

Humble Killers: Literary and Cinematic Representations of the German and
Italian Militant Left, 1970-1999

by

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Abstract

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Humble Killers presents close readings of memoirs, novels, literary essays, and films that were published and released in Italy and the German Federal Republic between 1970 and 1999, and that examine the phenomenon of postwar left-wing militancy in those countries. The study proposes an answer to the question: What is the relationship between ideology and art?

The introduction examines the conventional practice of discussing Italian and West German left-wing militancy under the rubric of "left-wing terrorism." Standard definitions of "terrorism" are examined and new definitions of both "terrorism" and "left-wing terrorism" are proposed. An argument is made for replacing the expression "left-wing terrorism" with "left-wing militancy."

Chapter I provides an overview of the main events associated with left-wing militancy in Italy and the German Federal Republic. Reference is made to first-person accounts by the protagonists of those events.

Chapter II examines roughly two dozen writers whose ideas contributed to the ideology of left-wing militant groups in Italy and the German Federal Republic. The chapter also elaborates on five concepts that were central to that ideology (praxis, illegality, counterviolence, revolutionary identity, and individuality). Differences between ideological statements issued by German and Italian groups are discussed.

Chapter III offers close readings of nine memoirs by German and Italian ex-militants, analysing the ways in which a writer's historical situation and ideological inclination may determine the formal features of his text.

Chapter IV briefly considers literary texts that were given ideological interpretations by left-wing militants, before embarking on an extended analysis of the novels and literary essays that were written in response to German and Italian left-wing militancy. The chapter demonstrates that while these novels and essays present themselves as critiques of militant ideology, they are themselves informed by ideological notions. Chapter V extends the analysis provided in Chapter IV to German and Italian cinema.

Chapter VI summarises the insights gained in the preceding chapters and uses these insights to formulate an answer to the question concerning the relationship between ideology and art. Theoretical analyses of political violence, ideology, and art formulated by Walter Benjamin and Theodor W. Adorno are critically examined.

Note

Within the renewed debate on terrorism, the insurrectionary activities of groups such as the German Red Army Faction (RAF) and the Italian Red Brigades have received considerable attention in recent months. Unfortunately, the orthodox discourse of "terrorism" often leads to these activities being described in a highly unscientific manner. This discourse subsumes under a single, highly reductive category a wide range of ideologies and practices, and frequently loses sight of the specificity of particular historical situations in its attempt to make generalisations from which past and present government policies can be defended or explained. The following study aims to restore a measure of scholarly accuracy to the ongoing debate on left-wing militancy in Italy and the German Federal Republic. In no way should it be construed as an apology for political violence or a defense of any particular ideology. In choosing as my title East German playwright Heiner Müller's description of the RAF as a band of "humble killers," I have tried to suggest how paradoxical and problematic the subject of this study has proven to be for many commentators and scholars. I also try to show, throughout the chapters that follow, to what extent apparently neutral analyses of left-wing militancy have themselves been ideologically informed.

My own analysis has profited immensely from the help of three advisors. Giancarlo Lombardi provided me with the impetus to begin work on this study during a seminar on contemporary Italian cinema he conducted at the City University of New York Graduate Centre in 2002. He also provided me with his expert knowledge on both the history of Italian left-wing militancy and Italian

cinema, as well as generously granting me access to his sizeable collection of texts and films. Vincent Crapanzano prodded me to probe more deeply than I otherwise would have into the ideological assumptions that frame much of the discourse of militancy. Paul Oppenheimer scrutinised my manuscript with extraordinary care and provided invaluable criticisms of the various drafts.

I dedicate this study to the memory of my father, Marco Henninger.

Max Henninger, New York City, 5 April, 2004

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Introduction

"Humanism now takes the form of terrorism. The Molotov cocktail is the last educative experience of the middle-class." (Heiner Müller)

East German playwright Heiner Müller's characteristically provocative statement was made in the context of the German Federal Republic's struggle with the militant left-wing movements that emerged from the student uprisings of 1967-69. It is a statement worth recalling today, even if the activities of the German Red Army Faction (RAF) have become a subject for historians and the religiously motivated terrorism that has attracted so much attention since 11 September, 2001, is something very different.¹ The left-wing militancy of the RAF and its Italian counterpart, the Red Brigades, was not so much an attack on Western civilisation as an outgrowth of (Marxist) humanism, and associated not with repressive Middle Eastern regimes, but with Western democratic societies. While motivated by outrage over the exploitation of the Third World, the German militants were themselves neither exploited nor dispossessed in any obvious way; often they came

¹ The differences between the RAF and today's militant Muslim organisations are discussed in Oliver Tolmein's Vom deutschen Herbst zum 11. September: Die RAF, der Terrorismus und der Staat (Hamburg: Konkret, 2002). Recent scholarship on terrorism routinely distinguishes between the "old terrorism" of groups such as ETA, the IRA, the RAF, and the Red Brigades, which operated or operate locally and with conventional weapons, and the "new terrorism" of groups such as Al Qaeda, which are active internationally and are thought to be pursuing weapons of mass destruction.

from middle-class backgrounds. Yet the Molotov cocktails that announced later hijackings and assassinations were not simply the irresponsible adventurism of bored youths; they were attempts to politically educate a public that had in many ways failed to learn from its Nazi past.²

While originally referring to the policy of a government (that of the Jacobins), the term "terrorism" continues to be applied almost exclusively to clandestine insurrectionary groups. It has a history of being used by governments and the media to stigmatise revolutionary movements whose aims the general population might endorse if given sufficient opportunities to learn about them objectively.³ Scholars have tended to belittle these movements by ignoring their political concerns and making them appear to be run by madmen and thugs. Origins of Terrorism, a 1990 collection of scholarly essays edited by Walter Reich, is largely devoted to depoliticising the RAF, the Red Brigades, and others by presenting them as pathological cases; the "origins of terrorism", the authors

² Crucially, this emancipatory work was conceived of not in theoretical, but in practical terms. Adorno, a theoretician who did not live to see the formation of the German RAF, already expressed his discomfort over the increasing violence of the student protesters, lamenting how they treated his theoretical model as an excuse to throw Molotov cocktails.

³ Cf. Walter Hoffmann (ed.), Rote Armee Fraktion: Texte und Materialien zur Geschichte der RAF (Berlin: ID-Verlag, 1997) 12ff. for an incomplete chronology of government attempts to undermine, through censorship, constructive dialogue between the RAF and the legal left. Notwithstanding such attempts, the solidarity of a substantial section of the German population with the RAF was, for a time, considerable. According to a poll conducted by the EMNID research group in 1971, every fifth citizen of the GFR tolerated efforts to help the RAF members hide from the police; every seventh citizen was prepared to hide the RAF members in his or her own home. The solidarity of the Italian proletariat with the Red Brigades is also well documented (cf. Chapter I).

suggest, lie not so much in specific social and political conditions as in the mental disturbances of individuals.⁴ Similarly, when Walter Laqueur adopts (in The New Terrorism) the right-wing media's description of the RAF as the "Baader-Meinhof gang" (Andreas Baader and Ulrike Meinhof were perhaps the RAF's most well-known members), he misrepresents the movement by stressing the criminality of its activities while ignoring their political nature.⁵

Much scholarly work on the RAF and the Red Brigades is also characterised by uncritical acceptance of that grossly reductive dichotomy which posits "the state" on one side of the conflict and "the terrorists" on the other, while ignoring not only the realities of state terrorism and state-sponsored terrorism, but also the extent to which the political agendas of states have been served by the existence of clandestine militant organisations, and the likelihood of there often having been open collaboration between the two (most

⁴ Walter Reich (ed.), Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies, States of Mind (Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1990). Consider such statements as "Some [West German terrorists] came from homes where the father was a clergyman who may have caused his children to rebel by repressive attitudes" and "The unhappy childhood characteristics of most West German terrorists may have turned them into angry, contrary, and frustrated people" (Konrad Kellen in Reich 53).

⁵ Walter Laqueur, The New Terrorism (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). Pace Laqueur, what Mario Moretti says about the Red Brigades in his Brigate rosse: una storia italiana (Milan: Anabasi, 1994) is also true of the RAF: "The history of the Red Brigades is a fragment of political, not of penal history" (Moretti 1). (Unless otherwise noted, translations from foreign-language texts are my own. Texts discussed in Chapters III and IV will be quoted in both the original and in translation, as will be dialogues from the films discussed in Chapter V.)

markedly, perhaps, in Italy – a subject examined by Giorgio Galli in his controversial Il partito armato⁶).

The examination of the militant left-wing organisations that formed in the German Federal Republic and in Italy in the aftermath of the 1968 student uprisings, and which were subsequently branded “terrorist,” provides a useful antidote to these tendencies, and to the attempted depolitization of what remains, by definition, a political phenomenon. Yet rather than approaching the subject historically or sociologically, the following study proceeds by close readings of literary and cinematic works that concern themselves with the militant left. As Thomas Hoeps has argued in his study of both right- and left-wing militancy in German literature, it is the “aesthetic form” of these works that allows “insight and experience beyond the opaque facticity of events.”⁷ While acknowledging affinities between the “terrorist” and the writer – both operate “in symbolic space” and strive for a “psychic effect” – Hoeps shows that where writers concern themselves with as controversial a subject as “terrorism,” their work may have an effect opposite to that of “terrorist” activities (and government reactions): by offering “alternative perceptions,” it helps to disrupt overly propagandistic

⁶ Giorgio Galli, Il partito armato. Gli “anni di piombo” in Italia, 1968-1986 (Milan: Kaos, 1993).

⁷ Thomas Hoeps, Arbeit am Widerspruch: “Terrorismus” in deutschen Romanen und Erzählungen (1837-1992) (Dresden: Thelem, 2001) 9. This is one of two extensive surveys of the representation of left-wing militancy in German literature; the other is Walter Delabar’s “entweder mensch oder schwein: die RAF in der Prosa der 70er und 80er Jahre”, in: Erhard Schütz and Walter Delabar (eds.), Deutsche Literatur der 70er und 80er Jahre (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1997) 154ff.

representations.⁸ A number of texts considered in this study were penned by former RAF and Red Brigades members. Others are the work of professional writers who either directly witnessed the rise and fall of these groups (and in many cases were directly affected by the repressive legislation introduced against them) or write from the vantage point of those born after the fact.⁹

Literary texts and films that address the theme of insurrectionary leftism cannot but concern themselves with the relationship of ideology to aesthetics.¹⁰ While a writer or director portraying the RAF or a similar organisation must by no means subscribe to a left-wing or indeed to any ideology, he will need to find ways of portraying the impact of ideology on the thoughts,

⁸ Hoeps 11, 14. Hoeps suggests that even where the actions of the militants involved physical violence, they were also (and perhaps primarily) intended to bring about psychological changes in large numbers of people (be it the general public, or a specific sector of society), altering "symbolic space" in the sense of subverting ordinary (non-revolutionary) representations of the social and political situation. This, he claims, is similar to the work of writers. Writers who identify themselves neither with the militants nor with the state are in a position to question the representations of reality offered by both.

⁹ On 16 January, 1976, laws were passed in the GFR that rendered punishable not only the "Befürwortung" ["endorsement"] of criminal activities, but also the possession of publications in which such an endorsement is formulated (paragraphs 88a and 130a of the penal code). Hoeps discusses the West German "hunt for sympathisers," of which a number of prominent writers (Heinrich Böll, Luise Rinser) became victims, in some detail (Hoeps 41ff.).

¹⁰ "Ideology" is used here in a narrower sense than in traditional critical theory. What is meant is not what Horkheimer and Adorno call "socially necessary semblance" (the totality of those false beliefs and attitudes a repressive society is constrained to perpetuate in order to continue functioning), but simply a unified and coherent body of ideas that governs (subjective and collective) perceptions, value judgements, and aspirations - in the words of Louis Althusser: "the system of the ideas and representations which dominate the mind of a man or a social group." Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press: 1971) 158. Such ideology may reflect or contest the dominant ideology of society. (It may also, as Adorno would have argued, unwittingly reflect it through the very act of contesting it.) Similarly, "praxis" will be used to refer not to social praxis in its entirety, but to distinct forms of active engagement with one's environment that operate within and possibly against the larger praxis of society.

emotions, and behaviour of individuals, as well as on society as a whole, in ways that are aesthetically compelling. Where ideological movements typically opt for non-aesthetic modes of expression (pamphlets, theoretical texts), the artist is forced, by virtue of being an artist, to reflect on these movements and their ideas aesthetically. If the ideology is radical and subversive, this may well call for experimental or non-orthodox aesthetic principles; it may also prompt the artist to choose a highly traditional format. Depending on the artist's own attitude to the ideology in question, he may choose to use the aesthetic devices at his disposal either to contain and perhaps to deflate its subversive character, or to heighten it. Some of the texts and films analysed in this study adhere strictly to the time-honoured principles of such genre categories as "memoir" and "novel." Others defy categorisation, rendering difficult their attribution to any particular genre and flatly rejecting the ideal of the organic or unified work of art.

The bulk of this study (Chapters III, IV, and V) is devoted to close readings of films and literary texts (including memoirs) from the period between 1970 and 1999.¹¹ Properly understanding these

¹¹ The number of post-1969 literary and (auto-)biographical texts that concern themselves with German and Italian left-wing militancy is considerable. For reasons of space, several types of texts had to be excluded: novels that treat militancy only marginally, all short stories, all plays, all biographies (rather than autobiographies or memoirs), and all book-length interviews (some of which have been published as "memoirs"). The texts not discussed include: Tre giorni a luglio, a novel by anarchist Pietro Valpreda (Milan: Edizioni Associazione Culturale Anarchica Ponte della Ghisolfa, 1997); Teresa Zona Zanetti's somewhat misleadingly titled Rosso di Mária: l'educazione sentimentale di una bambina guerrigliera (Rome: DeriveApprodi, 1997); Stefano Tassinari's Assalti al cielo

texts and films requires some historical background and awareness of the ideological issues raised by the German and Italian militant left. This information is provided in Chapters I and II. Chapter VI is theoretical; on the basis of the preceding close readings, it proposes an answer to the question "What is the relation of ideological to aesthetic issues?"

As mentioned above, it has become standard practice to speak of the RAF, the Red Brigades, and related organisations as exponents of "left-wing terrorism." In the following paragraphs, which propose working definitions of "terrorism" and "left-wing terrorism," this practice is subjected to closer scrutiny.

"Terrorism"

"It can be predicted with confidence," writes Walter Laqueur, "that the disputes about a comprehensive, detailed definition of terrorism will continue for a long time, that they will not result in a consensus, and that they will not make a notable contribution

(Bologna: Calderini, 1998); "Sprechzeit" by Helga M. Novak and "Lenau" by Günter Herburger, both short stories, published in the volumes Palisaden (Darmstadt/Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1980) and Die Eroberung der Zitadelle (Frankfurt: Luchterhand, 1991), respectively; Ulrike Edschmid's Frau mit Waffe: zwei Geschichten aus terroristischen Zeiten (Berlin: Rowohlt Berlin, 1996); Valerio Morucci's A guerra finita: sei racconti (Rome: Manifesto libri, 1994); Nell'anno della Tigre, a biography of Italian ex-militant Adriana Faranda by Silvana Mazzocchi (Milan: Ballini & Castoldi, 1994); Nel cerchio della prigionia, a collection of letters and autobiographical texts by former Red Brigades member Anna Laura Braghetti and right-wing militant Francesca Mambro (Milan: Sperling & Kupfer, 1995); as well as A viso aperto by Renato Curcio (Milan: Mondadori, 1993) and Brigate rosse: una storia italiana by Mario Moretti (Milan: Anabasi, 1994), two "memoirs" in interview-form. The cinema section excludes films of an entirely documentary nature, such as Andreas Veiel's Black Box BRD and Sergio Zavoli's La notte della repubblica.

towards the understanding of terrorism."¹² While the latter claim may be too strong, disagreement about the correct definition of "terrorism" has certainly been intense. Laqueur's findings are used here to formulate a definition of "terrorism" that is sufficiently accurate for the purposes of this study. This definition will doubtless leave many scholars unsatisfied, and it departs in important ways from the definitions offered by Laqueur himself.

Laqueur rightly points out that "there are so many different kinds of terrorists that generalizations are almost bound to be misleading" and that "there is no terrorism per se, except perhaps on an abstract level, but different terrorisms."¹³ The abstract level, however, is sufficient for purposes of definition; without downplaying the need for empirical verification, one might say abstraction is a requirement of definition. In this sense, the 1798 supplement to the Dictionary of the French Academy – "a system or regimen of terror" – is not a bad one. This is in fact one of the first instances of the word "terrorism" being used at all; as mentioned above, the term referred initially to the Jacobin reign of terror, that is, to a form of state terrorism.¹⁴

Laqueur is in agreement with most scholars when he points out that "terrorism is not an ideology but an insurrectional

¹² Walter Laqueur, The Age of Terrorism (Boston/Toronto: Little, Brown & Company, 1987) 72.

¹³ Laqueur 1987 3, 9.

¹⁴ Similarly, Marx uses the term "terrorism" to describe the expropriation of the Scottish peasants in section VII of the first volume of Capital. Cf. Karl Marx, Das Kapital I (Berlin: Dietz 1959) 772.

strategy."¹⁵ Terrorism is indeed a political tool that can be used to promote almost any kind of political agenda, as history shows: Laqueur amply documents the use of terrorism by Russian revolutionaries (the Narodnaya Volya), Irish, Macedonian, Armenian, Polish, and Algerian nationalists (to name only a few), French, Russian, German, and Iberian anarchists, Czech resistance fighters of the 1940s, and many others; he also shows that theories of terrorism have been formulated by thinkers of both the left (Blanqui, Bakunin, Most) and the right (Carl Schmitt). More recently, it has of course been associated with the Palestinian liberation movement and Islamic fundamentalists.

