (pre-)WWI Germany meant being a respected public figure and a pillar

of society, they have come down to an existence of no real social significance, no economic importance and no emotional 'belonging'. In narrative terms this loss of power and meaning is the result of the transformation of the protagonist from being a national 'hero' into a person playing a minor part if not, a dispensable 'extra', in the (con)text called 'Germany'.

This prefiguring of the films' actual story sets the scene as follows: representatives of the old/pre-war social/economic/political order are confronted with the challenge of taking part in the German post-war re-imagination and re-narration process. The main part of the story then explores the protagonists' development from being narratively marginalized ex-soldiers to people who slowly but surely find their way back to the core of the national narrative in the form of becoming Nazi-officials (e.g. the protagonist of *Aus einem deutschen Leben* becomes the commandant of the concentration camp Auschwitz) and once again indispensable components of a new/old Germany. Thus, these history narratives show how the processes of marginalisation/prefiguring and re-centring/configuring work as narrative articulations in 'storying' Germany during (largely) the inter-war period[105]. The refiguring is then left to agents of the post-WWII period which also includes the audience.

The configuring or main part of the film's story can be fruitfully analysed in contrast to the literary genre of the *Bildungsroman* as it radically inverts its narrative temporality. In the original genre a young person undergoes a process of growing up whereby the narrative especially focuses on mental and emotional processes (generally not physical ones, which indicates the non-essentialist notion of *Bildung*). The narrative's starting point is marked by an initiation of some sort. Here, the individual *plays a part* in a social event or ritual which signifies her/his transition from adolescence to adulthood – an incident that stresses the performative character of identity. However, this ceremonial practice which is bound to mythical time subsequently has to be proven and realised in action and thus in the temporal mode of the everyday. During this quintessential moment of identity construction, or, in other words, at the focal point of a development towards maturity, the individual to be educated is usually accompanied by a mentor who functions as a facilitator and catalyst. It is a journey to realise her/his own potential in a manner that despite guidance can be seen as largely autonomous – an approach to identity inspired by the Enlightenment and in contrast to notions of cultural construction and performativity. Hence the *Bildungsroman* provides complex and

[105] At this point I refer back to my earlier investigation of the film *Der Willi Busch Report* (Niklaus Schilling 1979) in which I have explored constructions of periphery and centre as part of the narrative strategy of this border narrative.

conflictual senses of identification which combine performative and constructivist as well as self-determinist elements. In terms of a sense of time it is primarily a linear past-to-future narrative of personal progress (and as such chronological). However, it also includes aspects of mythical, and thus kairological, time since, through its initiation, it emphasizes 'the spirit of a particular moment' (Griffiths, 1999: 21) whose existential meaning lies in its prefiguring function for the future life of the protagonist.

I will now return to the filmic examples of this subsection to see how this particular format can cast some light on senses of time and identity in history narratives of the perpetrator. In terms of the *Bildungsroman* the war socialisation of both protagonists can not only be seen as prefiguring but even more as initiation experience since it becomes quintessential for the configuring part of the film, which shows the two leading characters' development into Nazi 'heroes'. This makes the future a heightened past insofar as, instead of engaging with the new socio-political situation in the Weimar Republic, both men try to return to already known patterns of behaviour at the core of which lies being a soldier. Hence their inability to imagine *otherwise* results in a sense of nostalgia whose narrative mode of looking backwards can be regarded as opposed to the *Bildungsroman*'s looking forward. Nostalgia renders their present everyday life and their hopes and dreams for the future as versions of the past which they experienced and still treasure as a spatial and temporal 'home'. This clearly suggests that the reference point for their existence even after the war is the one they were socialised and initiated into before and during the war, which causes them to be *stuck in the past.*

However, their longing for the past to return is not an innocent and private issue satisfied in sharing memories with likeminded veterans, family and friends, but virulent and mass-oriented, seeking fulfilment on a national scale. This, primarily, temporal project of turning back the clock has real social implications. It ultimately reverses the social roles of Jews, who before and during the inter-war period often occupied influential positions in society, and potential Nazis, whose members to a large extent stemmed from the lower middle-class (e.g. Hitler himself) and as a social group did not exist prior to the aftermath of WWI. In narrative terms this role reversal can be seen as a figurative replacement which introduces the Nazis to the (con)text of inter-war Germany – *their time has come* – while simultaneously subverting the role of the Jewish people into being reactive rather than active, which in temporal terms means *being out of time.* Hence ultimately, turning back towards the past, to things gone and lives passed away, comes to (re)produce death in one of its most horrific forms: the Holocaust

– a mass execution which exterminated more than six million lives and, although not in any way comparable, destroyed and poisoned the future of its perpetrators.

In this respect, nostalgia in the above films is depicted as a way of relating to the past which brings disaster and puts a premature end to future*s* – in many cases before they even fully began. Thus, to call upon the past in a fashion which does not critically question history in order to be equipped for the challenges of the present and the future but which instead glorifies it, leads to a temporal relationality which can be described as *being stuck with the past*. Moreover, both history narratives have very definitive endings which leave little room for interpretation and questioning on the part of the audience[106], presenting the issues the films raise as concerns which have already been dealt with, a chapter of the big German history book which has been written and submitted to the publisher. As such these two narratives are *stuck in the past*, too – a response which does not really solve the problem posed by the films' societal (con)text whose temporality I earlier characterized as *being stuck without the past*: stuck is stuck, never mind whether *with*, *in* or *without* the past. Thus the films do not make time for dialogue within which new forms of dealing with the past might emerge but they close down the very opportunity for it by presenting a seemingly counter-productive option insofar as the films' narrative temporality suggests to the audience that nostalgia is not the way forward. However, it fails to answer the question: if not nostalgia, then what other way of relating to the past is useful in terms of national identity construction?

To conclude I will return to the *Bildungsroman* concept. Having said that the war can be regarded as providing an initiation experience for both protagonists, their development into Nazi officials seems to clash with the notion of a development towards maturity since it marks a retreat or line of decline with regard to humanity and morality. Furthermore, steered by representatives of the system these men were socialised into, they are not guided towards autonomy or the unfolding of their personal potential but instead instrumentalised for their group's purposes, oppressed and even raped. Finally, nostalgia as the motivating force of the protagonists' actions resembles backwardness and stands in striking contrast to the future-orientation of the *Bildungsroman* concept.

[106] This almost hermetic construction of the narrative is, as we will see at the end of this chapter, the most significant difference between these history narratives of the perpetrator and films which function as memory spaces.

Yet, there is one more parallel between the two narrative structures which is the integration of performative and constructivist elements. Hence, part of the perpetrators' identity can be seen as socially and culturally constructed in the events of the First World War. Regarding performative aspects, one finds elements of cyclicality and repetition through which meaning is generated and conveyed on a figurative level (the ex-soldier becomes a soldier again) and on a historical/national level (the labelling 'WWI' and 'WWII' suggests a progression) which can be regarded as a performative practice to create identities. Nonetheless, overall the history narratives of the perpetrator present linear narratives which show an anti-*Bildungsroman* tendency played out in the protagonists' nostalgic relationship to their past which is subsequently condemned by the historical outcome (the Holocaust). Alas the films do not move beyond this negative depiction of nostalgia to promote a different narrative temporality, for example, one similar to the *Bildungsroman*. They finish by saying 'no'. As such these *narratives of refusal* become objects of their own critique of nostalgia as they remain *stuck in the past*.

History narratives II: male ways of dealing with the past in narratives of the victim

I will now proceed to the analysis of the victim narrative *David* (Peter Lilienthal 1979) which is based on the autobiographical novel *David – Aufzeichnungen eines Überlebenden*[107]. It is a history, rather than a memory, narrative because even though it is based on individually remembered, lived experience it is presented as a representative account of Jewish-German history in the 1930s and 1940s. *David* is similar to the above perpetrator narratives in that it is told using a historicizing and distancing third person focalisation instead of a personal, and involving, first person narration as in the case of the above memory narratives. The time structure of the narrative is strictly chronological without any cyclical or repetitive elements – a regular tempus or pulse that is complemented by a strongly realist visual composition which instead of experimental camera work and montage relies on a near documentary style aesthetic. Besides, the narrative is carefully organised through the use of captions, which provides the audience with dates and brief comments that work like chapter headings in a book. As a result the film overall appears like (and in fact is) an illustration or even a remake of a written historical account to whose boundaries it anxiously keeps rather than making use of its artistic licence to create a self-directed work of art.

[107] Approx. Trans.: 'David – The Record of a Survivor'.

Its historicizing, very controlled and deferential mode of narration seems to prove Griffiths right when she remarks, 'historians say that the idea of history can be a symptom of cultural insecurity' (1999: 60). In this respect, the approach of the film discloses a complicated relationship with the topic of the Holocaust as it contributes to a sense of the national past which is unsettling and threatening as it points towards irreversible collective failure and guilt. This unease then further leads to a handling of this particular narrative temporality as something which has to be contained in order for it not to cause emotional damage on a national scale. Hence the historical narrative of the victim is – similar to the one of the perpetrator – *stuck in the past* as a safe temporality for troublesome narratives to be in.

In a different vein it has to be acknowledged though that the film, despite its temporal closure, also makes a Holocaust narrative discursively available which helps to break an overarching silence that was still the dominant mode of address at the time the film was made. One has to remember that, internationally, the first popular Holocaust narrative (the American television series with the same title) was only made in 1978 and broadcast in West Germany at the beginning of 1979 – when the first German Holocaust film had still to be produced. Accordingly, *David* which was made slightly later that year had to break a national silence and establish a way of narrating this part of the German past which in many ways seemed unspeakable. Hence its tightly structured and somewhat detached handling of the topic becomes understandable as a means of managing this highly demanding and problematic project. Moreover, the source for the film – an autobiography rather than a fictional account – further works as a cultural reassurance in providing the film's narrative with authenticity and thus credibility. It seems to say, 'there are enough Holocaust narratives which are little known yet. We might as well publicise one of them to a large audience instead of inventing a fictional story'.

It can even be argued that through this narrative contribution to the range of available German (his)stories which already existed the film balances its own fixity by becoming part of the spectators' consciousness of the past and through that opening up new ways of thinking about the events between 1933 and 1945. This then could be seen as a way of *being orientated towards the present* in a rather implicit and indirect way. However, this point is speculative and cannot be deduced from the film's mode of temporal narration itself. It remains work to be done by the film's 'outside' or the national (con)text of the narrative.

In terms of nostalgia the film obviously takes a strongly oppositional stance, as the Jewish experience of the above time period is one of genocide and terror. In this anti-nostalgic mode, films of the perpetrators and those of the victims correspond. However, whereas the protagonists of the former are driven by a nostalgic relationship with the past, the male lead in the latter does not look back to times prior to 1933 in an attempt at emotional consolation. Only David's father is reluctant to realise the true significance of the social changes that have occurred in the aftermath of Hitler's seizure of power. He is still holding on to the idea of a functioning Jewish-German community governed by mutual respect, while around him this community is increasingly falling apart. In 1939 the family finally makes plans to emigrate to Israel or America in order to flee *German times*. Even the last bit of nostalgia, which made it possible to stay and cope that long, is used up by then. So pressing are the events of their present that there is (literally) no time to wallow in sentiment. Thus anti-nostalgia becomes the only possible attitude to see the threat clearly, to be able to leave and let go, and ultimately to survive. This perception conveys a sense of history as hell told in a mode of linear regress.

Regarding the film's content, nostalgia is not the only concept which is or has to be dispensed with due to a lack of time which the protagonist has at his disposal because of his need to fight for survival. There is also no time for development in the sense of the *Bildungsroman*: the audience does not see David develop. From the beginning to the end of the film the teenager responds to his increasingly hostile social environment without having the chance to grow into an autonomous individual who actively shapes his life and contributes to his community. More exactly, the Holocaust narrative displays a non-development as a result of having to hide, become invisible and thus in effect subtract oneself from one's social world. In doing so, David is often shown as being stuck in some kind of hideout such as a wardrobe or a cellar. Accordingly, he can be seen as *doubly stuck in time* – on a personal/developmental and on a social/historical level – a temporality whose portrayal can be seen as lying at the core of the configuring part of the film.

The prefiguring or initiation moment is not narrated as such and thus reduced to an implicit beginning as it belongs to any story. The configuring then fills the complete temporal space of the narrative without reaching an end in the form of a conclusion of some sort – the narrative breaks off during the war. Hence the film discloses a sense of time which is stuck not only in the past but also in a configuring mode which narrates the middle part of a story without reflecting much on its beginning, the prefiguring, or its significance for the audience, the

refiguring. As such there are limitations to the content of the film as well as its form of narrative temporality, which makes it a *narrative of closure* that does not call upon dialogue (although it might have implicitly done so by offering a new, that is the victim's, perspective to ongoing national debates) – a shortcoming which is disappointing especially with regard to the topic and the cultural context within which it was produced.

History narratives III: male ways of dealing with the past in narratives of the 'normal' person

I will finish this part of the analysis of senses of the past by examining (his)stories of the 'normal' person for which I have chosen to look at *Stunde Null* (Zero Hour, Edgar Reitz 1976) and the *Heimat* series (Edgar Reitz 1984). *Stunde Null* is set in July 1945, two months after the end of the Second World War, and it has as its protagonist a teenage boy, Joschi, who develops increasingly anti-nostalgic feelings in relation to Germany and its recent past – an attitude which becomes visible as he trades a Hitler plate for cigarettes with an American soldier and wears a leather jacket from the American army. At the same time he turns more and more into a fan of America and its culture until he says close to the end of the film, 'I want to leave this crap country! One cannot help but see that the Americans are the greatest!' This positive attitude towards the so-called 'liberators', however, again changes when at the very end of the film a group of American soldiers take away all his possessions along with his girl-friend, leaving him alone and empty-handed in the middle of nowhere – an incident which he responds to by yelling, 'You pigs!'

This storyline, which features a teenage boy (about 16 years old) who in the course of the film develops a particular sense of Germany's national past influenced by certain incidents in the present, brings the analysis back to the *Bildungsroman* concept. The prefiguring of the film's main story, or Joschi's initiation, lies before the actual beginning of the history narrative and is composed of the events surrounding the end of the Second World War from which the film derives its title: *Stunde Null* (Zero Hour). This term, as mentioned above, refers to the end of the Second World War – the 8th May 1945 – and thus marks the point of departure for post-war Germany. Symbolically it is the starting point of a new national calendar, a defining date which conveys a historical sense of time. In this respect the figure of Joschi acquires a metaphorical quality. Beyond representing a 'normal' boy he simultaneously becomes a personification of post-war German experience and an embodiment of a particular German

Zeitgeist as his personal initiation is narrated as coinciding with the national initiation of his country.

In the main part of the film, or during the configuring process, Joschi/post-war Germany develops a negative attitude towards the recent national past which in the form of a Nazi trophy is regarded as worthless (or probably even damaging) with regard to present meaning-making practices. Thus, the act of giving away the Hitler emblem generates positively felt results in two ways: it rids oneself of a part of the past which hurts as it resembles an irretrievable national disaster, plus one gets a piece of prosperity in return which seems to suggest a better future. Moreover, Joschi mingles with American soldiers and wears one of their leather jackets, a performative action that makes him less German and more American. In addition, it is an early indication of the imminent Americanisation of West Germany which will see a mass import of American culture and consumer goods into the country. In terms of narrative temporality, new *American times* have arrived in old Germany – a time change which is quickly adjusted to by the majority of the German people since for them going back is not an option and new perspectives of their own have not yet been developed, neither individually nor collectively. In other words, the new outfit glosses over and hides the past's dirty costume under a temporal coating that produces feelings of comfort.

This growing resentment towards the German past together with the increasing enthusiasm for the promise of an Americanised future is finally questioned by the last scene of the film in which the American friend turns out to be rather unfriendly. Thus everything which Joschi is proud of and which suggests a future is taken away by the people he waves at and runs towards in the belief that they will recognize him as one of them. Yet the fact that he wears an American army jacket makes them suspicious instead of trustful – as suspicious as they are about the German past. Hence they 'Other' Joschi and with him post-war Germany which metaphorically sends him back in time. Rid of his insignias of the future he is left how he started: on his own, deprived of hope and possessions and hence far away from everything and everyone.

This ending of the history narrative ascribes a completely new meaning to the expression *Stunde Null* (Zero Hour) in opposition to its starting point connotations. In view of the changed narrative context, zero hour can mean 'time running out' since one does not only count upwards starting with 'zero' but, depending on the occasion, also downwards, for

example, during a countdown, which takes the event *back to the future*. Moreover, the term can mean 'lost time' (like 'ground zero' can be understood as 'lost place'), an interpretation which is probably the most convincing one in this case. According to this reading, Joschi and post-war Germany are temporally *lost* between their Nazi past and an Americanised future since both temporalities seem impossible to live in. Hence the 'normal' man and post-war Germany, which is narratively associated with him, are lost in-between two incompatible temporalities – a conflict which Reitz resolves in his later production *Heimat* – a title that in itself already provides the answer to the question 'where in time?' It suggests, 'back to the past, back to ourselves'.

In many ways *Heimat* can be seen as a continuation and further elaboration on the specific sense of the past developed in *Stunde Null* in which the filmmaker, like Joschi in the last scene of the latter film, answers an American call. He artistically responds to the American television series *Holocaust* with his own production to which he attributes the subtitle 'Made in Germany' and thus returns the treatment of the German past as a topic to Germany itself (from the national 'outside' to the national 'inside'). By doing so Reitz has already made a decision between the German past and an Americanised future. It has to be the German past which the German people have to turn to in order to make sense of their present self. This understanding of the past as immediately productive puts forward the idea of *positive* nostalgia in opposition to the notions of *negative* or anti-nostalgia one gets from the above narratives of the perpetrators and the victims. The positive understanding of the term sees nostalgia as 'a strategy for coping with change, loss, or anomie. The nostalgic view, then, can provide an integrative service by reassuring individuals (and nations) that continuity – what one sociologist calls a "restitutive link" – exists between former and current conditions' (Behlmer, 2000: 7).

The actual narrative implementation of the concept of positive nostalgia is based on the construction of the national past as being the realm of the 'normal' man with whom, as argued above, Germany associates itself rather than with the perpetrator or the victim. Both the role of the perpetrator and that of the victim are extremist ways of relating to German history that do not lend themselves easily to mass identification. On the contrary, the character of the 'normal' man offers the possibility for emotional closeness and narrative self-recognition to the audience, which both other versions of narrating the past as history do not provide.

In comparing the narrative construction of *Stunde Null* and *Heimat* one can argue that a role similar to Joschi's in the earlier production is played by Maria in the later series. This figurative modulation presents the audience with a relatively ordinary character that in relation to Joschi, however, is far more symbolically charged. To start with, this main protagonist in *Heimat* is called Maria like the (eternal and timeless) Holy Mother who within the Christian narrative occupies a central position. Her name and the gendered social role of the mother characterise Maria as the symbolic and (re)productive centre of communal life in the village, which to a large extent seems to revolve around her and of which she is a constituent part. Secondly, she is born in 1900 and as such literally embodies 20th century Germany as the narrative moves from the end of the First World War in 1918 to 1984, the year in which the production was broadcast. The narrative temporality revealed in this construction of the film's main figure is that of national history as an organic linear progression, and it renders Maria the *timeline* of the village against and to which every event is measured and necessarily linked. With Joschi, she shares anti-American sentiments as she, too, loses a loved one, her husband Paul, when he emigrates to the United States without involving her in his decision. Yet whereas *Stunde Null* finishes with this anti-American attitude, *Heimat* starts with it (Paul leaves her at the end of the first episode) – a narrative feature which further illustrates my point that in relation to one another both films can be understood as successive narratives of modulation.

Besides these figurative aspects, the concrete treatment of history in the form of relics moves from the simple exchange of economically not very valuable goods (a Hitler plate versus cigarettes) to something, which might be called a capitalist 'sell-out of history'. This anti-nostalgic act, however, is not committed by Maria herself who as the *nostalgia mater* has to condemn this commodification of historical objects. Instead it is her second son who, as part of his business, trades traditional house facades taken from Hunsrück farms in the region for modern/urban ones. As a result of his dealings he actively contributes to a narrative/temporal cleansing of *Heimat* in terms of its historical signifiers. More precisely, he takes away temporal markers and historical inscriptions and, as such, erases specific memories of this particular place. Consequently, he threatens the temporal and spatial identity of Schabbach and the region by turning its 'homing' typicality into an '*unhomely*', uniform facelessness. In this respect, capitalism is portrayed as a crucial anti-nostalgic factor, which betrays *Heimat* in the pursuit of economic success.

The memory of the place, however, manifests itself not only in material objects; it also exists in the form of stories and images in the minds of the villagers. And it is amongst them, that I found another narrative/temporal hybrid who acts as a narrator, performer and memoriser. It is an old man who, from the position of a relative outsider (as is revealed in his performance; he never marries and has no children of his own but is still an integral part of the community), tells the story of the village from memory. He unfolds his narrating and memorising function at the beginning of each episode when, with the help of personal photographs, he brings the audience up to date with what happened in the story so far – a mode of narration which inserts a certain *orientation towards the present* into the otherwise historical narrative temporality of the film. More precisely, the simultaneously remembered and narrated (oral) village history, told in the process of going through a private photo album at the beginning of every episode, creates an intimate atmosphere and, to some extent, turns the spectator into a member of the village as s/he follows the life (his)stories of the core family around Maria. Thus s/he becomes an insider and the borders between *their* (his)story and *my* (his)story as well as between history and memory are blurred.

Moreover, the film's mode of narration conflates the processes of prefiguring, configuring and refiguring which were distinctly different in the two films discussed previously. As a consequence, national 'events' such as the Second World War and the Holocaust are not appropriately elaborated in terms of their nationally defining importance. Rather, their significance is minimized, which in narrative terms has a de-politicising and de-historicising effect. Individual events such as the 80th birthday of Maria, however, are distended to fill the void, which which leads to an over-emphasis of private and memorial matters. Consequently, the story, which claims to represent the recent past/history made in Germany, largely excludes what can be seen as *the* most crucial event of the first half of the 20th century for any post-war German identity construction: the Holocaust. Thus the film fails to illustrate the complex prefiguring role of WWII for the subsequent post-war era. The apparent complexification – the inclusion of memory aspects as part of the narrative/temporal hybridisation of the history narrative – along with a mode of narration that collapses the prefiguring, configuring and refiguring stages into one figuration does not lead to the construction of a multi-layered history narrative analogous to the earlier memory narratives. Instead of drawing out the interconnectedness and reciprocal relationships between the different levels and elements of a history/memory narrative, the film swallows and obscures complexity.

As a final point, I want to investigate more closely this most crucial cleansing process of the film, which works as an eloquent silence behind the scenes of *Heimat* and which has been heavily criticised by Santner (1990): the narrative marginalisation of the Holocaust. There are no representations of anti-Semitism, of life in concentration camps, or Jewish suffering in general. The only WWII images the film offers are the death of Maria's lover who gets blown up on the job (he is a bomb expert) and how her brother, his wife and other members of the village turn into Nazis, while she remains – as a good 'normal' German – critical of them without, however, ever being overtly and actively opposed. Thus, although the narrative is different from the previous history narratives in that it addresses the past in a positive, or nostalgic, manner, it leaves the audience *stuck in time*. The film does not offer any working-through as it presents the spectators with a version of German history in which the trauma is narratively glossed over and treated only as 'background noise'. In this way, the audience is reassured in its 'it wasn't all that bad back then' attitude, which is silencing rather than inducing of dialogue. What is more, a nostalgic mode of narrating history seems to lead to similar problems as does an anti-nostalgic one. Both narrative temporalities produce and disclose a sense of *being stuck in the past* as the past still seems unmanageable and hence appears like a threatening beast or demon which has to be contained to prevent further emotional damage. However, as it remains *stuck in the past* it cannot spill over into the present or future to contaminate these times as well. Hence the past stayed past and left the present longing.

4.3 Being (in the) now: senses of the present

The investigation of *NGC* past-to-future narratives moves now from the films' past to their immediate present, knowing that only in the (relatively) exceptional case of two memory narratives the past is treated in a way that provides constructive contributions to ongoing national identity constructions by *being orientated towards the present.* Alternatively, the majority of films, whose topic is the past and which are set in this particular temporality, reveal a sense of time which I have called *being stuck in the past.* Hence the question arises whether the following present-centred films will, or even can, provide representations of an isolated *now* without going back to the largely unresolved question of how the past is part of present national identity constructions. It has to be suspected that the following analysis of productions concerned with the present will have to 'pick up the pieces' which the above history narratives left or pushed back into a state of distant and seemingly secure pastness – a

way of dealing with the challenges and traumas of the past (i.e. WWII and the Holocaust) which can be seen as rather pacifying than genuinely problematising or productive. However, it is important to note that, 'there is no absolute and simple break between now and then. There is a blurred border like a frayed cloud, not a separation of time but the difference of two modalities' (Griffiths, 1999: 49).

The return of the repressed or the presence of the Holocaust

Two films which I want to position precisely on this blurred border between past and present and which I thus regard as 'temporal border narratives' are *Abrahams Gold* (Abraham's Gold, Jörg Graser 1989) and *Das schreckliche Mädchen* (The Nasty Girl, Michael Verhoeven 1989). Besides their shared narrative temporality they were both produced in 1989 and, as such, can be seen as temporal border narratives in reference to the specific time frame of my analysis within which they are locatable at the very 'end of the present'. The following investigation will examine their sense of the present in relation to narrative/temporal elements of the previously discussed films which look back at the past, namely memory narratives and history narratives about perpetrators, victims and 'normal' people.

In *Abrahams Gold* we have another anti-*Heimat* film whose story, however, unfolds in a radically different way to the anti-*Heimat* productions discussed in the previous chapter. At first one is lured into thinking that *Abrahams Gold* is a *Heimat* film. A fourteen year old girl, Annamirl, is seen collecting mushrooms in the woods – a scene which beyond its *Heimat* film aesthetic can be interpreted as a reference to the famous fairytale Little Red Riding Hood. And so one becomes alert... yet in the subsequent scenes the representation of further *Heimat* film components follow. There is the Bavarian village with its church bells and traditionally built houses, which turns out to be Annamirl's 'home'; there is her loving grandfather Alois who owns a pub in the rural idyll; there is the romantic rural landscape within which she meets friendly villagers who are on their Sunday walk and greet her in a friendly and caring fashion; there are her rural dress and hairstyle, her out-of-date name, and her (rather childlike) striking naivety and innocence which can be seen as quite untypical for a teenager in the late 1980s. All in all, one feels one has been transported back to another time, or more precisely to the viewing of a 1950s *Heimat* film production whose style seems strangely anachronistic for a film made in 1989 and hence it arouses one's suspicion.

Then the catastrophe starts to unfold. The *Heimat* film format, linked to a nostalgic narrative temporality, is first challenged by the arrival of Barbara Hunzinger, known as Bärbel, who is Alois Hunzinger's daughter and Annamirl's mother. Her whole appearance and behaviour stand in striking contrast to that of the average villager and portray her as an outsider. She appears overly sexualised through the way she dresses; she drinks heavily; she stays in bed until midday and is without a job; she does not confine herself to the traditional role of the female (unlike her daughter) and challenges her father who is one of the main authorities in the village. Overall, she disturbs the nostalgic narrative temporality of the film's opening sequence and can be seen as a personified wake-up call for the village community, which seems to be *stuck in the past*. However, she is not the longed-for saviour who with a gentle kiss awakens Sleeping Beauty back to *being in the now*, but a herald of greater disaster that brings with her the cold breath of death to the warm and sunlit *Heimat* setting.

The tragedy develops further when Alois decides to go on a supposed holiday to Eastern Europe together with Karl, his best friend – an endeavour that turns out to be more of a business trip straight to hell. What is so 'hellish' about this undertaking is that the present, represented by Alois and Karl, (commercially) exploits the victims of the past, namely Jewish concentration camp inmates, a second time. More precisely, the two men dig up Jewish tooth gold which Alois hid in the woods of Auschwitz II (aka Birkenau)[108]. Leading the operation, Alois, the 'normal' man from the present, discloses himself as the perpetrator from the past who is about to abuse past victims once more in the present. Hence the narrative temporality of *Abrahams Gold* appears as an articulation of the three types of history narratives discussed above, that is (his)stories of the perpetrator, the victim and the 'normal' person. This modulation process between history narratives and this temporal border narrative links a range of past and present 'Selves' and opens up the possibility for past narratives to make contact with the present. As a result, the history narratives get a chance to leave *being stuck in the past* behind for *being orientated towards the present* in an act of working-through. However, at the same time this modulation poses the danger of repeating the past in the present which would make the present into, what might almost be considered, a 'second past'. Consequently, this renders the narrative as *stuck in the past* rather than a time necessarily linked with, yet also distinctly different from its temporal predecessor.

[108] Here again, though dramatically heightened in comparison to its representation in *Heimat*, capitalist eagerness betrays nostalgic notions of *Heimat*.

Before I move on, it has to be noted that as an important outcome of Alois' narrative/temporal betrayal his 'true' persona is exposed. In fairytale terms one now has to assume that he is neither going to be the elderly victim of the wolf nor the helpful forester who saves Little Red Riding Hood at the end of the story but the evil and greedy wolf himself who is deceiving the innocent girl into trusting him so that he can ultimately take advantage of her. And as he digs deep down to get to his long-hidden treasure he does not bring to light a past as glamorous and shiny as its gold, but instead he unearths past crimes, deaths, (his)stories, memories, nightmares, things which up until then were securely *stuck in the past* since in some sense being attached to the gold itself. Exhumed from the depths of the past (which here seems to function as a narrative/temporal unconscious), they break into the present as not-worked-through traumas and subsequently poison the later narrative temporality.

If one looks a little closer at this narrative/temporal collision of the nostalgic pastness of the village with the anti-nostalgic pastness of the Holocaust one can see that it coincides with the simultaneous occurrence of the film's prefiguring and configuring processes. It becomes clear that the narrative/temporal *Heimat* episode has not a prefiguring but a *disfiguring* function, as it misleads the audience by luring them into seeing the present as a conflictless form of the past or pure nostalgia which in Lowenthal's words is 'memory with the pain removed' (1985: 8). Thus the prefiguring is postponed to the beginning of the actual configuring when the history narrative which lies beneath the *Heimat* surface erupts and merges with the (up until then) merely present narrative. As a result, it inserts the past into the present and finally positions *Abrahams Gold* on the border between the two modalities of time.

While Alois and Karl are away it becomes apparent that Bärbel can be seen as a past and present (and thus a temporal border) victim of her father, too. She seems to have been beaten regularly by him as a teenager – acts of violence, which she vividly recalls and links to her relationship problems as an adult woman. Hence the narrative reveals that, besides his involvement in the Holocaust, Alois became a perpetrator within his own family where he exercised violence over the seemingly deviant 'Other', in this case his teenage daughter. And so yet another history narrative forces its way from the past to the present and demands recognition and working-through. Likewise, another modulation underlines the repetitiveness of Alois' actions. Comparable to taking away the tooth gold from the murdered Jews in the past to be sold and turned into wealth in the present, Alois took Annamirl away from Bärbel right after her birth to mould her into a person of his own liking and to have emotional and

practical support (she keeps him company and works in his pub). From these historical narratives Alois emerges as a self-centred and cold-blooded perpetrator who readily sacrificed other people's happiness and lives in the pursuit of his own desires.

But Alois's sacrificing and victimising spree is not confined to actions in the distant or immediate past as he carries on in the present, and mistreats Karl and Annamirl. Coming back from their journey, Alois pays Karl for his help with a handful of golden teeth. A few days later, Karl's mother finds these, as she wants to wash her son's clothes. Shocked by her discovery she asks him about his trip with Alois and finds her son to be completely unaware of the ethical implications of what he has done: he rejects any guilt by pointing to the fact that he was born in 1938 – an attitude which sees the past as 'over and done with' and thus of no particular importance for the present, neither in general nor in personal terms. Because she cannot bear her son's indifference towards the past for reasons soon to be revealed, she decides to give him a box with old photographs and letters which tell him the story of his beginning and which allow for the Holocaust not only to crucially prefigure Alois's present life but also Karl's – only in diametrically opposite ways.

Karl Lechner is in fact David Sternenmeer, the youngest son of a Jewish family who lived in the village before the Second World War. When his family was transported to a concentration camp, their maid saved the baby by claiming that he was her's. From then onwards she raised him as her son and never told him about his true origins (which she wanted to keep secret until her own death) and thus essentially *disfigured* his life story. However, now she feels she cannot wait any longer and breaks her silence. As a consequence, Karl's whole identity is shattered as he takes on a new persona, that of David Sternenmeer. As such, he immediately breaks off his friendship with Alois who for him changes from being his best friend to being a potential murderer of his family. Hence the personal past (although not actively remembered by Karl/David himself) is given preference over the actually experienced present in terms of making his present life meaningful. This discloses a sense of the present as being fragile and ready to disappear in the overwhelming presence of the past.

When Alois realises that he cannot buy himself out of the present situation (he offers Karl money but the latter declines his offer), he decides on an alternative strategy to put the past back where it (according to his opinion) belongs: in the past. In front of Annamirl, he positions himself as a victim of Jewish intrigues behind which, he claims, Karl is the driving

force. He denies his involvement in the Holocaust, even going as far as suggesting it never happened. He finishes his anti-Semitic rant by asking Annamirl to help him get rid of the person whom he describes as wanting him dead: Karl. He asks in a threatening tone of voice: 'The Jew or me?' Since Annamirl does not know what else to do, she agrees to help her grandfather by declaring that Karl raped her. Consequently, Karl is taken to the police station where Annamirl, however, cannot sustain her lies. As an act of revenge Karl wants to take Alois to court for being a mass murderer in the concentration camp Auschwitz II/Birkenau but the police officers advise him to keep quiet. When he says he will not let things rest, everyone denies responsibility. This episode then produces the first *present* victim and shows the ongoing national process of further silencing the Holocaust: state institutions, in this case the police, and people in positions of power, such as Alois, still prove reluctant to engage in any working-through.

The second last scene shows a tragic culmination of events as Alois discovers Annamirl's dead body hanging from the ceiling of the attic. She committed suicide because she could not bear the 'truth' about her grandfather's past and present persona. Realising that he was and is a Nazi perpetrator completely shattered her sense of 'belonging' to him and her identity in the present. However, as her mother could not offer her a 'home' either, she sought her rescue in a different narrative temporality over which her grandfather has no control. And Alois, rather than being sad or feeling guilty, accuses her of betraying him just as all the others before. Her death again supports his point of being the ultimate victim and as such provides a final closure instead of an opening up to the present. Thus he fails to recognize his responsibilities as a first step towards a working-through and hence a new sense of 'belonging'.

In the final scene Karl/David and Bärbel meet at Annamirl's grave – a gathering which unites all three of Alois's *present* victims and shows their overwhelming sense of 'homelessness'. Annamirl took her life in the face of the narrative/temporal 'homelessness' caused by her grandfather as it left her with neither a present nor a future perspective. Karl/David and Bärbel articulate their 'homelessness' in the following dialogue as they walk away from the grave:

> **Karl/David:** I don't feel comfortable here any more.
> (...)
> My Heimat is lost in any case.
> **Bärbel:** Heimat... (*she replies in an ironic tone as if to say: 'Heimat does not exist anyway'.*)

In the example of this temporal border narrative, the narrative/temporal contact between past and present ultimately leads to a historicisation of the present rather than a working-through of the past, here specifically the Holocaust. The perpetrator (Alois) – even if not fully aware – re-enacts being a perpetrator and the people close to him either remain his victims (Bärbel), are victimised by him again (Jewish people who were killed in the Holocaust), or become his new victims (Karl/David, Annamirl). Thus, victimisation processes linked to the perpetrator's past are perpetually repeated in the present, which indicates that in this film the mode of modulation does not indicate cyclicality and *pro*gress but cyclicality and *re*gress. More precisely, the film draws a direct line from the Holocaust to Annamirl's suicide and thus brings the national/political 'home' to the personal/private.

In effect, the generational or family history reads as follows: the first generation (Alois) belongs to the narrative/temporal category of the 'normal' man (on a surface level) and that of the perpetrator (on a repressed level); the second generation (Bärbel, Karl/David) consists of 'homeless' victims produced as such by the first generation; the third generation (Annamirl) is equally affected/victimised by the first and the second generation and as a result chooses death over life. In this way, the destruction in the past is followed by 'homelessness' in the present and culminates in death, which means 'no future'. This alignment of past, present and the anticipated future in an anti-nostalgic narrative temporality shows the present as being overshadowed by the past to such an extent that one gets a sense of the present as *being stuck in the past*. Thus the film is another anti-nostalgic plea to work through the present national identity dilemma by recognising the prefiguring function of the Holocaust, the *disfiguring* role of nostalgia and silence, the configuring as being in the present problematic state of things, and the refiguring as a task to resolve these problems – a narrative/temporal challenge which essentially asks the audience to become the missing *narrator/performer/memoriser.*

The second temporal border narrative I want to analyse in terms of its sense of the present is Michael Verhoeven's *Das schreckliche Mädchen*. Right from the beginning, the film presents itself as being a particular kind of memory narrative. Sonja, the film's narrative/temporal hybrid, tells the audience the story of her beginning which includes her childhood and teenage years in a Bavarian village called Pfilzingen. However, instead of the serious tone of the memory narratives discussed in the previous section, Sonja's remembered, narrated and performed life story is told in a caustic-ironical fashion which nevertheless successfully

avoids compromising the seriousness of the content matter. This mode of narration is especially noteworthy since, apart from Achternbusch's surreal storytelling, which, as can be argued, possesses a certain kind of humorous absurdity, the vast majority of productions are told in a rather earnest if not melodramatic manner.

Besides these narrative/temporal elements of the memory narratives which form a constitutive part of the film's composition, *Das schreckliche Mädchen* can more accurately be described as in parts being a *historicized* memory narrative insofar as the film is based on a true story which took place in Passau/Bavaria – a detail which authenticates the narrative. Hence in this temporal border narrative not only the border between past and present but also the one between memory and history is blurred or broken down which makes the film a *cross-temporal* border narrative.

On a figurative level, the articulation of the three narrative/temporal entities of the narrator, the performer and the memoriser is strengthened through the actress Lena Stolze performing the *past* Sonja and the *present* Sonja as well as lending her voice to the memorising and narrating voice-over which mediates between the two modalities of time. This adds further to a breaking down of narrative/temporal boundaries and subsequently renders the narrator, the performer and the memoriser as being different aspects of the same, an interpretation which supports my concept of narrative/temporal hybridisation and relates to the past and the present as being modalities of the one dimension: time.

As far as the development of the story is concerned *Das schreckliche Mädchen* shows many similarities to *Abrahams Gold.* Sonja, like Annamirl, is an innocent teenager who lives in a village with *Heimat* appeal. However, due to the caustic-ironical mode of narration the spectator is never lured into thinking s/he is watching a Heimat film but instead one is aware of the anti-*Heimat* quality of the film right from the start. However, like the opening sequence of *Abrahams Gold*, the *disfiguring* function of the *Heimat* episode becomes apparent when Sonja starts to investigate the village's history as part of her taking part in a national essay competition hosted by the West German President at the time. The essay title reads: 'My hometown during the Third Reich'[109]. Hence to bring the past/history back into the present is here – in contrast to *Abrahams Gold* – not a mere accident, bound to a capitalist act of greed

[109] I could not help but feel reminded of my own school experiences discussed in the opening paragraph of the thesis. Thus I must have been about Sonja's age when I was asked to write about 'are you proud to be German?' Maybe we even took part in a similar competition…

carried out by an individual perpetrator, but an intentional and ethically motivated educational project which can be seen as being part of a national process of working-through.

The combined prefiguring and configuring starts to unfold its narrative/temporal power when Sonja's socio-historical research is hindered by deliberate silence and rejection which goes as far as files not being available to her. As a result she cannot complete her project and misses the deadline. *Heimat* and nostalgia seem to prevail over a critical working-through. Yet even though Sonja seemingly forgets about her failed participation in the above essay competition and goes on to live the typical life of a young woman in the countryside – she finishes school, gets married and shortly after becomes the mother of two children – she does not give up on her unfinished history project and finally decides to go to university to study German studies, theology and, most importantly, history.

Still driven by the desire to uncover Pfilzingen's largely unknown, or rather, hidden, past and history, the nice girl turns nasty. She no longer accepts the silencing strategy of the community's governing body and takes it to court where she wins the right to investigate the community's archives. However, the mayor and the archivist continue to hinder and sabotage her research so that only by chance does she get hold of the crucially important files she is looking for. Increasingly, her critical attitude and her uncompromising search for the historical 'truth' spark off a whole range of serious antipathies from the side of the villagers who, like Alois, favour a nostalgic sense of the present. This historicisation of the present turns it into, what I earlier called, a 'second past', and includes letting the considerably problematic history be *stuck in the past*.

Having written her book about Pfilzingen's past, despite substantial personal and professional difficulties stemming from within the rural community, Sonja's position is then unexpectedly strengthened from the 'outside'. She is awarded an honorary doctorate from three different universities which acknowledge her great academic achievements. Moreover, Juppenack, an influential professor from the village whom she discovered to be a Nazi perpetrator and who took her to court for damaging his reputation, loses his case against her. Hence the *temporal* 'outside', which is not part of the history under investigation, helps her to be able to make the history narrative which was *stuck in the past* into a memory narrative that is *orientated towards the present*.

This appreciation from the *temporal* 'outside' finally has an effect on the *temporal* 'inside', too. Thus, the supporters of the formerly nostalgic village time who kept themselves warm in a coat of cleansed history throw this away to face the cold wind of the present stirred up by Sonja. They turn against Professor Juppenack, since Sonja's claim about him having been a Nazi is verified by the court – a legal as well as a moral judgement which consequently marks him as an evil perpetrator from the past and her as a hero from the present. In effect, Sonja, the former outsider, is temporally reunited with the village population in the present and simultaneously cleared of the accusation of being 'the nasty girl'; once more, she is embraced as the nice girl. The village people even further align themselves with her by saying that they have known it all along. This statement, however, reveals their still largely uncritical attitude towards the(ir) past since this way of talking about it is not the result of a successful working-through but instead is a 'yes' to a change of time which can no longer be avoided. Thus the *time-giver* in the village is not Juppenack or the nostalgic past any more but Sonja who represents the anti-nostalgic present.

This re-temporalisation based on a temporal alignment between Sonja and the village people, however, proves to be considerably fragile when they go over the top in their praise for her. They start to display her book in a wide range of local shops along with making arrangements for erecting a statue of her. During the unveiling ceremony, when a temporal happy ending, the reconciliation between the village people/the past and Sonja/the present, seems possible, Sonja blows the formal procedure by giving a speech in which she accuses the audience of wanting to silence her through the honouring process. She does not believe that the event is meant to pay tribute to her efforts to move the village *towards the present*. Thus, rather than being happy about her achievements and instead of seeing her work on the past as a success for the present and maybe even the future, she interprets the event as a point of closure and not as an opening up of a dialogue about the past. In this respect, the function of the memorial as represented in this film is, ironically, less one of encouraging remembering than one of allowing oneself to actively forget. By externalising the memorising process, Sonja sought to bring to an end its internalised and individualised status, yet, despite her efforts, making communally available her research findings proves unproductive in terms of the project of working-through. Furthermore, when Sonja starts to insult people, her mother prevents her from speaking by clasping her hand over her mouth – an act that, though not consciously, proves Sonja right once more.

The last scene discloses a sense of the present as being in a never-ending conflict with the past since it demonstrates the ultimate impossibility of reconciliation between these two modalities of time. At the core of the struggle seems to lie a fundamental trust issue since the village people at first (when still *stuck in the past*) do not believe that Sonja's research is not about damaging the reputation of the village and that of certain individuals in it but about the production of knowledge as part of a process of working-through; thus they position her outside of their cosy temporal realm which makes her realise her 'homelessness'. In contrast, when they finally appear willing to step outside of their temporality to join her in the present, she rejects their *time travel* as an act of closure in the process of which the ongoing present is turned into a past-like temporality since a non-working-through poses the danger of repeating the past in the present (see Alois). And again, Sonja is 'the nasty girl' – a monstrous present 'Other' created by a community with a largely nostalgic, past-oriented view of the present which rather than coming to terms with its monstrous past 'Self' silences it by putting all blame onto Juppenack and those, who as scapegoats, are again 'Othered' and subsequently excluded from the community. After the exclusion of the *present* as well as the *past* monstrous 'Other' in the form of Sonja and Juppenack, village life can then return to its former nostalgic temporality which renders the people of the present as *being stuck in the past*.

The emergence of an anti-repressive force or the pastness of German terrorism[110]

Das schreckliche Mädchen serves as an exploration of the question of how a highly integrated and 'homed' person who is perceived of as nice by her social environment can turn into a (self-)alienated and monstrous 'Other' who in the end fights precisely the community she comes from – a struggle which, as outlined above, can be understood in temporal terms. From this analysis of the importance of the Holocaust for the present, I now want to move on to an investigation of the significance of the repressive silencing or non-working-through of the past for the emergence of terrorism in West Germany in the 1970s. In the following I will examine *Die Bleierne Zeit*[111] (The German Sisters/Marianne and Juliane, Margarethe von Trotta 1981) and *Deutschland im Herbst* (Germany in Autumn, *NGC* teamwork 1978) since both films focus on the specific case of post-war West German terrorism as a temporal

[110] Here I want to largely focus on the particular narrative temporality of German terrorism. Its social aspects will be part of the investigation in the following chapter.
[111] Lit. Trans.: 'The Leaden Time'.

response to the unresolved issue of the nationally pertinent past-present struggle represented in the temporal border narratives analysed so far.

Die Bleierne Zeit, similar to *Abrahams Gold* and *Das schreckliche Mädchen*, contains a prefiguring childhood story (in this case seemingly without any *disfiguring* elements since free from nostalgia) which is presented through flashbacks that penetrate the configuring or main narrative. Here, the audience is introduced to the protestant-puritan family life of Marianne and Juliane's parents and their two teenage daughters in post-war West Germany. An important subtext of the film is the biography of Gudrun Ensslin, which serves as a historicizing and authenticating device for *Die Bleierne Zeit* similar to the true story upon which *Das schreckliche Mädchen* is based. However, although both plotlines show striking similarities, as, to put it very simply, they are about nice girls who turn nasty, *Die Bleierne Zeit* is not a memory narrative since it does not feature a *narrator/performer/memoriser*. Rather it seems to offer an intensified version of the narrative temporality in *Abrahams Gold* in the sense that in *Die Bleierne Zeit* one not only finds past-present perpetrators (similar to Alois), past-present victims (like Bärbel, Karl/David and Annamirl) and past-present 'normal' people (akin to *disfigured* Alois) but in Juliane, von Trotta has created a character which represents all three past-present subject positions.

Juliane is presented as having been a nice, 'normal' teenager, obedient to and particularly fond of her father, a Protestant minister and patriarchal head of the family. Yet, in the present of the film she has become one of the leading members of the RAF who lives in hiding and is involved in terrorist attacks. As a perpetrator she has victimised her partner (who, after her decision to leave him and to join the RAF, committed suicide) and her young son (whom she left behind to be cared for by her ex-partner and then her sister) and was involved in the killing of FRG representatives such as Hanns Martin Schleyer on a national level. However, between the past nice girl and the present terrorist she also – and this interpretation is supported by many dialogues between Juliane and her sister Marianne – sees herself as a victim of familial and national circumstances, as if the prefiguring of the 'happy' middle-class family life was a deceitful *disfiguring* bound up with the national practice of silencing the Holocaust. This narrative temporality can then – with reference to the memory narratives' *narrator/performer/memoriser* – be conceptualised as *victim/perpetrator/'normal' person*. More precisely, the term describes a narrative/temporal hybrid which is composed of the history narratives' victim, perpetrator and 'normal' person, yet, placed in a narrative of the

present. Its narrative/temporal function is to refer to the *disfiguring* quality of 'normality' which, as I have demonstrated in the analysis of the temporal border narratives, is often articulated with a nostalgic framing of the present.

The dominant representation of Juliane, despite her multiple narrative/temporal identities teased out above, is, however, the one of the present perpetrator. Hence, both Sonja in *Das schreckliche Mädchen* and Juliane in *Die Bleierne Zeit*, are portrayed as young women who have decided not to further accept and excuse the non-working-through attitude of the supposedly 'normal' people in their parents (Juliane) and grandparents' (Sonja) generation. As a result, Sonja embarks upon academic research to uncover her village's hidden Nazi past and to break the silence about past crimes against humanity committed by Juppenack and other village authorities during the Third Reich. In comparison with her, Juliane goes one step further (away from the past and towards the present). Far beyond Sonja's limited and local narrative/temporal project which only accidentally reaches out to other narrative temporalities when she is awarded several honorary doctorates, Juliane's narrative/temporal intervention is national right from the start. And, as a highly dubious reward, she makes it – retrospectively – not only into the village chronicle but earns herself a place in the national history of the FRG.

In this respect, Juliane is portrayed as the 'Other' national perpetrator. Thus in contrast to the usually male soldier (e.g. Alois) who is prepared to die fighting *for* his nation because he passionately identifies with it, she is a terrorist who is prepared to die fighting *against* her nation since it is an entity she largely identifies against. To be more precise, she regards (West) Germany as still heavily infiltrated by fascistic elements and power structures as a consequence of a non-working-through of the national past/history which she, from a present point of view and linked to personal experiences, so strongly contests that she is convinced the use of force and overt violence is justified. Hence she can be seen as a *time terrorist* who fights the pastness in the present in order to liberate it from the grip of temporal residues, which threaten to overpower a sense of the present as present. Evidently, her temporal endeavour is anti-nostalgic in the most extreme sense of the word.

This amalgamated narrative temporality from which one gets a sense of the present as being weighed down by the past is perfectly captured in the original German title whose symbolic meaning is unfortunately lost in its English and American version which both solely focus on

the literal constellation. Thus the latter re-named the film whose original title translates as 'The Leaden Time' into 'The German Sisters' and 'Marianne and Juliane'. However, the expression 'leaden time' portrays a sense of the present as being a heavy and burdened narrative temporality since, metaphorically speaking, it carries not only its own weight but that of the past, too. Furthermore, in view of the fact that lead is a dull, grey and not very shiny metal, a *leaden* present carries associations with being only of a shadowy existence instead of unfolding its full creative potential of giving rise to a qualitatively different (and hopefully better) timely 'being in the world' than its temporal predecessor. Finally, lead is a substance whose intake is deadly for humans[112] and hence a *leaden* present evokes the image of a poisoned and dying time that, as has to be assumed, makes a future largely inconceivable. Aesthetically, the impression of a 'leaden time' is achieved in the film by the predominant use of shades of cold colours such as blue and grey as well as pastel and subtle hues to emphasize the *greyness* of the time. The use of bright colours like yellow and red, which might signify happy times, is consciously avoided.

In the penultimate sequence of *Die Bleierne Zeit*, Juliane is found hanged in her high security prison cell – an incident that in the case of the real terrorist Gudrun Ensslin is argued over until today. It has never been satisfactorily proven that she committed suicide (even though this is the official interpretation), which leaves the possibility open that she was executed. This brings me to what Griffiths calls the 'relation between time and sacrifice' (1999: 18). It can be argued that Juliane puts herself on the line, in the last instance willing to sacrifice her life for a better national present. In doing so, her attitude and actions represent a long, yet, 'little-acknowledged human universal' (ibid.) – a statement which Griffiths proves by referring to examples from ancient Indian, pagan, Aztec, Mexican and Mayan traditions. In these cultures sacrifices were offered to turn the day, the season, or the year forward. If one applies this understanding of time and sacrifice as being intrinsically linked to *Die Bleierne Zeit*, Juliane is sacrificed or sacrifices herself for time to move on and thus for the German narrative temporality not to remain eternally *stuck in the past.*

Deutschland im Herbst, the last film I want to consider under the rubric 'senses of the present', starts where *Die Bleierne Zeit* left off. In a way similar to the above film's usage of the metaphor 'leaden time' it invokes a sense of heaviness, greyness and deadliness by using the metaphor 'in autumn'. As I said at the beginning of this chapter, when I investigated time

[112] As we have just recently learnt, Beethoven supposedly died of lead poisoning.

referents in the titles of a range of *NGC* films, the expression 'Germany in Autumn' calls to mind a country close to its fall or end of existence since in the course of a year autumn comes before winter, the time associated with death. Likewise, *Deutschland im Herbst* picks up on the time and sacrifice motif embedded in the topic of (German) terrorism while further elaborating and broadening it. Thus the film does not concentrate on one individual victim or perpetrator – either on the side of the terrorists or on the side of state representatives – but at the core of the narrative lies the juxtaposition of the funerals of the three key RAF terrorists Gudrun Ensslin, Andreas Baader and Jan-Carl Raspe and the state funeral of Hanns Martin Schleyer in October 1977.

Through this articulation of people associated with different narrative/temporal subject positions in relation to the national narrative temporality, the boundaries between victims and perpetrators are broken down once more. There is Schleyer, the spearhead of the West German economy at the time, who used to be a Nazi/soldier in the Second World War. He is a perpetrator from the past, then a Nazi, and in the present, a representative of capitalist exploitation and proof of fascist structures still operating in West Germany (according to the terrorists), who becomes a victim in the present as he is executed by the terrorists for being the perpetrator that he was and is. The terrorists, on the other hand, first see themselves as victims of their perpetrating parents, then they reject the victim position for the one of the perpetrator by killing Schleyer, and lastly they turn into victims again by either being killed or killing themselves.

The narrative/temporal mode of the 'normal' person is largely left to other figures in the film such as Fassbinder and his mother, Kluge's fictional history teacher Gabi Teichert and several other fictional characters who play parts in small scenes which function as comments on the overarching perpetrator-victim theme. Hence, extremism is portrayed as a 'real' possibility even for the 'normal' person because it appears to surround and cross over with 'normality', thus challenging the 'normal' person to critically reflect upon his/her narrative/temporal positionality and to takes sides. According to this understanding, extremism is born out of, what one might call, *disfigured* 'normality' – a notion which relates back to the concept of the *victim/perpetrator/'normal' person.* Yet, instead of being personified by the main protagonist as in *Die Bleierne Zeit*, in *Deutschland im Herbst* this narrative temporality seems to be embodied by the German nation which as a collective is composed of perpetrators, victims

and 'normal' people whose subject positions in the narrative temporality of the nation are, it seems, at times interchangeable and not fixed but fluid.

In terms of its production time, the film *Deutschland im Herbst* was made shortly after the incident from which it derives its title, and it is maybe the most striking filmic expression of the *NGC*'s interest and engagement in West German society at the time. It is a combination of feature film and *Zeitgeist* documentary, which was realised as a teamwork involving a range of *NGC* filmmakers such as Fassbinder, Reitz and Kluge. Composed of fictional and non-fictional episodes it tries to come to terms with the events of autumn 1977 which culminated in Gudrun Ensslin, Andreas Bader and Jan Carl Raspe being found dead in their high security prison cells in Stuttgart-Stammheim. However, in addition to an investigation of these contemporary events the film moves beyond the immediate present to relate the incidents to issues of the German past, especially fascism, and thus to frame and contextualise the West German society of the filmmakers' period with the German society of their parents' time. For example, we see Fassbinder having a moving dialogue with his mother about democracy and her role within it. As an outcome, the present is represented as a contested narrative/temporal space within which the deadly past, personified by the war generation, struggles with the active and creative present, embodied by their children's generation (with the terrorists on the one hand and the *NGC* on the other) – a conflictual narrative temporality which ultimately causes deaths on both sides/sites.

Deutschland im Herbst is probably the most convincing example of a strongly present-oriented narrative temporality aimed at working through the traumatic events. In this respect, it works, to some extent, like the two memory narratives *Deutschland Bleiche Mutter* and *Malou* described above. It mourns the clash between past and present, between fascism and terrorism, between the WWII generation and the student movement, between parents and children. In this way, generational issues are brought to the fore (as in the two memory narratives), which renders the present as being a web of past presences and present pasts, spinning around a national collective of victims, perpetrators and 'normal' people, that is post-war Germany. Into this swirl of narrative temporality the audience is drawn as well. More exactly, the documentary footage can be seen as *Zeitgeschichte* on celluloid which explicitely refers to the spectators' immediate past experiences and hence calls upon an already existing discourse in which the film attempts to intervene. Through this dialogical character, which indicates the will to work-through the present events rather than to adopt the

past mode of narration which silenced and thus *disfigured* past and present, *Deutschland im Herbst* becomes a doubly dialogical enterprise: multi-voiced (inside the film) and inviting new interventions by crossing the border between the film's 'inside' and its 'outside' audience.

The film's temporal horizon captures a crucial moment in the existence of post-war West Germany and is, as such, simultaneously about the immediate (and still very present) past as well as already being part of history. Its dialogical construction then offers an alternative way of dealing with a national trauma in relation to the *disfiguring* and silencing strategy employed by the majority of narratives from the past in trying to come to terms with the Holocaust. This is not to say that the German Autumn of 1977 is in any way comparable to the Holocaust, however both incidents can more or less be seen as narrative temporalities of an extremist nature ending in a national trauma narrative. Thus the *NGC*'s narrative effort might be regarded as an attempt not to repeat the past in the present and to find a more productive mode of narrative temporality, which allows for the trauma not to become repressed and subsequently weighing on the future. It can even be seen as an attempt to work through both traumas at once, since the Holocaust and the German Autumn are portrayed as intrinsically linked and, hence, by working through the second one the first one has to be necessarily addressed as well. In this respect, the RAF's innate pastness along with its strongly anti-nostalgic attitude towards this past bring about the emergence of an anti-repressive narrative temporality, or in other words, a present infused with self-hate and self-sacrifice which quite literally invites the repressive elements of the past to fight a present-past duel over the right to hold sway over the present national narrative. For the time being and as represented in *Deutschland im Herbst*, the fight is won by the past as it removes the present-oriented, troubling narrative/temporal elements of West German terrorism and thus restores the predominance of the past in the present, which is rendered as having yet again become *stuck in the past*.

4.4 Looking ahead: senses of the future

The chapter will now proceed to the investigation of what is to come from the past/present narrative temporalities represented in films of the *NGC*. As indicated before, films concerned with a portrayal of senses of the present also had to engage with issues of the past since it proved to be a major element of the national self-narration in the present. Hence the *NGC*

productions which I analysed in the previous section tended to be temporal border narratives rather than being purely about the present. This narrative/temporal construction principle of border-crossing translated into an articulation of performative and pedagogical components which slightly differed from the one of the memory narratives. Thus, representing a sense of *being stuck in the past*, the temporal border narratives were leaning more towards the pedagogical side. In terms of working-through they further proved to be a modulation of the memory narratives, turning the narrative temporality of the *narrator/performer/memoriser* into that of the *victim/perpetrator/'normal' person* – a narrative/temporal mode that identifies problematic ways of relating to the past and as a resolution offers self-sacrifice or terror. Taking these findings into account, what narrative/temporal space does the unresolved past and the *disfigured* present allow for a future 'being in the world'?

The above film analyses revealed that the representations of the present found in present-oriented narratives are for the most part modulations of the past – the present is portrayed as being populated with past/present perpetrators, victims and 'normal' people who due to not working through their past re-construct its narrative temporality in the present. This cyclical sense of time discloses a national narrative, which appears cursed to remain *stuck in the past*, and it poses important questions regarding the mere possibility of a future. If there is no self-governing present, then how and to what extent is a future being-for-itself conceivable? Here the analysis of senses of the future in *NGC* films seems to get stuck before it even started, since there is no single production which shows a distinct treatment of this modality of time. However, as the future has to be seen as a temporal essential not to be excluded from the national narrative, I aim to compensate for this lack of specific 'future narratives' (an absence which, of course, is indicative in itself) by investigating the endings of all the *NGC* films which I consider immediately relevant to my project as a whole. By employing this method, I assume that the ending of one narrative always prefigures the beginning of another or future one which means to some extent the (relative) continuation of the *old* in the *new*. In this I follow Wright who says, 'stories are repeatable and they make sense above all in terms of their *endings*' (1985: 14, my emphasis).

Most of the 82 *NGC* productions that I will use for my *Endzeit*[113] analysis have either been examined in chapter three and four so far or will be analysed in chapter four and five to come. To make sense of this considerable number of film endings in terms of their allusion to

[113] Lit. Trans.: 'End of time'.

possible narrative/temporal futures, I propose the following categories which will serve as an analytical grid to locate these last scenes within the overall national narrative temporality: 1. Happy Ending, 2. Open Ended + (alluding to a happy ending), 3. Open Ended – (alluding to a disaster), and 4. Tragedy/Death. In what follows, I am going to momentarily abandon the qualitative method of close analysis that I have applied in my investigation of filmic sources so far and to which I will return for the last section of this chapter. Alternatively, and in view of the vast amount of material, I favour the use of a table in which I will mark the appropriate ending category for every individual film (see below). To achive a certain clarity and to keep the chart manageable I will, however, focus mainly on the protagonists.