Laqueur may be wrong to reject Max Horkheimer's argument that "he who does not mention state terrorism must not speak or write about individual terrorist acts."¹⁶ Laqueur's main objection to Horkheimer is that to treat the use of terror by states as a form of terrorism is to define the term too broadly. "Violence and oppression," he correctly points out, "have been an 'integral component' not just during the last few years, not just of the 'modern state', but throughout all recorded history." He adds that "To write the history of oppression and persecution is to write the history of mankind."¹⁷ It is not immediately obvious, however, that

¹⁵ Laqueur 1987 4.

¹⁶ Horkheimer qtd. in Laqueur 1987 2.

¹⁷ Ibid.

"violence and oppression," or even "persecution" are necessarily terrorist. In fact, Laqueur fails to establish this.

To speak of state terrorism may not, therefore, mean making the definition quite as broad as Laqueur suggests. Even if a definition of the kind desired by Horkheimer did include events from throughout "the history of mankind," this would not make scholarly work impossible; arguably, the solution to the problem of being faced with such abundant material is not to narrow the definition of "terrorism," but to focus on a specific aspect of the phenomenon, while acknowledging that there are others.

For the purposes of this study, terrorism is the use of terror for political ends, where "terror" refers to a prolonged and widespread condition of fear resulting from a combination of (i) certainty about the existence of a threat to one's life, property, and security, combined with (ii) uncertainty about when and where this threat will manifest itself, or indeed whether it will do so at all.

This definition departs from two others endorsed by Laqueur. Terrorism is not necessarily "the use of covert violence by a group for political ends" because the violence need not be covert (although it often is); it is not necessarily "an insurrectional strategy" because it need not be employed for purposes of insurrection.¹⁸ In other words, there exists such a thing as state

¹⁸ Laqueur 1987 72, 4.

terrorism. That the terrorism of some groups is both covert and insurrectional does not entail that all terrorism is.

"Left-wing terrorism"

For the purposes of this study, "left-wing terrorism" will be defined as the use of terror for political purposes as determined on the basis of a left-wing (typically anarchist or Marxist-Leninist) ideology, where "terror" refers to a prolonged and widespread condition of fear, as defined above.

It is worth noting that the left-wing organisations it has become uncontroversial to label "terrorist" themselves rejected description by this term.¹⁹ As Alberto Franceschini, a founding member of the Italian Red Brigades, remarked in an interview conducted by the Italian journalist Sergio Zavoli: "We never defined ourselves as terrorists. It's a term we've always rejected, applied to us by the mass media. We always believed ourselves to be making the revolution, to be revolutionaries."²⁰ Similarly, Mario Moretti, the Red Brigades member in charge of the Moro kidnapping, has said: "We never carried out a terrorist operation," and Andreas Baader,

¹⁹ This tendency to shun the term was not always as widespread as one might assume. Marx openly advocated "revolutionary terrorism" during the German revolution of 1848 and 1849. Brazilian guerrillero Carlos Marighela, whose "Handbook of Urban Guerrilla Warfare" will be discussed in Chapter II, also openly advocated terrorist tactics. One of the slogans of the German student movement was "High sein, frei sein, Terror muß dabei sein" ["Be high, be free, terror has to be involved"].

²⁰ Alberto Franceschini qtd. in Sergio Zavoli, La Notte della Repubblica (Rome/Milan: Nuova Eri/Arnaldo Mondadori, 1992) 109.

founding member of the German Red Army Faction (RAF), declared in 1977: "The politics of the RAF is not one of terrorism."²¹

RAF and Red Brigades members followed the example of the South American Tupamaros²² and described themselves as "urban guerrilla fighters" (Stadtguerilla or guerriglia urbana). They insisted the true terrorism is that perpetrated by states. To argue this point, Baader quoted, during his trial, a remark by the Rhineland's minister of the interior: "The basic rule of terrorism is to kill as many people as possible. Paralysing horror, that is the emotional state the terrorists obviously want to produce in more and more people across the world."²³ Baader commented: "That is the precise definition of Israel's political actions against the Palestinian liberation movement, that is the precise definition of the USA's political actions in Vietnam up until their defeat."²⁴ During the same court session, Ulrike Meinhof, another accused RAF member, argued that the actions of her organisation were those of an "urban guerrilla" whose function was precisely to combat (state) terrorism:

²¹ Moretti 176; Andreas Baader qtd. in Stefan Aust, *Der Baader-Meinhof Komplex* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1985) 562. Cf. also the 1975 statement issued by the Stammheim prisoners in response to a bomb at Hamburg central station being falsely attributed to the RAF: "Terrorism cannot be a weapon of the urban guerrilla in its attack on the state. The urban guerrilla operates in the rift between the state and the masses, in order to widen it and further politization, revolutionary solidarity, and the organisation of proletarian power against the state" (Hoffmann 196). The document goes on to argue that it is precisely through the association of the "urban guerrilla" with terrorism that the government attempts to create a climate of fear and uncertainty whose intended effect is to make people identify more strongly with the state.

²² The Tupamaros were an Uruguayan guerrilla group tied to the MLN (Movimiento de Liberación Nacional) and active roughly from 1963 to 1972.

²³ Baader qtd. in Aust 349.

²⁴ Ibid.

Terrorism is the destruction of utilities, i.e. dams, water plants, hospitals, power plants. Everything at which the American bombings of North Vietnam were systematically directed from 1965 onward. Terrorism operates by instilling fear in the masses. The urban guerrilla carries fear into the institutions.²⁵

The comments of Franceschini, Baader, and Meinhof on "terrorism" point to the left's discomfort over the term. This is related to the open rejection of terrorism on the part of Marx, Lenin, and other left-wing thinkers (discussed in Chapter II); more importantly, it results from a sense that "terrorism" is a derogatory expression used by the state for mystificatory and propagandistic purposes.

This raises an important question. Is the description of such organisations as the Red Brigades and the RAF as "terrorist" accurate? The application of the term to those groups is usually justified by reference to such activities as the kidnapping of Aldo Moro and the assassination of Alfred Herrhausen. Arguably, these

²⁵ Meinhof qtd. in Aust 350. Cf. also Ralf Reinders and Ronald Fritsch, Die Bewegung 2. Juni: Gespräche über Haschrebellen, Lorenz-Entführung, Knast (Berlin: ID-Verlag, 1995) 52: "Terrorists? I reject that term. Terrorists are those on the other side of the conflict." The notion that terrorism originates with "those on the other side" (i.e. the state) is taken for granted in most documents issued by the RAF, the Red Brigades, and similar groups. Cf. eg. the Strategic Command Resolution issued by the Red Brigades in 1975, reprinted in: Progetto Memoria, Le parole scritte (Rome: Sensibili alle foglie, 1996) 45ff. In this document, the Italian Christian Democrats are identified as the "political and organisational center of the reaction and of terrorism" (Progetto Memoria 1996 56).

were intended to advance a political agenda through the creation of widespread and prolonged fear, as defined above.²⁶

One response to this argument is to point out that Moro and Herrhausen were not randomly selected victims. In fact, the left-wing groups discussed in this study differ from their right-wing counterparts in that they targeted – and sought to “terrorise” or, to use a Red Brigades term, “disarticulate” – a very specific class of people: politicians, factory bosses, chiefs of police, NATO generals – in short, those in the centers of power, the rulers rather than the ruled. These groups were opposed on principle to indiscriminate violence against ordinary civilians.²⁷ It is fairly clear that such indiscriminate violence – exemplified by the bomb detonated in Piazza Fontana, Milan, in 1969, and by the hijacking of the Lufthansa airplane Landshut in 1977 – was almost always the work either of groups directly opposed to the militant left (e.g. right-wing groups), or of those who were associated with it but operated on different principles (e.g. the PFLP).²⁸ Some operations conducted by German militant groups, such as the RAF’s occupation of the Stockholm embassy, were arguably examples of indiscriminate

²⁶ It might also be said that the Red Brigades slogan “Colpirne uno per educarne cento” [“Strike one to educate a hundred” – originally a Maoist slogan] expresses a terrorist mentality in the sense of the definition offered here.

²⁷ Cf. Reinders/Fritzsche 52: “Terror is indiscriminate violence, and we never used violence indiscriminately.” “We” refers to the 2 June Movement.

²⁸ “Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.” For background on the PFLP and Palestinian militancy in general, cf. G. Chaliand, The Palestinian Resistance (Middlesex: Penguin, 1972); J. Cooley, Green March, Black September (London: Frank Cass, 1973); and L. Kadi (ed.), Basic Political Documents of the Armed Palestinian Resistance Movement (Beirut: PLO, 1969).

violence – but they seem to have been perceived as aberrations, and were harshly criticised as such, within the ranks of the militant left itself.²⁹

If the German and Italian militant left sought to create fear in those perceived as representatives of the ruling class, not in the general population, then the aim was to create a limited rather than a widespread condition of fear. It becomes difficult, then, to describe the militant left as “terrorist” without ignoring (or dismissing as illusory) the distinction between rulers and ruled. Those who accept the distinction are less likely to speak of “terrorism.”³⁰

Another point worth noting is that many early RAF operations, such as the liberation of Andreas Baader and subsequent bank robberies, are difficult to construe as “terrorist” in any sense, which is not true of a number of actions taken by the government and the media – most notably the planting of completely fictitious news stories whose effect was to eliminate any sense of solidarity the general population might have felt towards Baader and his companions. During the Stammheim trial, the German media published stories about intended RAF attacks on football stadiums and nuclear power plants whose factual basis later turned out to be

²⁹ Cf. eg. Till Meyer’s comments on Stockholm, in: Till Meyer, Staatsfeind (Hamburg: Spiegel Buchverlag, 1996) 53ff.

³⁰ This is not to say a strategy of fear is disqualified from description as “terrorism” simply because it is directed at a minority. The distinction between rulers and ruled is qualitative as well as quantitative.

nil. Margrit Schiller writes about these fictitious news stories in her memoir: "The aim: to destroy solidarity and sow fear and uncertainty. Every ordinary citizen had to be convinced he might be next, and that the guerrilla fighters didn't give a damn about the general population."³¹ Such actions – in which a political aim is advanced through terror – would seem to qualify for description as "terrorist" as much as any other. Bombs may not have been involved – but it is not bombs that make an action terrorist; it is terror.³²

The RAF and the Red Brigades did not shy from violence, yet it is not as clear as some would have it that they were therefore terrorists. That the activities of the Red Brigades ought to be characterised not as "terrorist," but as forms of "insurrectionary leftism," is the position even of Italy's former minister of the interior, Francesco Cossiga.³³

As the events and texts analysed in the following chapters will show, the term "terrorism" is simply too demagogic to do justice to the German and Italian political conflicts of the 1970s. In the following chapters, the word will appear only occasionally, mostly in

³¹ Margrit Schiller, *Es war ein harter Kampf um meine Erinnerung* (Hamburg: Piper, 2001) 165. Cf. also Hoffmann 176, 196. For an extended Red Brigades analysis of the function of the media as a device for the "reactionary mobilisation of the masses," cf. Progetto Memoria 1996 91ff.

³² That there can be "terrorism" without physical violence is apparently also the position of the German judiciary. In 1995, it issued charges of membership in a "terrorist organisation" to twenty-five citizens of the GFR for their supposed role in producing and circulating the underground publication *radikal*. Cf. Hoffmann 508.

³³ Cf. Renato Curcio, *A viso aperto* (Milan: Mondadori, 1993) 220.

statements by other people, who are far from agreeing on its meaning. Sometimes it will be placed in quotation marks to indicate the difficulties mentioned; where possible, it will be replaced by the more neutral "left-wing militancy."³⁴

"Terrorism" is the word by which the works discussed in this study are typically categorised. That this word should be so problematic indicates a central difficulty for the analysis of these works: like the discourse of militancy itself, they are riddled with ideologically charged, often mystificatory statements and representations. They grapple both with the ideology of militancy and with the dominant ideology (or ideologies) of their societies, but they do not do so from a position that is itself beyond ideology. Decoding their ideological and mystificatory function will be a central task in the chapters that follow. This task can be accomplished neither by taking at face value the statements and representations found in the various texts and films, nor by analysing them solely on the level of content. Much of this study will be devoted to showing how the nature of the militant conflict and the larger social antagonisms underlying it are expressed through the very way in which writers and directors organise their material - through their aesthetic

³⁴ In placing the word "terrorist" in quotation marks when speaking about the militant left, I am following the example of Thomas Hoeps. I am also using the word "militant" in a narrower sense than many Italian writers, for whom it seems to be roughly equivalent to "activist." For the purposes of this study, a militant is a political dissident who takes up arms.

principles and the structure that results from them. Insights garnered from this analysis of form will often serve to correct the misunderstandings that can arise from an excessive and uncritical attention to content. This study takes as one of its guiding principles Adorno's insight that a text may "say" something quite different on the level of form than it appears to do on the level of content; implied in this insight is a critique of those who take as the basis for their judgement of an artwork the ideological positions more or less explicitly expressed by the artist: "Social struggles and the relations of classes are imprinted in the structure of artworks; by contrast, the political positions deliberately adopted by artworks are epiphenomena and usually impinge on the elaboration of works [...]." ³⁵

Even where they seem to endorse militancy, the works analysed in this study cannot be understood simply as vehicles for militant ideology. Nor do they even analyse that ideology in any straightforward sense. What they examine is not militant ideology per se, but the violent praxis from which that ideology always declared itself inseparable, and the experiences that praxis produced.³⁶ To explore the translation of abstract ideology into concrete experience is to also explore the ways in which experience

³⁵ Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997) 232.

³⁶ Adorno has pointed out the centrality of experience to the artistic impulse: "But art, mimesis driven to the point of self-consciousness, is nevertheless bound up with feeling, with the immediacy of experience; otherwise it would be indistinguishable from science, at best an installment plan on its results and usually no more than social reporting." Adorno 259.

calls ideology into question (yet, again, this does not occur from a position that is itself beyond ideology). The aesthetic principles that underlie these works are employed so as to emphasise this dialectic of the abstract and the concrete – the confirmation or refutation of an ideal through its transformation into biographical and social fact, or the transformation of ideology through its realisation. It will be demonstrated that in every case, what mediates between ideology and aesthetics is praxis. Between the Red Brigades Strategic Command Resolution of 1975 and Leonardo Sciascia's critique of the ideology formulated therein stands the political violence of the 1978 Moro kidnapping.³⁷

The first group of texts analysed will be the memoirs of ex-militants: four by former members of German groups such as the RAF and the 2 June Movement, five by former members of the Italian Red Brigades. In so far as these memoirs frequently present themselves as historical reportage, free of the "defamiliarising" features of fiction, their analysis will help draw attention to how ideologically charged and mystificatory even an apparently factual account of militancy can be. The analysis of these memoirs will also begin to reveal shifts of emphasis between German and Italian texts; it will be shown that these shifts result as much from

³⁷ Obviously, this is not a question of the aesthetization of politics mentioned by Benjamin in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." Political praxis is not presented as art, but represented through art. In so far as the representation is cognizant of its own political nature or assumes responsibility for its possible political effects, what results may, however, be a politization of art.

different ideological formulations as from different historical developments. For example, the predominance of issues of domesticity, family, and generational conflict in Italian memoirs will be revealed to result directly from a stronger emphasis, among the Italian militants, on those ideological issues that bear directly on the subjective experience of the militant. This particular emphasis will also become evident in the analysis of novels, literary essays, and films undertaken next.³⁸ Likewise, the concern with issues of legality that distinguishes the ideological statements of the German RAF will be seen to recur in the novels and films on German militancy.

In addition to memoirs, twenty-eight literary texts from both West Germany and Italy will be analysed. The films analysed number fourteen. The vastness of this material calls for some explanation of the selection process employed. As will be seen, the

³⁸ It is simply not possible to offer a complete survey of left-wing militancy as a theme in German and Italian literature here. It is worth noting, however, that there was such a theme in the literature of both countries prior to 1970. In Der letzte Sommer (1909), Ricarda Huch tells the story of a Russian anarchist's sly and successful assassination of a university director. Thomas Hoeps discusses other texts in his 2001 survey of the theme of terrorism in German literature, Arbeit am Widerstand. Walter Laqueur gives a useful overview of the history of "terrorism" as a literary theme in The Age of Terrorism. He discusses texts by Dostoevsky, Conrad, Henry James, and many less well-known authors. One author Laqueur only mentions in passing, and not in the chapter on literature, is Jack London. As H. Bruce Franklin writes in his introduction to The Iron Heel, London foresaw, in this 1908 novel, "urban guerrillas battling the government's army of mercenaries and police in the canyons of the cities." Cf. Jack London, The Iron Heel (Chicago: Lawrence Hill, n.d.) iii. Cf. also chapter 17 of The Iron Heel, in which the capitalist "Oligarchy" plants a bomb in order to discredit elected socialists as "anarchists," and in which the punishment of revolutionaries by solitary confinement is mentioned. The narrator of The Iron Heel is a middle-class woman who becomes "a revolutionist inured to scenes of violence and death" (London 176). The novel's final chapter is titled "The Terrorists."

texts and films are far from homogeneous. In most, militancy is the central theme; in others, it is merely a term of comparison. The latter are included because, despite the secondary status of the theme of militancy, they provide insights into the reception of the militant conflict that are invaluable for rounding out the picture presented by other works. Militancy may appear to be a marginal theme in the work of feminist writer Dacia Maraini, while a feminist analysis of domesticity is clearly at the heart of that work. Yet that militancy should be employed to supplement such an analysis is itself telling, particularly since questions of domesticity are so central to texts in which militancy is clearly not a marginal theme.

The Wittgensteinian notion of a "family resemblance" may be invoked to explain the selection process. All works analysed have as their protagonists either militants or those who are profoundly affected by an encounter with militancy. All build obviously on the history of the militant conflict. Most importantly, all engage substantially with the ideological issues to be analysed in Chapter II. Yet this engagement allows for considerable variety. Questions of legality and violence lend themselves to narratives of legal persecution and crime. Other questions, such as that of clandestinity, lend themselves more easily to narratives of family and generational conflict. It will be shown that German writers have focused particularly on issues of state violence and state-sanctioned ideology, while Italian writers have more frequently examined

militancy through the lens of personal relations, particularly family relations. German writers have been drawn to third-person narration and a mock-documentary format, while Italian writers have frequently made use of more "subjective" genres, such as the epistolary novel.

Again, these differences are determined partly by history, partly by ideology. To understand the extent to which the texts discussed from Chapter III onward have been determined by these factors, it will be necessary to look more closely both at the historical development and at the ideological positions of the German and Italian militant groups. This is undertaken in the two chapters that follow.

I. History

The history of post-1969 German and Italian left-wing militancy is a history of failed revolutions. In part, the failure of these revolutions took the form of an increasing alienation of the militants from those sections of the population they had identified as the revolutionary subject and claimed to represent. This alienation led to the increasingly self-referential nature of the militant movements; where their first operations had clearly been conducted with the aim of educating and emancipating the general population, in addition to physically attacking the centres of political and economic power, later operations were devoted almost entirely to the survival of the militant organisations themselves (and to the liberation of prisoners or at least the amelioration of prison conditions). The existence of armed oppositional movements that rejected the traditional (parliamentary) channels of political expression prompted the governments of Italy and the GFR to take increasingly desperate - and frequently illegal - measures. Some of the more striking moments in this spiral of violence and repression are described in this chapter.

It is worth pointing out that the specific brand of left-wing militancy that followed in the wake of the 1967-69 student movement was not limited either to Germany or Italy. There existed

a number of armed left-wing organisations in France.¹ Nor was this form of militancy solely a European phenomenon; while more short-lived, the Chicago Weathermen and the Japanese Red Army shared many characteristics of the RAF and the Red Brigades, among them a Marxist outlook, a program of clandestinity, and the strategic use of kidnappings and assassinations.²

Historical background: GFR

Without the blatant continuities between the Third Reich and the Federal German Republic, and without the refusal of both the postwar government and large sections of the population properly to come to terms with the legacy of Nazism, West German left-wing militancy might well never have come about. In the introduction to his anthology of RAF documents, Martin Hoffmann describes some aspects of this failure to engage with history.³ He mentions the displacement of the original program (outlined in the Treaty of

¹ Action Directe is of particular interest for its collaboration with the RAF from January 1985 onward. Cf. Hoffmann 278ff. "For the Unity of Revolutionaries in Western Europe" (the joint statement issued by the RAF and Action Directe in January 1985) is reprinted in Hoffmann 328ff. For the comments of anonymous RAF members on the French media's response to this statement, cf. the interview reprinted in Hoffmann 333ff., in particular Hoffmann 336. Another European militant organisation is mentioned in this interview, the Belgian Cellules Communistes Combattantes (CCC), which carried out twenty-seven attacks on German, Belgian, and US companies, as well as on oil pipelines and NATO buildings, in 1984 and 1985 (Hoffmann 336).

² For background on the Weathermen (named after Bob Dylan's lyric "You don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows"), cf. Harold Jacobs (ed.), Weatherman (Berkeley: Ramparts Press, 1970) and Suzan Stern, With the Weatherman (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975). The Japanese Red Army is mentioned repeatedly in Laqueur's Age of Terrorism (eg. 83ff., 94, 95, 220, 236, 243).

³ Hoffmann 14ff.

Potsdam) of "demilitarisation, denazification, dispersal of industry, decentralisation, and democratisation" by the 1947 Truman doctrine and a conception of the GFR as a strategic "outpost" in the Cold War against the Soviet bloc. The results were the persecution of communists in the 1950s, culminating in the outlawing of the German Communist Party (1956), and rearmament. Like the entry of the GFR into the NATO (1955) and the reintroduction of compulsory military service (1956), German rearmament was decided against the will of massive sections of the population, and despite widespread campaigning on the part of extraparliamentary groups. The German peace movement collected no less than nine million signatures to protest it.

From its conception, the GFR was arguably more tolerant of the radical right than of the left. Government sanctioning of right-wing violence had already been a feature of the Weimar Republic – witness the leniency shown to the assassins of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. Following the murder of Liebknecht and Luxemburg, Berlin newspapers circulated the fictitious story that the two leaders of the Spartacist league had been killed by a rabble of workers. The *Vossische Zeitung* described Liebknecht and Luxemburg as "terrorist leaders." Bertolt Brecht gave a different interpretation in his poem "Grabschrift 1919":

Die rote Rosa nun auch verschwand.

Wo sie liegt ist unbekannt.

Weil sie den Armen die Wahrheit gesagt

Haben die Reichen sie aus der Welt gejagt.⁴

The murder of Luxemburg and Liebknecht was of considerable interest to the student movement. The respected publisher Suhrkamp released a study of it in 1967, the year student protests began in earnest.⁵ The students reading it are likely to also have been reading Brecht, and to have sympathised with his Marxist outlook.

The "political crime" perpetrated against Luxemburg and Liebknecht renders problematic Laqueur's claim that "there was no terrorism" in Germany prior to 1945.⁶ In fact, the Weimar authorities were markedly sympathetic to the activities of paramilitary right-wing organisations such as the Freikorps. And while it may not come as a surprise that members of these organisations were given positions of authority under Hitler, it is a commonly ignored fact that many of the elites of the Third Reich continued to occupy positions of economic, legislative, and political

⁴ "Now Red Rosa is gone as well. / No one knows where she lies. / The wealthy chased her from this world / For speaking truth to the poor." Bertolt Brecht, Lieder Gedichte Chöre, in: Bertolt Brecht, Gesammelte Werke 9 (Gedichte 2) (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1967) 429.

⁵ Elisabeth Hannover-Drück and Heinrich Hannover (eds.), Der Mord an Rosa Luxemburg und Karl Liebknecht: Dokumentation eines politischen Verbrechens (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1967). Another influential text published that year is an anthology of essays on fascism and its relation to capitalism: Otto Bauer, Herbert Marcuse, Arthur Rosenberg, Faschismus und Kapitalismus: Theorien über die sozialen Ursprünge und die Funktion des Faschismus (Frankfurt: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1967). In their introduction, Kurt Kliem, Jörg Kammler, and Rüdiger Griepenburg argue against the concept of "totalitarianism" and its implicit equation of fascism with communism. This argument was later echoed by the RAF, which decied the term "totalitarianism" as a tool of anticommunist propaganda.

⁶ Laqueur 1987 164.

power after 1945. One of the slogans of the German student movement – “Unter den Talaren / Muff von tausend Jahren”⁷ – pointed to the prevalence of numerous (at best only formally repentant) Nazis in the postwar German university system. According to statistics cited by historian Dietrich Thränhardt, in 1951, 66% of leading positions in the foreign ministry were occupied by former NSDAP members; the percentage was even higher for the judiciary. According to Peter Brückner, in 1965, roughly 60% of ranking officers in the West German military had served in the Wehrmacht.⁸

There is also evidence to suggest the CIA sponsored West German right-wing groups in the first years after World War Two. According to William Blum, a former member of the US State Department, these groups conducted raids on East German facilities, burning the freight cars of trains, blowing up railway bridges, and destroying factory machinery.⁹ There was also recruitment of a West German militia to protect against the unlikely possibility of a Soviet invasion, as disclosed in 1952 by Georg August Zinn, then prime-minister of the state of Hessen. The

⁷ “Under the academic robes / The stench of a thousand years.”

⁸ Dietrich Thränhardt, Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1996) 114; Peter Brückner, Ulrike Meinhof und die deutschen Verhältnisse (Berlin: Klaus Wagenbach, 1976) 74. Later in his book (p. 119), Brückner estimates that, in 1950, some 25% of people in influential positions in the GFR were former members of the NSDAP; they occupied important political and economic positions, or wielded influence in the church, the media, and the educational system. Brückner bases his estimate on Lewis J. Edinger’s essay “Post Totalitarian Leadership: Elites in the German Federal Republic” (American Political Science Review LIV, March 1960, 58ff.).

⁹ William Blum, Killing Hope: U.S. Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II (Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press, 1995) 61ff.

members of this militia were former officers of the Luftwaffe, the Wehrmacht, and the SS. They were trained in the use of explosives and infantry weapons at a US base.¹⁰

It took a new generation of Germans, whose formative years lay in the period just after 1945, to protest the scandal of their country's failure to face up to and learn from history. This was the generation of the 1967-69 student movement, whose most radical members graduated to militancy.

It is worth recalling the international character of the student movement. 1968 saw student uprisings not only in Germany and Italy, but also in the USA, France (the Paris May), Turkey (the occupation of the Ankara and Istanbul universities), Uruguay (street fights between students and the police in Montevideo), Brazil (student demonstrations in Rio de Janeiro), the Dominican Republic (student demonstrations in Santo Domingo), and Japan (student demonstrations in Tokyo). A demonstration in Mexico City (6 August) was violently put down by the Mexican army: nearly 500 protesters were killed. Finally, there were the popular uprisings in the Soviet bloc, most notably the Prague Spring.

A main grievance of the European student movement was the complicity of Western European nations, such as the GFR, in the

¹⁰ This too is reported by Blum. For further background on CIA operations in Europe, cf. Philip Agee and Louis Wolf, Dirty Work: The CIA in Western Europe (Secaucus, New Jersey: Lyle Stuart, 1978) passim. Cf. also Christopher Simpson, Blowback: America's Recruitment of Nazis and Its Effects on the Cold War (New York: Collier Books, 1988) 138ff.

USA's war against Vietnam – a war described by the editors of konkret magazine as the “largest killing operation since Auschwitz.”¹¹ Other political reference points included the triumph of the Cuban revolution (1959) and the failure of the USA's attempted invasion of Cuba (1961); the rise of South American guerrilla movements combating US-sponsored military dictatorships; the Belgian-sponsored murder of Patrick Lumumba in the Congo (17 January, 1961) and the resulting guerrilla war; the anti-apartheid struggle of the Namibian SWAPO; US support for the Shah of Iran following the overthrow of Mohammad Mossadegh (1953); the formation of the Black Panther Party following the race riots in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and other US cities (1966); and the military coup in Greece (1967).

Perhaps the central factor in the transition from student protest to militancy was the state's unduly harsh response to student demonstrations. One West German militant organisation, the 2 June Movement, was named after the anniversary of the death of Benno Ohnesorg, an unarmed student protester shot in

¹¹ Brückner 145. “Complicity” refers here not only to rhetorical, but also to logistical, technological, financial, and (by some accounts) even paramilitary support. Cf. Brückner 120ff. For an informative and influential document on the USA's attacks on North Vietnam cf. Peter Weiss and Gunilla Palmstierna-Weiss, Bericht über die Angriffe der US-Luftwaffe und –Marine gegen die Demokratische Republik Viet Nam nach der Erklärung Präsident Johnsons über die “begrenzte Bombardierung” am 31. März 1968 (Frankfurt/Berlin: Edition Voltaire, 1968) (Voltaire Flugschrift 23). For an example of how left-wing activists of the late 1960s were able to speak in the same breath about the Vietnam war and the exploitation of the working class in developed nations, cf. the ninth chapter of Nanni Balestrini's *Vogliamo tutto* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1971), in which a speaker at a rally organised by Fiat workers says: “La lotta Fiat deve diventare il Vietnam per i padroni in Italia” (Balestrini 1971 175) [“The Fiat struggle must become the Vietnam of the Italian bosses”].

1967. All charges against Karl-Heinz Kurras, the policeman who killed Ohnesorg, were dropped. The shooting led to widespread demonstrations; some 10,000 people attended Ohnesorg's funeral. As a former member of the 2 June Movement explained almost thirty years later: "Everyone knew what the second of June meant [...] This date in our name was a constant reminder of who had fired the first shot!"¹²

No less paradigmatic than Ohnesorg's death was the attempted assassination of Rudi Dutschke, leader of the Extraparliamentary Opposition (APO). Dutschke was shot and hospitalised by a right-wing extremist on 11 April, 1968. He died in 1979, as a result of his head injury.

The names of Gudrun Ensslin and Andreas Baader, now forever associated with the Red Army Faction (RAF), first became the subject of public attention on 2 April, 1968, when Ensslin, Baader, and two others were arrested for detonating a bomb in a vacant Frankfurt shopping mall. This act of protest was intended to raise public awareness of the Vietnam war; it occurred roughly two weeks after the massacre in My Lai (16 March, 1968). The arsonists received three-year prison sentences, but Ensslin and Baader evaded the authorities and remained free. Baader was arrested and detained on 4 April, 1970, then violently liberated by the newly founded RAF on 22 May. The RAF's first written statement is a

¹² Reinders/Fritzsche 39.

vindication of Baader's liberation and a call to begin translating the theory of revolution into practice by recruiting the disenfranchised:

There's no point in explaining the right thing to the wrong people. We've done that long enough. We mustn't explain Baader's liberation to the intellectual chatterboxes, the cowards and know-it-alls, but to the potentially revolutionary parts of the population. That is, to those who can immediately understand it because they are themselves prisoners. Who don't care for the chatter of the "left" because it has not led to results or action. Who've had enough!¹³

This statement was probably penned by Ulrike Meinhof, a young journalist who had participated in the liberation of Baader and become a RAF member, abandoning her husband and children. She had already written sympathetically about the Frankfurt arson.¹⁴

1971 saw the staging of various bank robberies and the first arrests of RAF members. The following May, in the so-called "May Offensive," bombs were detonated by the RAF across the country, including one in a US military base in Frankfurt (11 May); three in police headquarters in Augsburg and Munich (12 May); one in

¹³ Hoffmann 24.

¹⁴ Much has been written about the middle-class background of many RAF members, and Meinhof is frequently cited as an example. Unlike its Italian counterpart, the RAF lacked strong support among the working class. Cf. Stefan Wisniewski, Wir waren so unheimlich konsequent... Ein Gespräch zur Geschichte der RAF (Berlin: ID-Verlag, 1997) 22ff. (This interview was first published in the Berlin tageszeitung of 11 October, 1997.) For a more ideological position, cf. Horst Mahler's 1971 pamphlet "On Revolutionary Struggle in Western Europe" (Hoffmann 64ff.). Cf. also Inge Vielt, Nie war ich furchtloser (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 2000) 117ff.

Karlsruhe, targeting a judge held responsible for prison conditions (16 May); two in a building owned by the notoriously right-wing Springer press (19 May); and two in the US Army's European headquarters in Heidelberg (24 May).

In a statement released three days after the attack on the Frankfurt military base, the RAF declared its solidarity with the Vietnamese resistance and enmity towards the USA:

West Germany and West Berlin will no longer be a safe place for the strategists of extermination in Vietnam to retreat to. They have to understand that their crimes against the Vietnamese people have earned them new and embittered enemies, that there will be no place in the world where they can be safe from the attacks of revolutionary guerilla units.¹⁵

The bombs in the Augsburg and Munich police headquarters were a response to the death of Thomas Weisbecker, shot by the police. The RAF statement released on 16 May announced: "The investigators must now realise they cannot liquidate any of us without expecting retaliation."¹⁶

Wolfgang Buddenberg, the Karlsruhe judge targeted on 16 May, was accused by the RAF of having attempted to murder Manfred Grashof, a militant arrested after a shoot-out with the

¹⁵ Hoffmann 145.

¹⁶ Ibid.

police in Frankfurt on 10 February, 1971, by having transferred him to prison when his medical condition was not yet stable.¹⁷

The bombs at the Springer office were announced by telephone in time for the building to be vacated. The calls were dismissed as a practical joke, and seventeen Springer employees were injured in the explosion. The RAF accused Springer of having cynically sacrificed his employees for the purpose of creating a greater (and bloodier) media sensation. The statement dated 20 May also featured the following demands:

We demand of Springer: that his newspapers stop their anticommunist rants against the New Left, against displays of working class solidarity such as strikes, against the communist parties here and in other countries; that the Springer corporation refrain from attacking the liberation movements of the Third World, particularly the Arabs fighting for the liberation of Palestine; that he cease his propagandistic and material support of Zionism, the imperialist politics of the ruling class of Israel; that the Springer press cease circulating racist lies about foreign workers in this country.¹⁸

The attack on the US Army's European headquarters – the last to be organised by Baader and the other “first generation” RAF members – was again intended as a statement of protest against the Vietnam war, as made clear in the statement released 25 May:

¹⁷ Cf. Hoffmann 146.

¹⁸ Hoffmann 147.

In the last 7 weeks, the US Air Force has dropped more bombs on Vietnam than on Germany and Japan during the Second World War. There is talk of further millions of explosives the Pentagon wants to use to stop the North Vietnamese offensive. That's genocide, that would be the "final solution," that's Auschwitz.