Film Title	**Happy Ending**	**Open Ended +**	**Open Ended –**	**Tragedy/Death**
Abrahams Gold (Jörg Graser 1989)				Homelessness of the surviving victims, death of the innocent girl, continuing national 'silence'
Abschied von Gestern (Alexander Kluge 1965/6)				Homelessness and imprisonment of the main protagonist
Aguirre, der Zorn Gottes (Werner Herzog 1972)				Everyone but the main protagonist has already died, yet his death is impending
Alice in den Städten (Wim Wenders 1974)		Reunification between a mother and her daughter, a conscious new beginning for the main protagonist		
Angst essen Seele auf (Rainer Werner Fassbinder 1973)				Failure of a marriage between a Moroccan guest worker and a German cleaner with the former becoming life-threateningly ill
Angst vor der Angst (Rainer Werner Fassbinder 1975)				Depression of the main protagonist and suicide of a depressive neighbour
Aus einem deutschen Leben (Theodor Kotulla 1977)				Execution of the protagonist for administering the Jewish mass ex-ecution in Auschwitz
Bildnis einer Trinkerin (Ulrike Ottinger 1979)				Homelessness and alcohol addiction of the main protagonist
Cobra Verde (Werner Herzog 1987)				Impending death of the main protagonist

Film Title	Happy Ending	Open Ended +	Open Ended –	Tragedy/Death
Das Andechser Gefühl, (Herbert Achternbusch 1974)				Wife murders her husband after ten year of an unhappy marriage
Das Boot (Wolfgang Petersen 1981)				Death of the main protagonist along with that of several other protagonists when finally coming home
Das letzte Loch (Herbert Achternbusch 1981)				Suicide of the main protagonist
Das schreckliche Mädchen (Michael Verhoeven, 1989)				Homelessness of the main protagonist
Das Spinnennetz (Bernhard Wicki 1989)				Rise of National Socialism, murder of the main Jewish character
Das Unheil (Peter Fleischmann 1970)				Turmoil in a small community, end of a familial idyll, death of a documentary filmmaker, murder of an innocent girl
Das zweite Erwachen der Christa Klages (Margarethe von Trotta 1977)		A political activist and criminal is unexpectedly saved from having to go to prison by an eye witness		
David (Peter Lilienthal 1979)		The main Jewish protagonist escapes in a Nazi uniform		
Der Amerikanische Freund (Wim Wenders 1977)				Death of one of the main protagonists and of several other characters
Der Mann auf der Mauer (Reinhard Hauff 1982)				Homelessness of the main protagonist, problematic love relationships
Der plötzliche Reichtum der armen Leute von Kombach (Volker Schlöndorff 1970)				Death of six poor farmers who had been involved in a bank robbery: two commit suicide and the rest is executed
Der Stand der Dinge (Wim Wenders 1982)				Murder of the main protagonist and of another figure
Der Willi Busch Report (Niklaus Schilling 1979)			Local chaos causes a nervous breakdown of the main protagonist since the things he initiated have got out of hand	

Film Title	Happy Ending	Open Ended +	Open Ended –	Tragedy/Death
Deutschland, Bleiche Mutter (Helma Sanders-Brahms 1979)				A couple's marriage ends in bitterness and coldness in which their daughter freezes
Deutschland im Herbst (Teamwork, 1977/8)				Death of three RAF terrorists and Hanns Martin Schleyer
Die allseitig reduzierte Persönlichkeit – Redupers (Helke Sander 1977)		The everyday life of a West-Berlin artist		
Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter (Wim Wenders 1972)			The main protagonist murdered a woman and is running away from the police	
Die Atlantikschwimmer (Herbert Achternbusch 1975)			The main protagonist embarks on a swim across the Atlantic consciously risking his life	
Die Blechtrommel (Volker Schlöndorff, Margarethe von Trotta 1979)				Extinction of a whole family, more or less caused by the main protagonist
Die Bleierne Zeit (Margarethe von Trotta 1981)				Death of one of the main protagonists
Die dritte Generation (Rainer Werner Fassbinder 1979)				Death of several main protagonists and kidnapping of another
Die Ehe der Maria Braun (Rainer Werner Fassbinder 1979)				Death of the main protagonist and her husband
Die Nacht des Marders (Maria Theresia Wagner 1987)				Murder of one of the main protagonists and subsequent suicide of another
Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum (Volker Schlöndorff 1975)				Murder of one of the main protagonists and imprisonment of two others
Die Patriotin (Alexander Kluge, 1979)		Hope of the main protagonist for a better German history		
Die Vertreibung aus dem Paradies (Niklaus Schilling 1976)		Death of a mother reunites her son and daughter and frees the latter at last		
Dorado (Reinhard Münster 1983)	Happy end for everyone			
Effi Briest (Rainer Werner Fassbinder 1974)				Death of the main protagonist

Film Title	Happy Ending	Open Ended +	Open Ended –	Tragedy/Death
Eine Reise ins Licht (Rainer Werner Fassbinder 1978)				Murder of an innocent character through the hands of the main protagonist, causing the latter increasing panic attacks
Falsche Bewegung (Wim Wenders 1974)				Homelessness of the main protagonist
Grenzenlos (Josef Rödl 1982)		Two outsiders free themselves from a range of communal constraints and enter a love relationship		
Händler der vier Jahreszeiten (Rainer Werner Fassbinder 1971)				Suicide of the main protagonist
Heidenlöcher (Wolfram Paulus 1985)				Death of one of the main protagonists and two other characters
Heimat (Edgar Reitz 1984)				Communal/individual homelessness: Death of the main protagonist as the end of the 'Heimat' era
Himmel über Berlin (Wim Wenders 1987)	The two main protagonists enter into a happy love relationship			
Hitler – ein Film aus Deutschland (Hans Jürgen Syberberg 1977)				Hitler and fascism, since inherent in German life and culture, have ruined the latter forever
Herz aus Glas (Werner Herzog 1976)				A town's moral and financial bankruptcy, impending extinction
Hungerjahre (Jutta Brückner 1979)				Suicide attempt of the main protagonist
Ich liebe Dich, ich töte Dich (Uwe Brandner 1971)				Death of the main protagonist and of two policemen
Im Lauf der Zeit (Wim Wenders 1975)		A conscious new beginning for both main protagonists		
In einem Jahr mit 13 Monden (Rainer Werner Fassbinder, 1978)				Suicide of the main protagonist
Jagdszenen aus Niederbayern (Peter Fleischmann 1968/9)			Physical violence against one main protagonist and imprisonment of another, communal celebrations	

Film Title	Happy Ending	Open Ended +	Open Ended –	Tragedy/Death
Jeder für sich und Gott gegen alle (Werner Herzog 1974)				Murder of the main protagonist
Kaltgestellt (Bernhard Sinkel 1980)				The main protagonist sacrificed love for political ideals, is badly injured and hunted down by the police – awaiting imprisonment
Karl May (Hans Jürgen Syberberg 1974)				Death of the homeless author who sees dying as a means of 'coming home'
Land der Väter, Land der Söhne (Nico Hofmann 1988)	Son works through the story of his beginning/his family's Nazi guilt			
Lebenszeichen (Werner Herzog 1968)				Madness and possible death of the main protagonist
Lili Marleen (Rainer Werner Fassbinder 1980)				Nazism destroys the love relationship between the Jewish and the German protagonist
Lola (Rainer Werner Fassbinder 1981)				Immorality and corruption win against the 'good' individual
Ludwig – Requiem für einen jungfräulichen König (Hans Jürgen Syberberg 1972)				Suicide/murder of the Bavarian King Ludwig II
Malou (Jeanine Meerapfel 1980)	The main protagonist has successfully worked through her identity problems and thus saved her marriage			
Mathias Kneissl (Reinhard Hauff, 1971)				Execution of the main protagonist
Messer im Kopf (Reinhard Hauff 1978)				A homeless and mentally as well as bodily harmed main protagonist, broken marriage
Morgen in Alabama (Norbert Kückelmann 1983)				Death of the main protagonist
Mutter Küsters' Fahrt zum Himmel (Rainer Werner Fassbinder 1975)				Death of the main protagonist and other characters

Film Title	Happy Ending	Open Ended +	Open Ended –	Tragedy/Death
Nachtschatten (Niklaus Schilling 1971)				Suicide of one of the main protagonists
Nicht versöhnt oder es hilft nur Gewalt, wo Gewalt herrscht (Jean-Marie Straub, Danielle Huillet 1965)				Homelessness and attempted murder of the alleged murderer of one of the protagonists' grandson
Paris, Texas (Wim Wenders 1984)			The main protagonist walks off into nothingness, implying possible death/suicide	
Pioniere in Ingolstadt (Rainer Werner Fassbinder 1971)				Murder of one of the characters, dysfunctional love relationship: sex without love
Regentropfen (Michael Hoffmann, Harry Raymon 1981)			A Jewish family is denied the right to emigrate to the US and thus possibly faces the Holocaust	
Rheingold (Niklaus Schilling 1977)				Death of the main protagonist following a murderous attack of her husband
Schonzeit für Füchse (Peter Schamoni 1966)			Two old friends have come to the parting of their ways	
Schwestern – oder die Balance des Glücks (Margarethe von Trotta 1979)				Recurring pathological relationships between women ending in suicide and loneliness
Servus Bayern (Herbert Achternbusch 1977)				Murder of the main protagonist and of another character
Stammheim (Reinhard Hauff 1985)			Problematic court case with four RAF terrorists being accused of terrorism and murder	
Stroszek (Werner Herzog, 1977)				Suicide of the main protagonist, homelessness and imprisonment of the other two
Stunde Null (Edgar Reitz 1976)				Homelessness of the main protagonist
Tätowierung (Johannes Schaaf 1976)				Homelessness of the main protagonist who murders his stepfather
Tarot (Rudolf Thome 1985)				Death of a baby and of two protagonists

Film Title	Happy Ending	Open Ended +	Open Ended –	Tragedy/Death
Theo gegen den Rest der Welt (Peter F. Bringmann 1980)			Endless series of attempts to escape various personal problems	
Überall ist es besser wo wir nicht sind (Michael Kliers 1989)		A possibly final meeting of the two main protagonists whose outcome is, however, uncertain		
Verfolgte Wege (Uwe Janson 1989)	Happy end after the war – two lovers find one another			
Wallers letzter Gang (Christian Wagner 1988)			The homeless main protagonist walks off into nothingness – possible death	

If one translates the results of the chart into figures and percentages this reads as follows: altogether, there are 5 Happy Endings (6%), 8 Open Endings + (10%), 10 Open Endings – (12%) of which 5 end with an impending death (6%), 58 Tragedies/Deaths (71%) of which 39 end with a definite death (48%) and 4 with an impending death (5%). This means that 59% of the *NGC* productions chosen for the study of West German national identity constructions end with a definite or impending death. These *dead ends*, in the literal sense of the word, leave no room for future imaginings since they represent a point of closure beyond which there is no narrative/temporal continuation possible. One might deduce that this is the consequence of the past-present struggle in the present, within which the present is defeated by the past – a narrative/temporal domination from which the present can only escape by leaving the realm of time: life (as exemplified in the character of Annamirl in *Abrahams Gold*). Thus, demoralised from being defeated by the past in their own narrative temporality the representatives of the present seem to hold no hope in the future in terms of being able to work through the past in order to achieve relative narrative/temporal autonomy.

On the other hand, death (and here especially suicide) can be seen as a last attempt to push time forward by sacrificing oneself or becoming a victim, and through that assuming a narrative/temporal counter-position in relation to the past one of the perpetrator. This renders the personal death/sacrifice as a present antidote to the past's poisoning narrative temporality which might be understood in the form of the following equation: perpetrators + victims = 'normal' people. In this equation, the 'normal' people represent the present's longing for temporal synthesis which then might lead to a narrative temporality that incorporates and

neutralises both narrative/temporal extremes of the past and the present and makes a new and productive future conceivable.

These results resonate with my initial findings that there is a significant absence of future narratives amongst *NGC* productions. However, having analysed narratives of the past, the present and the future, one can conclude that the past is the modality of time most important for West German national identity constructions according to the representations in the above *NGC* films. The present comes second since it derives its importance through being the past's narrative/temporal successor. As such the latter can exercise its power over the former by passing on its unresolved issues and thus successfully turning the present into a border temporality subsumed by its narrative/temporal antecedent. As a consequence the present is highly dependent on the past and has, since still struggling to come to terms with its Nazi heritage and the Holocaust, not (yet) managed to produce a narrative temporality of its own. It derives its sense of time from a negative relationship with the past as the concept of the *victim/perpetrator/'normal' person* shows. This means for the future that instead of following on from a present, it largely follows on from this present's past which effectively renders it, what one might call, a 'second present' or, still more accurate, a 'third past'. Therefore, as the national narrative/temporal space is completely filled with – one could even say 'colonized' by[114] – troublesome past and (though to a much lesser extent) present narrative temporalities, there does not seem to be any space for imagining a future. To paraphrase Gramsci, 'the old is dead and the new cannot be born'.

4.5 Looking back and forth and all around: uncategorisable or hybrid senses of time

Apart from the previous analysis of representations of the past, the present and the future there are also *NGC* films which – especially through the use of particular editing techniques – transcend these temporal categories and even go beyond being temporal border narratives. They are characteristically composed of a multiplicity of *thens* and *nows* and hence offer another narrative temporality, which I want to draw out as part of the following analysis (we can suspect, however, that it will have a strongly performative character). As always, the

[114] This notion of the national, that is Nazi, past as having, metaphorically speaking, a 'colonizing' grip on post-war West Germany resonates with Stratton's (2003) argument that the Holocaust can be understood in '(post-) colonial' terms, which connects Germany with real and symbolic 'colonial' experiences.

question is: how will this narrative temporality support (or hinder) a national process of working-through on the level of representation as well as on the level of reception? Can it, in opposition to the majority of the narratives analysed above, get beyond the incisive portrayal of the national narrative/temporal status quo as *being stuck in the past*?

Kluge, on whose work I will focus here in particular, says 'goodbye to yesterday' in the form of challenging the dominant narrative conventions of genre and realism. He avoids composing his narratives, such as *Abschied von gestern*[115] (Yesterday Girl, 1966) and *Die Patriotin* (The Patriot, 1979) in a linear, progressive fashion since this would infer the ultimate intelligibility of the world. Instead he confronts the audience with a disorienting composition of broken and incomplete story pieces drawn from a range of documentary as well as fictional sources, which presents itself rather as work in progress than as a finished narrative. Through this editing technique, Kluge creates multi-layered and knowingly intertextual collages, which turn his films into 'accessible memory spaces' (Wenzel 2000). By this, Wenzel means that the audience is invited to come forward with its own memories and understandings of images, sounds and signs which then can be negotiated with those of the film. Thus Kluge's narratives are challenging in two ways. First they question seemingly fixed hegemonic knowledge along with its truth claim. Secondly they provoke the audience to engage with film as *a building site for meaning-making* in order to use it as a space for the development of creative and new imaginings.

Wenzel develops his concept of film as *Gedächtnisraum*[116] using Assmann and Assmann's notion of social and cultural memory (1992 and 1994) for the analysis of films made by filmmakers such as Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet, Harun Farocki, Hartmut Bitomsky and Kluge. He describes film as a 'socio-cultural memory storage' within which disparate, historically and/or politically inscribed and thus *used* material is brought together in the *new* context of the film without being re-organised according to a particular logic or world view. This technique of mixing a multiplicity of *thens* and *nows* in an egalitarian fashion discloses a radical narrative/temporal openness as the films' main construction principle. Through this programmatic narrative *inter*temporality, borders between different narrative temporalities which might exist within individual productions are not only questioned but dissolved. Furthermore, Wenzel sees the films in question as opening themselves to their audience by

[115] Lit.: Trans.: 'Goodbye to Yesterday'.
[116] Approx. Trans.: 'Memory Space'.

having no clearly defined borders – they invite dialogue instead of asking for identification – by means of which they challenge the notion of the *auteur* and his/her autonomous artistic product. Instead the concept of films as memory spaces presupposes a memorising subject outside of the film which is willing to actively engage with the cultural text. Finally, in opposition to the majority of (his)stories of whatever format, films that can be perceived of as being memory spaces make their constructedness visible and might hence be seen as anti-ideological and democratising. In effect they break up existing narrative/temporal contexts and make their components discursively available for the construction of new narrative temporalities, which are *orientated towards the present and the future.*

Wenzel's performative notion of films as accessible memory spaces can be regarded as a complexification and further elaboration of what was earlier described as a *hybrid* narrative temporality in films conceptualised as memory narratives. To be more precise, films made by filmmakers such as Kluge can be seen as opening up a dialogue with the audience who, by entering this discursive space as part of the reception process in the cinema, become a *narrator/performer/memoriser* themselves. This process of identity construction happens *outside* of the film, while also being in negotiation with the articulated narrative/temporal activities of narrating, performing and memorising *inside* the film. It is, however, fundamentally facilitated through the formal organisation of the film, which consciously leaves gaps within the narration process.

To give an example, Kluge's film *Die Patriotin* is told from the perspectives of the knee of a fallen soldier – a position which due to its obvious limitations leaves considerable space for the audience to fill in and hence to become a co-narrator. As far as the performing is concerned, the documentary character of large parts of the film invites the audience to put forward their own experiences and recall images from their own life which are connected with some of the events shown. Thus, it has often been argued that in the case of a major national event, such as the assassination of John F. Kennedy in America, people remember precisely what they were doing at the time of this internationally defining moment. Accordingly, the end of WWII, the building of the Berlin Wall or the collective deaths of the RAF terrorists can be seen as narrative/temporal points of reference in (West) German national as well as individual terms. Hence the representation of such national benchmarks as part of Kluge's filmic collages calls upon the audience to remember and maybe even to emotionally relive some of their personal performances and to relate them to national performances *then* and

cinematic ones *now* – in effect becoming a co-performer. This brings us finally to the memorising function which the audience participates in by recalling past national, along with personal, performances which again facilitates the fragmented narrating process to work through the spectators filling in the gaps.

To conclude, the concept of film as memory space assumes a *narrator/performer/memoriser* outside of the film who, in conjunction with the cultural text, brings about an individual narrative temporality of working-through. This is not manifest in the film itself but develops as part of the dialogue between film and spectator to cause an effect in the latter. It thus emphasizes that the narrative/temporal process of working-through has national as well as personal aspects and that the national project of working-through requires a joint, yet individualised, effort. In this respect, Kluge's films can be regarded as initiating a multiplicity of dialogues at the same time (that is, during one sceening). If we keep up the metaphor of the film collage as narrative/temporal storage, people entering this storage will find different items interesting, appealing, thought-provoking, useful, and others boring, meaningless, anxiety-producing, or even repulsive. At this point it seems important to note that the storage metaphor, too, resonates with the notion of the unconscious, whereby especially in the case of a personal trauma or illness which needs working-through, a revisiting of one's repressed (his)story fragments offers the prospect of healing and subsequently the prospect of *being in the present and orientated towards the future*. In this psychoanalytic light then, films categorisable as memory spaces possess a potentially therapeutic quality that might enable their audience to eventually say (with Kluge) 'goodbye to yesterday'.

4.6 Conclusion

In relation to the analysis in the previous chapter which clearly established the predominance of anti-*Heimat* elements in representations of place in a range of *NGC* productions, the investigation in this chapter shows anti-nostalgia as being the prevalent mode of narrative temporality in films disclosing symptomatic senses of the past, the present, the future or hybrid temporalities. To be more precise, the place called 'West Germany' is in temporal terms largely represented as *being stuck in the past*; only in the case of memory narratives and films conceivable of as memory spaces does one encounter films which attempt to go beyond accounts of narrative/temporal *stuckness* by portraying and offering (as part of the reception

process) possible ways of working-through to arrive *in the present and be orientated towards the future*[117].

This national project of reconciling past, present, and future narratives and with them the respective narrative/temporal identities of perpetrators, victims and 'normal' people by working through the trauma and loss connected to WWII and its aftermath can be understood as an attempt to acquire the narrative/temporal agency of the *narrator/performer/memoriser* in the memory narratives or its generic companion in the films as memory spaces. In this respect, the memory narratives' narrative temporality with whose investigation I started my analysis – disclosing a particular sense of the past as *being orientated towards the present* – finds its closest narrative/temporal ally in the memory space's *being in the present and orientated towards the future*. Hence my analysis in some sense comes full circle – a metaphor that by suggesting a moment of recurrence adds to the notion of narrative/temporal *stuckness* rather than indicating a transgressive move *away*, *towards* or *beyond*. Thus even the most radical narrative/temporal filmic form cannot break away from a certain national cinematic 'repetition compulsion' as Sigmund Freud would have it.

Let us stay with Freud for a moment and consider his concept of 'mourning and melancholia' in relation to the narrative temporalities encountered in the films above. Thus one could argue that mourning and melancholia can be regarded as different versions of anti-nostalgia. In this way, the anti-nostalgic process of working-through – portrayed in the memory narratives as *being orientated towards the present* and called for in the films as memory spaces as they appeal to the audience to *be in the present and orientated towards the future* – represents a crucial act of mourning which, according to Freud, is the 'normal' (here understood as healthy) response to the experience of loss. Alternatively, the anti-nostalgic depictions of *being stuck in the past* – as I have shown in the case of history narratives, temporal border narratives, and in the analysis of film endings – resemble a form of melancholia which Freud described as a 'pathological disposition' (1984: 252). As a result, the analysis of different modalities of time and temporality in films of the *NGC* revealed an anti-nostalgic melancholia as being the dominant national narrative temporality, however, framed by an anti-nostalgic mourning process which (though to a limited extent) can be seen as instigating some movement in the otherwise largely *stuck* narrative/temporal relationality.

[117] It is important to note, however, that *NGC* films which represent a narrative/temporal *stuckness* (for example, in the form of death/suicide or tragedy) might still convey constructive communal/social imaginings which I aim to explore in the following chapter.

I will now conclude by returning to the concept of performative and pedagogical time which, as stated in the introduction to this chapter, together build the 'double and split time of national representation' (Bhabha, 1994: 144). Here, it is interesting to note that the above discussion seemingly confirms Bhabha's model of a 'double national temporality' through the notion of anti-nostalgia being split into a mourning and a melancholic mode. In this way, melancholia resonates with the pedagogical insofar as it perpetuates a sense of time that is expressed in chronological beginning-to-end narratives of a historical kind which centre around a core logic (*being stuck in time*). Mourning in its representation of narrative/temporal fragmentation, non-sequentiality, cyclicality, ambivalence and openness challenges the generic conventions of the melancholic/pedagogical and in doing so, resembles the performative. However, whereas the performative in Bhabha's model is accountable for a sense of unsettlement, uncertainty, repetition and recursion, thus producing a 'loss of identity' (ibid.: 153), and the pedagogical is responsible for supplying a sense of certainty, coherence, continuity and national identity along with 'belonging', my investigation of national temporalities in *NGC* productions suggests an inversion of these narrative/temporal relationalities in terms of their identity-constitutive function.

As the pedagogical is melancholic in the case of West German national representations taken from productions associated with the *NGC* – and thus pathological according to Freud – it fails to create constructive national self-imaginings and instead remains *stuck in the past* since it is unable to work through national traumas and losses. This narrative/temporal *stuckness* then encourages a national sense of 'homelessness' in the present together with a lack of future imaginings. In terms of the performative, which in the case of this investigation has a mourning quality to it, this 'homelessness' as *stuckness* is met by a second, yet oppositional and more productive version of a 'homelessness'-inducing narrative temporality. The latter challenges the former's pedagogical national identity politics by breaking up its common narrative/temporal structures, which got the national project of working-through and towards a new sense of 'belonging' *stuck* in the first place.

Hence I want to argue that Bhabha's model (even though necessarily modified for the specificities of this particular case study) is relevant for the investigation in question as it leads us to identify a sense of *deepened* 'homelessness' that emerges from an analysis of symptomatic *NGC* productions. However, the outcome of the ongoing struggle between the

melancholic/pedagogical and the mourning/performative is open. Thus the dominant sense of 'homelessness' as *stuckness* is fundamentally challenged by a form of 'homelessness' as *openness* whose declared aim it is to overcome national fixations which got in the way of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. And despite appearing to be a relatively marginal narrative temporality, this process of introducing dialogue into stillness (in the double sense of the word: immobility and silence) could eventually lead to, as it were, the 'homelessness' of the 'homelessness' which might give way to 'belonging'.

Chapter Five

Relative Strangers

5.1 Community, society and nation

Looking back at the preceding two chapters on place and time I will now complete[118] the (admittedly rather Hegelian) tripartite unity of my discussion on West German national identity constructions in films of the *NGC* with a chapter on the social. I am arguing that, besides its specific senses of place and time, a national way of 'being in the world' also, or even most importantly, has a social dimension. More precisely, the analysis of place-related issues along with the narrative/temporal function of protagonists such as the hunter/poacher and other (anti-)heroes and heroines in anti-*Heimat* films as well as the perpetrator, the victim, the 'normal' person and further characters in past, present and future narratives, proved largely inseparable from an investigation of their social roles – even though these earlier studies were consciously set out as confined to the examination of national identity constructions which could be seen as primarily associated with place and the temporal realm.

This pervading role of the social can be conceptualised by referring to the notion of the social constructedness of place and time. Regarding the concept of place, this entity was earlier defined as 'space to which meaning has been ascribed' (Carter, Donald and Squires, 1993: xii). If one inquires into who ascribed these meanings to an allegedly 'neutral' geographical space, the trace leads us to the social in one form or another. On the subject of time and following Ricoeur's argument about the interpenetration of time and narrative for which I coined the term 'narrative temporality', it became obvious that time essentially comes into being through the dialogical or social act of narration. To conclude, meaning and its particular articulations of senses of place and time, which lay at the core of my earlier investigations, can be conceptualised as social inscriptions. Hence it can be argued that even though place-related issues are implicated in the temporal and the social, analogous to the temporal being implicated in place and the social, the social is the dominant modality of the national, its grounding.

Having established the necessary interconnectedness of the social, the temporal and place-related issues on a general level I will now discuss how the methodological framework of the chapters on place and time can form a point of departure for the subsequent investigation of the social. To begin with, I will model the outline of the following chapter on the one laid out in chapter three since this provides a useful structural and analytical starting point taking into account the conceptual closeness between the national operationalisations of place and sociality. Thus similar to a place, a social entity, too, can be described as consisting of an 'inside' and of borders, whereby the latter's social function is more complex than its place-related one. On the one hand, social borders distanciates the national 'inside' from various other social entities which are then produced as a social 'outside'/'Other'. On the other hand, social borders divide this national 'inside' along gender, class, age, ethnic and sexual lines.

On this basis, the categories for an analysis of West German national sociality as represented in films of the *NGC* will be as follows: 1. national 'insiders' – in section 5.2, I will take a close look at representations of symptomatic individuals which will be taken from a wide range of protagonists featuring in *NGC* films that, for the most part, have not yet been discussed. 2. bonding, borders, in-between spaces – in the sections 5.3 to 5.5, I will examine the extent to which intra-national relationships between individual 'insiders' as well as between these 'insiders' and their nation(-state) are portrayed as having an integrational impact in terms of a West German national sociality; additionally, I will analyse the importance of 'outsiders' and their relations to 'insiders' regarding a West German national imaginary. 3. national cinematic 'outsiders' – in section 5.6, I will investigate the narrative function of symptomatic *NGC* actors and actresses who outside of West German mainstream cinema gave performances of the 'insiders' analysed under 5.2.

Besides these structural elements which set the scene for an analysis of notions of place in relation to national identity and which, I argued, can be generally applied to an examination of the integral relationship between sociality and national identity, I also want to retain the issue of identification which lay at the heart of my earlier investigation of place-related issues. Yet, in the case of this 'socialisation' of the complex processes of identification at work in *NGC* films, a conceptual reformulation in social terms is not necessary. By this, I mean, that the dynamic of identification processes is independent of the chosen object(s) of identification – be it the place or the sociality called '(West) Germany'.

[118] As a being-in-process the, what I call, 'tripartite unity of national identity' can never be fully complete(d).

The re-evaluation of the relational category of identification then brings me to reconsider Bhabha's concept of the pedagogical and the performative, which besides its narrative temporality can be regarded as having a strong bearing on the social. Thus the pedagogical that in narrative/temporal terms has been described as being responsible for feelings of certainty, coherence, continuity, and belonging, can be seen as supplying a sense of national identity which is uncomplicated, pre-given, fixed and homogenous. In this way, pedagogical identity constructions disclose an essentialist orientation and are, as such, composed of clear notions of 'Self' and 'Other'. In contrast to that, the performative has been depicted as offering ambivalent, disjunctive and often problematic narrative/temporal imaginings, which disturb the pedagogical idyll and consequently create a loss of national identity. Here the boundaries between 'Self' and 'Other' as well as between inside and outside are blurred, opening up the possibility for multiple and heterogeneous national identity constructions and the imagining of fragmented ways of 'being in the world' which fundamentally question the still dominant national self-narration of the unified, harmonious and eternal 'we'.

Diverging from the above account proposed by Bhabha, I have argued in my conclusion to chapter four that the pedagogical bears resemblance to the Freudian notion of melancholia while the performative resonates with mourning – an argument which turns the relationships between the pedagogical/performative and national identity matters *inside out*[119]. As a result of further reflecting upon my methodology and findings in the previous chapter I have come to realise that while I maintained a clear distinction between the two narrative temporalities in my analysis of an *NGC*-specific sense of time, the results challenged this binary opposition. Apart from the history narratives, which displayed a clearly pedagogical character, and the narratives classed as memory spaces, which showed a distinctly performative disposition, the memory narratives, with which I began my analysis in the previous chapter, were notably composed of pedagogical as well as performative elements.

In addition to this observation of narrative/temporal complexification and hybridisation, I want to suggest that even films which convey seemingly 'pure' pedagogical qualities can be regarded as having a performative undercurrent and vice versa. This line of argument links with discussions about the national symbolism of *Heimat* in chapter three. There *Heimat* was

[119] Thus, it is the performative rather than the pedagogical that proves productive in terms of national identity construction.

found to be an *old* national symbol which nevertheless continued to be integral to West German national identity constructions, despite and beyond the coming-into-being of the increasingly dominant *new* national symbol of the Berlin Wall/border. In a similar vein and applied to social matters, the pedagogical can be understood as underlying performative accounts in the sense that these are on the way to the pedagogical in their longing for narrative/temporal coherence and closure as an alleged precondition for a positive national identity. The performative, on the other hand, underlies the pedagogical in the form of feelings of existential angst and the (although largely suppressed) awareness that complete unity or identity can never be achieved – or if it can, then only momentarily and in the form of an *Augenblick*[120]. This interpretation of the complex relationship between *Heimat*/pedagogical and anti-*Heimat*/performative seems the more appropriate as both modalities in an anti-nostalgic fashion do not – for the most part – offer a solution[121]. In order to fully ground my following analysis in the realm of the social, I have, however, decided that it is not enough to review and appropriate my methodological tools introduced so far. Thus, even though there are theoretical resonances between the concepts applied to the investigation of place-related, narrative/temporal and social relationships concerning the national, there are also categorical differences to consider if one does not want to reduce a necessary complex and multifaceted analysis to a merely one-dimensional exercise of generalisation (thus, for example, *Heimat* cannot be equated with the pedagogical).

To acknowledge the distinctiveness of the social, I want to make use of Tönnies's famous concept of *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (1887), referring back to some elements of my already established methodological framework and forward to some new aspects specific to a national sociality. Regarding the particular value of Tönnies's account for the purpose of this investigation, it has to be noted that his text is a contribution of fundamental importance in the field of sociology and has been appropriated by contemporary cultural theorists for the study of national identity issues – even though in a rather common-sense fashion[122]. However,

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[120] A term used by Martin Heidegger, which might be translated as 'moment of vision'. More specifically, Heidegger writes in *Being and Time*: 'that *Present* which is held in authentic temporality and which thus is *authentic* itself, we call the "*moment of vision*".' (Heidegger, 1980: 387 (338))

[121] See the chart at the end of chapter four in which the endings of a wide range of *NGC* productions indicate this tendency.

[122] I am referring, for example, to Scott Lash and Mike Featherstone's *Recognition and Difference – Politics, Identity, Multiculture* where the editors state: 'in many ways Jews are not exactly a community or culture, but a group that is somehow in between *Gemeinschaft* of culture and universalist *Gesellschaft*' (2002: 8, emphasis in the original). Another example is Anderson's *Imagined Communities* where the author says: 'in these "natural ties" one senses what one might call "the beauty of *gemeinschaft*"' (1991: 143, emphasis in the original).

instead of using these recent interpretations I will begin my analysis by looking at the original German text.

Gemeinschaft (which literally means 'community') is Tönnies's first concern (1991: 3-4) – a formality which can be read as a programmatic gesture since the author (more or less) implicitly attaches value judgements to the social phenomena he analyses. *Gemeinschaft* then is described as a relation that is essentially 'real' and 'organic', a 'living-together' which is characterised as 'familiar', 'secretive' and 'exclusive'. Furthermore, *Gemeinschaft*, according to Tönnies, belongs to the realm of the 'domestic', deeply influencing every member who is 'born into' it and becomes a lifelong part of it via a deep 'emotional' bond. As typical examples for *Gemeinschaft* Tönnies refers to communities built upon shared 'religion', 'language', 'morals', 'possession of acre, forest, field' and, though on a slightly different base, 'marriage'. Tönnies ends on a *Heimat* note by emphasizing the specifically 'rural' quality of *Gemeinschaft* which he sees in the latter's being 'old', 'continuous', 'strong', 'lively' and 'authentic' – in other words 'a living organism'. Moreover, Tönnies stresses the crucial importance of familial relationships (1991: 7-9), which he describes as lying at the heart of a 'community of blood' and which again he understands as necessarily linked to a 'community of place' along with a 'community of the mind' (ibid.: 12). While all three forms of *Gemeinschaft* are depicted as being closely linked 'in space and time'[123] and sharing an overall sense of 'being in the world', Tönnies nevertheless prioritises the 'community of the mind' as being the highest and 'authentically human' form of *Gemeinschaft*. On the level of the individual, he describes the latter's need and longing for (physical) 'closeness' as being the precondition for fulfilled and balanced 'love'. Only then, Tönnies argues, is s/he 'with herself/himself'.

Gesellschaft (translatable as 'society'), is rendered as an 'imagined' and 'mechanical' relation which Tönnies associates with the realm of the 'public sphere' or even 'the world' (1991: 3). Consequently, he argues that, 'man geht in die *Gesellschaft* wie in die *Fremde*'[124] (ibid., my emphasis). In addition, the author characterises the relationship between different members of a society as 'functional' and 'constructed'. Here, he points to 'travel', 'business', 'trading'

[123] Tönnies here puts forward a line of reasoning which, in some respect, can be seen as linked to my own argument for the threefold structure of my film analyses – place, time, sociality.
[124] Approx. Trans.: 'Going into society is like going into the *Fremde*'. – For a further elaboration of this aspect, see my discussion on *Fremde* as opposed to *Heimat* at the beginning of chapter three.

and 'academic' societies as, what he calls, representative types of *Gesellschaft*[125]. As an entity with anti-*Heimat* appeal Tönnies describes *Gesellschaft* as a mere 'next-to-one-another-ness' composed of people who are largely 'independent' from each other. Moreover, *Gesellschaft*, according to him, is an essentially 'new' phenomenon, 'urban', 'transitory', 'imaginary' – in short: a 'mechanical aggregate' and 'artefact'. When the author discusses *Gesellschaft* in relation to *Gemeinschaft*, he gives a picture of *Gesellschaft* as 'a circle of people' peacefully living together – not unlike *Gemeinschaft* (1991: 34). However, whereas Tönnies talks about people in *Gemeinschaft* as forever 'essentially related' despite all divisions, he sees the members of a *Gesellschaft* as eternally and 'essentially divided' regardless of everything which binds them together. What is more, he characterises every individual which is part of a *Gesellschaft* as being existentially 'alone', and his/her relationships to others as being full of 'tensions'. This social condition, says Tönnies, is due to the sharp 'segregation' of the spheres of work and power, which hinders the individuals from getting 'close' or 'interacting'. He finishes by stating that there is 'no common good' in the reality of *Gesellschaft*.