People in the Federal Republic do not support the security forces in their search for the perpetrators of the bomb attack because they want to have nothing to do with the crimes of American imperialism and the approval those crimes meet with from the ruling class here. Because they have not forgotten Auschwitz, Dresden, and Hamburg, because they know bomb attacks are justified against the mass murderers of Vietnam. Because they have learned that demonstrations and words are useless against the crimes of imperialism.¹⁹

On 1 June, Andreas Baader, Holger Meins, and Jan-Carl Raspe were arrested after a shoot-out with the police in Frankfurt; on 7 June, Gudrun Ensslin was arrested in Hamburg, and on 15 June, Ulrike Meinhof was arrested in Hannover. The "first generation" RAF members were now in prison, which they would not leave alive, and the stage was set for the activities of the "second generation."

¹⁹ Hoffmann 148.

Between 17 January and 12 February, 1973, forty imprisoned RAF members went on hunger strike to protest prison conditions; eighty prisoners participated in a second strike from 8 May to 29 June. Demands included "Zusammenlegung" or the abolition of solitary confinement, and the equal treatment of "political" and "non-political" detainees (i.e. of those prisoners who were militant and those who were not).

Ulrike Meinhof described the experience of solitary confinement in her letters from Stammheim:

The feeling that your head is exploding (the feeling, your skull ought to come apart, burst off). [...] The feeling that your associations are being hacked apart. The feeling that the cell is moving. You wake up, open your eyes: the cell is moving; in the afternoon, when the sun shines in, it suddenly stops moving. You can't get rid of the feeling that it's moving. [...] Efforts like those for speaking loudly, almost shouting, for speaking at normal volume.

The feeling of going mute -

You can't identify the meaning of words, you can only guess. When you're writing: two lines - at the end of the second line, you can't remember the beginning of the first. [...] Extreme aggression, for which there's no vent. That's worst. Lucid awareness of the fact that you have no chance of

survival; total failure of any attempt to communicate that
[...].²⁰

Margrit Schiller reports the permanent physical effects of her years in solitary confinement. These include premature aging, permanent damage to her metabolism, feelings of vertigo, loss of short term memory, and high blood pressure (which led to the death of her first child).²¹

The demands of the prisoners were not met. During a second hunger strike, the prisoners were force-fed for the first time. The extreme violence of the procedure, which involves using wooden implements to force open the prisoner's mouth and then inserting a rubber tube into his stomach through the oesophagus, has been described in detail by former RAF-member Margrit Schiller.²² In 1981, RAF-member Sigurd Debus would die as a result of this procedure. The first West German militant to die in the course of a hunger strike was Holger Meins, on 9 November, 1974. His death has been attributed both to negligence (the prison medic was on weekend leave despite knowing Meins was in critical condition) and to a murder plot: by some accounts, Meins was deliberately provided with a lower number of calories than a man his age requires; as the medic ought to have known, a very low caloric

²⁰ Meinhof qtd. in: Peter-Jürgen Boock, Schwarzes Loch: im Hochsicherheitstrakt (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1988) 55ff.

²¹ Cf. Schiller 215ff.

²² Cf. Schiller 184.

intake will lead to faster weight loss and physical deterioration than abstaining from food entirely.²³

The death of Meins prompted demonstrations and clashes with the police in some fifty cities across the GFR. Similar unwelcome publicity for the authorities was caused by the trial of RAF-member Katharina Hammerschmidt. A cancer victim who had been denied medical attention despite the protests of her lawyers, Hammerschmidt died within three years of her trial being discontinued in 1974.

Also in 1974, first generation RAF member Horst Mahler was condemned to a fourteen year, and Ulrike Meinhof to an eight year prison sentence. Mahler had been excluded from the RAF due to his decision to become a member of a communist fringe party (the KPD/ML); having revoked militancy, he was released from prison early (in 1980), and is now a practising lawyer associated with the radically right-wing NPD party. He recently faced a court summons for his sympathetic comments on Al Qaeda following the attacks on the World Trade Centre in September of 2001.

The 2 June Movement, a Berlin-based clandestine organisation that developed out of the less rigidly organised, semi-clandestine Blues group, first attracted public attention on 10 November, 1974, when its members shot Berlin judge Günther Von Drenkmann in the course of a kidnapping attempt. The botched kidnapping was a

²³ Cf. Schiller 153. Cf. also Gerd Conradt's Starbuck, Holger Meins: ein Portrait als Zeitbild (Berlin: Espresso, 2001).

reaction to the death of Holger Meins; Von Drenkmann was perceived to be directly responsible for the treatment of the RAF prisoners. The statement issued by the 2 June Movement after the death of Von Drenkmann read in part:

When the hunger strike of the prisoners began, we said: if the state's strategy of annihilation takes the life of another revolutionary, those responsible will have to pay with their own lives. [...] Whoever sows violence will reap the same.²⁴

The Von Drenkmann kidnapping/assassination was the first attack on a representative of the West German state. It prompted harsh criticism from the legal left, to which the 2 June Movement responded with a second statement. In this statement, the Movement distinguished between attacks on the state and attacks on the civilian population, before urging its readers not to attend Von Drenkmann's funeral:

The operations of the militant left have never been directed against the people, but against those who exploit, deceive, and betray the people. Those in whose interest it is to conjure a threat to the general population when only they are in danger – a population with whom they would never ordinarily want to be associated.²⁵

The turnout at Von Drenkmann's funeral was in fact much lower than expected.

²⁴ Qtd. in Meyer 317.

²⁵ Qtd. in Meyer 319.

The most spectacular and well-remembered operation staged by the 2 June Movement was the 1975 kidnapping of Peter Lorenz, a Christian Democrat and candidate in the Berlin mayoral elections. Lorenz was kidnapped on 27 February and held until 4 March. The kidnappers issued this statement:

LORENZ was kidnapped by us because he is responsible, as representative of the reactionaries and the wealthy, for the increased exploitation of workers, for spying in the workplace, for the creation of anti-labour and anti-guerrilla groups, for laws prohibiting ideologically suspect citizens from practising their profession, for the new laws on demonstrations, for infringement on the right of defendants to choose their own lawyers, for the penal code's discriminating section 218.

As head of the Christian Democrats, he has made himself a propagandist of Zionism, the aggressive imperialist policy of the Israeli state in Palestine, and through visits to Israel and financial contributions, he participates in the persecution and oppression of the Palestinian people.

Similarly, he shares responsibility for the military coup staged by Pinochet and his aides in Chile. Through financial donations, his party enables the junta to carry out the repression that ruthlessly persecutes and crushes bloodily every libertarian view, that tortures thousands of Chileans in

concentration camps and maintains its power by daily bloodshed.²⁶

Lorenz was released in return for the liberation of several incarcerated protesters and militants: Verena Becker, Gabriele Kröcher-Tiedemann, Rolf Pohle, Ina Siepmann, and Rolf Heissler were released from prison and flown to Aden, South Yemen. Horst Mahler's release had also been requested, but he refused to leave prison, stating on German national television: "The politics of individual terror is not the strategy of the working class. [...] I'm firmly convinced the struggle of the revolutionary masses will lead to the prison gates opening for all political prisoners."²⁷

Lorenz went on to win the Berlin mayoral election after his release. The kidnapping also led to widespread sympathy for the 2 June Movement among the Berlin left. Two decisions taken by the kidnappers were particularly popular: that to mail all the cash in Lorenz's wallet (some 700,- Deutschmark) to the impoverished mother of a retarded child who had written half a dozen times to the politician without eliciting a reply, and that to pass a statement on to the police via a Berlin baker who happened to also be called Peter Lorenz.²⁸

As Till Meyer, a former member of the 2 June Movement, has pointed out: "The Lorenz kidnapping was the first time a European

²⁶ Qtd. in Meyer 23ff. "Section 218" was an anti-abortion law.

²⁷ Mahler qtd. in Meyer 34.

²⁸ Cf. Meyer 44ff. On p. 47, Meyer quotes a song (the "Lorenz-Lied") penned by a local songwriter in celebration of the kidnapping.

guerrilla group successfully contested the state's monopoly on violence."²⁹

Not long after the Lorenz kidnapping, on 24 April, the RAF commando "Holger Meins" occupied the German embassy in Stockholm, took twelve hostages, and demanded the release of twenty-six "political prisoners." Two hostages were shot before the embassy was stormed by the police. There was an explosion, the exact cause of which was never determined. One RAF member, Ulrich Wessel, died on the spot; another, Siegfried Hausner, died eleven days later, having been denied medical attention by the German authorities.³⁰ If the Lorenz kidnapping became the paradigm of a successful "guerrilla" operation, the Stockholm occupation was criticised, within both the legal and the extralegal left, as an example of gross tactical misjudgement and an outgrowth of proto-fascist thinking.

Roughly one month after the events in Stockholm, on 21 May, the notorious Stammheim trial of the first generation RAF members began. In the preceding months, the government had issued highly controversial laws such as those which allowed for continuing the trial in the absence of the defendant and prohibited lawyers from representing more than one defendant at a time.³¹ What Chancellor Schmidt said about the events in Mogadishu (discussed below)

²⁹ Meyer 332.

³⁰ Cf. Hoffmann 193ff. for the RAF statement on this operation, released 24 April.

³¹ Cf. Schiller 164.

might also be applied to his government's actions in Stammheim: "I can only retrospectively thank German lawyers for not having scrutinised all that in the light of our constitution."³²

The trial took place in a high security court building specially constructed for this purpose on the outskirts of Stuttgart, and involved much swearing, ranting, and exchanging of insults.³³ The accused repeatedly insisted they were physically unable to defend themselves due to having been debilitated by solitary confinement and sleep deprivation; this claim was later supported by independent medical examiners, although the court failed to act on it. On 9 May, 1976, Ulrike Meinhof was found hanged in her cell. The police investigators concluded she had committed suicide, although their report was fraught with contradictions. An international medical commission was formed to examine her death; its investigation yielded considerable evidence in support of the view that Meinhof was murdered.³⁴ Some five thousand people attended her funeral.

During the Stammheim trial, the accused spoke at length about the role of anticommunism in postwar German history,

³² Schmidt qtd. in Schiller 189.

³³ Cf. Reinhard Hauff's 1986 film Stammheim (discussed in Chapter V) for a reconstruction of the trial based on the trial records and the research of journalist Stefan Aust.

³⁴ Cf. La mort d'Ulrike Meinhof: rapport de la commission internationale d'enquête (Paris: Francois Maspéro, 1979). A German reprint was recently published by B.A.M.B.U.L.E.: Der Tod Ulrike Meinhofs: Bericht der internationalen Untersuchungskommission (Münster: Unrast, 2001). Cf. also Aust 376ff.

dismissing the conventional rhetoric of the USA's postwar
 "rehabilitation" of their country:

The political project of the West German state pursued by the USA, as hegemonic capitalist occupation force, in the three western occupation zones, lacked legitimacy from the beginning: the restoration of monopoly capital, the reconstruction of the old ruling elites in the economy and the state, now under the control of US capital, remilitarisation and the integration of the three western occupation zones into the economic and military system of US-imperialism, following the model of a colonial administration, the maintenance of anticommunism as the dominant ideology, the elimination of the proletariat from politics. This politics was never up for debate, it was never decided through elections, but in Washington.³⁵

In 1972, the RAF had reaped harsh criticism from large sectors of the German left for endorsing the kidnapping of Israeli athletes by the Palestinian Black September group during the Munich Olympics. The RAF had described the kidnappings as an anti-imperialist operation highlighting Germany's past and present complicity in the plight of the Palestinians:

The comrades from "Black September" have taken their own
 Black September 1970 – when the Jordanian army massacred

³⁵ Hoffmann 200.

more than 20,000 Palestinians – back where this massacre was originally thought up: West Germany – formerly Nazi Germany – now a centre of imperialism.³⁶

This association of the West German “urban guerrilla” with Palestinian “armed struggle” was reinforced on 27 June, 1976, when a Palestinian commando hijacked an Air France airplane with the help of the West German Rote Zellen (RZ). The hijackers demanded the release of “political prisoners” from various nations, including some incarcerated in the GFR. Their demands were not met; the airplane was stormed by Israeli security forces in Entebbe, Uganda. (This was not the first time the RZ collaborated with Palestinians; they had already done so in kidnapping seventy OPEC officials in Vienna on 21 December, 1975.³⁷) After Entebbe, the widespread impression that West German militants were lending themselves to all manner of causes spawned the notion of the “jet-set terrorist.” Some observers, including former RZ-militant Hans-Joachim Klein, suspected the putative revolutionaries had abandoned their ideals and were hiring themselves out to whoever was willing to recompense them (through money or arms). Before the end of the following year (1977), the association between West German

³⁶ Hoffmann 152. The number of Palestinians killed is thought to be closer to 2000. A substantial part of the RAF document (Hoffmann 160ff.) is devoted to attacking left-wing sociologist Oskar Negt as an “opportunist” and “thoroughly corrupt rat.” In a lecture held in Frankfurt on 3 June, 1972, Negt had spoken critically about “self-proclaimed political vanguards.”

³⁷ Hans-Joachim Klein offers an inside view of the activities of the Rote Zellen in his memoir Rückkehr in die Menschlichkeit (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1979), discussed in Chapter III.

militancy and the Palestinian cause would be reinforced yet another time.

Between 29 March and 30 April of 1977, more than one hundred "political prisoners" engaged in another hunger strike, demanding that prison authorities respect the Geneva Convention and abandon the practice of solitary confinement. On 28 April, Baader, Ensslin, and Raspe received life sentences. The event, preceded by the shooting of Stammheim lawyer Siegfried Buback in Karlsruhe (7 April), was followed, on 30 July, by the attempted kidnapping of Jürgen Ponto, an executive of Deutsche Bank, which resulted in his death.³⁸ RAF members broke the headlines again on 25 August, when, in the course of the fifth collective hunger strike (9 August – 2 September), a rocket launcher aimed at a building of the German judiciary in Karlsruhe was discovered and safely removed.

On 5 September, the kidnapping of businessman and former Nazi Hanns-Martin Schleyer marked the beginning of the much discussed "German autumn." The demands of the kidnappers included the liberation of eleven "political prisoners."³⁹ The government reacted by prohibiting any form of interaction between the seventy-two imprisoned RAF members, a decision that became

³⁸ A statement on the shooting of Buback was released by the RAF the same day. Cf. Hoffmann 267ff. The statement identified Buback as the man responsible for the deaths of Holger Meins and Ulrike Meinhof. The RAF statement on the Ponto shooting was released on 8 August. Cf. Hoffmann 269.

³⁹ Cf. Hoffmann 270ff.

legal only with the passing of an appropriate law the following month. A few weeks into the kidnapping, on 13 October, the Lufthansa plane Landshut was hijacked by a PFLP commando, whose demands included the liberation of RAF members. On 17 October, the plane was stormed, in Mogadishu, by the German counterinsurgency task force GSG-9.⁴⁰ On the morning of the following day, Baader and Ensslin were found dead in their cells; Raspe was found dying and another RAF member, Irmgard Möller, was found badly injured. Möller subsequently claimed she was assaulted; she also insisted Baader, Ensslin, and Raspe had been murdered rather than committing suicide, as the government and most of the public seemed happy to assume.⁴¹

Möller's view was also that of the RAF commando holding Schleyer. One day after the Stammheim deaths (19 October), Schleyer's corpse was found in the trunk of a car in Mühlhausen. The accompanying statement featured these words: "After 43 days,

⁴⁰ The GSG-9 or Grenzschutzgruppe 9 was formed following the failure of the German police to liberate the hostages taken by Black September during the 1972 Munich Olympics. It has become one of the world's leading counterinsurgency task forces. It was also involved in the shooting of Wolfgang Grams (discussed below).

⁴¹ För Möller's testimony, cf. Aust 577: "I fell asleep. [...] Suddenly I nodded off and lost consciousness, it all happened very quickly. / The last impression I remember was a noise like static in my head. I had seen no one and not noticed the cell door opening. / I only woke up in the corridor, on a stretcher, curled up and wincing, shivering terribly, covered in blood. I heard satisfied, malicious voices: Baader and Ensslin are taken care of [Baader und Ensslin sind kalt]." For other aspects of the controversy, cf. Aust 581ff. One issue among many: Several facts suggest Baader was killed by a gun equipped with a silencer: prison inmates who could ordinarily hear him turn on the water tap or pace his cell did not hear gunshots on the night of his death; the distribution of gun powder around the entry wound at the back of his head also suggests the use of a silencer. Yet the gun by which Baader shot himself, according to the official account sanctioned by the government and the media, was not equipped with such a device.

we have put an end to Hanns-Martin Schleyer's miserable and corrupt existence [...] His death is meaningless compared to the pain and rage we feel after the massacres of Mogadishu and Stammheim."⁴² In a grim epilogue to these events, another RAF member, Ingrid Schubert, was found hanged in her prison cell on 12 November.

1977 marks the crucial turning point in the RAF's history. The state's approach to the organisation and its sympathisers became still more aggressive. In 1979, Klaus Croissant, a lawyer accused of supporting the RAF, was condemned to a thirty-month prison sentence. In 1980, the lawyers Arndt Müller and Armin Newerla were accused of having smuggled arms into the cells of Baader, Raspe, and other RAF members in 1977; they received, respectively, a four-year-and-eight-month and a three-and-a-half-year prison sentence. In 1985, the condemnation of Christian Klar and Brigitte Mohnhaupt to five life sentences and fifteen years imprisonment each established the record for the most severe sentences received by any RAF members or sympathisers to date. Also, 1981 saw the death of another RAF member: Sigurd Debus died during the eighth collective hunger strike (2 February – 16 April), not of starvation but from injuries suffered during the force-feeding procedure. Following his death, the German government agreed to concede "Zusammenlegung," but failed to do so.