In conclusion, Tönnies argues that positive commonalities can only exist in the 'imagination' of the subjects[126] whereby the latter is again linked to 'the construction of a common subject and its will' (i.e. a nation, my example). Following this line of argument further, the 'common subject' then can be the bearer of, as well as the reference point for, positive commonality. As a critique of this 'imagined commonality' Tönnies points out that it is never purpose-free or authentic. Instead it can be regarded as being repeatedly 'reborn out of the heads' of people who see themselves as belonging to a certain *Gesellschaft* and who profit from this (i.e. economic) relationship. This construction process is ongoing, largely conscious and thus not based on innate feelings.

In the following film analyses I am interested in the sense of sociality which will become apparent in a range of *NGC* films. Findings will oscillate between notions of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, the two social categories that are taking the ongoing discussion of West German national identity constructions further. In a way similar to the examination of place and time where *Heimat* and the pedagogical/nostalgia proved to be quintessential points of departure, I will set out to investigate the identity constitutive function of the national

[125] I think I should add here that the German word 'Gesellschaft' does not in all cases mean 'society' but that it can also mean 'company' (though less often).
[126] This argument shows striking similarities to Anderson's concept of *Imagined Communities* (1991).

imaginary *Gemeinschaft* which in conceptual terms can be seen as following in the nostalgic *Heimat* footsteps.

5.2 Inside*(rs)* out*(siders)*

Any social formation of whatever makeup starts, as Wright puts it, 'with the person living it' (1985: 8). Thus I will begin my investigation with an analysis of selected *NGC* protagonists whose representations of particular ways of 'being in the world' render them symptomatic subjects of a sense of West German national sociality, which, in Wright's words, can be described as having 'its own varieties of "I", "we" and "they"' (ibid.). I will start with a close analysis of the historical figure of Kaspar Hauser whose life story has entered German (and to some extent European) legend and inspired the works of various international artists and academics[127]. According to a ZDF site[128], a new chapter in the (his)story of the Kaspar Hauser case began in November 1996 when the West German newsmagazine *Der Spiegel* published a special feature on Kaspar Hauser. It included an in-depth report on an attempt at genetic matching of blood samples taken from Kaspar's underwear with members of the royal family of Baden of which he might have been a member. Even though the matching failed, the legend continued, and in December 2002 new genetic analysis methods questioned the results of the earlier testing. They showed crucial discrepancies between the older blood and new hair and sweat samples, which proved that the blood on Kaspar's pants was not his. This led to new speculations, which are still ongoing today and illustrate the undiminished fascination of the myth of Kaspar Hauser.

In the analytical framework of my analysis, Herzog's film about Kaspar Hauser can be seen as a formative text which features an 'I' that has reached the status of a national symbol in narrative terms. As such it shows complex relations to the *old* national symbol of *Heimat* (as 'belonging') and to the *new* national symbol of the Berlin Wall/border (as 'homelessness') – a subject position which I will further scrutinize as part of my subsequent analysis. After a close examination of Herzog's film version of the Kaspar Hauser narrative, I will move on to the investigation of several other 'I-s' who can be regarded as acting upon their situation, which is not unlike Kaspar's, by developing, what I will call, suggestive 'life strategies'. 'We-s' and

[127] An internet search on the 26th March 2004, entering the term 'Kaspar Hauser' into the *Google* search engine lead to about 34, 800 results which mainly consisted of German, English and Spanish websites.
[128] See, for example, the following website of the ZDF, one of Germany's public service broadcasting TV channels: http://www.zdf.de/ZDFde/inhalt/31/0,1872,2027199,00.html

'they-s' will be largely considered in the next section even though occasional references will signify that all of these different social entities mutually implicate one another.

Self as Other

Kaspar Hauser, the male protagonist of Herzog's film *Jeder für sich und Gott gegen alle* (The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser, 1974) is a figure which in many ways can be regarded as being indicative of a *NGC*-specific take on the national issue of West German communal/societal 'belonging'. Elsaesser thus describes the character of Kaspar Hauser as,

> ...central to Herzog and to the New German Cinema. Not only as the subject of one of its best-known films, but as a complex psychoanalytic motif; it is the fantasy of being abandoned, fatherless, with an uncertain relationship to all forms of socialisation, to sexual identity and adulthood, attempting to survive between a good father substitute and a bad father image[129] (1989: 226).

To start at the alleged beginning of the Kaspar Hauser myth, a young man who was later estimated to have been around 16 years of age and who could hardly walk and scarcely talk appeared in the market place in Nürnberg/Germany in 1828. After having learnt some basic language skills he claimed that he had been kept in a dark underground room for the most part of his life. As his origins were unknown to him then and remain so even today, rumours suggested that he was the unfortunate victim of an intrigue within an influential aristocratic family. In the following years, the so-called 'foundling' stayed with a retired teacher who educated him in various subjects and who became something like a surrogate father for him. However, the story did not have a happy ending since five years after his sudden appearance he was brutally murdered by a stranger – an incident that added to the mysteriousness of the Kaspar Hauser narrative and strengthened the conspiracy theories. Thus, people believe(d), his death was to keep his noble descent secret.

In Herzog's adaptation, the first issue the audience is introduced to is Kaspar's seemingly animalistic nature which results from his isolated and neglected upbringing as his largely absent foster father only attended to his most basic needs for survival: food, sleep and shelter. This naturalness, then, is represented and portrayed as a non-human existence since it stands in a striking contrast to the realm of civilisation and societal conventions to which Kaspar as a

[129] This quotation relates back to the notion of *NGC* filmmakers being 'at home in exile' in post-war West Germany. More precisely, it reaffirms the centrality of notions of (self-)abandonment, the 'bad' (Nazi) father, and substitute parents in filmmaking and films of the *NGC*.

human being belongs and which he (re-)enters by arriving at the market place in Nürnberg. The latter location is especially noteworthy here, because in the early 19th century the market place was synonymous with the (still local) public sphere. Goods and animals were sold and bought, news exchanged and more or less the whole communal life of a village or city revolved around the market place. Thus Kaspar's first appearance takes him not only from the dark into the light, but also from the periphery or even a social non-place (since non-existent in the public consciousness) into the centre of public/communal life where he is placed in order to be found, looked at and dealt with.

This geographical and social repositioning brings the communal outsider, as Kaspar is clearly marked, to the community's centre (the market place). In other words, this re-socialisation process situates the anti-social 'Other' at the core of the social 'Self'. What happens next is the attempt by the community to exploit Kaspar's exoticism by exhibiting him in the local circus as part of a freak show. Here and elsewhere, everything about him is carefully documented in the form of standardized reports. Through them the 'Other' is controlled and knowledge about 'this person' who still cannot articulate himself adequately is produced and fixed in writing. After this initial *exoticisation* and monetary exploitation of the 'Other', the communal project, that is Kaspar, moves into its second phase: *integration*. Here, Kaspar becomes exposed to the canonical knowledge of his time whose appropriation is supposed to make him 'one of us'. This part of the project is carried out by a former teacher who becomes a substitute father for the, up to this point, fatherless Kaspar.

Yet despite making incredible progress the educator, ultimately, fails to overcome certain resistances of his pupil towards existing conceptualisations of the social and of the world at large. Thus, for example, Kaspar has no understanding of the concept of danger, be it caused by fire or an attacking soldier. Furthermore he does not see the difference between human subjects and objects such as apples; instead he regards both as integral parts of the community of the living and as such he believes them to be equally able to feel and think. Thirdly, he has no concept of gender. This becomes apparent when Kaspar asks the housekeeper about the 'use' of women and why their activities were solely confined to knitting and housework. Finally, he declares that the concept of creation or God does not make sense to him, thus questioning the role of the church, a major authority in society at the time.

His inability to consent to the common sense notions of these four social issues represent him as a person who is oriented towards life in its various forms, yet, who does not accept hierarchies within the realm of the living. Hence he tells his father/teacher not to pick up the apples which lie on the ground as he claims that they are 'tired'; moreover, he takes up knitting himself; and finally, he dies because he does not become suspicious of a stranger in his father/teacher's garden who then ends up stabbing him with a knife. Thus he has to pay with his life for not conforming to society's conventions, for remaining an 'Other' despite extensive and long-term assimilation attempts of various communal elements/'Selves', and for continuing to be a reminder of the constructedness of society with its 'invented traditions' and 'imagined community'. In the end, social order is restored by murder and the outsider, who started to become a painful and telling wound, is returned to silence.

Two social concepts, which the father/teacher along with society seemingly fail to explain to Kaspar, are love and sexuality. In the whole of the film, love is neither addressed as a topic nor shown as an emotional bond between two people. Consequently, the depicted relations between the citizens of Nürnberg appear rather functional, regulated and cold. This suggests that love is not a crucial constituent of a society or community. However, the absence of love seems linked to the necessary death of Kaspar since both social forces are to some extent uncontrollable and challenging to the existing power structures around patriarchy, the church and canonical knowledge. In addition though, a lack of love also renders the bodies of the characters somewhat asexual. Hence the whole notion of biological reproduction is left unmentioned, which might be understood by its association with femininity and nature that, according to the men in positions of power, have to be suppressed and controlled. A fitting motto might be: 'that which is neither talked about nor visible is not actually there', which for the hegemonic group in this situation is the perfect place for it to be.

Kaspar's 'Self' (his mind and body) can be described as a site of contesting power relations. To begin with, if we believe the rumours, his aristocratic family abandoned him and wilfully rid him of his roots – an act which in narrative terms might be called an erasure of the story of his beginning. However, as Kaspar's origin remains a mystery which continues to trouble him throughout his life and ultimately causes his death, this initial abandonment is not complete and leaves Kaspar's 'Self' in a palimpsest-like state. Hence, even though explicit familial inscriptions have been essentially removed, their traces are deep and mark Kaspar's 'being in the world' very distinctly. Afterwards, he is kept in the dark in all senses of the word, which

again causes inscriptions of a kind that throughout the rest of his life will decisively mark his character. Together, his family background and the subsequent cave experiences can be seen as a prefiguring for Kaspar's life story.

After his re-entrance into the social world (the configuring part of the narrative of the 'Self') the city council has substantial power over him as he is existentially 'homeless' and helpless, and hence he can be used in whatever way it pleases the local authorities. In the following, he is first their prisoner, then he becomes their exotic foundling who is named 'the mystery of Europe' and exhibited in the circus, and finally they decide upon a (re-)education programme for him and place him with a former teacher. Through the teacher he is then introduced to canonical knowledge and appropriate manners. In addition, the church becomes interested in him as well and tries to grab hold of his soul. Two priests in particular invite him to various religious sessions in an attempt to convince him that belief is far more important than knowledge. Regarding this triplet of political, rational and religious forces which fight over Kasper to assert their position of power and possibly justify hegemony over the other two, this phase of Kaspar's life rather than having configuring qualities can be seen as another, second prefiguring which tries to override the previous one. In the middle of it all, Kaspar becomes a mere tool of society and instead of being integrated as 'one of us', he is 'Othered' yet again.

In this sense, Kaspar can be regarded as being subjected to various 'Othering' forces, which attempt to use him for their own purposes and regardless of his own needs. In effect, this one-way process of familial and societal instrumentalisation/victimisation can be seen as a form of repeated colonisation and re-colonisation of Kaspar's body and mind which rather than enabling him to survive eventually lead to his ultimate social exclusion: death. Yet even his subtraction from the 'we' serves the society's purposes as it demonstrates that he who is 'Other' can never be truly included in the community of 'Selves' since he does not share 'our' social conventions. This idea of the 'Self' being oppressed by societal customs and practices resonates with Nietzsche's understanding of morality. In *Beyond Good and Evil* (1999), he argues that a virtuous (i.e. good) person is praised by others for the good s/he does to *them.* Moral beliefs, then, are always group beliefs, and the group is greater than the dissenting individual. Accordingly, Kaspar who in many ways can be regarded as dissenting (see, for example, his attitude towards gendered norms and values) destabilises and thus threatens the (moral) survival of the group and as such is removed for the sake of the unchanged continuity of their existence.

Besides these socio-spatial aspects that situate Kaspar simultaneously within and outside of society there are also narrative/temporal issues, which mark his societal 'belonging' as being incomplete and on the threshold. Yet first of all, his return to the social realm is a point of departure in terms of identity construction generally. It marks the moment when Kaspar's actual story starts or can be narrated, since he is dragged out of silent isolation (in social terms) or nowhere (as regards place) and dropped into the demanding loquaciousness of the public sphere (in social terms) or 'now' (in narrative/temporal terms). Regarding his 'being in the world' this existential transition depicts Kaspar as thrown out of nothingness and into a highly regulated and policed meaningfulness that, besides its repressiveness, provides the initially mute protagonist with the means of narration: the concepts of story and language. However, as with other concepts discussed previously, Kaspar never fully grasps the narrative convention of a story consisting of a beginning, a middle and an end. Instead, he announces that he wants to tell a story even though he only knows the beginning. Yet societal convention does not allow for partial narratives to be passed off as stories and thus his father/teacher asks him to keep the story to himself until he knows what happens in the middle and at the end of it.

Without its middle and end Kaspar's story, analogous to his life that does not move beyond the repetition of a prefiguring stage, remains partial. As such, one can describe Kaspar's life and (his)story as being intrinsically linked in their wish (and ultimate failure) to become part of societal reality and its ongoing narrative processes which are surrounding and excluding them, following, it seems, arbitrarily set rules. Only at the moment of impending death is Kaspar finally allowed to tell 'his beginning' which shows that death transcends and/or removes certain social conventions for the 'Self' to return to itself and to eventually be *in-itself*. In addition, society lets go of the individual as 'Other' and is finally prepared to see the latter's 'Self'-ness. As such, then, death is portrayed as providing greater personal freedom than life ever does, making available the possibility for identity in the sense of a 'Self's unity and completeness. Hence, the moment of death can be seen as the definitive *Augenblick* since it creates imaginary as well as real spaces for individual agency that are depicted as being crucial for the realisation of feelings of existential *'home'-coming*. However, it is important to point out that, even though in the case of the Kaspar Hauser narrative 'belonging' seems to be achieved at the point of death, this still does not resolve the issue of identity being a primarily transient construction which is essentially negotiated between 'Self'/'Selves' and 'Other/s'.

Symptomatically, the film does not finish with the 'happy' ending of Kaspar being dead but 'home'. Instead, the narrative moves on to illustrate how society's curiosity in its foundling does not stop with his death but only takes on a new, post-mortem form.

In place of a collective mourning for Kaspar's loss, the deceased is handed over to a range of experts who dismantle his body and subject it to a close medical examination during which they discover alarming physical aberrations: Kaspar's liver is enlarged and, more importantly, his brain shows major deformations or abnormalities which, as is subsequently suggested, might explain why he behaved in the way he did. On behalf of other city representatives the chronicler concludes: 'finally we have an explanation for this human being and one which could not be any better indeed.' With these last words of the film he goes off to write his last report about Kaspar, in the process of which the foundling's complex persona will be reduced to having been an 'ordinary' madman. In effect, the multi-layered phenomenon is demystified and rationalised and passed off as a story about the consequences of a simple brain defect. This *normalisation as 'Othering'* fundamentally transforms the existing discourse around human affairs, which hitherto has been largely dominated by political, educational/rational and religious forces, into one governed by medicine[130]. Moreover, it shifts responsibilities from a collective sociality to a narrow scientific one, which immediately removes all possible threat that Kaspar might have held for the former. He is marked as mentally ill, an 'Othering' process which keeps him at a clear distance from the 'normal' members of society and, in the form of a patient, situates him firmly in the realm of medicine. As this clinical term, which at the same time marks a social position, is assigned to him after his actual death it is the last and final, yet noticeably the first un-negotiated identity position he assumes. Thus society is depicted as prevailing over the individual in terms of the narrative side of identity construction, since it continues to hold sway over its members after their deaths, appropriating their identities/life stories in support of its own survival.

I want to finish this investigation of the Kaspar Hauser narrative by returning to the myth which is not only a lot older but also larger than the film and which reminded me of King Oedipus. Thus I noticed some striking similarities and differences between the two mythical tales from ancient Greece and modern Germany. To begin with, both legends involve the abandonment of a young prince by his parents as part of certain aristocratic family politics. Against all odds, both boys survive and grow up to challenge those who believe them to be

[130] ... which, as I pointed out at the beginning of this section, still continues today.

dead. Yet in both cases, the children do not remember their origins (as they were given away as babies), have no knowledge of their personal history (which I earlier called 'the story of their beginning') and thus are unaware of their role in society. Due to their lack of personal and social identity along with little or no understanding of their cultural context, they unknowingly and unintentionally bring about tragedy for themselves (as well as for their family and community in the case of Oedipus).

In view of this, one can argue that in both narratives social identity and personal life/survival, are portrayed as intrinsically linked so that the lack of the first necessarily brings about the loss of the second. Therefore, the only hope for an Oedipus/Kaspar like character who is going through an ordeal is, at some point to realise who he is (not only personally but especially in relation to his societal surroundings). In the case of Oedipus this happens as he tragically finds out about his family/society relations. Yet, while the 'truth' is hard to accept for him and destroys the social life he just built for himself, it nevertheless saves his personal life and gives him back his agency. This shows that definite personal and social identities are the key signifiers for a subject within society, and that there are no alternatives for a person who, for whatever reason, cannot claim them. In Kaspar's case the 'unbearable lightness of being' *without identity* is not tolerated by society and, consequently, he has to die. Hence identity can be seen as a social positioning which stabilises both the individual (emotionally) and his/her social context (functionally) but at the same time makes it impossible for anyone to step outside of the realm of identity practices. Thus any person who challenges this social bond is punished heavily – and Oedipus as well as Kaspar experiences this twice. The societal punishment which logically can only result in exclusion is inflicted upon them at the beginning of their lives – allegedly for the good of their families – and again shortly after their unexpected return to the realm of the social, since the first exclusion was obviously not complete.

To conclude, instead of making space for imagining and constructing positive socialities which resemble forms of *Gemeinschaft*, society in both narratives is portrayed as being rather restrictive, exclusive of original 'insiders' (as are the families of their inborn members) and responsible for their social identity crises (and death in Kaspar's case). Hence Oedipus and Kaspar are depicted as 'outsiders' *within* or 'insiders' *outside* who are ultimately destroyed due to – in national identity terms – the programmatic impossibility of their performative (in

its negative sense) identity positions marked by personal/social 'homelessness' and resulting from the highly ambiguous relationship between the individuals and their social realm.

Social identity crisis made in Germany, or: what about 'Fassbinder's Germany'[131]?

After investigating the largely passive way of relating to, or better, suffering from society demonstrated in the Kaspar Hauser narrative (myth and film) through the double victimisation of the protagonist, I will now move on to analyse alternative and more active ways of responding to evidently suffocating social structures. Hence in the following section, my examination of how people relate to the national sociality called 'West Germany' will focus on 'I-s' which display different solutions to the issue of a lack of social identity, yet can, even though to different degrees, be regarded as variations on the *death as 'home'-coming* motif introduced by the Kaspar Hauser narrative. I will regard the individual response as a way of resisting the exclusionary methods and practices of an 'insider's society' which I term 'life strategies' as they are ultimately strategies for mainly emotional, but also physical survival.

In relation to what I just said, it might seem slightly contradictory to start with an analysis of two different, yet connected, filmic representations of suicide. However, it will become clear in the subsequent investigation that the focus on death as the outcome of suicide does not explain the whole of this social phenomenon and its frequent narrative occurrence in *NGC* productions[132]. For the purpose of this examination I have chosen to look at a scene from Fassbinder's film *In einem Jahr mit 13 Monden* (In a Year of 13 Moons, 1978) whose making was inspired by the actual suicide of Fassbinder's lover Armin Meier and is thus an intensely personal film about an existentially 'homeless' character, her/his love relationships, the social context and suicide. More precisely, one could say that the film portrays the last few days in the life of Elvira/Erwin Weishaupt, a man who underwent a sex change operation in order to be desirable for Anton Saitz, a heterosexual man he fell in love with. Yet this crucial identity makeover neither led to a love relationship between (now) Elvira and Anton nor to a solution to the former's identity issues, because Erwin never felt like a woman but suddenly had to live as one. Beyond this personal/emotional element, the relationship between the two men also has a social/national dimension. Anton is a Jewish Holocaust survivor who was deported

[131] Title of Elsaesser's (1996) book on the work of this crucial *NGC* filmmaker.
[132] See my chart in the previous chapter, which shows that in the case of 17 out of 82 selected *NGC* productions, or in other words 21%, suicide is a topic (in the form of a *leitmotif* or narrative structure, actual film endings and as an underlying or impending possibility).

to the concentration camp Bergen Belsen during the Third Reich. Elvira/Erwin on the other hand, is a German orphan who was abandoned by his mother during WWII[133].

As a way into the analysis of this highly complex and multi-layered film, I want to consider a relatively short, self-contained and highly surreal scene in which the protagonist Elvira encounters an unfamiliar man who, seemingly not noticing (or not minding) the former's presence, embarks upon preparations to kill himself through hanging. When she asks him casually for a lighter the two strangers enter without any hesitation and awkwardness into the following dialogue[134]:

Elvira: Excuse me, please, do you have a light? I can't find a light anywhere. Otherwise, pretend I am not here...
(The man stops for a moment, searches in his pockets and finds a box of matches. Then he walks calmly over to Elvira and lights her/his cigarette.)
Elvira: Thanks. Would you like one?
Man: No, thanks.
Elvira: Going to hang yourself?
Man: Yes, naturally.
(Long take on the dangling noose)
Man: Does that bother you? Do you own the building?
Elvira: No, I was just having lunch. Are you hungry? I have bread and cheese here, and a bottle of red wine... I forgot my corkscrew, though...
Man: Give it here, I'll open it for you.
Elvira: Wine, you know, and French bread, and cheese, it's an old story...It's even a little campy when you think about it. But what would life be without a little nostalgia? Very sad...
It all started with cheese, since meat made Anton nauseous, because we were in the meat-packing business. Anton simply couldn't stand the smell of dead animals and blood, so he stopped eating meat completely. That's how it all started. Simple, isn't it?
(The man has managed to open the wine bottle and is taking a good swig.)
Tasty?
Man: Fine, thanks.
Elvira: Why...I mean, why...?
Man: Would I want to hang myself? I don't want things to exist because I perceive them.
Elvira: Which things?
Man: Feelings, for example, or pictures, letter, memories, rocks,...The moment of death you become one with the universe, and everything in it, you know?
Elvira: No.
Man: Your very negation illustrates the principle of being able to negate.
Elvira: Maybe you're right. But that doesn't change things for me. I put an end to my life once, too, and it hurt me very deeply, to experience the incurable

[133] From here onwards, I will use Elvira instead of Elvira/Erwin to refer to the protagonist in question.
[134] In the subsequent transcription of the dialogue from the film I will largely rely on the English subtitles.

nausea I felt for myself. I'd returned from Casablanca and was forced into nothingness; by someone who didn't have to do anything, but smile once too often. And whether you believe it or not, it was a pure accident, that saved my life... that forced my ego to accept itself, to bear the unbearable.

Man: If you want to know what people are worth in moral terms, look at their fate, in general, and in particular – nothing but hunger, pain, suffering and death. Eternal justice triumphs, and if men weren't basically worthless, their fate would not be so sad in general. We may say that the world itself is its own judge.

By the way, it's wrong to see the negation of the will to live, in terms of suicide, as a negative act. On the contrary...negating the will to live is in itself, an acceptance of will, since negation means, renouncing not life's suffering but its joys. The self-murderer doesn't reject life; only the conditions offered to him. Thus he rejects, not the will to live, but merely life; thereby, destroying his experience of life.

Elvira: I think you'd better do it.

Man: It's okay if you watch.

(Elvira turns to him as the man carries through with his suicide, dangling in silence.)

The first issue I want to explore is the meaning of suicide offered by the man who finally kills himself in front of Elvira's (and the spectator's) eyes. But in order to understand the rather positive view on suicide he presents to us it is necessary to first look at the general distinction he makes between the 'conditions of life' and the 'will to live'. This conceptual difference then separates out the social and the individual by describing the first as a conditionality and the second as a willing and thus potent subject. Furthermore, the two realms are revealed to be largely oppositional whereby the social offers a culturally specific setting to the individual who can either accept (and live) or negate (and die). Interestingly, the possibility of changing the conditions of life from unacceptable to tolerable or even satisfactory instead of ending one's life is not discussed.

At first sight one could think that this lack of constructive personal investment in the social is due to the man not believing in his power to alter the circumstances of his existence – but then he makes use of his ability to say 'no' to life. Therefore, it seems more convincing to me that he sees the social world of which he is a part as being so fundamentally 'wrong' that the only meaningful engagement is disengagement. And in this respect suicide can be regarded as a productive act in terms of self-preservation against all odds. It represents the man's ability to assert his right to maintain a positive sense of selfhood in the face of an oppressive social framework which does not allow for him to lead his life in the way he wants or needs to. Similarly Tim Lott writes in a recent *Guardian* article entitled 'the ultimate act of will': 'suicide is an assertion that you will survive as an identity even if you can't survive as a body'

(17/01/04: 21). In the film, the man goes even further by describing death not only as a way of preserving himself but also of re-establishing a meaningful relationship with the world of which he is a part, albeit in conflict too. He says to Elvira: 'the moment of death you become one with the universe, and everything in it, you know?' Thus death for him represents the only means of coming 'home' and for his 'Self' to be *in-itself* since in the act of dying he leaves 'homelessness' and identity crises behind and to the living.

These two dimensions of suicide, the social and the personal, which become apparent in the pre-suicidal talk of the unnamed self-murderer resonate with conceptualisations of suicide developed by Durkheim (1951). There the author distinguishes between 'egoistic', 'anomic' and 'altruistic' forms of suicide; in the following analysis I will be mainly interested in the first two versions. 'Altruistic' suicide, which means to sacrifice oneself for the betterment of the group one belongs to and which, according to Durkheim, is usually found in traditional communities, is a type of suicide whose representation can be seen as largely absent from *NGC* films since its occurrence presupposes 'belonging' – a place-related, temporal and social relationality which I have not come across yet in my analyses so far. 'Egoistic' and 'anomic' suicide, on the other hand, are analytical categories that can be seen as quite accurately describing the kind of self-killings analysed above and to be discussed below. Thus, according to Durkheim, the occurrence of this first and second mode of suicide is linked to a lack of integration within the social group that the individual is a member of and to a condition of 'moral deregulation'[135] in society at large (Giddens, 1971: 84).

In the above scene from Fassbinder's *In einem Jahr mit 13 Monden* we are represented with a combination of egoistic and anomic suicides. Thus the man's suicide can be seen as egoistic in the sense that he detaches himself from society in an act of asserting his will (and power) to negate the social conditions offered to him. Yet, his suicide can also be regarded as anomic if one interprets the wrong of society, which he refers to as being the reason for his wish to die, as due to moral deregulation. The latter reading is supported by the man's comments on the state of the social, 'if you want to know what people are worth in moral terms, look at their fate, in general, and in particular – nothing but hunger, pain, suffering and death'. Here the man's pessimistic outlook on the social reveals the (somewhat Calvinist) belief that personal

[135] Even though 'moral deregulation' in Durkheim's work is largely confined to the characterisation of modern economic relationships, Giddens' reading of it suggests that it might be understood in a wider sense. He writes: 'anomic suicide, on the other hand, derives from a lack of moral regulation *particularly* characteristic of major sectors of modern industry' (Giddens, 1971: 85, my emphasis).

misfortune is an expression of a lack of 'worth in moral terms', which on a societal scale means moral deregulation. Looking closer at the relationship between both possible explanations for his suicide, the man himself indicates the predominance of the anomic element by emphasizing that to him the social conditions are the decisive factor triggering off his death wish and subsequent killing of himself with which he then merely reacts to what is given to (or withheld from) him. Moving beyond common sense notions of suicide this position stresses the social rather than the personal nature of suicide whose occurrence it sees as being intrinsically linked to societal structures and developments beyond the reach of the individual. Durkheim writes in this respect:

> At any given moment the moral constitution of society establishes the contingent of voluntary deaths. There is, therefore, for each people a collective force of a definite amount of energy, impelling men to self-destruction. The victim's acts which at first seem to express only his personal temperament are really the supplement and prolongation of a social condition which they express externally (1951: 299).

In view of that, the explicit thematisation of suicide and self-destruction in *In einem Jahr mit 13 Monden* signifies a relationship between the social and the personal which, in general, can be seen as antagonistic and, in particular, as resulting in the death of an individual. This societal state then is not just far away from the notion of *Gemeinschaft* but can to some extent be seen as its opposite, since all of the suicidal tendencies – which according to my chart at the end of the last chapter concern a substantial number of its members – take on a metaphorical quality, representing the intellectual and physical (self-)castration rather then the re-production and continued existence of a sociality. This self-annihilation can further be considered as the quintessential expression of (individual and social) 'homelessness' in which the broken bond between the individual and his/her community is completely and irreversibly dissolved, which is the case in both of the above narratives. The only, yet crucial difference between the unknown man and Kaspar is the latter's implicit victimhood and the man's explicit resistance which in narrative terms links naivety and death as well as suicide and self-reflection.

In the case of the figure of Elvira the above-mentioned struggle between the individual and the social, which results in the 'Othering' and 'Self-Othering' of the unknown man and further leads him to cut himself off from his sociality, is taken to a new level. Thus the tensions and dividing lines between the individual 'Self'/'Other' and the social/societal 'Other'/'Self' which the man is fully conscious of and confidently specifies as the reason for

his impending suicide (with the latter only being a physical realisation of the already existing, intellectual and emotional split from the sociality he detests) are largely internalised to the extent of literal embodiment by Elvira. To explain what I mean by that I will start by looking at the above dialogue but then work my way outwards to take other thematic aspects and narrative tropes of various parts of the film into account.

Elvira states that 'I put an end to my life once, too' – a remark which seems odd given the fact that she is obviously still alive at the time when she makes this statement. Yet what she refers to is a symbolic death, or death of identity, rather than a physical one, although the former had and, in the present of the film, still has strong physical components. Right from the opening sequence where Elvira unsuccessfully attempts to have sex with a stranger, through to her conversations with her lover Christoph, her ex-wife Irene, her best friend, the prostitute Zora, her former teacher and educator, Sister Gudrun, the Jewish Holocaust survivor and love of her life, Anton Saitz, and a journalist to whom she recently told her story with Anton, the audience witnesses how the nearly lifelong identity crisis of Elvira draws to a dramatic close. Played out in gender/sexual terms this identity crisis, as revealed in the course of the film, is the more complex and difficult to comprehend as the crucial body modification, rather then marking the beginning of a new and better life, in Elvira's words put an end to her 'first' life. If one takes this metaphor further her cinematic present effectively becomes a kind of afterlife which, as we are about to discover, has more hellish than heavenly features.

More accurately, Elvira's 'first' life consisted in being a white, heterosexual, middle-class man who was married and the father of a daughter (Marie-Ann). As such, her earlier existence can largely be regarded as lying at the core of the national West German (or, in fact, the all-western) social imaginary. Thus, it strongly adhered to dominant cultural norms and values which in social terms meant integration and reproduction. Yet his love for Anton Saitz led Elvira (then Erwin) to leave her cosy social idyll and to align herself with a Jewish Holocaust survivor who in many ways can be seen as the quintessential 'Other' to the post-war German 'Self'. However, this first, symbolic 'Self-Othering' gets her only halfway to where she feels she has to be. It is the next phase in her identity struggle which takes her all the way out, that is away from the centre and indeed to the very periphery if not the outside of the national sociality of which she used to be a valued part. For this second 'Self-Othering' she employs drastic physical means as she undergoes a sex-change operation through which she becomes an in-between 'being in the world '– neither a man (due to the physical changes) nor a woman

(due to a lack of feeling like one). In view of this, Elvira's identity makeover can be regarded as an act of self-castration as it irrevocably causes the loss of her former 'Self', divorcing her from her family and social 'normality' and throwing her into existential 'homelessness': 'I'd returned from Casablanca and was forced into nothingness.'

In this respect, Elvira can be described as committing 'identity suicide' rather than choosing the man's version of physical suicide. Hence instead of giving up her body in order to survive as a person she makes her body the very site of her identity struggle, which she subsequently slowly loses. As such, with Elvira Fassbinder created a landmark character which more than any other protagonist of the *NGC* represents an individual, who in a deep and irresolvable crisis of 'belonging', cries out to her family, her so-called friends, and even the public (via the journalist) – yet for all the spectator is shown, she is left striving in vain. Besides Elvira's personal 'homelessness' and lack of integration, this (socio-individual) relationship between her and the sociality around, yet at a distance from her, further exposes a striking lack of social cohesion.

To be more precise about the specific character of Elvira's 'social condition', I will now offer a brief overview of her various 'Self'-'Self' and 'Self'-'Other' relationships. Throughout the narrative, it becomes increasingly apparent that Elvira ascribes very little value to her 'Self' and hardly complains about, as I put it above, 'the conditions offered to her'. This disregard for her 'being in the world' is seemingly caused by the fact that she does not have a clear sense of who she is, which makes her helpless, yet ready to accept the narratives of lack and failure that others tell about her. Christoph is the most brutal of all as he calls her a 'stinking mess' who does not know what to do with herself, who gets fatter and uglier all the time, whose brain is muddled, and who is basically a superfluous and meaningless 'piece of dirt'. After one of his outbursts he leaves Elvira for good like a used piece of clothing.

Irene seems kinder on the surface, yet, repeats Christoph's speech in other, less openly hurtful words. Although she keeps in regular contact with her former husband, a keeping-in-contact which could be interpreted as caring, she patronises Elvira and largely excludes her from her life with their daughter Marie-Ann. The latter is a well-behaved, kind teenager and the only person to genuinely love Elvira. However, she is not given much chance to express this love and thus has no great narrative function. When at the end of the film Elvira clutches at straws and tries to re-unite with her family (Irene and Marie-Ann), Irene sends her away with the

words, 'it is too late'. Zora, seemingly Elvira's only friend, appears to be on her side as she takes care of her after Christoph has left her. She also encourages and accompanies her to see Sister Gudrun in order to find out about her childhood. However, when she meets Anton Saitz in Elvira's flat she makes out with him straight away, which drives Elvira again away from the most important person in her life and out of her place.

Sister Gudrun tells Elvira the story of her beginning, which starts with the abandonment of baby Erwin who is brought to an orphanage by his mother during the Second World War. As he grows up he becomes favoured by all the Sisters and finally even finds a couple which wants to adopt him. Yet, in order for the adoption to go ahead, his mother has to give her consent, which seems like a formality but proves to be an insurmountable obstacle. Thus it turns out that she gave him away when she was already married to Erwin's father, which means that the latter would have to give his consent to the adoption, too. However, as the father does not know about Erwin's existence and the mother dreads to tell him after all those years the adoption cannot go ahead. As a consequence Erwin's parents-to-be stop coming and visiting him, which turns him into a difficult child whose behaviour the Sisters collectively disapprove off. All in all, Sister Gudrun recalls these heartbreaking incidents meticulously, yet in a detached and merciless manner.

Anton Saitz's most distinctive narrative involvement in Elvira's life story is non-involvement, or in other words, the fact that he never loved her back – not when he was working with Erwin and neither when he encounters Elvira for the first time. Yet what is more, the fact that he knows the most crucial fragment of Elvira's personal history and his part in it does not stop him from making out with Elvira's friend in Elvira's bedroom while waiting for some coffee. Finally, the journalist who is interested in Elvira's life story and the only one who listens to her (even though, admittedly, not without self-interest) closes his door on her when Elvira comes to see him after the story is published. 'It is late', he says, echoing Irene's words.

Taking this range of diverse characters and their respective narrative functions in Elvira's life story into account one can see that despite their apparent differences they are accomplices in causing the same narrative pattern of abandonment to repeat itself again and again, and thus the latter runs like a constant theme through Elvira's narrative. Correspondingly, it becomes apparent that instead of being in charge of her own life the role of the narrator of Elvira's story shifts between the 'configuring eight', namely (and in chronological order) Erwin's

mother, the Sisterhood of the orphanage, Erwin's parents-to-be, Irene, Anton Saitz, Christoph, Zora, and the journalist. They all abandon Elvira to varying degrees until at the end she has no place to go and no personal/social identity to fall back upon. In view of that, she finally abandons herself along with the struggle for identity and life (we learnt from the Kaspar and Oedipus narratives that life without a clearly defined social and/or individual identity, such as 'insider' or 'outsider', is ultimately not sustainable). Thus Elvira (the in-between, the self-castrated) commits suicide in the face of a reproductive act. She dies while Zora and Anton Saitz have sex next to the bed on which she lies. However, this moment of (re-)productive togetherness (at least of some sort) is again interrupted by the arrival of the people that, in life, abandoned Elvira and now embrace the dead body as it, similarly to the one in Kaspar's case, does not pose a threat anymore and is finally allowed 'home' – a symbolically charged ending which again has a symptomatic *NGC* representation portraying West German national sociality as being deadly and/or non-reproductive, while proposing *death as 'home'-coming*.

Having briefly looked at the entirety of Elvira's symptomatic relationships from a relative distance, I am now zooming in on her most crucial relationship in narrative and identity terms, which is the one she assumed with Anton Saitz. Their personal relationship is one between a (West) German, born during the Second World War, and a Jew, who survived the concentration camp Bergen Belsen, and it has a strongly allegorical quality referring to the complex interconnections between individual and national identity issues. Thus even though he and Anton do not know each other at the time, their story starts in the middle of this war which, amongst other things, separates Germans ('insiders') and Jews ('outsiders') and places them on opposite sides of the national social imaginary. Moreover, both individuals retain from this inner-national conflict personal traumas which for them and their people evolve around the experience of the Holocaust. As a narrative deadlock[136] the Holocaust brought 'homelessness' to the German Jews (prior to 1945) and to Germany (post WWII). As such the life stories of Erwin and Anton are prefigured by German national (his)story which provides them with a point of departure that has them both start out as (innocent) victims even though to different degrees and levels of recognition.

Looking closer at the social condition of their childhood and teenage years one sees similarities with Kaspar's imprisonment in the cellar. Thus Anton is literally locked away in a

[136] This expression refers to the Holocaust's saturation with death and terror which ended so many life stories in such a horrific way that many people see it as impossible to be narrated even today.

concentration camp, and Erwin is brought up in an orphanage run by Catholic nuns, not an imprisonment in the literal sense but certainly in terms of his emotional development. Both are freed eventually, Anton at the end of the Second World War and Erwin at the age of 18 when he is allowed to leave the orphanage. Yet like Kaspar, they are not sufficiently prepared for the social world they enter into as the prefiguring of their life stories was geared at drawing up survival strategies for either a life in a very self-contained and hermetic social setting which administers and contains 'homelessness' (the orphanage) or a site which might be the most striking symbol of anti-*Heimat* or 'homelessness' per se and which ceased to exist in Germany after WWII (the concentration camp). In this respect, both young men are 'outsiders' in post-war West Germany, desperately seeking to fit in and to make a living out of their experiences of death, abandonment, imprisonment, and 'homelessness'.

When the audience encounters Anton and Elvira around 20 years later both characters can be seen as having failed to assume comfortable identity positions which would generate feelings of being at 'home' with oneself and in society. Hence Anton gives the impression of a big boy who never quite grew up. He wears a tennis outfit and spends his time watching and re-enacting Jerry Lewis and Dean Martin films – a spectacle in which his employees are ordered to take part. On his company's parking lot he stages show shootings and car racing scenes for his own private amusement. Overall, he appears to live in a Hollywood coloured dream world which he seemingly prefers to an engagement in West German reality as if he has given up on the idea that he could find any kind of happiness or 'belonging' in being 'real' German. When Elvira admits to one of the people working for Anton that she once loved him, the man replies, 'nobody loves Anton Saitz, and he doesn't want to be loved either'. Yet, Anton's 'lovelessness' essentially applies to Elvira, too, since she is the eternally abandoned orphan. Different from Anton though, she cannot give up on the 'real' and flees into the dysfunctional relationship with Christoph and (in his absence) prostitution, seeking love and 'belonging' and finding abandonment and 'homelessness'.

Looking skin-deep now, Elvira's body discloses an utterly dismantled 'Self' which belongs to someone who, amongst other conflicting sub-identities (see above), is partly perpetrator and partly victim. On a national level, and through birth, Elvira sides with the Germans and thus with the perpetrators who are responsible for the 'homelessness' of Anton and the Jews. Yet on a personal level, Elvira is a victim of those national circumstances herself (the absence of her father, a soldier, brings about her first abandonment). However, when Anton and Elvira

first meet, Anton's victimhood as being not just personal but national/political weighs twice as much as Elvira's who – at least on the surface – is still, and despite her traumatic childhood experiences, a valued part of (now) West German sociality, a so-called 'insider'. When Elvira falls in love with Anton she desperately wants to alter this antagonistic relationship between a German perpetrator/'insider' and a Jewish victim/'outsider', yet is faced with the dilemma that she cannot ignore the national dimension as it is too intertwined with their personal (his)stories. As a consequence, she sees no choice but to divorce herself from her national sociality whose past deeds are precisely what seems to separate her from Anton since they make his present 'belonging' to the latter impossible. As such, the following 'Self'-'Other' scenario begins to take shape – first as a thought and then as a journey to Casablanca. The love for the 'Other', who in Elvira's case is only symbolically a victim of the protagonist's 'Self', requires a sacrifice of the 'Self' to match the 'Other's 'Self'-inflicted abandonment and loss and, again symbolically, allow for the 'Other' to take the 'Self's position as a perpetrator, in which case the categories of 'Self' and 'Other' cease to exist.

Tragically though, Elvira's self-victimisation in an attempt to become (like) the 'Other' has not much chance of success since her symbolic 'Othering' does not fully dissolve her ties with the perpetrators sociality (at least not from the perspective of the 'Other'). Hence Elvira's self-sacrifice of her (needless to say, unloved) identity and social 'belonging' does not bring about the love and personal 'belonging' of/to the 'Other' she yearns for and without which her life is ultimately missing any future. Elvira is lost on the borders between man and woman, homo- and heterosexuality, victim and perpetrator, 'Self' and 'Other'. Thus her suicide can be read as a form of self-abandonment in which she gives up her body, that is, she finally makes use of her ability to negate the conditions offered as she, similarly to the unknown man, sees no way of changing them (any more). Yet, her departing from this site of 'homelessness' has a very surprising post-mortem effect. It literally brings together all the people who abandoned Elvira at some point in her life (the 'Selves' and the 'Other' or vice versa), creating a momentary 'home' for all as well as an inclusive 'we' whose existence is solely based on Elvira's death. Hence in contrast to Kaspar, the dead Elvira is to some extent the basis for and a part of her social vision as she, like Kaspar, ceased to be a telling wound for both sides. In effect, she partakes in a sociality which she could not bring about or be at 'home' in while alive, which again is another variation on the *death as 'home'-coming* motif.

With a tin drum..? – A child's story

I finished my investigation of the place called 'West Germany' with an analysis of Wenders's travel narrative *Alice in den Städten* (Alice in the Cities, 1974). Here my concluding sentence on the child-induced and re-constructed place-related identity of the protagonist was, 'he sees (West) Germany again through the eyes of a child which means interpreting the place in a different, an innocent way – an experience which makes space for new senses of place freed from the baggage of the past'. In this chapter, and after an in-depth investigation of adult ways of relating to the suffocating reality of a West German sociality, I now want to examine if and to what extent a child might develop a life strategy beyond death and suicide. For this purpose I have chosen to analyse Volker Schlöndorff and Margarethe von Trotta's adaptation of Günther Grass's Nobel Prize winning novel *Die Blechtrommel* (The Tin Drum, 1979) with particular references to the narrator and protagonist Oskar Matzerath.

Oskar Matzerath is a small boy around Alice's age who lives with his family in the Polish-German town of Danzig between 1918 and 1945. He loves playing the drums, an activity which, apart from short and involuntary (usually parental) interruptions, he is occupied with for most of the time – much to the annoyance of the adults around him. In addition to his rhythmic or musical talent, he has another set of skills, which might be perceived of as being magical powers. Thus his high-pitched screaming can splinter glass and he uses it as a means of utter resistance if (in his world) existential things are being withheld from him. As such he can be described as a strong-willed, strangely gifted, eccentric and overall not very easy little person whose tyrannical narcissism dominates any relationship he enters into. One of his biggest coups against his social environment and the incident with which the actual narrative starts, is his decision to stop growing (up) after falling down the stairs.

Starting with Oskar's wider spatial, temporal and social settings, these can be described as being fundamentally in transition in every respect. Thus Danzig, the town in which he lives, is a border place situated in West Prussia, an in-between region whose geo-political belonging has alternated between the national territories of Germany and Poland. As such the city can be seen as having a double, yet deeply split national identity which can never be peaceful and stable since both countries' relationship with each other is that of recurring war between a perpetrator, usually Germany, and its victim, Poland. West Prussia could even be seen as an intrinsically liminal or conflict zone since its changing national belonging signifies which side

won the last war against the other, marking that country's position as being dominant over the other one which, accordingly, finds itself at a loss. Besides its geo-strategic position on the map, however, West Prussia is never central to either a German or Polish national imaginary as it lies at the very periphery of both countries. This marginality makes it very difficult for the region to have a positive identity of its own as it largely derives its meaning in relation to two bigger national wholes in the middle of which it seems to disappear.

In narrative/temporal terms the film is set between the endings of the First and the Second World War, a transitional period of German history in which the Empire gave way to the Weimar Republic and, later, to Nazism. The people living in it experienced the era leading up to the First World War as a time of national grandeur with Kaiser Wilhelm II, the finally achieved national unity, and (even though only small-scale) imperialism. Correspondingly, National Socialism later promised the return, if not an increase, of this former German greatness along with its international reputation, making the majority of Germans believe that they were living in the Third Empire, with Hitler as their Kaiser-like leader and a Germany soon to be massively enlarged so as to encompass the whole of Europe. Yet, the years in-between the defeat following WWI and the rise of National Socialism marked a time of transition, insecurity and crisis, with a deficient, first-time democratic system, the treaty of Versailles which by many was seen as humiliating, and the biggest economic crisis of its time. Consequently, those transitional years saw Germany and the people living in it lost between yesterday and tomorrow with a fragile sense of its/their present 'Self'/'Selves'.

Socially, Oskar's hometown (although we will have to see if Danzig can really be regarded as such) is a city co-inhabited by German, Polish and Jewish people. At the time when the film is set, the place is marked by the increasing significance and deepening of formerly largely invisible cultural dividing lines which slowly tear the earlier 'we' of Danzig apart and transform it into versions of *us* and *them*. This social segregation process induces further tensions as it creates 'Others' out of certain parts of the town's population whose members, despite having been 'insiders' for decades or even throughout all their lives, now face marginalisation and expulsion from the communal 'Self'. This societal disintegration then leads to a hierarchy which sees the German inhabitants as the most powerful, due to developments in Germany and (in retrospect) the impending invasion of Poland, and thus at the top of the social ladder (in the symbolic centre). The 'Others' are in that case the Polish citizens, who find themselves in a middle position in terms of power and social standing (at

the margins), and the powerless Jewish people who are situated at the bottom of Danzig's sociality (outside of the social realm). This set-up relates to the common and above-mentioned constellation of German perpetrators and Jewish victims, yet, in addition introduces a third and in-between category, that of the Polish 'casualty', whose possible death/victimisation is treated as a by-product (and not an end in itself as in the Jewish case) of German expansionism.

How is Oskar positioned in all of this and what is his life strategy? On the one hand, one could say that Oskar's upbringing is largely fatherless since his mother is not married for the largest part of the story. On the other hand he could be said to have two fathers: a Polish one (the mother's cousin, lover and supposed biological father of Oskar) and a German one (a Nazi whom the mother eventually marries and lives with, Oskar's societal and economic father). As he has two fathers, but equally none, Oskar's social identity might be perceived of as being more tied to his mother's West Prussian heritage. However, neither West Prussia which, as discussed above, has no identity of its own but sides with either Germany or Poland, nor his mother, who does not find a 'home' with either of her two men, provide very stable points of reference for Oskar. His mother finally dies as a result of self-abandonment and a crisis of 'belonging' (slightly increased by Oskar himself) which to some extent renders Oskar an orphan (but already puts a question mark over his victimhood). Hence Oskar's wider spatial, narrative/temporal and social world is a place of 'in-betweens' which produces an all-encompassing lack of 'belonging'. Similarly, his personal situation is an embodiment of this existential 'homelessness' with his mother/West Prussia 'swapping' her lover/Poland for an influential businessman/Germany between WWI and WWII, yet instead of finding 'home' and centring herself, she manoeuvres herself into a way of 'being in the world' which she ultimately cannot sustain[137].

Gradual abandonment by his biological parents (non-recognition by his father followed by the death of his mother), becoming an orphan, and being thrown into existential nothingness are stages of Oskar's life which bear resemblance to Kaspar's and Elvira's life stories. On the other hand, and unlike Kaspar or Elvira (and also Anton), Oskar's initial victimisation and 'Othering' does not make him an unaccustomed 'outsider' trying but failing to integrate into a community of 'insiders'. On the contrary, he knows the rules of the game of the adult world,

[137] West Prussia was lost for Germany after the Second World War, and from then on until today it belongs to Poland. Its German inhabitants had to flee and seek refuge in post-war West Germany (for example, one of my grandmothers).

which are more and more synonymous with the overpowering reality of Nazi Germany; yet, he consciously decides not to take part in it. As such he chooses to reject this form of anti-*Gemeinschaft* that rejects him amongst many 'Others'. His *anti*-anti stance, however, proves constructive, as it does not lead to personal death or suicide but to his physical and emotional survival. Hence at the margins of this dominant representation of German sociality he discovers a rather hidden alternative sociality and true *Gemeinschaft*: the world of dwarfs.

This is not meant in a metaphorical sense. Thus Oskar leaves that which is not 'home' to join a group of Lilliputians whose world is centred around the circus as a magical and powerful sociality of the 'Other'. It is an artistic, humane and beautiful counter-culture to the militaristic, suffocating and ugly Nazism which spreads itself through the whole of Danzig, West Prussia and Germany. In addition, it opposes the latter's border-observing and resentful nationalism with its open and light-hearted internationalism (its members come from different countries). Here, Oskar is welcomed and invited to make use of his special talents which, even though disturbing and alienating within the adult/Nazi realm, render him a valued member of the fairy-tale like world of the Lilliputians. Furthermore, Oskar meets a female Lilliputian from Italy with whom he encounters love for the first time. His 'homing' relationship and circus career, however, both end abruptly when his lover becomes a war casualty and the community of the Lilliputians disintegrates due to some of its members' emigration and death.

Having lost his chosen 'home', Oskar, who is now an adult himself (at least in terms of age), returns to his childhood place and point of departure: the house in Danzig and the rest of his so-called family (his twofold 'fatherlessness'). It is the end of the Second World War and it becomes apparent that the fighting is drawing to a dramatic close. Parallel to this national catastrophe Oskar is driving his own life story towards an ending of what can be seen as the prefiguring and called 'chapter one – the childhood years'. At this point, it is important to note that Oskar is the narrator of his story, a positioning which can be seen as a modulation of the narrative/temporal hybrid's narrating, performing and memorising function in the earlier memory narratives. More precisely, most narrative/life strategies ascribed to Oskar in *Die Blechtrommel* are selfishly geared at the physical and emotional survival of Oskar's 'Ego' in the *now*, which shows that he has no concept of his personal past yet. On the contrary, in *Deutschland, Bleiche Mutter* (Germany, Pale Mother, Helma Sanders-Brahms 1979) and *Malou* (Jeanine Meerapfel 1980) both adult narrators are self-reflexively working through the

relationships with their mothers/their past. This difference regarding the life strategies of (two female) adults and a (male) child in the face of existential crises is also evident in the film titles: *Die Blechtrommel* stands for Oskar('s resistance), while *Deutschland, Bleiche Mutter* and *Malou* refer to the narrator's mothers/their pasts. Oskar then is not looking back and working through but living in the *now* (as a child would), making his desires and needs the categorical point of reference upon which he bases his decisions and actions.

The pinnacle of this egocentric way of 'being in the world' is Oskar's 'deathliness'. Thus he is more or less responsible for the death of an uncle, of both of his fathers, and (even though to a lesser degree) of that of his mother, too. In this sense he causes the extinction of the whole of his family which, if one considers the personal/national cross-references throughout the narrative, has a terrorist undercurrent[138]. Yet this 'deathliness' towards significant 'Others', or in other words the nuclear family, seems to be the precondition for a life free and unburdened from a past to which one does not feel a 'belonging' (see again Alice's narrative function for the adult protagonist Philip and note Oskar's self-fulfilling performing alongside his own narration). Hence only after his family's death, which means an erasure of his biological and cultural origins and a re-writing of the story of his beginning, Oskar changes his attitude towards life and his future: he decides to grow (up). As such Oskar is a child who, dissatisfied with the conditions that are offered to him by his family/society, self-confidently abandons himself (or *them*) and chooses a self-appointed fatherless upbringing aside from the national projects of, first, war and Holocaust, and afterwards guilt and trauma.

In comparison to Kaspar, the unknown man, and Elvira, Oskar's life strategy is a challenging alternative to their *deaths as 'home'-coming*. On the other hand, he cannot do without death either. Yet, it is not his own personal death/suicide but the death of fellow or familial/national 'Selves' who became 'Others' to him that he sees as the basis of a future worth living (for him). To some extent one could argue that this outward-oriented killing narratively functions as a modulation of the above motif in the form of *death as 'home'-making*. This becomes even more apparent when one looks at an aspect of the narrative, which I have not discussed so far. Thus the film not only ends with the death of his familial 'Others' and his decision to grow (up), it also ends with Oskar's realisation that he is a father and his utterance of the words 'my son'.

[138] Here, the narrative anticipates the development of the argument in the following section where the analysis of representations of terrorism will play an important part.

Let me briefly position this son in the overall narrative of the film. Oskar, though dwarfish, has a brief affair with a girl of the same age as he goes through puberty. She lives with his family as a kind of maid and after his mother's death becomes the second wife of his German/Nazi father. Yet symptomatically, the latter relationship is not reproductive. On the contrary, the 'homeless' outsider Oskar is reproductive against all odds which results in the girl's pregnancy. As Oskar leaves his 'family remains' shortly after his mother's death to join the circus he only realises his fatherhood when he returns. This narrative strategy shows that not only the victims such as Kaspar, Elvira and Anton, but also the perpetrators of suffocating (in this case, Nazi) structures such as Oskar's German father, are ultimately non-reproductive, as the former's (self-)castration is met by the latter's more implicit impotence. The only one who starts as a victim, becomes a perpetrator, and ends/begins as a centred and reproductive 'Self' with a future, is a child who resisted 'belonging' to any of the two camps. Oskar killed those who marginalized him in order to make space for the formation of a new sociality with 'homing' qualities similar to the self-confident and abundant Lilliputians' world/circus he came into contact with. In this vein, *Die Blechtrommel* offers the first positive portrayal of existential 'homelessness', with Oskar being (re-)productive and *'home'-making*, along with an endorsement of the Lilliputians' post-national community of societal outsiders, which is depicted as creative, welcoming, love-ly, and 'small' (in preference to national megalomania).

5.3 Macht kaputt, was euch kaputtmacht![139]

In this section I will move from life strategies of symptomatic, yet singular, 'I-s' to more 'we'-oriented characters. However, the analysis of 'I-s' will still play an important role since most narratives tend to evolve around protagonists rather than collectives. Nevertheless, the following 'I-s' will, besides displaying a certain personal orientation, be representative of a social group's disposition towards their national sociality. Further, I will continue with a more gender sensitive analysis of the social attitudes and actions disclosed in *NGC* narratives. Thus it became apparent in the last section that *death as 'home'-coming*, as a response to the issue of existential 'homelessness', is predominantly ascribed to male anti-heroes. The only male survivor in this respect is a young boy whose life strategy's variation I called *death as*

[139] Approx. Trans.: 'Destroy that which destroys you!' The famous song title of the 1970s German rock group *Ton, Steine, Scherben* that came to epitomize the attitude of this generation of angry young people in Germany.

'home'-making; however, it can be argued that due to the feminine connotations of this, the boy's social identity is largely dominated by his being a child rather than male.

The German patient

The first *NGC* film in this category is Peter Fleischmann's *Die Hamburger Krankheit* (The Illness from Hamburg, 1979). The narrative starts with an introduction of the main characters whose depiction, however, is rather sketchy and incomplete, in relation to the rounded characters of the above films, as it shifts between them and a number of other people who they encounter on their way. Yet despite their relatively fragmented portrayal they serve as the audience's travel companions in this, at times, strange version of a 'travel narrative'. There is Ulrike, a young woman who appears largely indifferent to the world around her and who is about to become a prostitute. She runs into Heribert, the sleazy middle-aged owner of a snack bar and part-time pimp who arrives on the scene as the worst capitalist possible (with money being his first and foremost motivation). He is accompanied by another middle-aged man in a wheelchair whose cynical eccentricity and disgust for all healthy people bears resemblance to certain elements of Oskar's behaviour. Later, Ulrike, Heribert and his friend meet Sebastian Ellerwein, a young and enthusiastic medical professor whose research is concerned with ageing. This disparate group of four is placed in the West Germany of the late 1970s; more precisely, the film is set two years after the so-called German Autumn in 1977 (see the production date of the film). In this crisis-ridden time, they travel from the North (Hamburg) to the South (the Alps) of the country. Their journey, however, is not a leisurely one but an attempt to escape from an ever-faster spreading illness which seems to grab hold of more and more West German people regardless of class, gender, sexuality, and age.

The actual protagonist and perpetrator is thus the mysterious illness from Hamburg which invisibly invades West Germany and relentlessly pursues its victims, in the beginning only the inhabitants of Hamburg but then all West Germans. Its symptoms are unclear and so are its causes; the only piece of information, which one considers an unequivocal fact, is that the illness results in the death of the contaminated individual. This potentially catastrophic lack of knowledge leads to endless speculations put forward by politicians, so-called experts, and amateurs alike. Various theories about the core of the disease drive the narrative as everyone, including the audience, tries to find out what lies beneath. Professor Ellerwein, who in a detective-like fashion tries to solve the national riddle, is the lead character of this main plot.

With his energetic and seemingly 'we'-oriented search for the answer he functions as a positive identification figure for the spectator. Like any (self-)important detective, he is accompanied by an apprentice, here Ulrike, who is lectured by him and follows him like a ghost: wordless, unfeeling, and somehow transparent. This positive couple is contrasted (and neutralised, see below) by a negative one, which consists of Heribert and his friend who show no apparent or even feigned interest in the fate of the victims. On the contrary, Heribert becomes something like a (minor) perpetrator as he financially exploits the increasingly panicking population (similar to Alois' behaviour in *Abrahams Gold* (Abraham's Gold, Jörg Graser 1989)) and his friend is full of *Schadenfreude* for the formerly healthy.

Let us take a second look at Ellerwein who besides his 'we'-orientation shows an increasingly subversive attitude. Thus he robustly questions the official narrative according to which the disease is a virus infection or epidemic whose further spread can be prevented through the vaccination of the healthy part of the population in addition to the isolation of suspects and infected people. Having witnessed the death of a random pedestrian, he instead suggests that one should try to find out more about the social context of the affected: what is known about their past, in which situation were they when it happened, and what did they feel when the illness broke out. Moreover, he criticises the harsh treatment of suspects as, according to him, it directly contributes to the outbreak of the disease. Yet he fights a lonely battle; rather than taking his expert opinion into account, the authorities soon isolate him, together with other supposed suspects, as he has been seen close to the dead pedestrian and thus is regarded as a possible carrier of the virus. In social quarantine, he meets Ulrike and Heribert and, due to the latter's slyness, the three suspects manage to escape together with the help of the man in the wheelchair. In the course of their journey, they meet other healthy people with whom they travel for a while, yet more often than that they encounter dead individuals, groups and villages which have completely died out. Soon, escaping from the illness and from the vaccinating and isolating authorities becomes nearly impossible. West Germany is in the firm grip of a deadly force which presents itself as a national illness.

Ellerwein who studies the phenomenon, continuously refines his thesis on the social nature of the deadly disease. Thus he tells his fellow travellers a short story, which sums up parts of his current research. It is an allegory about the death of a rat that did not die of anything in particular but of a combination of too much stress and too little zest for life. The moral of the story is that socially-induced death is the result of an everyday life situation in which the

concentration and combination of relevant stress factors exceed a certain level. When they encounter a village where the former inhabitants seem to have died in a collective rage, Ulrike asks Ellerwein if the disease is infectious. Ellerwein answers, according to his conviction of the social constructedness of the illness, that anything can be infectious, '...a (social) climate, feelings, passions,...' Another few days later, when he and Ulrike hide in the evacuated flat of his sister, Ellerwein has another idea. He tells Ulrike that he has been thinking about issues around adrenalin, which might be the key to an understanding of vital concerns regarding the illness. He explains that the hormone is produced as a result of particular emotional states which can have dangerous physical implications if it is not absorbed in time. Now, Ellerwein infers, if the illness from Hamburg is in any way similar to the workings of adrenalin, it has been wrong to look for external symptoms. 'It depends on our state of being in the world...', he says and then dies himself.

In many ways, Ellerwein's notion of the social character of the nationwide illness bears resemblance to Durkheim's concept of suicide as a predominantly social phenomenon. Hence, suicide can be seen as a particular expression of a social illness whereby, at least according to the unknown man in *In einem Jahr mit 13 Monden*, it is still an expression of the individual's healthiness and strength to be able to negate the suffocating societal reality. In the case of the illness in *Die Hamburger Krankheit*, however, any individual autonomy is taken away by the 'unhealthy' alliance between certain state authorities and the illness, which has a distressing and alienating effect not only on the population's mental well-being but also on its psyche and its emotional life. In this vein, dying of the illness from Hamburg is not a sign of more or less consciously exercised social criticism but of unconscious emotional processes, which due to too much negativity and/or too little positive everyday life experiences have caused the body to collapse. Here again, and similar to the Kaspar Hauser story, the body can be seen as a socially colonized realm, which characterises the relationship between the individual and its respective sociality as an ongoing struggle for life or death.

After Ellerwein's death, Alexander, a caravan deliverer, provisionally continues the travel with Ulrike and some others. He offers his own thoughts on the origin of the social dilemma from which they run. Yet, like his narrative predecessor, he is not allowed to survive the national disaster. He is shot by a so-called civil defence force which consists of a group of Bavarian pensioners in traditional costumes who on behalf of the state execute him as an

unknown suspect. Before he is killed, however, and as the self-appointed guardians of the law are drawing close, he says to Ulrike:

> I had a friend in India who used to lie in his bathtub for hours. If possible, he would have dived into it completely and forever. One day, he drowned in it. Maybe we all want to go back into the womb, back to a new beginning. As masters of the Earth we are finished...

This *back into the womb* thesis uttered by the condemned man and illustrated with his friend's death/suicide resonates with the above *death as 'home'-coming* motif as it compares the sphere of death with the ultimate 'home' and realm of life, the womb, while describing human ambitions of (national) grandeur as being outdated or 'finished'. It thus raises the issues of unbearable personal and societal guilt as a result of Nazi megalomania, which is contrasted with the innocence of the unborn child. Moreover, this understanding of death as the precondition for a new (and innocent) beginning which everyone is yearning for also means that Alexander sees no real future for the societal status quo, as it is 'ill' (and guilty) beyond recovery. Yet, the *back into the womb* motto expresses an impossible return to a paradisal, dreamlike state of *before*-'being in the world' from which one was exiled into the cold societal reality of 'homelessness' and which now can only be left through death. It paints the picture of an imploding sociality which rather than going forward and reproducing itself is reversing its existence. Cinematically, Alexander's explanation is supported by the last body movement of the dying which marks their transition from life to death – all the dying suddenly move into a foetal position, which is often accompanied by a smile that signals 'I am home'.