⁴² Hoffmann 273.

Outside prison, the RAF regrouped and began to collaborate with organisations from other countries, such as Action Directe from France. Most operations were now directed against NATO and the US military. 25 June, 1978, saw the attempted assassination of NATO general Alexander Haig, organised by the RAF's "Kommando Andreas Baader" in collaboration with the PFLP and Action Directe. The statement issued on the day identifies NATO as a central enemy of the RAF, and accuses it of masterminding the shooting of militants both inside and outside of prison:

For as long as we've existed, NATO has developed its programs against the RAF's armed resistance. The armed leaders in West German prisons are executed according to their guidelines, just as the order to fire preventive shots to the head has now been issued against those struggling outside.⁴³

NATO became a target again in 1984, when the RAF attempted a bomb attack on the "Shape School" in Oberammergau (18 December). "It's there the leaders for the integrated NATO staffs are trained," a RAF member explained.⁴⁴

The US military was targeted three times during this period. On 31 August, 1981, RAF members detonated a bomb on an American air force base in Ramstein, injuring twenty people; on 15 September of the same year, US general Kroesen and his wife were

⁴³ Hoffmann 283.

⁴⁴ Hoffmann 237.

slightly injured in a failed assassination attempt; and on 8 August, 1985, a bomb was detonated on a US air force base near Frankfurt airport (the Rhein-Main-Air-Base), killing two people and injuring twenty-three. The statement issued in justification of the Ramstein bomb characterises this operation as an attack on US imperialism:

The US imperialists will not be able to prepare and execute their plans for world domination without resistance. They want war. They mean to reverse history and return to the time before the attack of the liberation movements, which have weakened their political and military might worldwide.

Overcoming the military stalemate between the socialist and imperialist states is their strategy. [...] Whoever wants to fight imperialist war must fight for the destruction of the imperialist system.⁴⁵

Similarly, Kroesen was characterised by the RAF as "one of the US generals who genuinely control imperialist politics from Western Europe to the Gulf, because he decides on operations and the means of confrontation."⁴⁶ The attack on the Rhein-Main-Air-Base, in which Action Directe collaborated, was intended to reduce the USA's ability to deploy forces into the Third World:

The Rhein-Main-Air-Base – the largest military airport of the US armed forces outside the USA – is a crucial location for wars in the Third World conducted from western Europe;

⁴⁵ Hoffmann 288ff.

⁴⁶ Hoffmann 289ff.

specifically, the deployment of US intervention forces and their military equipment to the Middle East, the Near East, and to Africa occurs from there. The 435th Tactical Airlift Wing, part of the Military Airlift Command, is integrated into the command structure of the Rapid Deployment Force (RDF). It was from here that the deployment of French and Belgian parachutists to Shaba in 1978, the Yankee attack on Iran in 1980, and the deployment of Special Forces to the Near East in the context of the TWA hijacking were organised. The Air Base is riddled with intelligence service agents: computers, airplanes, helicopters await their use in Special Forces operations. Most supplies for US troops stationed in western Europe, the Middle East, the Near East, and Africa travel through the Air Base. It is also intended as a "portal to Europe" in the war against the socialist states in the East.⁴⁷

Not all RAF operations were directed at military targets. 1986 brought two assassinations that recalled earlier RAF operations: the shooting of Siemens executive Karl Heinz Beckurts near Munich, and that of politician Gerold von Braunmühl in Bonn (9 July and 10 October, respectively). Beckurts was head of the "nuclear energy workgroup" at Siemens. The RAF statement issued after his assassination argues nuclear energy is an economic weapon used to

⁴⁷ Hoffmann 343. "The Yankee attack on Iran" refers to the US attempt to liberate militarily the hostages held in the US embassy in Teheran in the spring of 1980. The TWA hijacking of 14 June, 1985, was conducted by Palestinian militants and led to the release, by Israel, of 700 political prisoners.

oppress the Third World (and in particular, oil-producing nations).⁴⁸
 Von Braunmühl, a member of the foreign ministry, was identified as
 "one of the central figures in the formation of western European
 policies within the overall imperialist system."⁴⁹

On 20 September, 1988, shortly before the meeting of the
 International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in West Berlin,
 RAF members made an attempt on the life of economist and
 politician Hans Tietmeyer, identified as a main exponent of the
 "imperialist politics of annihilation by hunger and
 counterinsurgency, conducted against the people of the dependent
 countries of the South – a political strategy that means death and
 misery for most – in order to secure profit and power for
 international capital."⁵⁰

1989 was the year both of the tenth collective hunger strike
 (1 February – 14 May) and the Herrhausen assassination. The
 hunger strike was begun with the usual objective: achieving
 "Zusammenlegung" or an end to solitary confinement; the objective
 was not achieved. The assassination of Alfred Herrhausen, board

⁴⁸ Cf. Hoffmann 370: "Beckurts represents and advances the direction of international capital in the current phase of the political, economic, and military strategy of the larger imperialist system. As early as the 70s, he spearheaded the strategic direction of capital: he was in charge of the nuclear research facility Jülich at a time when the bourgeoisie – then ruling through the Social Democrats – was devoted to realising its nuclear program, intended as a weapon against the young nation states on the global market and their demand for a new world economic order, and as a device for reducing the political power these nation states held by virtue of their control of oil prices, oil having been until then the most important energy source." Beckurts was also involved in the development of military technology.

⁴⁹ Hoffmann 376.

⁵⁰ Hoffmann 387.

member of Deutsche Bank and executive of Daimler Benz, Continental, and Texaco, was more successful, from the point of view of the RAF; Herrhausen was ambushed and killed on his way to work on 30 November. The RAF statement issued 2 December points out Deutsche Bank's complicity in Nazi crimes and identifies Herrhausen as Europe's mightiest economic leader:

The history of Deutsche Bank is marked by the bloodshed of two world wars and the exploitation of millions, and as part of this continuity, Herrhausen reigned at the top of this German centre of economic power; he was the mightiest economic leader in Europe.⁵¹

1989 was also the year the German Democratic Republic collapsed. As a result, various former RAF members who had become residents of that state were arrested. Their new government offered them reduced prison sentences provided they agreed to act as witnesses in ongoing RAF trials (the "Kronzeugenregelung"). Inge Viett was the only arrested militant to refuse. She was condemned to a thirteen-year sentence, but released early, and currently resides in Cuba.

On 27 July, 1990, the RAF made an attempt on the life of Hans Neusel, a government minister responsible for counterinsurgency policies. According to the statement issued on 29 July, Neusel had been a driving force at recent meetings of TREVI

⁵¹ Hoffmann 391.

(Terrorisme, Radicalisme, Extremisme, Violence International), a counterterrorism policy group created by various European ministers in 1976.

The next major RAF operation was a reaction to the USA's 1991 attack on Iraq. On 13 February of that year, RAF members fired shots at the US consulate in Bonn to protest the war. The statement released the same day featured an analysis of the USA's economic interests in the Middle East and an attack on the false moralism of pro-war demagogues:

The Near East is a politically unstable region for imperialism. [...] That's why this region, on whose oil western corporations and western European industrialised states depend, must under no circumstances give rise to a power that is not under full control of the imperialist bloc.

Those are the reasons why the imperialist states are now fighting this war against their former ally. Imperialism knows no morality. The comparisons between Saddam Hussein and Hitler are the propagandistic trick by which the rulers attempt to create in the people consent for a war the majority does not approve of.

But this system is friendly with Hitler, Shamir, Özal, Pinochet, Cristiani and all the others, as long as they advance

– by any means necessary – the interests of international capital.⁵²

On 1 April of the same year, a RAF commando assassinated Detlef Karsten Rohwedder, head of the Berlin Treuhand. Founded in 1990, the Treuhand was responsible for privatising the state property of the defunct German Democratic Republic; it was dissolved in 1995, having become embroiled in a series of corruption scandals, and leaving a vast deficit. The RAF statement issued 4 April offered this analysis of Rohwedder's organisation:

The work of the Treuhand means more than job loss, the closing of businesses, and the fact that all new institutions are geared towards profit. This process is intended to impose on the land and its people the structure international capital requires in order to rule.⁵³

The year following the Rohwedder assassination (1992), the RAF issued various documents in which it distanced itself from the targeting of individuals. A pamphlet that appeared in August contains the following statement:

We don't think escalating the conflict through armed operations is the right answer to the state's massive aggression and its attempts to stall certain processes.

⁵² Hoffmann 401ff. Yitzhak Shamir was prime minister of Israel at the time, Turgut Özal the president of Turkey, Augusto Pinochet the former dictator of Chile, and Alfredo Cristiani the president of El Salvador.

⁵³ Hoffmann 405.

Our primary aim today is to develop a social process whereby oppositional power organises itself from the base up.⁵⁴

This program of refraining from armed operations against human targets, engaging in a critical self-evaluation, and building an "anti-imperialist front" that would bring together a variety of left-wing resistance movements, both legal and illegal, was first formulated in an April 1992 statement. It was reiterated in a June 1992 address to protesters gathered for the world economic summit in Munich, and partly implemented on 30 March, 1993, when the RAF detonated a bomb in the high security prison Weiterstadt, which was still under construction and empty.⁵⁵

The Weiterstadt bomb was to remain the last aggressive RAF operation; by March of 1998, the organisation had declared its historical failure and disbanded.⁵⁶ Two events preceding this decision attracted widespread public attention: the shooting of RAF member Wolfgang Grams at Bad Kleinen train station on 27 June, 1993; and the 1994 hunger strike protesting the continued incarceration of Irmgard Möller. The shooting of Grams followed the infiltration of the RAF by an undercover agent, Klaus Steinmetz.

⁵⁴ Hoffmann 447f.

⁵⁵ Cf. Hoffmann 455.

⁵⁶ Cf. Zwischenberichte: Zur Diskussion über die Politik der bewaffneten und militanten Linken in der BRD, Italien und der Schweiz (Berlin: ID-Verlag, 1998). The final RAF documents deal largely with internal dissent (disagreements among the imprisoned RAF members in October of 1993, concerning the supposed collaboration of some of these prisoners with the authorities), as well as with the undercover police officer Klaus Steinmetz, who succeeded in infiltrating the RAF and was instrumental in the death of Wolfgang Grams.

Tipped off by Steinmetz, a counterinsurgency task force (including members of GSG-9) tracked down Grams and fellow militant Birgit Hogefeld. Hogefeld was arrested and later sentenced to life in prison. Grams was shot - by some accounts, in cold blood. In a statement issued on 6 July, the RAF found an expression to describe the events in Bad Kleinen; they called it an "act of terror."⁵⁷

RAF member Irmgard Möller had spent twenty-two years in prison at the time of the hunger strike protesting her incarceration. It was the first hunger strike not accompanied by armed operations outside prison, and met with considerable support not only from the extraparliamentary left, but also from the German Green Party and church groups. The strike was comparatively short (27 July – 3 August). It won no concessions from the prison authorities or the government.

Historical background: Italy

Historically, Italy has been one of the most left-leaning countries in Europe. In the first decades of the postwar period, its communist party (PCI) was among the largest in the world. The antifascist resistance of the partisans is legendary. After World War Two, a legal or electoral transition to Italian socialism seemed a distinct possibility. William Blum has described the machinations by which it was prevented.

⁵⁷ Hoffmann 464. The death of Grams is one subject of Andreas Veiel's documentary Black Box BRD (the other is the Herrhausen assassination).

He begins with prime minister Alcide De Gasperi's January 1947 visit to Washington. Its purpose was to ask for financial aid. Three days after returning to Rome, De Gasperi surprised his countrymen by dissolving his cabinet, which included a number of communists and socialists. His failure to form a more centre-right cabinet resulted in the US freezing its promised loans to Italy in May. After a third cabinet was formed, this one purged of leftist members, massive aid was provided, and Italy's \$1 billion debt to the USA was canceled.

Prior to the 1948 elections, the US State Department declared in no uncertain terms there would be no further aid if the communists were to win. The Justice Department announced no Italian known to have voted for the Communist Party would be allowed to enter the USA. This was in addition to massive anti-communist propaganda in Italy. The CIA subsidised right-wing trade unions left over from Mussolini's regime; an organisation called the Italian-American Labor Council contributed \$50,000 to anti-communist labour groups.⁵⁸

For decades afterward, the dominant political party was that of the Christian Democrats (DC). Nonetheless, the PCI continued to enjoy substantial support, and communist sympathies were too much a part of the culture to simply disappear. The CIA continued to maintain a presence in Italy. Some aspects of its covert

⁵⁸ Cf. Blum 27ff.

operations were known by the mid-1970s, thanks to the revelations of former agents such as Philip Agee. Today these operations are suspected to have been tied into Gladio, a European-wide project for creating a "stay-behind net" of US-trained paramilitary troops to wage an insurrectionary war in the event of a communist takeover. Gladio began in 1949 and involved the creation of secret weapon depots in a number of Western European nations. The project first attracted major public attention in 1990, when an Italian investigation into a 1972 car-bombing determined the explosives had come from a Gladio depot; there were 139 such depots in Italy alone. Italian prime minister Giulio Andreotti declared in 1990 that some 600 people were still on the Gladio payroll for Italy that year.⁵⁹

Although largely unaware of this history, the generation of Italians that made up the student movement was accustomed to associating politics with secrecy, corruption, and violence. Worker unrest was considerable from the 1950s onward. Youths associated with right-wing and left-wing groups waged bloody street fights, the former frequently enjoying police support. Given these circumstances, the formation of armed and clandestine political organisation was perhaps less surprising in Italy than in Germany.

⁵⁹ Cf. Blum 106ff. Blum cites General Nikos Kouris on the formation of a Greek Gladio force in 1955. The force was assembled by CIA agents and recruited the right-wing fringe of the Greek military, as well as civilians. Cf. also Paolo Inzerilli, Gladio: la verità negata (Bologna: Edizioni Analisi, 1995) and Emanuele Bettini, Gladio (Rome: Ediesse, 1996).

Like its German counterpart, the Italian student movement was open to the accusation of middle-class adventurism. This was the gist of the attack launched on protesting Italian students by Pasolini. Following a fight between these students and the police, he declared his solidarity with the proletarian policemen rather than the middle-class protesters.⁶⁰ Pasolini's remarks foreshadowed the later rift between the Italian leftist intelligentsia and the Red Brigades. While many Italian left-wing intellectuals were members of the PCI, the Red Brigades openly distanced themselves from it, condemning its strategy of a "historic compromise" with the conservative Christian Democrats (DC). This mutual hostility expressed itself in the PCI's echoing of the Christian Democrat condemnation of the Moro kidnappers, and in the attacks on PCI members perpetrated by the Red Brigades throughout the 1980s.

One of the central figures of the Italian student movement, Mario Capanna, has gone so far as to describe the activities of the Red Brigades as the "negation" of everything the student movement stood for.⁶¹ Whatever the merits of such claims, it is important to note that unlike the German militants, the Red Brigades were as much rooted in a radical labour movement as in the student movement.⁶² The struggle for "labour autonomy" preceded both the

⁶⁰ Cf. Zavoli 30.

⁶¹ Cf. Zavoli 43.

⁶² It is in this that Rossana Rossanda rightly identifies the crucial difference between the RAF and the Red Brigades. Cf. her preface to Mario Moretti's Brigate rosse: una storia italiana (Moretti xix-xx).

student movement and Italian militancy. Moroni and Balestrini trace the roots of this struggle back to the 1950s. It reached a climax in the "hot autumn" of 1969, during which prolonged strikes at Fiat's Mirafiori factory led to street fights across Turin.⁶³

This radical working class movement and its close ties to the Red Brigades render problematic one of the conclusions reached by Laqueur in The Age of Terrorism, namely that "Terrorism is about political, not economic power."⁶⁴ Such a neat distinction between politics and economics may be as difficult to maintain as that between politics and terrorism made elsewhere by Laqueur, and the statement that follows simply flies in the face of the historical facts: "It [sc. terrorism] does not occur at a time of economic crisis, but, on the contrary, when economic conditions are relatively good."⁶⁵ As demonstrated by Primo Moroni, Nanni Balestrini, and others, the formation of the Red Brigades occurred at a time when "economic conditions" may certainly have been "good" for investors, but when the objective grounds for worker discontent were also considerable. Recognising this important fact, Zavoli dedicates much of his attention to the workers' strikes of 1969 in his seminal La notte della Repubblica.⁶⁶

⁶³ The events are narrated in Nanni Balestrini's 1971 novel Vogliamo tutto (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1971).

⁶⁴ Laqueur 1987 306.

⁶⁵ Laqueur 1987 160, 306.

⁶⁶ Cf. Zavoli 35. For a more extensive examination of the ties between labour movements and left-wing militancy, cf. the excellent L'orda d'oro by Nanni Balestrini and Primo Moroni (Milan: SugarCo, 1988). Balestrini and Moroni show that Italian left-wing militancy cannot be analysed purely in relation to the

The formation of the Red Brigades was announced in a pirate radio transmission on 16 April, 1970: "A new form of mass resistance is born, the rebellion of the workers against their bosses and the bosses' state, the rebellion against foreign imperialism, the rebellion of the people, of the working classes of the South. The Red Brigades are born [...]."⁶⁷ Several months earlier, on 12 December, 1969, a bomb had exploded in the Banca Nazionale dell'Agricoltura, Piazza Fontana, Milan. Other bombs exploded in Rome the same day. It remains unclear whether these acts of terrorism were perpetrated by one of various right-wing organisations active in Italy at the time, whether they were the work of agents provocateurs, or whether "anarchists" were responsible. The government operated on the latter assumption.

The bomb in Piazza Fontana provided the justification for the arrests of many left-wing activists (eighty-four within four days of the bombing, compared to only two members of right-wing groups) and led to the death of at least one, the anarchist Giuseppe Pinelli, who "fell" from the fourth floor of the Milan police headquarters on the evening of 15 December.⁶⁸ In *L'orda d'oro*, Primo Moroni and Nanni Balestrini take the view of many left-wing activists of the time: that the explosion in Piazza Fontana was a "state massacre" organised by the government in order to create the conditions for

student movement; its ties to the struggles of the factory workers of Turin, Milan, and other cities also need to be considered.

⁶⁷ Qtd. in Zavoli 71.

⁶⁸ Cf. Zavoli 50ff.

dismantling the extraparlimentary left. They quote a situationist flyer that appeared in Milan after the massacre, suggestively titled "Is the Reichstag burning?" and arguing that "The bomb in Milan was detonated against the proletariat."⁶⁹

There was, among those who suspected the government behind the massacre (possibly in collaboration with intelligence services and fascist groups), a widespread fear that Italy was on the brink of a right-wing coup similar to the one perpetrated by the Greek army in 1967. One Italian militant organisation, the XXII October Group, had the following to say: "The Piazza Fontana massacre is nothing but one link in the chain of criminal schemes intended to create for the right the possibility of a coup by which to resist the conscious and revolutionary force of the masses."⁷⁰

According to historian Giorgio Galli, "It is worth remembering that after Piazza Fontana not only Marxist-Leninist 'extremists', but the official left and even large sectors of liberal democratic culture feared the possibility of an authoritarian turn in Italy, following the model of the Greek colonels of 1967."⁷¹

⁶⁹ Moroni/Balestrini 202ff.

⁷⁰ Progetto Memoria 1996 28.

⁷¹ Galli 21. The Greek junta came to power through a military coup in April 1967, two days before the campaign for national elections that would most likely have resulted in a victory for George Papandreou. While not a communist, Papandreou provoked the animosity of US-president Wilson by his announced intention to establish diplomatic relations with the socialist states on Greece's border; he was also critical of the massive US military presence in his country. The leader of the junta that prevented Papandreou's election, George Papadopoulos, was an officer of KYP, the Greek intelligence service established by the CIA during the Greek civil war; Papadopoulos received training in the USA and was on the CIA's payroll from about 1952 onwards. In the 1940s, he expressed sympathy for Hitler and served as a captain in the so-called Security Battalions, established by the Nazis

There was a vibrant extraparlimentary left in Italy at the time: two important groups were Avanguardia Operaia, founded by Massimo Gorla, Aurelio Campi, Luigi Vinci, Franco Calamida, and Emilio Molinari in 1968, and Potere Operaio, founded in 1969 and headed by Toni Negri, Oreste Scalzone, Franco Piperno, and others. Lotta Continua, which published a journal of the same name, and whose members included Adriano Sofri, Guido Viale, and Mauro Rostagno, was founded in the early 1970s.⁷² Right-wing terrorism was also an undeniable reality in postwar Italy. That the Italian government was for some time more interested in demonising even the legal activities of the left, instead of combating the criminal operations of the right, no doubt contributed to a widespread sense that the formation of a clandestine and militant communist organisation was urgently needed.

Moroni and Balestrini quote a popular song of the time, "The Ballad of Pinelli." One of its verses threatens revenge for the death of Pinelli:

Ti hanno ucciso per farti tacere

for the purpose of tracking down Greek resistance fighters. According to Amnesty International, some two thousand people were tortured under his rule. James Becket, a US attorney working for Amnesty International, has reported claims by Greek torturers that they used equipment provided by the USA. When Papadopoulos was ousted in 1973, he was replaced by another Greek colonel, Demetrios Ioannidis, another CIA employee who received US training in counterinsurgency techniques. Cf. Blum 215ff. Italian attempts at a military coup are described by Zavoli (124ff.).

⁷² All these groups were under massive police observation. Adriano and Luca Sofri have published the 1969-1977 police records on Lotta Continua, a collection of documents more revealing about the police than about the extraparlimentary group. Cf. Adriano Sofri/Luca Sofri, Si allontanarono alla spicciolata: Le carte riservate di polizia su Lotta Continua (Palermo: Selerio, 1996).

Perché avevi capito l'inganno
 Ora dormi non puoi più parlare
 Ma i compagni ti vendicheranno⁷³

The formation of clandestine groups such as the Red Brigades was certainly in part a consequence of the massive government crackdown on the legal left after December of 1969. Red Brigades co-founder Renato Curcio said as much in 1992: "After the massacre of Piazza Fontana there was an oppressive atmosphere of violent antagonism. We felt it had become impossible to move forward using the same methods of organisation, acting in the open."⁷⁴ Curcio also narrates the disbanding of the extraparlimentary Metropolitan Political Collective and the ensuing formation of the more rigidly organised, but still entirely legal and non-clandestine Proletarian Left. These were early steps towards first theorising armed struggle, and then forming the clandestine organisations through which to practice it – steps that were taken largely as a result of the changed political climate after the bombs of December 1969:

It was then that there occurred a qualitative leap: first in our thinking and then in our actions. These bombs and the way they are instrumentalised are an act of war against the struggles and the movement, they prove we have arrived at a

⁷³ "They killed you to make you keep quiet / Because you saw through their scheme / Now you sleep, can't speak anymore / But the comrades will avenge you." Moroni/Balestrini 207.

⁷⁴ Curcio 6.

very harsh level of conflict, we told ourselves. This is a development that leaves us only two options: let everything be and finish with the experience of the Collective, which no longer makes any sense in these circumstances; or move forward, but equipping ourselves in a new way.⁷⁵

Mario Moretti concurs. Speaking of the months after December 1969, he says: "It was then that a general discourse on violence was replaced by a discussion of armed struggle. We're a long way from a theory of armed struggle, and even more so from its organisation. But we feel its necessity."⁷⁶

The first Red Brigades pamphlets, featuring the symbol of the asymmetrical five pointed star, appeared in Milan shortly after the 16 April radio transmission.⁷⁷ Like other clandestine organisations forming at the time, the Red Brigades began to target individuals identified as "enemies of the people." Burning the cars of factory bosses, responding to the violence of fascist groups who had taken over entire streets by force of arms, and helping to organise the occupation of houses earned the Red Brigades, then at best a semi-clandestine organisation, the status of popular heroes in the working class suburbs of Milan. As Curcio remembers:

In those neighbourhoods the first Red Brigades were certainly nothing mysterious or clandestine: we knew thousands of

⁷⁵ Curcio 49ff.

⁷⁶ Moretti 15ff. Cf. also Moretti 20, 40.

⁷⁷ According to Renato Curcio, the star was intended as a nod to the Tupamaros of Uruguay (Curcio 5).

people who knew perfectly well what we were preaching and practising. And who, occasionally, would call us to explain to us their problems.

On 25 April of '71 and '72, we raised at least two hundred Red Brigades flags on the flagpoles of the housing projects: red, with the yellow star in the center. They were flags sown by the mothers, the sisters, the aunts, the grandmothers of many of our comrades in the neighbourhood. The newspapers talked about it, but without understanding or wanting to understand. I remember journalists and policemen asked themselves: What are these flags that aren't those of the PCI, nor those of the trade unions, and don't look like anything we've seen before?⁷⁸

Soon, militant groups began to engage in kidnappings and assassinations. On 17 September, a bomb was detonated in the home of the Italian Siemens boss Giuseppe Leoni. On 26 March of the following year, the XXII October Group attempted to kidnap the Genoa housing official Alessandro Floris and killed him when he tried to defend himself.⁷⁹ On 17 May, Luigi Calabresi, the Italian chief of police, was assassinated. Calabresi was, by most accounts, directly involved in the death of Giuseppe Pinelli. "Calabresi fascista

⁷⁸ Curcio 64ff.

⁷⁹ For documents on the XXII October Group, cf. Progetto memoria, La mappa perduta (Rome: Sensibili alle foglie, 1994) 41 and Progetto memoria 1996 28ff. For documents on the Floris operation, cf. Progetto memoria 1994 374. Cf. also Zavoli 81.

/ Sei il primo della lista”⁸⁰ and “Calabresi, sarai suicidato”⁸¹ were popular slogans of the time. Calabresi’s assassins were never identified.

3 March, 1972, saw the first Red Brigades operation that targeted an individual. Led by Renato Curcio, the group kidnapped Siemens boss Idalgo Macchiarini in Milan. Curcio recalls this crucial change of strategy:

We realised we couldn’t go on burning old cars and Pirelli tires. We thought of a gesture in the style of the Tupamaros: a brief kidnapping of a particularly unpopular symbolic character for purposes of demonstration and punishment. To be recorded in a photograph that would reproduce our message a million times, in every newspaper.⁸²

One of the militant organisations emerging at this time, the GAP or Gruppi D’Azione Partigiana, lost one of its leading figures, Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, that same spring. Feltrinelli’s mangled body was found on 15 March, 1972; he had died (probably by accident, although there was speculation about a right-wing plot) while assembling explosives. Feltrinelli had been one of the main advocates of communist “armed struggle” in Italy; founder of an archive on the Italian resistance movement, former member of the PCI, and one of Italy’s most acclaimed publishers, he had been

⁸⁰ “Calabresi, you fascist / You’re first on the list.”

⁸¹ “Calabresi, you’ll be suicided.”

⁸² Curcio 70.

personally familiar not only with Fidel Castro and internationally known theoreticians of guerrilla warfare such as Régis Debray, but also with a number of German and Italian militants, including members of the RAF and Red Brigades founders Curcio and Franceschini.

The GAP had formed officially on 16 April, 1970. Their activities consisted in armed attacks on US consulates, factories, and a refinery, in addition to pirate radio broadcasts. Unlike the Red Brigades, the GAP operated on the assumption that a right-wing coup was imminent, and that the appropriate strategy for combating the state was that of a rural (rather than an urban) guerrilla.⁸³ The name of Feltrinelli's group was intended to evoke the partisan resistance of the 1940s. As one of its militants explained:

As for the name, we chose GAP to recall and commemorate the fighters and the fallen of the first war of Liberation. We feel obliged to the comrades who fought in the war of Liberation, to the comrades who fell in that war; we feel obliged to carry forward and win definitively their glorious and heroic, but unfinished revolutionary war.⁸⁴

⁸³ Cf. Feltrinelli's essay "Estate '69" (excerpted in Moroni/Balestrini 238ff.).

⁸⁴ Progetto Memoria 1996 18.

The death of Feltrinelli led to the dissolution of the GAP.⁸⁵

Many former GAP militants went on to join the Red Brigades, although this organisation was itself going through a difficult period. Having narrowly escaped arrest in Milan, its leaders Renato Curcio, Margherita Cagol, and Alberto Franceschini had relocated to Turin. According to Curcio, the increase in police activity following the death of Feltrinelli had almost caused the Red Brigades to disband:

On the one hand, the situation was very daunting: Feltrinelli was dead, the GAP had practically vanished, our French comrades of Nouvelle Résistance had scattered, Andreas Baader, Ulrike Meinhof, and other German RAF militants had been arrested... A reasonable analysis of the situation made us think the experience of armed struggle in Europe had more or less failed and that there was nothing for us to do but call it quits while we still could.⁸⁶

According to Curcio, the workers at the Fiat Mirafiori factory in Turin convinced him and his comrades to continue their armed struggle and seek closer ties to the Turin labour movement:

We noted that there existed around us a very encouraging and combative working class environment – the only one that interested us then – which led us to rethink things in a

⁸⁵ For a first-hand account of the death of Feltrinelli, cf. *Progetto Memoria* 1994 276ff. For essential documents on the life and death of Feltrinelli, cf. *Progetto Memoria*, *Sguardi ritrovati* (Rome: Sensibile alle foglie, 1995) 27ff. Cf. also Moroni/Balestrini 233ff., Zavoli 80ff., and Galli 52ff.

⁸⁶ Curcio 78.

different way. If we want to continue on this path, we thought, we have to reconceptualise our presence in the factory and our relationship to other parts of the movement.⁸⁷

On 13 February, 1973, the trade unionist Bruno Labate was kidnapped and interrogated for five hours by a Red Brigades commando in Turin. Accused of having made himself a tool in the hands of the factory bosses, and more specifically, of having orchestrated the infiltration of Turin labour groups by right-wing activists, he was chained, with his trousers off and a sign around his neck, to a lamppost outside the main gate of Fiat's Mirafiori factory. Curcio narrates the events as follows:

In February of '73 we picked Bruno Labate, head of the fascist trade union Cisl, up off the street. We took him to an apartment and interrogated him for a number of hours. He explains to us the system by which Fiat hires right-wing employees to spy on unruly workers and stage provocations. The next day, with Margherita, Ferrari, and Bonavita, I drive Labate to the main gate of Mirafiori, just at the time when people are coming out from their shift. In front of hundreds of workers, we make him get out of the car, chain him to a lamppost, and put the usual sign around his neck. Then, calmly and without hiding our faces, we pass out our Red Brigades flyers and leave, not without receiving some

⁸⁷ Curcio 79.

applause. Labate stays there until the police arrive more than an hour later, surrounded by workers who speak their minds to him. And no one opens his mouth to furnish information that might help identify us.⁸⁸

On 28 June, the Alfa Romeo executive Michele Mincuzzi was given the same treatment as Labate. The sign around Mincuzzi's neck read: "Fascist executive, brought to justice by the Red Brigades." The Fiat boss Ettore Amerio was interrogated for eight days before being released. "We chose Ettore Amerio," Curcio remembers, "because, as head of Fiat Auto and long-time executive, he was a symbol of the 'boss' and knew all the secrets of that group of spies and stagers of provocations we had selected as our direct adversaries."⁸⁹ The operation was a complete success in terms of boosting support for the Red Brigades: "That spectacular and nonviolent operation caused the popularity of the Red Brigades to soar."⁹⁰

Crucially, assassinations were not yet on the agenda: "At the time, the elimination of someone we kidnapped never occurred to us."⁹¹ This was still true, according to Curcio, on 18 April, 1974, when the Red Brigades kidnapped Genovese magistrate Mario

⁸⁸ Curcio 80.

⁸⁹ Curcio 82.

⁹⁰ Curcio 83.

⁹¹ Curcio 83.

Sossi.⁹² Nevertheless, this operation marked another change of strategy – the extension of the struggle beyond the factory and the decision to attack “the heart of the state.”

We realised the power of the workers could not expand by itself, within the confines of the factory. The crucial decisions were taken in Rome. It was necessary to strike at the serpent’s head. Raising the level of the conflict by directly confronting political power: that is, the central elements of the State and the nerve centre controlled by the Christian Democrats.⁹³

Curcio identifies the metal workers’ contracts signed in 1973 as the immediate cause of this new approach. Despite the success, in terms of public attention, of the Amerio kidnapping that preceded them, these contracts were a significant setback for the labour movement.

Given his background, Sossi was an obvious target: He wasn’t just any judge. He was a Christian Democrat, a reactionary, and you can’t say he didn’t deserve his bad reputation. Many nicknamed him “Doctor Handcuffs” and accused him of having manipulated the inquest against the

⁹² Curcio 93. Zavoli’s La notte della repubblica contains an interview with Mario Sossi and Alberto Franceschini, the Red Brigades member in charge of the kidnapping. Cf. Zavoli 166ff.

⁹³ Curcio 84.

XXII October Group, one of the first to opt for armed struggle.⁹⁴

The Sossi kidnapping was also sufficiently spectacular to focus considerable media attention on the Red Brigades. "With Sossi we conquer the territory of the media," says Mario Moretti.⁹⁵ The operation demonstrated the ability of the Red Brigades to pressure the government. On 12 May, eleven days before Sossi's release, prison gates were opened for eight convicted members of the XXII October Group. That police forces were waiting on the other side of the gates did not reduce the symbolic impact of this reaction.

The magistrate Francesco Coco, who had protested the decision to "release" the prisoners, was assassinated on 8 June. "It's our first killing," Moretti recalls, "the first intentionally lethal operation. It's also the first operation whose only protagonists are the Red Brigades and the state."⁹⁶ He adds: "If we've ever been self-referential, it began with this operation."⁹⁷

By this time, the Red Brigades had been infiltrated by an informant. Silvano Girotto, also known as "Frate Mitra" or "Brother Machine Gun," was a Franciscan monk and former member of the foreign legion. He had spent several years in Latin America and won the confidence of Curcio and Franceschini by boasting about having participated in guerrilla operations. As a result of Girotto's police

⁹⁴ Curcio 89.

⁹⁵ Moretti 66.

⁹⁶ Moretti 97.

⁹⁷ Moretti 98.

contacts, Curcio and Franceschini were arrested on 8 September.⁹⁸ Curcio later escaped from prison with the aid of a Red Brigades commando led by his wife Margherita (Mara) Cagol.⁹⁹

The following spring (1975) began with three kidnappings and ended with the death of Cagol. On 6 May, 1975, the NAP or Nuclei Armati Proletari¹⁰⁰ kidnapped the magistrate Giuseppe Di Gennaro, responsible for drafting Italy's new draconian prison laws. To his kidnappers, he was "a reactionary who for years has served antiproletarian state repression," a man whose "function is to cover up the daily massacre perpetrated by the authorities inside their prisons, against the proletariat."¹⁰¹ Di Gennaro was released after five days. The kidnapping of Milanese lawyer Massimo De Carolis, one of DC's most right-wing members, ended more bloodily. De Carolis was interrogated and shot by a Red Brigades commando. The leader of this commando, Walter Alasia, was also partly responsible for the 4 June kidnapping of industrialist Vittorio Gancia.¹⁰² The other Red Brigades member supervising the Gancia kidnapping was Cagol.