Having discussed the illness and its victims at some length I will now look at some of the representations of suffocating social structures in the film. With regard to the former, one has to say that it is never totally clear if the outbreak of the illness is entirely due to the social climate or if the authorities are pushing it, too. Hence some people in the film claim that the illness was caused by the enforced preventative vaccination that was declared compulsory for all inhabitants. Yet apart from that, the isolation and evacuation of certain areas along with the concentration of suspects in designated buildings show distinctly fascist traits. On the radio, the following message is placed to warn all potential dissidents that, 'whoever puts the communal well-being at risk cannot count on the consideration of the community'. One cannot help but recall the Nazi argument of the 'parasitic' character of the Jews and Gypsies

along with the supposed 'unhealthiness' and 'community-corroding' nature of homosexuals and communists.

That the illness might be orchestrated by, or at least serves, the social elite becomes apparent during a party organised by Heribert in the second half of the film. Here, high-ranking officials spell out that they regard the current crisis as socio-politically more than welcome and utterly positive. However, the ultimate Nazi reference is placed at the end of the narrative where Ulrike is captured for the second time since she has not been successfully vaccinated yet. At first, her jewellery is taken from her (remember the fate of the Jews in *Abrahams Gold*) and then her shoes are confiscated as well. This leaves her robbed of all her personal belongings and barefoot, which can be read as a metaphor for complete vulnerability and defencelessness. She then receives a yellow sign with the number twelve which someone hangs around her neck – a clear allusion to the Star of David and the number that every Jew was given at her/his arrival at a concentration camp. After that, she is forced to undress in front of the entirely male medical staff in black protection suits, resembling fascist executives in black Gestapo uniforms. Next, she is pushed into a shower room/tent, which conjures up images from the gas chambers that the Jewish captives were introduced to as cleaning and disinfecting facilities. At this point Ulrike is constantly screaming and attacking her persecutors. Finally, she is brought to an old and white-haired doctor who tells her that everyone (the whole nation) must work together in order to win this 'war'. And again the audience is reminded of the propagandistic war language used in the Second World War. Yet surprisingly and in stark contrast to most concentration camp inhabitants, Ulrike manages to escape once more.

In conclusion, the suffocation of this post-war West German sociality and its deadly climate is portrayed as a result of still operating fascist elements which, as argued by the terrorists of the RAF, show that the political, juridical and executive system of the post-war period does not resemble a clear break with its Nazi predecessor. Instead, the RAF claimed, there are structural continuities which can be seen as the hidden rationale behind the democratic surface, yet which only become visible at times of societal crises – a logic which is taken up and compellingly dramatised by the film so that the latter can be seen as a declaration of sympathy for the cause of the RAF terrorists whose leading figures had died (or were murdered by the state) less than two years before the film was made. In addition, it is a strong

critique and a proclamation of failure regarding post-war West Germany's attempt and promise to leave 'hell' and make 'home' after the supposed 'zero hour' in 1945.

The film ends with a powerful and cynical anti-*Heimat* sequence which stands in a striking contrast to the narrative strategies used before. Ulrike flees to her grandfather high up in the Alps who lives in a little house on an idyllic mountain pasture. The narrative reference here is the well-known children's story *Heidi* (Johanna Spyri 1956) in which a little girl called Heidi grows up parentless with her grandfather in a similar environment. Ulrike, like Heidi, now wears a dirndl and is shown on the swings with a smile on her face that the audience has not seen throughout the film. It signifies that, for the first time in the story, Ulrike is truly happy and at 'home'. However, her return to childhood and *back to a new beginning*, which can be regarded as a modulation of the *back into the womb* motif, is depicted as an illusion rather than a 'real' solution. Hence shortly after her arrival, Ulrike is found and transported back to a central vaccination unit, which means uncertainty with regard to her death or survival. Her grandfather who does not witness the enforced removal or kidnapping of his granddaughter only remarks that her visit has been very short indeed this time. Then he decides to send a yodelling her way (as a kind of goodbye). Yet as an expression of joy the yodelling stands in cynical contrast to the possibly deadly future Ulrike is facing. As such this crucially altered German fairytale episode of the film shows, in a different yet corresponding way to the earlier fascist portrayal of post-war West Germany, how the *old* with all that it stands for holds sway over the *young* generation and the social conditions. Furthermore, Nazism and *Heimat* are alluded to as being the two sides of the national climate catastrophe that led to a deep social 'homelessness' and the illness from Hamburg.

Sex, Drugs and…

From the above representation of a sociality ill beyond help with a bittersweet anti-*Heimat* finish I will now turn to another equally compelling social portrait of post-war West Germany taken from one of the first anti-*Heimat* films called *Ich liebe dich, ich töte dich* (I Love You, I Kill You, Uwe Brandner 1971). In chapter three, I analysed the film's sense of place by juxtaposing its hunting protagonist with the forester of an earlier *Heimat* film and the poacher of another anti-*Heimat* production from the same year. The investigation focused on the aura of wilderness surrounding the anti-hero in black leather who was said to show striking similarities to the leader of a motorcycle gang. In the following analysis, I will focus on the

'drugging' policy of the film which offers a creative way to think about a possible medical treatment for the West German patient who has above been diagnosed as being terminally ill.

At first, however, I will discuss how *Ich liebe dich, ich töte dich* is unravelling what lies beneath the unhealthily sugary icing of the post-war West German sociality. Thus while the scenery is beautiful – a concert in the town hall provides a harmonic background sound, the children at school write about their favourite day, sing the traditional German resistance song *Die Gedanken sind frei*[140], and learn the poem 'Ein freies Leben führen wir, ein Leben voller Wonne[141],...' – the social reality is less idyllic. Here the two main characters, a teacher and the above-mentioned hunter, regularly look at porn magazines and visit prostitutes instead of engaging in meaningful love relationships; the main leisure activity of the male villagers seems to be shooting and not growing or building something in the form of gardening or other *'home'-work*; the village itself is plagued by wolves, yet even more so by wild dogs which occasionally kill inhabitants rather than being tamed pet animals which protect their human caretakers; finally, two policemen control the villagers' every move and restrict their personal freedom (for example, it is forbidden to be in the streets at night) which stands in a striking contrast to the freedom propaganda that the children are subjected to at school. Symbolically, the hunter says to the teacher who is new in the village, 'we nearly live in the wilderness here.' Civilisation, compassion and happiness seem to have left the place, which results in a rather empty, silenced and lethargic, yet also violent anti-community.

Some selected comments from the village's priest and its chronicler substantiate the gloomy impression of this ill-looking anti-*Heimat* site by providing the following insights into the local sense of communality. The first says during one of his Sunday sermons that, 'one has to take it as it is. And what is makes us happy. Enough said. Let us sing.' These words come from a representative of the state (in West Germany there is no clear separation between the church and the state) who uses his authority to demand an unquestioning attitude towards the existing conditions of life. His fatalistic maxim further claims to bring happiness to the people of the village, and it in turn usefully justifies the hierarchical social structures which are in place. Not surprisingly, the community's consent or disapproval is not asked for, and before anyone can even raise her/his voice the 'perpetrator' decides that although 'in the beginning was the word' too many of them are surely damaging the feeling of harmonious togetherness.

[140] Approx. Trans.: 'Our thoughts are free'
[141] Approx. Trans.: 'We lead a free life, a life full of joy,...'

And the silenced village population takes it and begins to sing in an orderly fashion, praising Him who has made everything as it is.

The chronicler, who as a 'normal' man from the midst of the village, occasionally comments on its *Zeitgeist* writes:

> The days flow into each other without us noticing. The seasons change above our heads. No one can do anything against it. (...) Maybe one day we will run out of medicine. That will be the Last Judgement. We have obeyed the rules and must not fear any judge[142].

Here the chronicler seemingly joins in with the priest's fatalistic sense of 'being in the world'. Yet, where the former suggests that the present conditions are a reason to rejoice, the latter's words are unmistakeably sad and unhopeful with regard to the existing local communality and its future. Thus he refers to the powerlessness of the villagers who are subjected to a never-changing life which imprisons them in long-established, traditional social routines and conventions. However, his remarks also demonstrate that instead of a collective, or at least an occasional individual resistance in the face of this unbearable standstill, these people resign themselves to obey the rules, which means paying the high price of personal unhappiness and meaninglessness (in their worldly life). This astonishing response of the members of this not-changing, not-moving, not-feeling, and hence not actually living sociality to unreservedly accept their victim position is only understandable in relation to their readiness to die and face the Last Judgement which speaks from the chronicler's annotations. Here, it seems, one hopes to eventually receive the reward for bearing the unbearable.

The religious framing of this modulation of the *death as 'home'-coming* motif shows the villagers as deprived of any agency to make their lives meaningful since they are stuck in a position between life and death, or hell and paradise. In this vein, religion is depicted as a strategy of the socially powerful that allows them to keep their less powerful or dependent social 'Others' in check[143]. Yet besides these structural issues around the socially controlling character of religion there are other, more personal dilemmas which it casts on its followers. As a 'prerun', the everyday life of a believer becomes essentially devalued and drained of

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[142] Approx. Trans.

[143] This line of argument is inspired by a famous statement by Karl Marx who said that, 'Religion ist Opium fürs Volk' ('religion is opium for the people'). The particular applicability of this socio-critical thesis for the analysis of *Ich liebe dich, ich töte dich* will become even more apparent in the next paragraphs where I will discuss the character of the specific opiate supplied and taken here.

meaning and importance, which then are re-invested in an imaginary afterlife. Hence paradoxically, worldly life becomes associated with spiritual and emotional lack, suffering, 'homelessness', and in the last instance with death, while worldly death becomes the gate to spiritual and emotional abundance, fulfilment, *'home'-coming* and ultimately to life. Yet how do people survive this vacuum socially and without killing each other or themselves – a difficult task that nevertheless has to be fulfilled if one is to receive the blessing of paradisal afterlife since killing and suicide, as shortcuts to the latter, are not valued options within the Christian faith.

At this point, I want to discuss the second last issue of the chronicler's *Zeitgeist* report which has not been analysed yet: what he refers to as 'medicine' (and Marx calls 'opium'). The majority, if not all villagers (the audience sees, for example, the farmer, the hunter, and the prostitute), take certain pills in private, while the police give them to anyone who suspiciously disturbs the deadly silence of the village's public sphere in the streets at night. Therefore, one can argue, that in the absence of an organic sense of community an illusion of the latter is supplied by pills which have the effect of enhancing the villagers happiness and lulling them into a state of indifferent endurance. It is a life without aims and passions but also bare of conflict and chaos, and it provides the, even though artificially produced, social cohesion which is necessary for the continued existence of the sociality. Yet this *drugged communality* is represented as being only a temporary solution to the wider social issues such as spiritual and emotional 'homelessness', a lack of communication, and the failure to make one's life meaningful. Hence ultimately, the members of this community are comparable to zombies (who, for instance, do not actively reproduce): they are not yet dead but they are also not fully alive any more. Resistance is rendered impossible by the police's policy of drugging the wrongdoer back into 'normality', so that effectively the community (or better, its various elites) becomes unchallengeable. This causes the latter to be frozen in time, space and its form of failed communality – kept in check by invisible power structures behind which we nevertheless find the state.

Made in 1971, the film clearly addresses and criticises existing socio-political and communal issues in post-war West Germany. More precisely, and using narrative strategies comparable to *Die Hamburger Krankheit*, it shows sympathy with the cause of the RAF terrorists as the film ends with an anti-authoritarian act following the illegal and arbitrary (mis)use of power by a state representative. At first, the poaching teacher and friend of the hunter is shot dead by

a policeman in public which, from the perspective of the ruling elites, leads to the removal of this ('hopefully' last) socially intolerable example of individual resistance that otherwise has successfully been rendered impossible. In turn, the perpetrator and his colleague are shot dead by the hunter who eradicates these local oppressors and henchmen of a national sociality that clearly shows anti-democratic, if not fascist elements. However, through his attack on representatives of some of the deadliest elements of this seemingly forlorn and 'homeless' failed communality, the hunter (in a logical progression) moves on from killing animals which threaten the physical survival of the people from the village to killing humans or fellow villagers who threaten the emotional and spiritual well-being of the villagers. In this respect, the deadly ending is a 'happy' ending in accordance with the *death as 'home'-making* motif since it makes space for the development of a flourishing communality which produces life after (near) death, similar to spring following winter. Hence, the sociality of the quick fix with prostitution instead of love and pills instead of a meaningful life is deeply challenged and thrown into hopeful chaos and conflict. In other words, as the established medical treatment ceased to have a soothing effect it has been replaced by a drastic alternative antidote which is now expected to induce the West German patient's healing process.

5.4 Rising from the dead

From a gender perspective, the deadly *'home'-coming* and *'home'-making* strategies analysed in the *NGC* productions *Jeder für sich und Gott gegen alle*, *In einem Jahr mit 13 Monden*, *Die Blechtrommel*, *Die Hamburger Krankheit*, and *Ich liebe dich, ich töte dich* represent male views on the post-war West German sociality, or more precisely on the years of the RAF and post-RAF period. Made by the acclaimed male filmmakers Herzog, Fassbinder, Schlöndorff, Fleischmann and Brandner, these films centre around male protagonists and their responses to the suffocating reality of the society/anti-community they live in. The only female director whose influence is at least partly accredited in the above productions is von Trotta who co-directed *Die Blechtrommel* with her partner Schlöndorff. Interestingly, this film employed quite different narrative strategies in comparison with the other films. As such, it was the only one with a child as the unlikely protagonist. Furthermore, this child showed at least some feminine traits which were considered as *'home'-making* qualities, and in addition, he was the only reproductive character in the films selected for close analysis to this point.

It is time to examine the work of a female filmmaker who provides the ongoing investigation with female/feminist protagonists and their relationships with their social surroundings. Again it is von Trotta's name which has to be mentioned here. Of course, there are other female filmmakers such as Sander, Meerapfel or Sanders-Brahms who are worth mentioning in this respect and whose heroines have been analysed in the previous two chapters. Yet, the most symptomatic filmmaker concerned with the social reality of her post-war present is von Trotta, and thus in the following I will first analyse her debut film *Das zweite Erwachen der Christa Klages* (The Second Awakening of Christa Klages, 1977) and then her later film *Die Bleierne Zeit*[144] (The German Sisters / Marianne and Juliane, 1981).

A second awakening

Das Zweite Erwachen der Christa Klages is a film about the lives of three women in the crisis-ridden West German society of 1977, the year in which the leading figures of the RAF died in their cells in the high security prison in Stuttgart-Stammheim – a national episode later referred to as the German Autumn. In this politically charged society, the three women of the film initially seem to lead very different private lives. However, as the narrative unfolds it becomes apparent that their distinctive life stories can also be read as a succession of stages within a single person's life: beginning with Lena, continuing with Ingrid, and resuming with Christa. On the level of the plot, the women are connected through a bank robbery committed by Christa and two male accomplices to save her kindergarten, whereby Lena becomes Christa's hostage and Ingrid's flat temporarily serves as a hideout before she helps Christa to escape the West German officials. On a symbolic level, all three are linked via their growing discontent with the conditions of their lives and the realisation that they have to change certain personal and/or social matters. Thus the film moves between the personal/the private and the political/the social, and from Christa to Lena to Ingrid and back again. Now it is time to find out what these 'nurses' can do for themselves and for their West German patient.

The youngest woman, Lena Seidlhofer, works in a bank and naively dreams about being married and owning a flat in a newly built house. Besides her work routine and the conventional romantic imaginings, she is depicted as a very lonely person who (rather than leading a life) happens to have an existence that essentially lacks social contact, meaningful everyday life experiences, and empathy for others. She lives by herself, does not seem to have

[144] Lit. Trans.: 'The Leaden Time'

a friend, is most concerned about never being late for, or even missing, work and spends most of her free time in front of a huge television set in her one-bedroom flat. When Christa as a masked bank robber literally bursts into her life and grabs hold of her, Lena's life changes. The 'Other' who, while threatening her with a gun, also holds her close immediately intrigues her. Being free again, this (although only momentary) experience of closeness and intimate contact continues to govern her thoughts and feelings to such an extent that she decides she cannot let Christa go. She tries to find her by going to her alternative kindergarten, her mother and finally Ingrid.

The more Lena learns about this strange woman, the more she admires her. When in the last scene of the film, she is asked by the police to identify Christa as the woman who committed the robbery she says, 'no, it is definitely not her'. Then she smiles imperceptibly, visible only for Christa but not for the police. Hence, out of compassion for an unknown stranger, Lena breaks out of her previous way of life, which was dominated by conventional life choices and a clear sense of duty. By doing so, she chooses to act in a humane way and, maybe for the first time in her life, she selflessly reaches out to an 'Other'. That in this case it means opposing the state by breaking the law (knowingly lying to the police) highlights the strength of her will and the extent of her personality change. As a result, Christa's compassion for 'Others' (the children of her 'exiled' kindergarten) has saved Lena's life by asking her to make up her own mind about her 'Self'.

Ingrid Häkele whose married name resonates with the German word for crocheting, 'häkeln', and thus emphasizes her domesticity, follows Lena in (self-)developmental terms. Her life story strikingly demonstrates how a fairytale can end in tragedy and that the fulfilment of Lena's dreams does not necessarily mean a happy ending for the people involved. Hence Ingrid's married existence is dominated by the constant effort to answer the private/public call for caring selflessness and willingly accepted dependence on her husband Heinz, an officer of the West German army. Together, they live in a spacious new flat of their own whose mortgage payments mean a lifelong financial obligation – something Ingrid declares as unproblematic since Heinz has a job with tenure. As it serves the couple's financial purposes and also is compatible with her domestic labour, Ingrid works at home as a beautician, which is her only source of outside social contact. In her spare time she dreams about having children, which Heinz wants to delay until he has been promoted. The loneliness, emptiness and 'homelessness' of Ingrid's life manifest themselves in her nightly screaming which later

becomes apparent as being an expression of fear of her husband. Symbolically, several walls in their flat are covered with stuffed bats killed by Heinz who loves to hunt and spread his dead trophies/victims in every corner. This peculiar decoration has a frightening effect and further substantiates the morbid *stuckness*, latent violence, and non-reproductive atmosphere of the place in which Ingrid is trapped.

Ingrid's relationship with Christa is an old friendship, which has been interrupted since they left school and lost sight of each other. As both reinvest in their relationship it becomes apparent that Flo[145], as Christa affectionately calls her, has always admired her friend Chris for being so stubborn and fearless. Yet in the course of their second encounter, Ingrid is set alight by Christa's energy and idealism, overcomes her anxiety and spontaneously helps her friend and Werner (one of Christa's accomplices and at the same time her lover) to hide from the police. After Werner has been killed she even takes the lead, makes Christa look like herself and lends her her passport so that she can escape to a commune in Portugal. More astonishingly still, she follows Christa there, risking a marriage break-up and later, back in West Germany, moves into a flat community founded by Christa. Hence, out of deeply felt solidarity with her best friend she breaks out of her narrow and imprisoning marriage and instead chooses a communal life in which existing social hierarchies and gender boundaries are challenged or even overcome. In addition, she quits being a beautician which shows that rather than looking at the outward appearance of her well-paying customers she is now concerned with the emotional '(in)side' of herself and her wider social environment, with meaningful, post-familial relationships, and social commitment.

Christa Klages[146], the protagonist of the film, is, in contrast to the above two characters, someone who beyond her personal needs and interests is concerned with the wider social realm and here specifically with the development of alternative forms of communality. Thus she founded a cooperative kindergarten, which different from the conventional state ones became a real 'home' for a handful of adults, their children and children or adults without any familial ties or even German nationality. In effect, Christa created a post-familial and post-national community of societal outsiders which is similar to Oskar's chosen community of Lilliputians (here largely replaced by children). It offers a challenging alternative to the

[145] Lit. Trans.: 'Flea' – reference to Ingrid's petite stature.
[146] Her name offers the following associations: 'Christa' – a popular German first name which includes 'Christ' and thus refers to religious and humane qualities; 'Klages' – a rare German last name which looks like a version of the verb 'klagen' and is translatable as 'to lament, to complain, to bring into action'; it suggests 'awakening' characteristics.

deadly *'home'-coming* and *'home'-making* policies of the other *NGC* films. Her *'home'-making* transgresses the purely personal and even egoistic strategies of Oskar in *Die Blechtrommel* and the hunter in *Ich liebe dich, ich töte dich* since her *-making* has building qualities and in addition, it is not confined to the well-being of herself and her own little daughter, Mischa, but humanely includes relevant 'Others', here 'homeless' outsiders.

Yet, Christa's self-made social idyll comes under threat from the capitalist and morally questionable elements of post-war West Germany with their impending eviction due to continuing financial problems. In their place, the owner plans to rent the flat out to a more lucrative porn shop – a business transaction that favours an immoral industry over unconventional social work. As such, the porn versus children decision bears resemblance to the representation of prostitution versus love in *Ich liebe dich, ich töte dich* and is indicative of what I called the anti-communal sociality of the quick fix. In order to save her 'baby', which in this case refers to both her daughter and her communal 'being in the world', Christa desperately re-personalises her cooperative project and decides to fight back. To be more precise, she commits a bank robbery with two accomplices in order to get hold of the amount of money which is necessary to secure the survival of her community.

This violent act can to some extent be seen as a turning point of the narrative since here Christa employs a method which is alien to her usually sustainable approach to life and rather belongs to the sociality of the quick fix. Consequently, she is punished for her community-incompatible behaviour by the other members who disapprove of her solo action and reject the captured money. Thus her violation of the communal code of behaviour is followed by estrangement and separation from the group. Not knowing where to go and still hunted by the police, she finally escapes to rural Portugal where she joins an agricultural cooperative. At the outset, things seem promising and, in comparison with her former 'home' in West Germany, comparably idyllic. Yet a few weeks later and shortly after Ingrid has joined her there, Christa is asked to leave. Again, her behaviour is regarded as irreconcilable with the group's social policies which are quite hierarchical and gendered. Therefore, Christa and Ingrid's feminist attitudes and actions are regarded as a threat to their guest community, which as a result sends them back 'home' into social exile. In Christa's case, this means a retreat into complete isolation. She moves into an unfurnished flat where she survives in the style of a homeless person in the street: on the floor, in a sleeping bag, hardly clean and seemingly without any perspective. Her loneliness progresses to such an extent that she finally decides to commit

suicide by taking sleeping pills. In this situation, she seems to be in a similar state to the unknown man, the late Elvira, and some of the ill people from Hamburg: dying to come 'home'.

This, however, becomes the second major turning point in the course of the narrative as Christa stops in the middle of her suicide attempt, packs her stuff, and returns from social exile to her 'home' community which, reduced in numbers, now resides in a small flat. When she awakes after a long and exhausting sleep her daughter is lying close to her. It seems as if everything has only been a bad dream from which she finally 'awakens'. Ingrid and the others welcome her back (without the money which she has left in Portugal) and Christa appears to be happy again for the first time in ages. This harmony is immediately interrupted by a visit of two policemen who have come to ask the community to be more silent since some neighbours had complained about the children's noisy playing. Christa who is sick of hiding comes to the door to handle the problem and face up to her responsibilities. A few days later, she is taken away by the police who then confront her with the crown witness Lena Seidlhofer. This unexpected happy ending, which incidentally is the happiest ending of the *NGC* films analysed so far, is based on a startling sympathy which Lena, a *victim-turned-fan*, feels towards her *perpetrator-turned-idol*, Christa. Overall, it shows that Christa's wrongdoings are seen as less significant than her positive personal and social impulses.

Regarding the moral of this feminist fable, one could say that Christa's life-threatening 'homelessness' is caused and cured by her departure from and return to communal life, which is supplemented by her loss and recovery of a positive social identity. Accordingly, her chosen means to preserve her 'home', a violent and armed bank robbery complete with kidnapping, are narratively condemned by the subsequent representation of her life's social as well as emotional and spiritual decline to the point of suicidal self-abandonment. However, different from the narrative strategies of her male colleagues, von Trotta is not satisfied with the *death as 'home'-coming* tendencies of her protagonist. Instead the filmmaker portrays a woman who finds the strength to recover her mission and to re-socialise with her fellow *'home'-makers*. In effect, the idealist within her regains her socio-political point of reference, and the mother within her returns to her little daughter. The societal antagonist and egoistic proto-terrorist within her, on the other hand, is weakened by a lack of communal support and the death of her lover/accomplice.

Christa's re-'awakening' is thus characterized by a 'yes' to love, life, and community, and a 'no' to hate, death/suicide and 'homelessness'. It is a *second* 'awakening' because her first one was to give birth to a post-familial and post-national way of 'being in the world'. This then offered a (re-)productive alternative to the widespread societal 'homelessness' and deathliness of the RAF years whose narrative treatment finds its expression in the socially castrating or self-castrating filmic representations analysed above. Yet, *Das zweite Erwachen der Christa Klages* seems to aim to remind the audience of the heritage of the student movement such as solidarity and socio-political commitment which, practised in small groups such as the one described in this film, can serve as a source of health for its members and the surrounding society. In other words, the West German patient might be able to recover communally. Nevertheless and despite all optimism, Christa (and the audience) have to realise that even a once-established communal 'home' is continuously challenged by self-interest (from the 'inside') and societal changes (from the 'outside'). This means that *'home'-making* is never complete and has to be struggled for again and again, which is why the *second* 'awakening' of Christa Klages is emphasized in the title and not her first one.

Having discussed the tripartite female/feminist unity of Lena, Ingrid and Christa along with the identity politics of a small *Gemeinschaft*, I do not want to end this investigation without at least briefly addressing the representation of men and children and the construction of their social identities in the film. These other social 'Selves', as I will show in the following argument, in part complement as well as differ quite distinctly from the portrayal of female 'awakening' and *'home'-making*. At first, there is Werner Wiedemann, Christa's accomplice and lover with whom she flees to Hans Grawe, a friend of the second accomplice, and later to Ingrid. In the course of the narrative, the filmmaker variously refers to certain aspects of Werner's background which depicts him as a clearly identifiable Kaspar Hauser character.

From a conversation between Christa and Hans we learn that Werner had a parentless upbringing in an orphanage (like Elvira) which seems to have left deep imprints on his character. Thus his 'homelessness' is presented as his main motivation for his communal engagement and the bank robbery. Additionally, even though he is said to be Christa's lover the two of them are only once shown as *failing* lovers, which de-sexualises their relationship and indicates his impotence (another form of social castration). In the following scene, he talks about Christa as a mother figure for Wolfgang, the third accomplice – a statement which together with his orphan status and the previous sex debacle suggests that he might be talking

about himself when he says, 'you were the mother with whom he couldn't have sex...' This understanding is supported by a scene in which Christa cuts Werner's spaghetti in pieces so that it is easier for him to eat. Here and elsewhere, Werner's apparent boyishness (rather than manliness) goes together with Christa's personal and social motherhood. Yet, as in the Kaspar Hauser narrative (where the teacher served as a kind of late father substitute for Kaspar), Werner cannot be saved by a surrogate mother (Christa). Hence, Werner's lack of a clearly definable social identity – heightened by the fact that he and Christa are fugitives (which is symbolic of their transient, borderline status) – in the end leads to his unavoidable death: shot by a guardian of the law and social order. In narrative/social terms, by being killed as a criminal on the run (resembling Kaspar dying as a, retrospectively, mentally ill person in a fever) the anti-societal 'Other' is removed from the 'inside' of the national sociality and instead placed at the very margins, or the 'outside' even, from where he cannot further challenge the (anti-communal) social elements which he died to change. In addition, it means a shift from societal chaos to enforced normality and peacefulness via the one-sided criminalisation of a critical voice.

This re-establishment of the status quo, analogous to the post-mortem attestation of Kaspar's madness, can be called *normalisation as 'Othering'*, since the self-righteous society literally executes its right to decide what is right, or 'normal', and what is wrong, or 'Other'. And similar to Kaspar's post-mortem examination, the solution to this social problem is handed over to an alleged professional, a policeman who as part of the state's executive is entrusted with societal responsibilities regarding criminal citizens. Supported by the law he successfully removes Werner and with him all possible threat that he might have held for the national sociality by returning him to eternal silence. Hence Werner dies 'homeless' at the hands of society, an anti-community which Tönnies called *Fremde* and which he saw as the opposite of *Heimat*. As such Werner's death is not a *'home'-coming* (as in Kaspar or Elvira's case) but a deepened 'homelessness' which follows an unsuccessful double act of resistance and *'home'-making*. The fact that he is shot in the back further supports this interpretation since it alludes to a form of 'going' or, even more, 'escape' instead of a willing 'coming'. After his death, Christa says to Ingrid about her relationship to Werner[147]:

> **Christa:** Werner and I...we always were so unwieldy with each other. We pulled on each other in such a senseless way, and when we couldn't think of anything any more we committed the bank robbery.

[147] Approx. Trans.

Ingrid: Then it was only for the money?
Christa: Yes, of course, it was for the money. It is just that if we had really loved each other, then maybe we wouldn't have needed it.

In this dialogue one discovers a new aspect in the ongoing discussion about 'homelessness', *'home'-coming* and *'home'-making*. Thus Christa establishes a correlation between a lack of love, emotional 'homelessness' and her and Werner's angry 'double solo run' which unsuccessfully tried to *make 'home'* using violent means (similar to Oskar and the hunter). This in turn questions the prospects of the deadly *'home'-making* strategies analysed above since it proclaims that without love there is no sustainable *'home'-making*. Moreover, and due to a lack of further examples of positive *'home'-making* strategies in *NGC* films, this means retrospectively that deadly and (self-)violating approaches to *come* or *make 'home'* refer to a fundamental lack or absence of love which is overwhelmingly present.

Speaking of love, besides Werner there is Hans, a Protestant minister, who takes Christa and Werner in for a night. He is very understanding as far as their community project is concerned, but he rejects their violent and criminal means and nearly throws them out of his house. This strong initial refutation is, however, increasingly weakened and slowly turned into sympathy as he gets to know Christa and falls in love with her. Similar to Lena and Ingrid, he is impressed by Christa's enthusiasm and courage to such an extent that he addresses the question of social responsibility in his Sunday prayer. Here he uses Brecht's *Mother Courage and Her Children* (1962) to show that praying alone is not enough. Thus, according to Brecht's story, when a town is attacked at night the mute daughter of Mother Courage climbs onto a farmer's house and starts drumming. Through the noise she awakens the town's people and saves their lives while being shot by a soldier herself. In the film script it says about Hans' delivery of his interpretation of the socio-critical text, 'it was as if he was only speaking for her'. This unusual declaration of love via an 'awakening' speech against passive endurance and for social commitment, together with Christa's already established actual and symbolic motherhood and social courage, unmistakably renders her the Mother Courage of the film: for herself, her small community, and for the people she meets 'outside' in society (i.e. Lena, Ingrid and Hans).

After Werner's death, Hans supports Christa in her motherly role by helping her to see Mischa and through sending money to the community to help them survive. Like the other people in the film, he recognises Christa's *'home'-making* qualities and thus decides to help

her with her communal mission. This Mother Courage motif is further substantiated by Christa's daughter Mischa playing the tin drum which her mother gives her through Ingrid while living in hiding. It refers back to Oskar's drumming in *Die Blechtrommel*, where he gets a number of tin drums from his mother, too. Yet, Oskar's mother could not be further away from being a Brechtian Mother Courage, and thus, besides reluctantly buying the instrument, she leaves all active resistance to the child himself. Interestingly though, they buy Oskar's tin drums from a Jewish toy store which even more makes the tin drum into a symbolically charged resistance tool. As such it cuts through the 'deafening silence' with which the majority of the German population meets the aggressive Nazi attack. However, Oskar's drumming does not 'awaken' anyone, it seems, which is why in the end he punishes his familial audience for having been such unwilling listeners. In Mischa's case the tin drum, rather than indicating the social 'homelessness' of its carrier, represents the loving bond between mother and daughter, while at the same time reminding both of them of their social responsibilities of 'awakening' and *'home'-making*.

To conclude, these social representations in *Das zweite Erwachen der Christa Klages* differ quite distinctly from the previously analysed deadly relationships between the male 'I' and the society he lives in, which at times involved a more or less dramatic victimhood or perpetrator status. As an alternative, this feminist narrative offers female-female and female-society relationships which are personally and socially (re-)productive and 'awakening' and, symbolically speaking, like a fresh breeze which blows away West Germany's winding-sheet. In other words, the West German patient at first nearly dies of Kaspar Hauser's *'home'-sickness* but then starts recovering through Mother Courage's love and *'home'-making*.