When, on 5 June, the police accidentally discovered the rural hideout of Alasia and Cagol, gunshots were exchanged and Cagol

⁹⁸ Cf. Zavoli 199ff.

⁹⁹ Mario Scialoja describes the liberation of Curcio as "probably the most clamorous urban guerrilla operation carried out in Italy" (Scialoja in Curcio 107). He also points out not a single shot was fired.

¹⁰⁰ For more information on this group, cf. Progetto Memoria 1994 65 and Progetto Memoria 1996 230ff.

¹⁰¹ Progetto Memoria 1996 234, 236.

¹⁰² Cf. Zavoli 230, 208ff.

was killed. Walter Alasia escaped, but was killed in another shootout on 15 December. The death of Cagol prompted a Red Brigades statement featuring the frequently quoted statements "May a thousand arms reach out to take up her gun!" and "A flower has blossomed, and the Red Brigades will continue to cultivate this flower of liberty until they are victorious!" In terms of its symbolic and emotional force, the death of Cagol remains one of the most important events in the history of Italian militancy.¹⁰³

According to Curcio, both Cagol and Alasia were executed by the police. About Cagol, Curcio says: "The autopsy results indicate clearly what happened. Margherita was sitting with her arms raised. She received a single gunshot on her left side, right under the armpit. The classic shot to kill."¹⁰⁴ The death of Alasia is narrated by Curcio as follows:

There was a shooting in which he killed two policemen, was injured, and fell to the ground in a small courtyard. Then, several minutes after the shooting, he was found and shot right there. After my wife, he was the second Red Brigades comrade to be taken out cold by the forces of order.¹⁰⁵

The deaths of Cagol and Alasia ushered in the first major string of defeats for the Red Brigades. On 18 January, 1976, Curcio

¹⁰³ For valuable documents on the life and death of Cagol, cf. *Progetto Memoria* 1995 70ff.

¹⁰⁴ Curcio 121.

¹⁰⁵ Curcio 115. Cf. Moretti 87 for a confirmation of this account which cites what amounts to a confession by one of the policemen involved.

was arrested again after a twenty-minute shoot-out. 22 March saw the arrest of another founding member, Giorgio Semeria. On 17 May, the trial of Curcio, Franceschini, and nine others began in Turin.

By this time, the Red Brigades had developed from one of many small groups arising out of the Turin factory struggles to an urban guerrilla unit with an internationalist outlook. Already, they bore a closer resemblance to the RAF than to the striking factory workers of 1969. Rather than challenging exploitative employment contracts, they now declared themselves an enemy of the "imperialist state of the multinationals." Their most important document from this period, the Strategic Command Resolution of April 1975, begins with a definition of imperialism:

Imperialism is a system of global domination with the United States as its centre; at the centre of the United States are the major multinational corporations and their interests.

Throughout the years, this system has articulated and stratified itself through functional areas of production and consumption that are at the same time political and military areas.¹⁰⁶

The document goes on to analyse the revolutionary movements in Italy and other European countries in their global context:

¹⁰⁶ Progetto Memoria 1996 45.

The nations of the "old continent" constitute an important economic, political, and military area for imperialism. This area, essentially homogeneous from the point of view of capitalism, is defined in strategic terms as the "Western democratic system". In recent times, after the victorious liberation struggle of Vietnam and Cambodia, after the crises in Cyprus and the Middle East, this "system" has become, along with Japan, the acid test of the entire imperialist system. This means that it is essentially in Europe that the question of the permanence or abolition of the power relations established with the Second World War will be decided.¹⁰⁷

The notion that the nation state is nothing but a vehicle for the "imperialism of the multinationals" is first developed in the context of an economic analysis. After a discussion of what they identify as the crisis of global capitalism, resulting from overproduction and the decline of the average profit rate, the authors of the Strategic Command Resolution propose this thesis:

The State becomes the direct expression of the major imperialist and multinational groups, with a national axis. The State thus becomes a specific function of the development of capitalism in the period of the imperialism of the

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

multinationals; it becomes the Imperialist State of the Multinationals.¹⁰⁸

During the Turin trial, violent attacks on the authorities and those favouring them continued. On 13 February, 1977, Valerio Traversi, a government minister in charge of prison reform, was shot in the legs by a Red Brigades commando. On 28 April, the day that Baader, Ensslin, and Raspe received life sentences in Germany, the Red Brigades assassinated the Piemontese lawyer Fulvio Croce. On 2 June, the Italian journalist Indro Montanelli was shot in the legs, as were several other journalists during the months that followed.¹⁰⁹

On 16 March, 1978, in what would become the most infamous Red Brigades operation, Aldo Moro, head of DC, was kidnapped by the Red Brigades in via Fani, Rome.¹¹⁰ Led by Mario Moretti, the "Walter Alasia commando" demanded the release of left-wing militants imprisoned in Turin, and various statements reiterating this basic demand were issued during the following months. The

¹⁰⁸ Progetto Memoria 1996 48. In later documents, "Stato Imperialista delle Multinazionali" is abbreviated as "SIM." For a similar definition of "imperialism" by RAF militants, cf. Hoffmann 157: "The imperialism of multinational corporations combines within itself the contradictions of developed nations and those of nations deprived of their possibilities for development, of states with elected governments and states with governments established by the CIA, of rich and poor and countries, of the North and South as the centres and peripheries of its system. It is the system that uses both the political structure of the lawful state and that of fascism."

¹⁰⁹ For Traversi, cf. Zavoli 202ff. For Croce, cf. Zavoli 239ff. and Progetto Memoria 1994 390. For Montanelli, cf. Zavoli 241ff. Patrizio Peci discusses the decision to begin attacking journalists in his memoir. Cf. Patrizio Peci, *Io, l'infame* (Milan: Mondadori, 1983) 136.

¹¹⁰ For a useful overview of the events, cf. Zavoli 169ff. and Galli 297ff. The Red Brigades statements issued during the Moro kidnapping are reprinted in Progetto Memoria 1996 111ff. Cf. also Progetto Memoria 1994 401.

government refused to comply, even after Moro himself wrote no less than thirty-eight letters urging greater flexibility. A similar appeal was written by Moro's family on 1 May, to no effect. Moro's letters were universally dismissed as those of a man under the influence of drugs or extreme physical pain. It is clear today that this was at best a foolish misconception, at worst a deliberate attempt to justify ignoring his criticism of how the kidnapping was handled.

The Red Brigades explained their choice of target in their first statement on the kidnapping (16 March):

Who is Moro? The answer is quickly given. After his equal De Gasperi, he has been, until today, the most powerful leader, the undisputed "theorist" and "strategist" of that Christian Democrat rule which has oppressed the Italian people for thirty years. Every phase of DC's imperialist counterrevolution [...] has been directed by Moro. No one has implemented more faithfully than him the orders given by the imperialist centres.¹¹¹

The second statement (25 March) outlines Moro's political career and places his rule in the context of the European Union's "imperialism," warning the "strategists of counterrevolution" that

¹¹¹ Progetto Memoria 1996 111.

the "strategic union of communist forces" will rise against the "International of imperialist terrorism."¹¹²

Before being shot by the Red Brigades after 55 days, Moro penned a request for his removal from the DC membership lists – an indication of his disillusionment with the party that was willing to sacrifice his life before offering even the most minimal concession to his kidnappers. Moro's corpse was found on 9 May, in the trunk of a car parked halfway between the residences of the two governing parties, DC and PCI. The following day, Curcio quoted Lenin in court: "The death of a class enemy is the highest act of humanity possible in a society divided into classes."¹¹³ Some fifteen years later, he commented:

It was obviously a rite of self-assurance, an escamotage to help us confront that highly difficult situation. We knew ourselves to be faced with the end of a historical experience, but in those few hours it had been impossible to formulate a precise discourse with which to summarise our views and our analysis.¹¹⁴

Mario Moretti, the Red Brigades member in charge of the Moro operation and the man who personally shot Moro, describes the outcome of the kidnapping in similar terms:

¹¹² Progetto Memoria 1996 114.

¹¹³ Lenin qtd. in Curcio 162.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

The Moro kidnapping isn't just an operation gone wrong, a minor or major error of judgement; it's the end of a conception of the guerrilla, the end of the theory of armed struggle. Never again will we achieve an aim on the political scene by a guerrilla operation, because the political scene has reduced itself purely to the defense of the state.¹¹⁵

Like others (such as Leonardo Sciascia, whose views are discussed in Chapter IV), Moretti identifies the refusal of the Italian government to negotiate with Moro's kidnappers as the direct cause of the operation's tragic outcome.

In the Italian public mind, the "Moro affair" remains the paradigmatic tragedy of the first Italian republic. It prompted an extensive debate involving the country's leading intellectuals. Although it is often thought to have been the climax, it was by no means the end of Italian left-wing militancy.

Rather, there followed a string of assassinations. On 29 January, 1979, members of Prima Linea assassinated Emilio Alessandrini, the Milanese lawyer responsible for the investigation of the Piazza Fontana massacre. On 3 May, the Red Brigades opened fire on the DC party headquarters. On 13 July, they assassinated Antonio Varisco, a high-ranking officer of the Italian military police (carabinieri). On 21 September, Prima Linea members assassinated Fiat manager Carlo Ghiglieno in Turin. On 11 December, they read a

¹¹⁵ Moretti 179.

proclamation in a Turin business school before shooting five professors and five students in the legs.¹¹⁶

In January of 1980, members of the Red Brigades shot three Milanese policemen and one Genovese officer of the military police. The business executive Sergio Gori was assassinated in Mestre. On 12 February, Vittorio Bachelet, a professor of law and friend of Aldo Moro, was assassinated at Rome university.¹¹⁷ On 1 April, a Red Brigades commando disrupted a DC assembly and shot four people in the legs. On 2 May, members of Prima Linea made an unsuccessful attempt on the life of Sergio Lenci, an architect responsible for expanding Rebibbia prison. On 28 May, journalist Walter Tobagi was assassinated by the Red Brigades in Milan.

A week after the assassination of Bachelet, on 19 February, Patrizio Peci, leader of the Turinese Red Brigades, was arrested along with Rocco Micaletto. This marked one of the major setbacks for the organisation, along with the death of several Red Brigades members in a police shootout in via Fracchia, Genova, on 28 March. The events were related. As Mario Moretti reports: "Peci [...] directed the police [...] to via Fracchia in Genoa. [...] It's a massacre. The police have the keys [...] and can enter without even breaking down the door. The night of 28 March they surprise the

¹¹⁶ For the most important documents on and by Prima Linea, cf. Progetto Memoria 1994 96 and Progetto Memoria 1996 263ff. For the details of the Alessandrini assassination, cf. Zavoli 367ff. and Progetto Memoria 1994 417. For the 3 May operation, cf. Zavoli 391ff. For Varisco and Ghiglieno, cf. Progetto Memoria 1994 428, 430.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Zavoli 392 and Progetto Memoria 1994 440.

comrades in their sleep and kill them deliberately, all of them.”¹¹⁸

Peci had become the first of many “pentiti” – ex-militants who collaborated with the police, sharing names and addresses of their former comrades, in return for reduced prison sentences.

1980 was also the year of the D’Urso kidnapping, which Moretti describes as the “political masterpiece of the Red Brigades.”¹¹⁹ Giovanni D’Urso, a magistrate, was kidnapped on 12 December. In return for his release, the Red Brigades demanded the immediate closure of Asinara prison, described by Moretti as “a concentration camp and prisoner’s nightmare.”¹²⁰ Slightly more than two weeks into the kidnapping, on 28 December, there was an unexpected turn of events. A revolt broke out in another prison, Trani. Nineteen guards were taken hostage. The revolt was put down with extreme brutality by a special police force, which entered the prison “throwing bombs and firing shots at eye level. It’s a wonder no one dies, but when the police take back the prison, they beat the prisoners savagely.”¹²¹

The Red Brigades responded by assassinating the head of the military police, Enrico Galvaligi, on 31 December. On 4 January, 1981, they declared D’Urso had been condemned to death, but that his sentence had been “suspended.” D’Urso’s daughter appeared on

¹¹⁸ Moretti 213ff.

¹¹⁹ Moretti 221.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Moretti 221. This event is the basis for the central episode in Nanni Balestrini’s 1987 novel Gli invisibili, discussed in Chapter IV.

television to plead for his life. He was found alive, on 15 January, in a car parked in front of the Italian ministry of justice. Moretti was arrested some three months later, on 4 April.

Italian militant organisations had identified prison unrest as an important component of any large-scale anti-capitalist insurgency as early as 1975. According to a NAP document from that year,

Prisons are today both the place where vast sections of the proletariat organise themselves and the answer given by the capitalist system to the demand for power articulated by the subaltern masses, to the individual or collective attempt to conquer for oneself a space in which to live.¹²²

A similar statement is found in a document issued by the BR-PCC (Brigate Rosse per la Formazione del Partito Comunista Combattente, a Red Brigades splinter group):

Today prison, as a fundamental link in the much vaster and complicated mechanism of control, division, isolation, blackmail, torture and political and physical annihilation serving the project of preventive global counterrevolution, is the bourgeoisie's reply to the proletariat's struggle not to die of exploitation, of unemployment, or in imperialist war.¹²³

Kidnappings continued after Moretti's arrest. On 27 April, a Red Brigades commando kidnapped housing administrator Ciro

¹²² Progetto Memoria 1996 238.

¹²³ Progetto Memoria 1996 482. For a more extended analysis of the function of the prison by the original Red Brigades, cf. Progetto Memoria 1996 87ff.

Cirillo. He was freed on 28 July. On 20 May, industrialist Giuseppe Taliercio was kidnapped. He was found dead on 6 July.¹²⁴ Business executive Renzo Sandrucci was kidnapped on 3 June and released 23 July. The kidnappings of Cirillo, Taliercio, and Sandrucci are described by Moretti as the "swan song" of the Red Brigades. He speaks of the ideological differences and lack of coordination between the commandos in charge of these operations.¹²⁵

On 17 December, Italy witnessed a different kind of militant operation, already familiar in the GFR – different not so much in style as in terms of its target. Members of the BR-PCC kidnapped US general and NATO commander James Lee Dozier.¹²⁶ Before Dozier was freed by the police on 28 January of the following year, the BR-PCC issued a number of documents: extended analyses of the structure and function of NATO. The first begins with the words: "The crisis of capitalism generates imperialist war. Only anti-imperialist war can halt war!!!"¹²⁷ It goes on to refer to Dozier as "a Yankee pig from the American occupation force."¹²⁸ NATO is defined as "military control and occupation via an integrated structure with clear US hegemony," and the establishment of communism is presented as the only alternative to world war:

¹²⁴ Cf. Progetto Memoria 1994 462.

¹²⁵ Cf. Moretti 223.

¹²⁶ For information on the BR-PCC, cf. Progetto memoria 1994 206 and Progetto memoria 1996 474ff.

¹²⁷ Progetto Memoria 1996 474.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

It's becoming increasingly clear to the masses that the capitalist system of production produces imperialist barbarity and the continuous decline in living conditions: it is here the revolutionary proposal of a civil war to arrest and defeat imperialist war and to construct communist society takes shape; the possibility of an imminent global conflict reveals all the positivity of this proposal, the only means of preventing the destruction of nations.¹²⁹

The fourth and fifth documents released during the kidnapping are also of particular interest. The fourth contains excerpts from the "interrogation" of Dozier, in which he talks about his military career, his activities in Vietnam, and the existence, in the USA and Europe, of "special warfare centers" specialising in the training of anti-guerrilla troops. Dozier is told by his interrogator: "Your military career is the story of American aggression against the liberation struggles and revolutions of Southeast Asia, against the struggles of the working class in Europe."¹³⁰

The fifth document describes the use of torture by the police, stating that "There has been a long history of torture: from the scientifically conducted large-scale beatings in the high-security prisons [...] to the torture suffered by the most recently arrested comrades."¹³¹ These, the authors claim, are "Hung from the ceiling,

¹²⁹ Progetto Memoria 1996 476, 478.

¹³⁰ Progetto Memoria 1996 488.

¹³¹ Progetto Memoria 1996 494ff.

beaten with scientific precision in the most sensitive parts of their bodies, choked with liters and liters of salt water, cut and covered in salt, all this accompanied by the forced ingestion of unknown substances to break their physical resistance," the aim being "the destruction of their political identity" - their transformation into "the new pentiti," to be presented on "the cover pages of the newspapers."¹³²

Pentitismo became rampant after 29 May, 1982, when the Italian government passed a law allowing for a significant reduction in the sentence of any convict willing to collaborate with the police. In the words of Moretti, "Pentitismo becomes the basis of the legal system, right becomes war."¹³³ Like the authors of the BR-PCC document, Moretti sees a close link between pentitismo and torture.¹³⁴ In fact, he mentions one of Dozier's kidnappers, Antonio Savasta, as a torture victim. Shortly after his arrest, and to the surprise of all who knew him, Savasta chose to collaborate with the police. "I don't know what snapped inside him," Moretti reports. "But the forms of torture he suffered were surely a determining factor, even more so those suffered by his wife Emilia Libera - brutally, with a bottle - and in which he was forced to participate."¹³⁵

¹³² Progetto Memoria 1996 495.

¹³³ Moretti 246.

¹³⁴ Cf. Moretti 248.

¹³⁵ Moretti 249.