German sisterhood

After the representation of female/feminist solidarity and loving relationships as the basis for a *'home'-made* community in *Das zweite Erwachen der Christa Klages*, I now want to look at a later von Trotta film which again addresses the question of socio-political engagement versus violent and possibly deadly self-administered justice, in this case the terrorist actions of the RAF. As such, and as in Reitz's films *Stunde Null* (Zero Hour, Edgar Reitz 1976) and *Heimat* (Edgar Reitz 1984) analysed in chapter four, this second film by the same director can be seen as a narrative progression and further elaboration on the social issues raised above. At the core of this second feminist narrative, the filmmaker places the *German Sisters* (the

English film title), *Marianne and Juliane* (its American title). Interestingly, these Anglo-American titles create the impression that the narrative is a very personal story about two sisters/women, as the socially representative status of the two is only alluded to by the adjective 'German' in the English version. In contrast, the film's German title, *Die Bleierne Zeit*, which translated means 'the leaden time', refers to the stifling state of the social framework in which the story is placed. Hence, here the audience is prepared for a social critique with references to 'real' historical developments. However, despite being a *Zeitgeist* narrative, which portrays West German society in the years leading up to the so-called German Autumn in 1977, the film is character-driven like its predecessor.

As far as the plot is concerned, the action is largely split between the two sisters Marianne and Juliane. Marianne is a young woman who has studied and lives with her partner in a modern flat full of books. She writes for a feminist journal and in her spare time she organises and takes part in a number of public demonstrations for social/human rights, for example, against § 218 of the West German constitution which, up until the late 1970s, made abortion illegal. Once, Marianne had the chance to join the RAF but decided against it since she believes in humane and democratic means of social critique. Her relationship with Juliane is complicated and ambiguous: even though both sisters love each other dearly and in some respect could not be closer emotionally, they are also deeply divided by their fundamental differences regarding their relationships to society which manifest themselves in their socio-political activities. Marianne is the patient reformer who believes in dialogue, education and the power of social movements, Juliane[148] is the categorical, anti-democratic and deadly RAF terrorist who leaves her husband and her young son to fulfil her self-determined social responsibilities. When she gets caught, Marianne takes care of her and her son and is the sister's only contact with the outside world until Juliane dies under mysterious circumstances in her high security prison cell in Stuttgart-Stammheim.

Similar to von Trotta's debut, her second film also focuses on a female-female relationship which in the form of a *sisterly* one is even closer than the *friendly* ones between Lena, Ingrid and Christa (except for Christa's relationship to her daughter Mischa which, however, is only periodically important for the development of the story). Socially, on the other hand, the scope of this latter film is wider since both sisters are concerned with the national West German sociality (instead of a small post-familial and post-national community like

[148] Juliane was in real life Gudrun Ensslin, a member of the RAF's inner circle who died in the German Autumn.

Christa's). As such, Marianne and Juliane's chosen community project is inspired by and aimed at the society they live in. In this respect, Marianne develops increasingly Mother Courage qualities by extending her primarily intellectual socio-political engagement to include practical and emotional elements, such as looking after her younger sister and her sister's son who can both be seen as being existentially 'homeless' to varying degrees. In the case of the young boy, he first suffers the loss of his mother, who leaves the family, and is subsequently bereaved of his father who commits suicide in a characteristic *death as 'home'-coming* act. Suddenly 'homeless' and parentless, he comes to Marianne who, initially a stand-in mother against her will and with no children of her own, gradually grows into this new role. As the care-taking for her sister and nephew continues and even intensifies, her partner gives her the choice between him and Juliane. Without hesitation Marianne sees her loyalties lying with her sister, loses her partner, and shortly after gains a child – a change of living conditions which turns her life inside out and gives it a reproductive edge.

After her sister's death, Marianne's nephew is an orphan who, something which by now is confirmed as being seemingly typical for a male figure in a *NGC* film, shows distinctive Kaspar Hauser features, with Marianne as his social mother. Yet, amongst the other characters who socially assumed their parenthood (i.e. the teacher for Kaspar Hauser as well as Christa Klages for Werner) Marianne in the end seems to have been the most successful in making a 'home' for her protégé: she and her nephew live together, care for each other, and, most importantly, he survives a fire and thus is not killed by society as someone who as an outsider without a clearly definable identity has to be removed to re-establish societal normality (which instead happens to his mother). However, the two-people community of mother and son is only at the beginning of its struggle. Thus her *'home'-making* as a survival strategy for Juliane's son has just made Marianne 'homeless' herself since she lost her social frame of reference consisting of her long-time partner, her sister, her career, and her childless existence. Immediately after this loss, she finds herself confronted with the task of *making a second 'home'* for 'her' child and herself out of their post-familial rubble and without other self-affirming loved ones (a communal framework does not exist yet). Therefore, at 'home' in 'homelessness' might be the fitting description of their communal point of departure towards a meaningful 'we'.

Juliane can be seen as the alter ego of Marianne/Mother Courage, a narrative strategy with which von Trotta further explores the anti-communal issues raised in the portrayal of the

violent and proto-terrorist side of Christa Klages. However, while Christa at some point recognises that her chosen anti-communal means not only fail to rescue her community but also potentially jeopardize its survival, Juliane dies holding on to her conviction of the rightfulness of her terrorist and anti-societal methods of deadly *'home'-making* (in the vein of Oskar and the hunter): destruction, kidnapping, and killing. In view of this, Juliane is an anti-Mother Courage who shows more resemblance to male ways of dealing with personal and/or societal 'homelessness'. In addition, there are deadly *'home'-coming* elements to her survival strategy which link her to Kaspar Hauser, the unknown man, Elvira and the ill people from Hamburg. Juliane's first step is the conscious abandonment of her husband and child through which she cuts herself off from her familial and reproductive existence. This version of social self-castration in which she 'Others' herself in the face of a family-based West German sociality, whose climate she experiences as stifling and suffocating is further substantiated by her later death in prison.

Similar to Kaspar Hauser, Juliane's story cannot be reduced to its cinematic representation, as there is a much larger, mythical side to it; and according to the latter, there are two versions of Juliane's death. First, if she was killed by an agent of the state – a theory which after her death was put forward by RAF sympathisers and left wing intellectuals – she can be regarded as a female Kaspar Hauser. In that case, one would say that, like him, she was perceived as being a threat to the societal status quo, and therefore, like him, she became the victim of the *normalisation as 'Othering'* strategy of the state. The only narrative difference between the two characters would be that, whereas Kaspar was unaware of the societal power structures that brought him down, Juliane knowingly provoked them to expose the ugly and fascist face of the post-war West German democracy. In this respect, she would be a victim and a perpetrator in one: mothered by Marianne, like Kaspar by his teacher, and ruthlessly killing Hanns Martin Schleyer, a representative of the state, like the hunter shoots the two policemen. If she committed suicide – another version of the story that was told by the state and its ideological supporters – she shows a resemblance to the unknown man and Elvira who could not bear the social conditions offered to them. This reading is supported by the RAF inmates' unsuccessful hunger strike in which they tried to better their conditions of imprisonment from solitary to (at least in part) social confinement. Shortly after this failed attempt at communality all four of them were found dead.

In view of this, Juliane is probably the most complex character analysed in social terms so far. From a seemingly 'normal' woman she turns into a perpetrator and ends as a victim. Besides, she is a constituent part of a programmatically anti-societal community, which incites national chaos that practically leads to a civil war-like state of widespread anti-communality (see the above analysis of the last scene of *Ich liebe dich, ich töte dich*). In the end, however, the RAF's subversiveness turns against their communal group existence itself as the latter is largely destroyed through disintegration caused by the imprisonment of the RAF's inner circle. Similar to Christa's suicide attempt in complete isolation, this society-induced community splitting produces feelings of existential 'homelessness' amongst Juliane and the other prisoners, a state in which their socially-oriented *death as 'home'-making* strategy turns into its more personal *death as 'home'-coming* alternative. Here again, social exile or being outside of a 'homing' communality marks a point of no return (socially) as well as arrival (spiritually and emotionally).

In relation to *Das zweite Erwachen der Christa Klages* with its personal and communal happy ending including the strikingly positive development of all three female protagonists along with the continued existence of an alternative, post-familial and post-national community, *Die Bleierne Zeit* is a less optimistic and more complex narrative. Yet, even though the latter ends with the 'homelessness' of both German sisters and the death of one, there is hope for Marianne and her new son due to the *'home'-making* qualities which the older sister develops as a response to her younger sister's abandonment of these motherly attributes. Thus the sisterly couple is depicted as a complementing duality which is similar to the portrayal of Lena, Ingrid and Christa as a tripartite unity. This narrative reciprocity, which shows the one sister's loss (of her life) as the other sister's gain (of a new existence), signifies that their social and personal identities are formed in relation to one another. Furthermore, it illustrates that von Trotta presents her notions of Mother Courage as an integrated personal *and* social way of 'being in the world' in which a feminist combines her personal motherhood with courageous social engagement in the post-familial and post-national context of a small community. Solely personal as well as national/societal projects of an anti-communal nature might be part of the development, yet usually lead into a personal and/or national crisis which can only be overcome through a conscious and wholehearted return to the communal realm.

Compared with the mainly solitary, exclusively deadly and thus personally and socially *dividing* life strategies of the above male-centred films, these two feminist narratives, like *Die*

allseitig reduzierte Persönlichkeit – Redupers[149], show *unifying* tendencies in that their protagonists are working together and within smaller or larger post-familial and post-national teams supported by sympathetic bystanders. Additionally, their sustainable *'home'-making* approaches outweigh their short-lived *'home'-coming* strategies so that shared 'home' rather than singular feelings of finally being at 'home' are common. Finally, the female realm is characterized as reproductive and 'we'-oriented rather than deadly and 'I'-oriented. In other words, the male protagonists follow the maxim 'Macht kaputt, was euch kaputtmacht'[150], whereby this motto refers to societal elements and their own 'Selves'. This (self-)destructive way of 'being in the world' can be regarded as representing the rapidly spreading illness in the 'body' of the national West German sociality which turns the remains of 'home' into *Fremde*. Contrary to that, the female/feminist protagonists courageously attempt to 'awaken' the West German patient to get him to rise from his deathbed. In conclusion, the female sphere/feminist realm, even though or maybe because of being largely non- or anti-societal, is much closer to Tönnies's concept of *Gemeinschaft* than the male one which often is anti-communal as much as anti-societal. Both narrative categories, however, contain post-familial and post-national tendencies to similar degrees, which challenges the traditional family-fixation and exclusive 'Germanness' of the original notion of *Heimat* and instead proposes the possibility of a post-familial and post-national community of 'Others'.

5.5 Outside help for West Germany

Representations of non-German or ethnic 'Others' are rare in films of the *NGC*. Instead, and because they are mainly produced by male filmmakers, they centre on the male West German 'Self'. As with representations of female protagonists, there are, however, a few exceptions to this rule and a couple of them I want to analyse in the following section. For this purpose I have chosen *Der Amerikanische Freund* (The American Friend, Wenders 1977) and *Angst Essen Seele Auf* (Fear Eats the Soul, Fassbinder 1973). The first film refers to the national West German friendship with America, which for the United States was based on West Germany's capitalist orientation during the Cold War. For West Germany, on the other hand, America became a friend when it passed its famous Marshall Plan with which it helped the crisis-ridden country to achieve its famous *Wirtschaftwunder* ('economic miracle'). Contrary to this appreciated friend, the broken German of the second film title (unfortunately lost in the

[149] For an investigation of this film see the analysis of border narratives in chapter three.
[150] Approx. Trans.: 'destroy that which destroys you'.

English translation), alludes to a less welcome 'Other' and certainly not a friend: I am speaking of the so-called *Gastarbeiter* ('guest worker'). 'His' work[151], but not continued presence, was sought after in the time of the *Wirtschaftswunder* when the Americanised and booming West German industry had a shortage of skilled and unskilled workers. In the subsequent film analyses, these national relationships are personalised and represented as a male friendship in the first film and a heterosexual love relationship in the second one.

My best fiend[152]

Der Americanische Freund is a film about two very different men who get to know each other at an auction in Hamburg. Tom, an American arts dealer from New York, is there to sell a fake 'Derbert'. Jonathan, a West German restorer and frame-maker and the only one who doubts that the picture is genuine, accompanies a friend who, despite his companion's disapproval, buys the piece. Shortly after, Tom takes revenge for Jonathan's 'unfair' criticism by exploiting his knowledge about the latter's supposed terminal illness through which he gets him involved in two murders. Jonathan is thus approached by a French middleman who promises him a lot of money along with specialist medical examinations in Paris and Munich if in return he is prepared to kill two strangers. Being concerned with his health, and the future of his wife Marianne and their young son, Jonathan finally overcomes his reservations and successfully kills the first man in Paris.

When he is about to kill for the second time, he is helped by Tom who suddenly has a bad conscience about implicating Jonathan's life in such a way. Yet even more than that, Tom, who is desperately alone, wants to turn things around and become Jonathan's friend. Then things come to a head: Jonathan's medical results are shattering and do not give him any hope of living much longer; his marriage starts to suffer from his lies and betrayal so that Marianne moves out with their son; and Tom suggests a final murder, which ends in chaos and leads to the deaths of the French middleman and two other men. After the massacre, the friends run into Marianne who tells Jonathan that the experts' verdicts were wrong. As a result, Tom is abandoned by the couple who make their way home to a possible happy ending. Yet while Tom, seemingly in a state of complete desperation, hugs a wooden post and says, 'Jonathan,

[151] The first generation of 'guest workers' who came to West Germany in the 1960s were mainly male.
[152] Title of a documentary film made by Herzog about his filmmaking with (and against) the actor Klaus Kinski (*Mein Liebster Feind* (My Best Fiend, Werner Herzog 1999)).

we got there', his friend suddenly dies in the car. As a final departure, Marianne leaves her dead husband and walks off into the morning light and back to her child.

The relationship between the two men is interesting since the male-centred films analysed so far focused on one protagonist rather than two – a narrative strategy which emphasized the social isolation of the person in question. In addition, the word 'friend' suggests a meaningful relationship and alludes to a possible togetherness rather than existential 'homelessness'. Hence at first sight, it seems as if the friendship between Tom and Jonathan is a variation of the sisterhood between Marianne and Juliane. However, instead of complementing each other in order to Mother Courage one's personal context as well as the surrounding society and realise the foundation of a small community, both men are depicted as furthering each other's violent self-destruction. When they first meet, Tom is already 'homeless' as a monologue shows. The societal context in which they encounter each other is 'homeless', too. Thus we see Jonathan and his son walking down a street of grey houses on which a graffiti dedication to Holger Meins[153] has been sprayed. It further suggests the equation 'BRD = Polizeistaat' ('FRG = police state'). Only Jonathan seems to be at 'home' with himself and with his social environment since he apparently enjoys his family situation which is shown as being idyllic. Yet, shortly after, the romantic picture is exposed as being a mere delusion. Jonathan has leukaemia, cannot do his work as he used to, and as a result the family suffers from a shortage of money.

This introduction presents the audience with a 'homeless' outsider from America and another male West German patient. The first betrays people by selling them forgeries and does not shy away from killing unknown strangers either, a narrative strategy which depicts America as a meaningless cultural realm and its attractiveness and beauty as being only a false pretence and a pretty façade behind which one finds empty violence and death. In this respect, and corresponding to my analysis of the representation of America in Herzog's film *Stroszek* in chapter three, America is an exemplary anti-*Heimat* which consequently can only be the 'home' of 'homeless' characters. (Male) West Germany, on the other hand, has been analysed as being ill beyond help, which evidently makes it difficult to come across healthy heroes. In view of this, Jonathan is an appropriate national representative who not untypically (as with *Stroszek*) first trusts America's promises of wealth, freedom and a second *Heimat*, yet finally

[153] Meins, a filmmaker/terrorist discussed in chapter two, died in a hunger strike in 1974, shortly before Wenders, who had earlier worked with him on his first feature film *Summer in the City* (1970), started to shoot *Der Amerikanische Freund* (Conradt 2001).

rejects the latter's advertising slogans and dies as the only way left to *come 'home'*. In this respect, it is interesting to see that Marianne, who can be seen as displaying certain Mother Courage qualities in relation to Jonathan, their son, and herself, is distrustful of Tom from the first moment she sees him in Jonathan's shop. This healthy female suspicion can be regarded as an expression of the powerful conviction of someone who knows that *'home'-making* has to come from the inside and not from an outsider like Tom.

If one looks closer at the role of the American friend, one realises that he is the narrative antagonist to Marianne and her Mother Courage efforts. Thus, at the beginning of the film, Jonathan's personal and social situation seems idyllic and 'homing': he and Marianne love each other; they share happiness about their child and their life together as well as worries about his health and their financial situation; and they live in a nice flat on the harbour. The only weak point in their family situation is his illness and, as a result, their uncertain future. Yet, when Tom comes into Jonathan's life and literally uses up more and more of the latter's lifetime, the downward spiral begins. At first, Jonathan starts to lie to Marianne, which marks the beginning of the process of their separation in that it changes their relationship from a dialogical and communal one into a rather silent *next-to-one-another-ness*. Further to this, Jonathan's humanity, selflessness, and the simplicity of his existence are turned into deathful violence against unknown 'Others' in conjunction with a growing self-interest and an endless complication of his everyday life. Thirdly, the post-familial phase in which Marianne moves out of the family home is followed by a post-national chapter in which Jonathan forms an even closer alliance with his American friend. Hence he agrees to kill one last time, together with Tom, in order to cement their friendship by fighting against a common 'Other' (the French middleman and a couple of his helpers). Furthermore, since Marianne left their flat Jonathan is 'homeless' *at home* and without any orientation as where to go and what to do. Yet, the 'homeless' American ultimately cannot fill the void which the 'homeless' West German feels.

This becomes apparent when Marianne finds the two men after their massacre and Jonathan, who prior to this unexpected reunion was prepared to flee with Tom, changes his mind and drives off with his wife. In her 'homing' presence he eventually finds 'home', even though he dies before they even reach their flat together. As in the case of Kaspar, the unknown man, Elvira, the ill people from Hamburg, and Werner's death, Jonathan's dying in the car, while driving 'home' and possibly towards a new beginning, is another *death as 'home'-coming*.

And Marianne, similar to her namesake from *Die Bleierne Zeit*, is left to make a new 'home' for herself and her son, yet without a partner/father. Thus Jonathan's *death as 'home'-coming* is narratively contrasted with Marianne's *life as 'home'-making* which precisely summarizes the gendered narrative approaches towards the personal/the social and death/life that have become apparent in the *NGC* films analysed in this chapter so far.

Regarding the national 'Other' and his 'friendliness' towards the West German sociality, one could say that the American's heightened deadliness in comparison to the West German male's violent (self-) killings with castrating tendencies serves as an active support for the latter's cause. In other words, Tom aids Jonathan's project of tearing his social world apart – an anti-communal act with which he conspires against the national female/feminist forces represented through various unifying and reproductive strategies employed by Marianne and her narrative predecessors and which makes him as such, and in relation to Jonathan, a hyper-masculine male in a hyper-'homeless' situation. Symptomatically, his last words are 'we got there, Jonathan'. Yet instead of hugging his friend he hugs a dead piece of wood while his friend dies on his way 'home'. And while the latter is now finally 'there', Tom is left alone in the dark, a symbol for nothingness and 'homelessness'. In the imagery of the most famous American genre, the Western, he is the lonesome cowboy[154] who rides off into the sunset... As romantic as that sounds, this well-known image of an essentially American, male way of 'being in the world' is an anachronistic and, socially at least, questionable representation which offers no solution to the modern West German social dilemma.

The Moroccan guest

Angst Essen Seele Auf is another *NGC* production with a strong American connection (even though in a different way to Wender's *Der Amerikanische Freund*). It is loosely based on Sirk's famous film *All that Heaven Allows* (1956), a social critique of America in the 1950s in which a middle-class American housewife falls in love with her working-class gardener. In Fassbinder's German version of the American melodrama the filmmaker raises the stakes by adding a racial taboo to the age gap that the improbable couple Ali and Emmi have to contend with. Emmi is a West German cleaning woman in her 60s who has three adult children and was formerly married to a Polish prisoner of war. She lives by herself in comparatively simple conditions and has little social contact besides the occasional chat at work. Her relative

[154] Tom does indeed wear a cowboy hat in certain parts of the film, which visually heightens his Americanness.

poverty and her single status, in conjunction with her age, position her at the margins of the economically booming West German society.

Ali, a Moroccan 'guest worker' who has come to Munich for work, yet in the face of the West German economic miracle lives in even greater poverty than Emmi (he shares a room with four colleagues), is also a social outsider. He speaks only broken German and exclusively socialises in a bar where 'guest workers' mix. According to him, he has been treated badly by a number of West Germans and thus he chooses to have little contact with the 'host' sociality. When he meets Emmi in his favorite bar (it is raining heavily outside and Emmi is soaking wet) they make contact by transgressing a range of social conventions around age and ethnicity. Following their initial encounter, the first half of the film shows the couple's rejection by the outside world: neighbours, work colleagues, Emmi's children and a grocery shop keeper. The second half of the narrative focuses on the growing problems inside their relationship.

Both protagonists meet as two existentially 'homeless' characters who have nothing left to lose but their life. Emmi is marginalized by the society she 'motherly' contributed to by having three children and by doing domestic work (as a wife and as a cleaner) all her life. Ali, who gave up his 'home' in Morocco and who now dedicates his time to enhance the West German *Wirtschaftswunder* by working long hours as a mechanic, is in a similar situation. Appropriating a well-known proverb one could say: 'Germany eats its children'. Despite this national deathliness, Emmi and Ali struggle to save one another through love with which they try to make a 'home' out of the rubble they have. Yet, their project of a shared *life as 'home'-making* further exposes the 'homelessness' of the sociality around them. No one has a good word for them and eagerly tries to sabotage their unconventional and challenging togetherness. Rather than regarding this as an expression of certain vile personal drives, however, this destructive and anti-communal behaviour has to be seen as the consequence of a stifling social condition.

Even though narrative representations of West Germany's social structures have already been investigated on several occasions, it is worthwhile subjecting them to further analysis since their suffocation is nowhere as impressively aestheticised as in the films of Fassbinder, and here again *Angst Essen Seele Auf* might be seen as the director's masterpiece since the film marked his international breakthrough. As far as visual representations of the oppressive

social climate are concerned, Fassbinder makes use of so-called 'framing shots' in which spatial components seem to be constantly encroaching on the characters. More precisely, doorways especially, and also windows, walls and furniture, which can have a structuring effect within the picture, are frequently used as social markers of inclusion and exclusion. This treatment of the personal 'home' as an allegory for the *'home'-made* character or, in other words, the social constructedness of the national sociality with dividing rather than unifying tendencies, creates an atmosphere of *stuckness* from which there is no way out. As such, this setting shows the person inside as being trapped in a cage which s/he has made for herself/himself according to societal conventions and furnished in line with the *Zeitgeist*. In this vein, Fassbinder's aesthetics strikingly illustrate the literally crushing dominance of social structures over individual agency.

Having discussed the 'framing' of the narrative, I will move on to investigate the relationship between Emmi and Ali more closely. To begin with, one can argue that Emmi and Ali's relationship is of a distinctly post-familial (that is, post-reproductive) quality since it is obvious that due to her age the couple are not thinking about having children of their own. What is more, Emmi's adult children do not accept the choice of their mother and openly reject Ali. They break off contact with her and instead align themselves with the dominant public opinion. Together with other members of the public, they despise the pair not only for their post-familial but also for their apparent post-national tendencies as a mixed-race couple. And it is in the face of this familial-national front that Emmi and Ali try to make their 'home' and form a little refuge for openness, love and tolerance. Yet it becomes more and more difficult for the couple to bear the noticeable prejudices of their society whose members, rather than talking about them behind their back, now increasingly express their verbal abuse directly to their face. Like the framing shot, which is encroaching on the characters formally, the outside world is increasingly impinging on Emmi and Ali's relationship.

At the start, and before the couple go public through marriage, there seems to be a real possibility for a fairytale happy ending which would *include* the two societal outsiders. Apparently, they have both found someone who despite her/his age as well as national 'Otherness' complements and augments their own 'Self'. Yet in the course of the film, the initially 'homing' effects of this *coupled* 'Otherness' create a series of alienating experiences for both Emmi and Ali, which slowly tears their unity apart. Thus Ali misses, for example, traditional Moroccan food such as couscous which, since Emmi does not want to cook it,

causes him to revive his pre-marital affair with the barmaid of his favourite bar. In addition, it is not clear if Emmi and Ali have a sexual relationship, which gives Ali another reason to pursue his extra-marital affair. Emmi, on the other hand, increasingly misses the social contact with her family, her work colleagues, neighbours, and others. This, in effect, leads to a situation between the two of them in which Ali is 'home'-*sick* and Emmi is 'homeless' *at home*. As the narrative develops, Ali's 'home'-*sickness* gets worse until he has to go to hospital. At that point, the narrative breaks off and leaves a possible *death as 'home'-coming* solution as open as a second chance to live and make a 'home' with Emmi. However, the fact that being in West Germany and with Germans makes one ill or 'home'-*sick* is an experience which Ali undergoes even though, or because, he is a foreign 'guest'.

In conclusion, Emmi and Ali find one another in a state of 'homelessness' which, due to the West German *'home'-making* regulations, they cannot leave behind. In this vein, the West German patient, rather than being enlivened by his well-meaning foreign guest, spreads his 'home(less)'-*sickness* even to the latter. In the end, the guest is as alone as the cowboy before him except that, as a good guest, he cannot just get up and go. Besides, one cannot really be a guest without a host, which means that his identity is inextricably linked, and defined in relation, to West Germany. In contrast, a cowboy is expected to ride off into the sunset once the battle, here 'friendship', is over. In other words, the American has the economic power to decide whether or not, and to what extent, he wants to help his ill friend, that is West Germany, (and thus himself), whereas the Moroccan's economic dependence on the West German host is ill-fated in that he has to sell his soul and as a result, for better and for worse, is lifelong bound through marriage to the *Fremde*. As a final remark, 'outside' male help for the 'homeless' West German patient, which in the form of an American perpetrator and a Moroccan victim shows striking similarities to the previously analysed 'inside' male helplessness, cannot compete with Mother Courage's altruistic *'home'-making* qualities.

5.6 At home with the homeless

Besides the narrative strategies discussed in this chapter so far, there is a further crucial dimension to the *NGC*'s portrayal of West German sociality which has not been part of the overall analysis yet. I am talking about the stars of the *NGC* who provide its films with recognisable faces. In order to identify some of the characteristics of the concept of stardom, I am referring to Richard Dyer's landmark book *Heavenly Bodies – Film Stars and Society*

(1986) in which he investigates the complex relationship between the famous Hollywood legends Marilyn Monroe, Paul Robeson and Judy Garland and their social context, in this case the American society of the mid 1920s to the mid 1960s. To be more precise, he describes these stars as 'embodiments of the social categories' (Dyer, 1986: 18) of gender, race and sexuality. Besides their socially representative function, however, Dyer emphasizes that certain aspects of Monroe, Robeson and Garland's images 'remain individualised, partly because the star system is about the promotion of the individual' (ibid.: 7). As the complex question of film and representation has already been addressed in chapter one, I am here particularly interested in the inherent individualism of the Hollywood image[155] and how this relates to the images of *NGC* stars.

To start with, one has to note that the term 'star' is somewhat misleading in the case of the *NGC* as no renowned actor or actress of this cinematic movement can be claimed to compare with someone like Marilyn Monroe, for example. Hence it might be more appropriate to speak of these actresses/actors as being *emblematic characters* since their national as well as international fame can be said to be inextricably linked to their involvement with the *NGC*. As such, and in contrast to the capitalist promotion of the individual within the Hollywood system, the *NGC* can be described as endorsing an essentially cooperative production of artistic work. This politically leftist approach to filmmaking is particularly evident in the foundation of the movement in the form of a manifesto in which a range of young and internationally acclaimed West German directors formulated their filmic and socio-political goals that were openly against the artistically and politically conservative politics and practices of the powerful post-war West German film establishment. Probably, the most compelling realisation of this programmatic point of departure is the previously discussed[156] co-production *Deutschland im Herbst* (Germany in Autumn, *NGC* teamwork 1978) which represents a collaborative effort of numerous *NGC* filmmakers such as Fassbinder, Kluge and Reitz to come to terms with the events of the German Autumn in 1977.

In relation to these collectivist attitudes, the actress/actor politics of the *NGC* can be described as a programmatic move away from the unique individual of Hollywood and towards 'the exemplary individual', as Elsaesser calls it (1989: 126). According to him, 'representative

[155] Dyer writes: 'Robeson alone began to move in that direction [towards a more cooperative organisation of artistic work] in his ensemble theatre work, and his deliberately emblematic role in political activity in later years' (ibid.).
[156] See the penultimate section of chapter four.

figures, historical role models and literary heroes' (ibid.) populate the majority of *NGC* films – a narrative strategy which calls upon the audience to connect to a certain subject matter or adapt a specific worldview and which therefore differs quite decisively from the dominant viewing position of identifying with the starring protagonist. This politically motivated de-personalisation tendency is particularly pertinent in the pre-1970s period. At this time, lay actresses/actors and performers who completely *become* the part they play are cast into leading roles[157]. Furthermore, these actresses/actors often only appear once in the role of the protagonist which does not allow for a development of an actress/actor into a star.

In the post-1970s period a range of so-called 'high-visibility character actors' (Elsaesser, 1989: 285) emerge which slightly alters the de-personalisation trend. However, despite this narrative re-personalisation, only three actresses/actors are classed by Elsaesser as being international stars: Hanna Schygulla (Fassbinder's main protagonist in the majority of his films), Bruno Ganz (mainly a Wenders protagonist) and Klaus Kinski (the enfant terrible in most of Herzog's films). Interestingly though, Kinski dies shortly after having made his last film with Herzog, *Cobra Verde* (1987), and Schygulla is hardly ever seen on screen again after Fassbinder's death in 1982. Only Ganz continues to have an international career after 1989 and has just recently made *Der Untergang* (The Downfall, Bernd Eichinger 2004), in which he again engages with national issues as he plays Adolf Hitler during his last two months in the bunker. This demonstrates that these stars are not independent of their filmmaking alter egos and the production/narrative structures of the *NGC* who/which create the framework for them to 'shine'. Thus they have to be seen as thoroughly contextualised stars who, and here again in contrast to their Hollywood colleagues, are some way from being pin-ups (which Dyer proves to be an important part of the images of Monroe, Robeson and Garland).

Whereas the Hollywood stars captivate the audience's attention through their physical perfection and irresistible beauty made visible through close-ups, the *NGC* stars are less straightforwardly desirable. Hence, even though Schygulla is often seen in the role of the femme fatale (*Die Ehe der Maria Braun* (The Marriage of Maria Braun, Fassbinder 1979)), she also plays motherly figures (*Katzelmacher*, Fassbinder 1969), childlike characters (*Effi Briest*, Fassbinder 1974), broken women (*Abrahams Gold* (Abraham's Gold, Graser 1989)), a

[157] The most famous example is Bruno S. who plays the lead character in two of Herzog's films: Kaspar Hauser and Stroszek.

middle-class would-be terrorist (*Die dritte Generation* (The Third Generation, Fassbinder 1979)) and many other female figures. While enacting all these parts and many more she is never quite the same type of (West German) woman. Instead, she can be described as a multifaceted character actress who embodies the abundance of female ways of 'being in the world'. And this complexity is a feature which sets her image apart from that of, for example, the American beauty Marilyn Monroe who was, as Dyer argues, marketed and 'consumed' solely on the basis of her sexual attractiveness. Thus the approach to stardom taken by Hollywood, and as observable in the case of Monroe, is to reduce the actress' image in order to make it/her recognisable and, as a result, easily sellable. The *NGC*'s more complex narratives and representations, on the other hand, have a political undercurrent and show a reality-orientation which sets their films apart from the productions made in Hollywood's dream factory.

Regarding Kinski and Ganz, this trend continues as both male actors are far away from Robeson's one-dimensional reception as a 'black man'. Kinski thus plays characters which are mad and narcissistic (*Aguirre, der Zorn Gottes* (Aguirre, Wrath of God, Herzog 1972)), extrovert and violent (*Cobra Verde*, Herzog 1987), sensitive and tender (*Woyzek*, Herzog 1978) and wild as well as civilized (*Fitzcarraldo*, Herzog 1981). Similarly, Ganz has a wide repertoire and plays, for example, an angel (*Der Himmel über Berlin* (Wings of Desire Wenders 1987)), a mutilated scientist (*Messer im Kopf* (Knife in the Head, Hauff 1978)), a terminally ill frame-maker (*Der amerikanische Freund* (The American Friend, Wenders 1977)) and numerous other character roles, while at the same time doing radio work (reading poetry) and further pursuing his theatre career (he played Goethe's *Faust I/II* in the highly praised complete performance of both parts directed by Peter Stein in 2000). And while Kinski has always been regarded as a highly controversial (anti-)figure or the enfant terrible of the *NGC*, Ganz has been admired for his artistic range and incredible intuition which made him probably the greatest international star of all three of the above actresses/actors, while seemingly remaining a very normal man – which practically is the opposite of a star.

Yet, if one, apart from the above-mentioned reservations, still considers Schygulla, Kinski and Ganz as being *NGC* stars, they are, especially in relation to their Hollywood colleagues, relatively low-key or even anti-stars. This might be best captured by a variation of the saying 'every country has the politicians it deserves' into 'every cinema has the stars it deserves'. Thus Hollywood is epitomized by glamorous actors who are above all 'represented insistently

by their bodies' (Dyer, 1986: 13), and, in the case of Monroe and Robeson, signal 'sexuality' and 'the nobility of the black race' (ibid.). In comparison to this physical conception of the star which celebrates the actresses/actor's body as part of an essentialising stance on the issues of what is a person, the *NGC* stars are illustrative of a very different national body politics. In this respect, it is noteworthy that their bodies are only occasionally on pleasurable display for the audience (this concerns Schygulla) while being mainly the site of power struggles between the individual and her/his national sociality. This is, for example, the case in *Messer im Kopf*, where Ganz, an innocent scientist, is mutilated by a police officer who mistakes him for a terrorist – an act of state violence which turns a strong and successful individual into a helpless, impotent, Kaspar Hauser-like victim; similarly, in *Abrahams Gold*, Schygulla's worn-out body shows signs of the exploitation and victimisation which her father, an old Nazi, subjected her to; it becomes symbolic of the continuing perpetration of Nazi structures in post-war West Germany and the suffering it causes the second generation; in *Woyzek*, Kinski plays a simple, impoverished army private who is haunted by nightmares of impending destruction; his drained, thin body and growing madness show him as an unwitting victim of social and sexual oppression. Three bodies which are representative of the sufferings of the West German patient...

In conclusion, the *NGC*'s treatment of its stars differs from the Hollywood approach in that the latter's individualism and celebrations of the body are met on the West Germany side with the *NGC*'s self-styled *symptomatic* individualism and its display of bodies deeply inscribed by social power structures, or in other words, weather-beaten from the suffocating social climate in post-war West Germany. These body politics have to be further related to an important aesthetic/narrative/historical antecedent against which the *N*GC strongly positioned itself: the Nazi imaginary in its various forms whose ideological centre was the strong, healthy and attractive Aryan body most strikingly aestheticised in Riefenstahl's propaganda documentary films such as *Olympia* (1937). In view of this heritage, the frailty, particularly of the male body, can be understood as a programmatic rejection of an all too familiar imagery and an open declaration of solidarity with the victims of the Third Reich among whom the members of the second generation, who made and populate the *NGC* films, count themselves.

On a more organisational level, the *NGC* can be seen as a *cinematic ensemble*, which despite some aesthetic and narrative differences that become apparent in the specific filmmaking strategies and techniques of each director, share common concerns of a socially/nationally

critical nature. Hence despite considering themselves to be artistically and socio-politically 'homeless', the directors of the *NGC* at the same time claim to be the legitimate voice of West German cinema (inside and outside of the national borders). Moreover, being one of its society's most relentless groups of analysts and thus literally 'at home' with West German issues, the *NGC* tries to prepare the ground for a social/national *'home'-making* by using film as a therapeutic medium or catalyst by means of which the national 'illness' is *screened* in order to strengthen its filmmaker's call for the development of new forms of communal ways of living. In conjunction with their filmmaking policy, the *NGC*'s stars and high-visibility character actresses/actors, who have been analysed as predominantly playing emotionally 'homeless' and physically beaten (often to the point of impending death/suicide) individuals, form a close-knit community of outsiders within and across *NGC* productions of different directors. As such, the deadly societal climate of existential 'homelessness' can be identified as a common denominator for a significant socio-cultural *Gemeinschaft* – a pervading 'exile' *within*, which, paradoxically, provides something like a 'home' for the 'homeless'. Finally, the narrative strategy of filmmakers such as Fassbinder, Wenders, Herzog and many others to employ the same group of actresses/actors and stars again and again in their films introduces the audience to a number of increasingly familiar 'homeless' companions which they see in the cinema and whose images and messages they then take home. As a result, the presence of these *NGC* heralds enlarges the discursive availability of a critical vocabulary necessary for addressing *'home'-grown* social dilemmas and for even feeling to some extent *at home with the 'homeless'*.

5.7 Conclusion

At the end of this chapter on the social, the sense of place-related and narrative/temporal 'homelessness' that was the result of earlier film analyses has again deepened. To be more precise, the close examination of symptomatic 'I-s' led to the conceptualisation of three types of socially 'homeless' characters according to their respective life strategies. In the case of representations of the West German male, the majority of 'I-s' were classified as 'Kaspar Hauser' figures who besides their life experiences of parental and societal abandonment also share its deadly complement which has been described as *death as 'home'-coming*. Their female counterparts are mainly portrayed as community-oriented Mother Courage figures who engage in constructive *life as 'home'-making* strategies. In addition, there were members of both genders who went beyond their gender typical narrative/social roles by employing a

combination of the two approaches using (proto-)terrorist means to perpetuate *death as 'home'-making*.

These personal life strategies, however, are born out of an omnipresent, negative sense of sociality which can be described as collective feelings of anti-*Gemeinschaft*. Thus the coherence and continuity of the West German national 'we' is portrayed as being essentially threatened by the 'homelessness' of its members. To understand the latter, the *'home'-making* and *'home'-coming* strategies (with reference to Durkheim) have to be read as social rather than personal symptoms. In these terms, the first life strategy mentioned above, which in the chosen narratives takes the form of suicide and becoming the victim of a foul murder, is depicted as a performance of socially induced (self-)castration and occurs as a result of the individuals' inability to cope with the social conditions offered to them. These case studies of (self-)destruction show social conflicts as being literally embodied by a range of male individuals who can only escape their emotional torment by removing themselves from the national (w)hole. Through these (self-)killings, however, the dead males are able to reclaim their bodies/personal spaces. In effect, the scaled down and individualised social conflict returns to society in the form of disengaging members who flee the social scene and thus rid society of 'potent' young men.

Fighting a similar societal battle, yet with different means, are the followers of the last life strategy. Thus, in the form of (proto-)terrorist attacks on representatives of the system such as policemen, they target the centre of society in an attempt to destroy the existing suffocating structures which they regard as fascist residues. As such, they explicitly reject the dispersed victimisation policy of the society they live in, but to which they do not consider themselves to 'belong'. In order to make their point unmistakably clear, they declare '(civil) war' on West Germany, a call for action which in the case of the RAF and other radical cells serves as the basis for the foundation of meaningful, counter-hegemonic communities. Symbolically, their acts of overt violence are aimed at preventing the existing society from its future reproduction and thus connect them to the adherents of the first life strategy. Together, both social practices of prevented societal reproduction/(self-)castration actively work towards the eventual disappearance of West German society. On a slightly different note, one should add that their programmatic anti-stance seemingly completely exhausts the energy of its national victims-turned-perpetrators as there are no apparent plans for the post-national future of the *passing* society called 'West Germany'.

Another anti-societal, yet constructive approach is represented by a group of feminist characters who in contrast to the deadliness of the male figures are depicted as being life-affirmative in their commitment to communal ways of 'being in the world' and their care for the 'Other'. Thus the future they envisage already starts in their present, in that they lend their energies to the establishment of alternative social structures rather than the destruction of existing ones. Consequently, the female sphere is portrayed as being reproductive (involving childbearing, childminding and education) and thus adding or giving to the social world of which it is a part. The female characters' relationship to society is a familial one in which they assume a 'motherly' role. However, this female *'home'-making*, although fuelled by a deep longing for being 'home', runs counter to the male *'home'-coming* policy described above. To be more precise, the feminist approach to (re-)productively improve the social conditions in the society in which the heroines live, and to transform the social 'being in the world' from an anti-*Gemeinschaft* into its positive opposite is a reformist position with echoes the student movement of the late 1960s.

Yet, according to the death-driven portrayal of the male anti-hero, the answer to post-war West Germany's social question is suicide and terrorism, or in other words, social/communal disengagement. Not surprisingly, this *tabula rasa* method, which, as has become apparent in the course of the film analyses, dramatically dominates the available narratives, connects the *NGC* productions with a famous school of critical German thought: the Frankfurt School. Hence Adorno famously wrote in *Minima Moralia* (1951), 'es gibt kein richtiges Leben im Falschen'[158]. In relation to the filmically represented female/feminist and male ways of 'being in the world' this statement means that as long as the post-war West German society is 'wrong', *'home'-making* strategies cannot be successful and *'home'-coming* is only possible outside of this sociality – a line of reasoning which again links the West German present of the films (socio-politically addressed by the *NGC*) with the country's Nazi past (in Adorno's terms).

Moreover, this link between filmmaking and philosophy casts light on the identification strategy applied by the *NGC* to establish a relation between its (anti-) heroines/heroes and the audience. As such, it further substantiates the *NGC*'s critically informed approach to film which decentres the individual subject and focuses instead on subject matter in the form of

[158] Lit. Trans.: 'There is no right life in the wrong.'

socially pressing issues. In this respect, the films are more about identifying a social agenda which then is presented to spectators through high visibility character actors. Accordingly, rather than being 'star vehicles', the films are visualised and aestheticised *social critiques*, perpetuating alternative national identity constructions which are discursively available in other critical areas such as philosophy, literature and politics, too. Identification in this case is neither positive, negative, anti-, non- and/or ambiguous but rather a call to the audience to understand their social world as inherently connected to the national past (a viewing position most strikingly created in films as memory spaces) and to face up to pressing issues in the present (in particular national division, thematised in border narratives). Hence contrary to the dominant conception of identification as a manifestation of personal empathy and emotional bonding between a 'real' recipient and a represented 'Self'/'Other', the *NGC*'s praxis of identification suggests a process of a national self-recognition in which the audience is meant to see beyond the symbolic 'Self'/'Other' in order to discover themselves – a demanding project whose intellectual challenge in the case of the films of Kluge, for example, compares absolutely with a reading of the Adorno text.

This particular take on the concept of identification has further implications for the construction of national identity which can be traced along pedagogical and/or performative lines. On the level of content, performative elements dominate since social 'homelessness' is omnipresent in the *NGC* life portrayals of symptomatic national 'insiders' such as Kaspar Hauser, of relationships amongst members of this group and between them, the society they live in and national 'outsiders' such as the American friend and the Moroccan 'guest worker'. In addition, their predominantly deadly *'home'-coming* and *'home'-making* strategies further emphasize the absence of a clear sense of 'Self', of certainty, coherence, continuity, and of 'belonging' in national terms. However, on a meta-level, which might be best described as the self-reflexive space in-between and across *NGC* filmmakers, actresses/actors, narrative patterns and aesthetic concerns, 'homelessness' becomes a *leitmotif*, continually dramatised by a large number of increasingly established filmmakers and played out by their own ensembles. This cinematic framework then grounds the performative narratives in a *NGC* production context and makes them into a (saleable) brand. Thus, the wider *NGC* network functions as a pedagogical means in that it provides a safe haven for ambivalent, disjunctive and problematic imaginings which are indicative of a post-national sense of the social.

This struggle between the story content of the film and the structures that produced it can be regarded as a heightened version of the narrative/temporal complexification processes whose analysis lay at the heart of my previous investigations. Moreover, it powerfully illustrates my earlier argument put forward in the introduction to this chapter, which says that the pedagogical is always implicated in the performative and vice versa. More precisely, the 'homelessness'/anti-*Gemeinschaft*/performativity of the films – on the level of 'text' – is articulated with their embeddedness in a socio-political formation – on the level of context – which provides these 'lost narratives'[159] with a 'home'/*Gemeinschaft*/pedagogical quality in that it represents and combines the efforts of numerous filmmakers to open up alternative spaces for conceiving new forms of community.

I want to conclude by returning to the Freudian theory of melancholia which at the end of the previous chapter was linked to Bhabha's concept of the pedagogical and notions of anti-nostalgia. In social terms, melancholia is represented by the deadly life strategies of the predominantly male anti-heroes analysed above. They are depicted as embodiments of Heidegger's (1980) concept of life as 'being towards death' whereby a substantial number of them are taking self-designed shortcuts. For the post-war West German society this means that singular individuals as well as whole social groups remove themselves from their social context, which in the case of respective *NGC* representations is not an occasional narrative event but a *chronic normality*. This national 'death drive' (Freud, 1973: 140-141) further resonates with an apparent lack of love or 'erotic instinct' (ibid.), which might be seen as the major narrative absence in the films of the *NGC*. Thus, the majority of the films completely exclude (romantic) love and sexual passion or displace their treatment into a subplot in which they never have any considerable effect on the story. Yet, whether one stresses the castration or non-reproduction aspect of the *NGC*'s take on post-war West German sociality – the consequence is a social deformation which is far from (being) 'home'.

[159] Title of a book by Bromley (1988) in which the author investigates the complex relationship between cultural 'texts', national identity constructions and their socio-political context.

Conclusion

The End

This is the first explicitly cultural studies investigation of the *NGC* to date. As such, it developed its own methodology, yet was inspired by the existing historical, themes-and-issues, biographical/*auteurist* and textual approaches. More precisely, its distinctly *con-textual* approach caused the investigation to alternate between the discussion of wider contextual parameters (with occasional biographical references), such as defining moments in post-war West German history, and that of selected textual matters, derived from a close analysis of symptomatic films. This has allowed the investigation to combine macro and micro levels of analysis, which was necessary in order to make sense of the complex and very specific relationship between West Germany and 'its' national cinema. However, it was not always easy to strike the right balance between the declared commitment to *con*text, here especially important considering a non-German readership that might not be entirely familiar with Germany's post-WWII history or with the large amount of films the investigation draws on, and the temptation of digging deeper into the fascinating places, times and life stories, which I encountered in the course of my research. But there was a lot of ground to cover, and, indeed, uncover: half a century's German history, a generation's filmmaking and dozens of relevant productions.

In West Germany, a society that above all has been characterized as being largely silent about its problematic past and divided present, the *NGC* aligned itself with the *Gegenöffentlichkeit* that developed around the 1968 moment. More precisely, the cinema movement contributed to this broad cultural formation by staging narratives of 'not belonging' – an artistic practice that crossed over into socio-political action through various dialogue-initiating strategies. In other words, the *NGC* and its productions gave voice to a particular structure of feeling which, until then, had not been represented in the public discourse on (West-) German national identity. Regarding the self-positioning of the group and their work within the national context, the concept of inner emigration has been used to describe the programmatic outsiderness of the *NGC*'s filmmaking praxis. Hence, notions of 'exile' and 'homelessness' have been found to lie at the core of the narrative processes surrounding and constituting the *NGC* and its (at best) ambiguous relationship with post-war West Germany.

This ambiguity that *NGC* directors felt towards their production context, then translated into the way they represented West Germany. In my analysis of symptomatic films, place-related, temporal and social referents have demonstrated a national sense of 'homelessness' resulting from the failure of German *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* up to that point. With regard to the representation of place relations, my findings have suggested that anti-*Heimat* elements, most prominently the Berlin Wall and the German-German border, supply a strong sense of unsettledness, but also a longing for, as I put it earlier, 'an as yet unrepresentable home'. As a consequence, what we, the spectators, are presented with as the place called 'West Germany' is the dramatisation of an identificatory void in which characters in search of 'home' remain fundamentally out of place – epitomized in *Der Mann auf der Mauer* where the-man-on-the-wall's in-between or diasporic non-sense of place alludes to notions of post-nationality.

Corresponding to the relative lack of positive identifications with West Germany as a place articulated through anti-*Heimat* elements, the narrative temporality that accompanies these in the majority of *NGC* productions is strikingly anti-nostalgic. However, there is little evidence to suggest that this overwhelmingly negative attitude towards the national past translates into productive criticism. On the contrary, narratives of closure which identify, but then leave, problematic issues to be worked through 'securely' in the past, seem to demand centre stage. As such, a profound sense of *being stuck in the past* has been found to pervade past, present and future narratives, putting the present in 'suspended animation'. Perpetrator, victims and 'normal' people alike have been shown to populate films which not only on the level of place, but also 'in time', fail to come to terms with the past, that is finding a way to *be in the present*. If it were not for the openness and the positive sense of agency resulting from the hybridisation of narrative/temporal processes in memory narratives and, related to it, the innovative composition of films as memory spaces, there would have been no manifestation of hope for West Germany's future in *NGC* films.

In order to investigate the issue of narrative/temporal 'belonging' further, pedagogical and performative elements have been identified as being constitutive of the 'double and split time of national representation' (Bhabha, 1994: 144). Yet, while the pedagogical in Bhabha is understood to produce a sense of certainty, national identity and belonging, my findings have suggested that, in productions of the *NGC*, this narrative process also gets *stuck in the past* which creates a sense of 'homelessness' in the present. In contrast, the performative, which,

according to Bhabha, is responsible for a sense of insecurity or even a 'loss of identity' (ibid.: 153), in *NGC* films has been found to make narrative/temporal space for exploring ways of *being in the present and orientated towards the future*. However, by leaving that which is certain and, to some extent, taken for granted, in other words, 'home', a sense of 'homelessness' is the result of the performative pursuit to get away from dead ends. Thus either way, and similar to the findings of the analysis of place-related issues, 'homelessness' appears to be the narrative/temporal answer to the question 'what does it mean to be West German with regard to time?'

Taking a closer look at symptomatic *NGC* protagonists inhabiting this spatial and temporal 'homelessness' has enabled the investigation to determine what life strategies these people are shown to develop in their desperate attempts to cope with the national dilemma that in many ways is played out as their own. Representations include male Kaspar Hauser to feminist Mother Courage characters who have largely been analysed as engaging in *death as 'home'-coming* versus *life as 'home'-making* strategies, and a third, mixed group of characters who participate in (proto-)terrorist *death as 'home'-making* acts. Driven by a profound sense of anti-*Gemeinschaft*, members of the first and the third group are shown to perform diverse annihilation practices aimed at the destruction of the personal 'Self' as well as the national 'Other'. In opposition to this, the life-orientated feminist approach is constructive and pro-*Gemeinschaft* as it seeks to challenge, change and improve the existing social status quo through (re)productive and communal activities. However, since the dominance of death-driven anti-heroes, who actively work towards the eventual disappearance of West German society, accentuates the lack of a clear sense of 'Self' and national 'belonging', I have come to consider these 'homing' strategies as indicative of a sense of social 'homelessness' which corresponds with the structure of feeling found in place-related and temporal representations of West Germany.

When one filters through these findings in order to extract some of the key terms that have been deployed, the cluster which emerges is striking. It contains formulations such as 'not belonging', 'inner emigration', 'outsiderness', 'exile', 'homelessness' 'borders', in search of 'home', 'diaspora', 'non-sense of place', 'post-nationality', 'hybridisation', destruction of the 'Self', the national 'Other', 'annihilation practices', 'death-drives', and so on. Looking closer at these terms, one is reminded of ideas usually associated with post-colonial theory (for example, Bhabha 1994, Brah 1996, and Gilroy 2000), which, in the case of (West) Germany,

is an unusual connection. However, the first time I was exposed to post-colonial concepts, I remember thinking how strangely familiar some of these sounded and how I felt I could immediately relate to 'the post-colonial experience'.

Having analysed a wide range of *NGC* films, I was struck by the overwhelming sense of 'homelessness' that spoke from these cultural narratives. Yet, I decided that rather than alluding to notions of diaspora, a prevalent, but controversial, concept in contemporary post-colonial writings, 'homelessness' was the more neutral term (although used in certain sociological writings to refer to the general modern condition). Moreover, it allowed me to account for the (historically) specific post-war West German experience of being 'homeless', that is being 'homeless' *at home*. And it is this specification – *at home* – which marks the West German experience of 'homelessness' as fundamentally different to any other. Thus, it seems that precisely because one is *at home* (in the physical/material sense of the word), one realises how 'homeless' one is emotionally and spiritually. This is to say that the experience of 'homelessness' somewhere far away from home can to some extent be seen as a 'normal' feeling, whereas 'homelessness' *at home* signifies an existential, that is internal, conflict of national identity.

As to where this sense of a national 'not belonging' might come from, the investigation has proposed an explanation which combines the two most traumatic national experiences in Germany's recent history: the Holocaust and the division of Germany (which is why I earlier identified *NGC* films as narratives of *post-Holocaust* and *post-unity*). In this way, one can argue that *NGC* filmmaking is a symbol of the West German struggle to define itself in relation to and against a Nazi German 'Other' in the past and an East German 'Other' in the present, while claiming to represent Germany as a whole. As mentioned previously, German reunification was written into the FRG's constitution which meant that West Germany was established as being (only) a temporary construction – not Nazi any more and not reunited yet. But how can one establish a sense of 'belonging' to a national entity that is, by definition, transitionary and ready to disappear at any moment? A national dilemma which led the *NGC* to make films about being 'homeless' *at home*.

Substantiating this notion of, metaphorically speaking, the 'post-colonial' experience of 'what it means to be West German after the Second World War', Stratton (2003)[160] argues that 'in order to understand the Holocaust as a practice, we need to set it in the context of the history of colonial violence' (ibid.: 508). Moreover, the declared aim of his article is to 'apply the ideas of postcolonial theory to the Holocaust' (ibid.: 524). To go straight to the core of his argument, Stratton claims that the terror methods of the Holocaust were regular colonial practices exercised before in Algeria, India and Africa. Thus, he argues, according to Nazi ideology, Jews were seen as an inferior race which 'Othered' certain, hitherto 'normal', Germans and legitimised their treatment as quasi-colonial subjects. And after the Nazis withdrew their citizenship rights in the so-called Nuremberg laws of 1933, the German Jews found themselves outside of the German law which rendered them foreigners in their own country.

Similar to the racial 'Othering' of the Jews, the establishing of concentration camps, too, can be understood as a re-appropriation of a widely used colonial method. Hence, according to Stratton, an integral part of the colonising practice was to create a 'space of death' in the colonies. There – outside of the national and European legal realm – indigenous people were exterminated to make space for colonial settlements. Yet, as Stratton puts it, 'the Nazis brought the space of death, literalized in the death camps, to Europe' (2003: 515). With regard to the concentration camps Dachau and Buchenwald, which are both in Germany and situated right outside of significant cities (Munich and Weimar), one can even argue that the Nazis brought the space of death, arguably the ultimate place of 'homelessness', to the centre of 'home'. Moreover, by relocating, what Stratton calls, 'the colonial periphery' (ibid.: 521) from the national 'outside' to its very 'inside', the borders between these place-related positionalities and, inextricably linked to them, the social boundaries between 'Self' and 'Other' became blurred while at the same time being heavily policed.

If one now considers, however tentatively, the dominant structure of feeling portrayed in *NGC* productions from a post-colonial perspective, an interesting picture emerges. This picture is the self-portrait of a country where the former 'colonisers', the Nazis, who defined the national 'Self' and excised large parts of the national 'Other' during the Third Reich, have post-war been identified as 'Other' – first by the international public, but later, and more

[160] Stratton's article has wider ramifications but in order to not introduce too much new material into the conclusion I will focus here on the part of his argument which concerns the German side of things (thus consciously neglecting the Jewish experience which plays an important part in his account).

significantly, by their own children, known as the 1968 generation. Still, although Nazism lost its cultural hegemony to a critical *Gegenöffentlichkeit*, Nazi residues continued to have a 'colonising' grip on West Germany. Besides, the 'de-colonisation'/de-nazification process was greatly hindered by the fact that the *new* anti-fascist West German 'Self' and the *old* fascist German 'Self' (now the 'Other') were not just inhabiting the same national space but in many cases were part of the same family (as demonstrated, for example, in my biographical opening and the *NGC* film *Abrahams Gold*).

Instead of a clear ethnic divide between the colonising 'Self' and the colonized 'Other' as in the majority of European – non-European post-colonial relationships, the 'Other', in the post-war West German case, is literally part of the 'Self', since it is the father or grandfather. In this respect, a dividing line does not only run through the country but also through society down to the level of individual families. This is why, for a white West German, it has proven difficult, if not impossible, to construct a national identity independent of the Nazi 'Other' as has been demonstrated throughout the various film analyses. Thus, since one is intimately related to the perpetrators, a side of the 'Self' one utterly rejects, one is lost between victims (with whom one wants to identify but ultimately cannot, such as Elvira in *In einem Jahr mit 13 Monden*) and perpetrators (in the midst of whom one might have grown up but, due to knowing about the past, one now regards as the enemy, as the terrorist Juliane in Die *Bleierne Zeit*). In other words, there is no space for normality between these two extreme national identity positions. Instead, as dramatized in numerous *NGC* productions, one chooses (or, in some cases, just comes) to inhabit a void, which I have described as 'homelessness' *at home*.

In the late 1960s, this sense of national 'homelessness' was not only felt but also actively responded to by the second generation who set about the formation of a *Gegenöffentlichkeit* of which the *NGC* became a vital part. Their 'homelessness' was self-proclaimed insofar as people publicly renounced any positive identification with post-war West Germany, partly on the basis of their parents' involvement in, and lack of mourning after, the Holocaust. Yet, this imagined and symbolic 'homelessness' was still voiced *at home* since – apart from working in a mode that has been described as inner emigration – none of its members actually left West Germany. In this respect, the 'homelessness' which was felt by these young people *at home* can be regarded as a post-national answer to the question 'what is German?' since it takes a deliberate stance against the hyper-nationalism and the deadliness of the Nazi period along with the lasting effects it had on Germany.

Regarding actual filmic representations, what we have seen in many *NGC* productions is how the so-called 'space of death' was narratively appropriated to offer a *'home'-coming* to the children of Nazi perpetrators who declared themselves 'homeless' *at home*. Thus despite the few feminist attempts to address the national dilemma collectively by trying to work together to make a better Germany, the dominant life strategy in the films is to commit suicide, become the victim of a perpetrator (usually a nasty father or grandfather figure) or kill the latter 'before he gets you'. Besides, working under the conditions of inner emigration reaffirms the connection with the 'colonial' past which might have been a necessary point of departure, yet, as the divided present has its own challenges, largely fails to imagine a post-national future which is informed, though not entirely defined, by its relationship to the past. But how can one start to conceive of a new beginning in the long shadows of Dachau and Buchenwald?

Here, it is interesting to note that Dachau (near Munich) was part of West Germany while Buchenwald (near Weimar) was part of the former GDR, not far away from the German-German border. This emphasizes that the national trauma of the Holocaust not only caused inter-generational frictions after the Second World War, but, as a common past, also united East and West Germany. More importantly still, the Berlin Wall and the inner-German border related back to the Holocaust's space of death in that there was a so-called *Todesstreifen* ('strip of death', the opposite of Achternbusch's idea of a 'verge of life') surrounding these post-war means of division. This meant that anyone entering this zone was in danger of being immediately shot dead by the patrolling border police or the automatic shooting system which was in place at these borders. And many people who tried to cross the border from one Germany (East) to the 'Other' (West) were indeed killed. Hence even in post-war Germany a zone of death – earlier established as the epitome of 'homelessness' – could be literally found at the centre of 'home', separating both Germanies while, again, having Germans (lawfully) killing 'Othered' Germans on ideological grounds.

To conclude, the notion of 'homelessness' *at home* pervades *NGC* films in the form of a *leitmotif*. More precisely, representations of national 'homelessness' are narratively realised by the same group of filmmakers whose respective ensembles, again and again, play out what it means 'not to belong' to the place called 'home', here West Germany. In this respect, one could say that what started out as a deconstructive move to break new ground, and in this

respect a performative endeavour, became repetitive and thus 'stuck' in its own mode of dramatization, which caused the project to take a more pedagogical turn. In other words, the *NGC*'s originally *new* approach to filmmaking in Germany laid out in their Oberhausen Manifesto became formulaic over time, which made their representations of 'homelessness' *at home* appear somewhat *schematic*. Hence, through a seemingly eternally recurring mode of (self-)narration, which one might call 'pedagogical performativity', the initial acuteness and transgressiveness of the 'homelessness' *at home* motif, here understood as the performative, was to some extent 'normalised' and it became the taken-for-granted narrative pattern by which *NGC* films could be identified.

Evaluating this narrative development in terms of its social function, 'homelessness' or a lack of national identity came to define the core of post-war West German identity. Yet, whilst this anti-stance, culturally 'at home' in the counter-hegemonic project of *Gegenöffentlichkeit*, was a necessary and progressive move in the 1960s, twenty years on it had not produced viable alternatives to the national project which its members so deeply rejected. In effect, the *NGC* got stuck in a 'being against' mode, and thus failed to develop positive imaginings of a post-national, communal 'being in the world'. And by doing so, it betrayed its original aim, which is that of every resistance movement: to become the new universal and offer new and better ways of living together. Yet, without changing their perspective, the filmmakers of the *NGC* were not able to overcome their *post*-position, evident in what I have called narratives of *post-Holocaust* and *post-unity*, and to assume a *pole*-position in constructing a new post-war West German identity.

Maybe it was this feeling of having got 'stuck' – something that the investigation has proven to be counter-productive regarding the national project of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* – which led to the disintegration of the *NGC* in the second half of the 1980s. Perhaps it was also the fact that, by then, the *NGC* was the last remaining group of the 1968 formation, after the end of the student movement, the APO, and the German Autumn. The air of resistance and the existential need to come to terms with the national past seemed to have left West Germany as 1982 saw the beginning of a national consolidation period when the country elected a conservative government that remained in office for sixteen years. Curiously, 1982 was also the year of Fassbinder's unexpected death which shocked the wider national and international community (not only the film fans, critics, filmmakers and others). With him, the *NGC* lost its spearhead, and West Germany was bereaved of one of its most prolific filmmakers who 'left'

at a moment in time when the *NGC* faced the – as it turned out insurmountable – challenge of re-adjusting its perspective in order not to lose touch with a changing West German society.

As a final point and in view of the research that has been done on the *NGC*, issues which would be worth investigating at greater length concern audience reception, 'silences' and a comparison between West and East German cinema. Apart from Elsaesser (1989) who, as part of his extensive account, goes 'in search of the spectator', little work has been done on the national and international audience of the *NGC* in quantitative and qualitative terms. Similarly, Meurer's (2000) work is the only comparative study of filmmaking in East and West Germany – even though it considers only four films: two from East and two from West Germany. Lastly, the issue of 'silences' such as the absence of love (which I touched upon in my analysis of the proto-terrorist film *Das Zweite Erwachen der Christa Klages*) and the relative absence of Jewish characters (with the exception of the Holocaust-survivors *David* and Anton in *In einem Jahr mit 13 Monden*) in films of the *NGC* is fascinating and calls for further investigation.

Post-*NGC*, it would be interesting to do research on how cinematic representations of 'Germanness' and the practice of filmmaking have changed after German reunification in 1989. Thus this national experience of joy and unity stands in striking contrast to the post-WWII traumas of Holocaust and division and therefore lends itself to a positive re-defining of the nation. In fact, re-unification is widely considered as marking the beginning of a re-nationalisation period and it would be exciting to find out how this 'whole' new national identity is negotiated in films of the next generation of German filmmakers. Yet socio-politically as well as cinematically, there are other issues, too. From the late 1980s onwards a new social group has discovered the cinema as a forum for critically exploring their complex, in this case hyphenated, German identities: second generation migrants whose parents came as so-called 'guest workers' to Germany in the 1950s and 60s. One of them is Fatih Akin, a Turkish-German filmmaker, who last year received much national and international acclaim for his Turkish-German melodrama *Gegen die Wand* (Head-On, 2004). With another second generation in need of negotiating their problematic national 'belonging', one wonders whether we are about to witness the formation of a new socio-cinematic movement in Germany.

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