Creating collaborators through intimidation, torture, and the incentive of a reduced sentence became the state's main strategy in its attempt to crack down on militant groups. One result was the rapid spread of distrust and violence among imprisoned militants. On 8 February, 1982, three imprisoned Red Brigades members attempted to murder their comrade Immacolata Gargiulo in the high security prison Palmi; Gargiulo was a known collaborator. On 27 July, in Trani prison, Red Brigades member Ennio Di Rocco was stabbed for the same reason. Maria Giovanna Massa survived an attempt on her life in Voghera prison. Giorgio Soldati was strangled in Cuneo prison.¹³⁶ Carmine Palladino was killed 10 August.

Outside the prisons, political violence continued. On 4 June, 1983, university professor and government advisor Gino Giugni was shot in the legs by a Red Brigades commando.¹³⁷ The following year, on 15 February, US diplomat Leamon Hunt was assassinated in Rome, and on 27 March, 1985, economics professor Ezio Tarantelli was shot at Rome University – again by BR-PCC commandos. (The Hunt assassination was carried out in collaboration with the Armed Revolutionary Faction of Lebanon, FARL.) On 10 February, 1986, the BR-PCC assassinated former

¹³⁶ Having collaborated with the police, Soldati asked to be "tried" by his comrades. They condemned him to death and strangled him, with his consent. Cf. Enrico Fenzi, *Armi e bagagli* (Milan: Costa & Nolan, 1988) 175ff. and Zavoli 457. Patrizio Peci tells a slightly different version of the story, according to which Soldati did not voluntarily submit to being "tried," although he did then accept his "death sentence." Peci also claims Soldati had his throat cut, rather than being strangled. Cf. Patrizio Peci, *Io, l'infame* (Milan: Mondadori, 1983) 217ff.

¹³⁷ Cf. Zavoli 459.

trade unionist Lando Conti in Florence. On 27 March of the following year, Italian air force general Licio Giorgieri, responsible for research into the military uses of outer space, was shot by a group known as the Unione di Comunisti Combattenti (UCC). Another much-noted assassination was that of Italian Christian Democrat Roberto Ruffilli on 16 April, 1988 (by the BR-PCC).¹³⁸

On 23 April of 1988, Renato Curcio publicly dissociated himself from recent militant activities conducted in the name of the Red Brigades. A similar statement was issued by other imprisoned Red Brigades members, including co-founder Prospero Gallinari, on 23 October.

According to Mario Moretti, the failure of both the labour movement and the Red Brigades to bring about revolution in postwar Italy eliminated all potential for future revolutions in that country: "We have proven beyond doubt that after the fall of the great factory-based labour movement and after 'armed propaganda' there is no longer any space for a revolutionary struggle. There's nothing left."¹³⁹

¹³⁸ Cf. Zavoli 461ff. for the assassinations of Hunt, Tarantelli, Conti, Giorgieri, and Ruffilli. Cf. also Progetto Memoria 1994 475ff.

¹³⁹ Moretti 181. In fact, there has been a recent resurgence in Red Brigades activity. On 20 May, 1999, Massimo D'Antona, a key figure in the formulation of the Italian state's employment policies, was assassinated by a group designating itself a Red Brigades commando. The extent of the actual ties of this group to the historical Red Brigades is controversial. Historical Red Brigades leaders such as Moretti have condemned the assassination. Cf. "Le Brigate Rosse? Un progetto improponibile", il manifesto, June 18, 1999, 12f. Cf. also the introduction to Giancarlo Lombardi's "Virgil, Dante, Blade Runner, and Italian terrorism: the concept of *pietas* in *La seconda volta* and *La mia generazione*", Romance Languages Annual XI (2000) 191ff.

II. Ideology

If a common denominator had to be found for the ideologies of the RAF, the Red Brigades, and similar militant organisations, it would most likely have to be the combination of radical or revolutionary leftism with an insistence on the primacy of praxis.¹ All West German and Italian militants shared the conviction that capitalism is an inherently exploitative, historically outdated, and profoundly destructive social and economic order, and that it can only be defeated by force of arms.

The left-wing militants of West Germany and Italy did not subscribe to any specific body of ideological beliefs. In their own theoretical statements, they quote the classics of Marxism and Leninism, but also anarchists, Maoists, the spokesmen of African and South American liberation movements, and contemporary theorists such as Régis Debray, Ernest Mandel, and Samir Amin.² They insist that theoretical elaboration is of secondary importance; that what counts is revolutionary praxis. The authors of a May 1982

¹ For an excellent discussion on the general meaning of the expression "left-wing," cf. Absterben des Staates: was heisst das?, a discussion between Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt reprinted in: Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt, Der Unterschätzte Mensch I (Frankfurt: Zweitausendeins, 2001) 24ff. Cf. also the discussion on the death of Benno Ohnesorg (104ff.), and that on the student protests of 1967-1969 (310ff.).

² Debray is discussed below. Mandel and Amin are Marxist economists. Cf. in particular Mandel, Late Capitalism, trans. Joris De Bres (London: Verso, 1978) and Amin, Accumulation on a World Scale: A Critique of the Theory of Underdevelopment (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974). Mandel is quoted, for example, in the May 1971 RAF document "On Armed Struggle in Western Europe" (Hoffmann 49ff.). Amin's theory of global capitalism and Third World dependence crucially informs the RAF statement of 13 January, 1976 (Hoffmann 198ff.).

RAF document argued their revolution "has nothing to do with ideology. It does not set up another one of these interchangeable ideological models, of which we are told they will be realised later. It can only be a real process."³

Of course, this is itself an ideological (or at least ideologically informed) position, and any revolutionary praxis confronts the militant with decisions that necessarily involve ideological issues. Hence a (very general) survey of those left-wing texts that bear directly on the problem of militancy is in order. Following this, it will be possible to designate the specific ideological issues that are most important for understanding the experiences of 1970-1999, and thereby to set the stage for an analysis of the texts and films in which those issues and experiences are articulated.

Marx and Engels

This is not the place to enter into a summary of Marxist ideology.⁴ However, statements made by Marx and Engels on the insurrectionary violence of their own time deserve some consideration, as do similar statements by Lenin and Trotsky. The upshot of the following analysis is that, despite occasional ambiguities, the strategic viability of the kind of militancy practised

³ Hoffmann 303.

⁴ Lenin's 1914 essay "Karl Marx" remains one of the most concise, readable, and accurate summaries of Marxism. Karl Korsch's book Karl Marx (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1967) was of considerable influence on the German and Italian student movements.

by the RAF and the Red Brigades has been almost universally dismissed in the Marxist tradition.

In April of 1881, Marx wrote to his wife Jenny about a much-noted anarchist trial in St. Petersburg. He praised the calm and unpretentious manner of the Russian anarchists, contrasting it with the passionate calls for political violence issued by his rival Johann Most:

Have you followed the St. Petersburg court proceedings against the assassins? They're thoroughly decent people, sans pose mélodramatique, simple, down-to-earth, heroic. Shouting and acting are irreconcilable opposites. The St. Petersburg executive committee, which acts so fervently, releases sublimely "moderate" manifestos. It's a far cry from the laddish manner of Most and other childish crybabies, who preach tyrannicide as a "theory" and "panacea."⁵

Despite his admiration for the anarchists, Marx insisted their tactics could not be applied outside of Russia. They were a necessary product of Russia, shaped by the history of that country as if by natural forces:

[...] they strive [...] to explain to Europe that their *modus operandi* is a specifically Russian, historically inevitable form

⁵ Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels, Werke 35 (Berlin: Dietz, 1967) 179.

of action. Moralising about it – for or against – would be like moralising about the earthquake in Chios.⁶

This is certainly not a condemnation of the anarchists. However, Marx makes it clear that he sees no place for their sporadic and uncoordinated violence in his own vision of European revolution.⁷

Four years later, in a letter dated January 1885, Friedrich Engels commented on insurrectionary violence in Ireland and posed the important question of whether it might, in some instances, serve a government agenda, or even be organised by secret agents. Engels began his letter by pointing out the efforts of Russia to force England and France to extradite the Russian terrorists who had found refuge in those countries: "You know what efforts the Russian government has been making for years now, in order to compel England and France [...] to extradite the heroic nihilists."⁸ He went on to draw attention to a newspaper article published on 15 January, in which a Russian csarist argued the Russian case by pointing out the threat of bomb attacks in England:

Now the Pall Mall Gazette of 15 January contained an article by Ms. Nowikow, a devoted csarist, who appealed once more

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Marx did advocate organised armed resistance to the Prussian counterrevolution in 1848, and characterised such resistance as "revolutionary terrorism" in articles published in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* in November of that year – probably the true reason for his expatriation on 16 May of 1849. Accused of having incited insurrectionary violence, Marx argued he had merely indicated the people's right to resist the original terror of the counterrevolution, and the charge was dropped. (Marx's expatriation was officially justified in terms of his statelessness; he had given up his Prussian passport in December of 1845.)

⁸ Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels, *Werke* 36 (Berlin: Dietz, 1967) 277.

to England for the extradition of Hartmann, Stepniak, and all those who "organise murder in Russia." According to the article, the English now face the same danger of bomb attacks; just as they offer refuge to the Russian dynamiters, America offers refuge to the Irish dynamiters. What England demands of America is precisely what Russia demands of England.⁹

Next, Engels mentions an agreement between Russia and Germany, concerning the extradition of anarchists. The day the news of this agreement was published was also the day of three bomb attacks in England. These attacks targeted buildings associated with the legislative, the judiciary, and the executive branches of the British government: "a concentrated assault on the three great powers of the state, symbolised by the buildings in which they are based."¹⁰ Given the timing and the international context of the attacks, Engels suspected they were organised by Russian secret agents:

Is this the work of overexcited Fenians? Is it not rather the great blow csarism needs in order to force England to join its anti-revolutionary league? If the dynamite is of Russian origin, was handled by Russian agents, could it then, I ask, have exploded at a more opportune moment, forcing the frightened

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

and regretful John Bull to throw himself at the feet of Alexander III?¹¹

For Marx, the brand of insurrectionary violence practised by the Russian anarchists was simply extraneous to his revolutionary program; for Engels, it was a positive danger to that program. While putatively revolutionary, it was in fact counterrevolutionary. The notion that “terrorist” acts attributed to clandestine organisations are in fact staged by governments and intelligence services continues to enjoy some popularity today.¹²

Lenin and Trotsky

If Marx and Engels looked on bombings and assassinations with a mixture of fascination and scepticism, many of the statements made on the subject by their successors Lenin and Trotsky are characterised by outright hostility and condemnation.

In What Is To Be Done?, Lenin contrasted his own revolutionary program, based on the centrality of mass support, with what he viewed as two dangerous aberrations of revolutionary thought: an excessive emphasis on economic developments, and “terrorism.” Like those putting too much stock in economic theories, revolutionaries in favour of “terrorism” overlook the need for the prolonged and widespread organisation of a mass movement:

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Giorgio Galli's Il partito armato is a prominent example of a contemporary scholar seriously considering this possibility.

Calls for terror, just as calls for lending the economic struggle itself a political character, represent different forms of shirking the most pressing obligation of Russian revolutionaries – which is to organize the carrying out of an all-embracing political agitation.¹³

In a 1902 Iskra essay on “Revolutionary Adventurism,” Lenin condemned specific “terrorist” activities by arguing that those organising them “neither counted on nor hoped for any definite action or support on the part of the masses.”¹⁴ He argued that a “predilection for terrorism” was typically a symptom of being “aloof from the working-class movement.”¹⁵ Such aloofness can never lead to revolution, he insisted, because “without the working people, all bombs are powerless, patently powerless.”¹⁶

Besides viewing it as practically useless, Lenin insisted that “terrorism” posed a threat to the revolutionary project:

At a time when the revolutionaries are short of the forces and means to lead the masses, who are already rising, an appeal to resort to such terrorist acts as the organisation of attempts on the lives of ministers by individuals and groups that are not known to one another means, not only thereby breaking off

¹³ V.I. Lenin, What Is To Be Done?, trans. S.V. and Patricia Utechin (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1963) 100.

¹⁴ V.I. Lenin, Against Dogmatism and Sectarianism in the Working-Class Movement (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965) 40.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

work among the masses, but also introducing downright disorganisation into that work.¹⁷

"Terrorist acts" staged by individuals or "single combat" not only achieve no more than "a short-lived sensation"; they also lead to "apathy and passive waiting for the next bout" rather than successful revolutionary action.¹⁸ Since the "elusive individuals" who make attempts on the lives of government members have "lost faith" in the possibility of "marching in formation and working hand in hand with the masses," their actions can only "end in smoke."¹⁹

It is important to note that this is not a principled, but a strategic rejection. Four years later, in an article on "Guerrilla Warfare," Lenin insisted that "Marxism [...] positively does not reject any form of struggle."²⁰ Hence

To attempt to answer yes or no to the question whether any particular means of struggle should be used, without making a detailed examination of the concrete situation of the given movement at the given stage of its development, means completely to abandon the Marxist position.²¹

In other words, while "terrorism" was not the way forward in Russia in 1902, it might be an invaluable tool at another time or in another place. Voicing the usual Marxist scepticism about secluded

¹⁷ Lenin 1965 43f.

¹⁸ Lenin 1965 44.

¹⁹ Lenin 1965 46f.

²⁰ Lenin 1965 50.

²¹ Lenin 1965 51.

"systematisers," Lenin in fact insisted "that the coming crisis will introduce new forms of struggle that we are now unable to foresee."²² To examine Lenin's condemnations of "individual terror" without also considering these later statements is to misrepresent his position.²³

In 1911, Trotsky ridiculed the advocates of "terrorism" in a manner very much reminiscent of the Iskra article on "Revolutionary Adventurism." Like Lenin, he suggested revolution could be brought about only by mass-based party action, not by individual "terrorist" acts:

If it suffices to arm oneself with a revolver in order to reach our goal, then to what end are the goals of the class struggle? If a pinch of powder and a slug of lead are enough to destroy the enemy, what need is there of class organization? If there is rhyme or reason in scaring titled personages with the noise of an explosion, what need is there for a party?²⁴

Deepening one's understanding of the role militancy has played in the Marxist tradition and recognising how the German and Italian militant left was able to reconcile Marxism with "individual terror" requires some awareness of the twentieth century revolutionary

²² Lenin 1965 50.

²³ Most Marxists have in fact reiterated Lenin's 1902 remarks on the political uselessness of "terrorism." It was in keeping with this tradition (as well as with Stalin's policy of socialism in one country) that the socialist states of the Cold War era were at best sceptical about the actions of such organisations as the RAF and the Red Brigades.

²⁴ Trotsky qtd. in Laqueur 63.

movements in China, South America, Africa, and the United States of America.²⁵ Some ideas that emerged from these movements are discussed below.

Maoism

Maoism was of considerable influence on the post-1969 militant left. Mao placed renewed emphasis on Marx's principle that "Force is the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one," insisting famously (or infamously) that "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun."²⁶

In "Long Live The Victory of the People's War," a 1965 speech given in commemoration of the 20th anniversary of China's victory over Japan, Chinese foreign minister Lin Pao insisted that "The seizure of power by armed force [...] is the central task and the highest form of revolution" not only in China but in "all other countries."²⁷ Quoting Mao's dictum that "the imperialists and all reactionaries are paper tigers," he stressed the power of popular uprisings in what amounted to a call for worldwide anti-capitalist insurgence:

²⁵ Cf. Curcio 54: "We wanted to learn from the new experiences being made in the world: we looked to the Black Panthers, the Tupamaros, to Cuba and the Bolivia of Che Guevara, to the Brazil of Marighela."

²⁶ Karl Marx, *Capital* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing, 1954) 751; Mao Tse-Tung, *Selected Works II* (Peking: Foreign Languages Publishing, 1965) 224. For a general survey of Maoist doctrine, cf. John Wilson Lewis, *Major Doctrines of Communist China* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1964).

²⁷ Lin Pao, "Defeat U.S. Imperialism by People's War", in: K.T. Fann and Donald C. Hodges (eds.), *Readings in U.S. Imperialism* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1971) 373.

The history of people's war in China and other countries provides conclusive evidence that the growth of the people's revolutionary forces from weak and small beginnings into strong and large forces is a universal law of development of class struggle, a universal law of development of people's war.²⁸

While the operations of the Red Brigades and the RAF hardly amounted to a "people's war," Italian and West German militants are likely to have taken heart at the notion that successful revolutions have small beginnings. More importantly, Maoism served as a powerful reminder that Marxism had always been intended as both a theoretical and a practical project, and that its praxis was conceived of at least partly as a violent one.

Ho Chi Minh

As mentioned above, the US war in Vietnam was a central grievance of both the student movement and the militant organisations of Italy and Germany. Following the findings of Bertrand Russell's International War Crimes Tribunal (discussed below) and the disclosure of US atrocities such as that at "Pinkville" (My Lai), interest in the Vietnamese revolutionary movement increased across Europe. The views of that movement were concisely

²⁸ Ibid.

summarised by Leninist Ho Chi Minh in his speeches and interviews.²⁹

In an April 1966 speech to the North Vietnamese National Assembly, Ho accused the USA of perpetrating "terrorist" acts in his country: "They [sc. the U.S. aggressors] have been launching large-scale terrorist operations. Wherever they go, they carry out the 'burn all, kill all, and destroy all' policy."³⁰ Identifying the USA as the chief enemy not only of Vietnam, but of "the world peoples," Ho pointed to the unbroken resistance of the Vietnamese and spoke in praise of such values as "unity" and "duty":

We have the responsibility and great honor to stand in the front line of the world people's struggle against U.S. imperialist aggression. For the independence and reunification of our country, for the security of the socialist camp, for the revolutionary cause and defense of peace of the world peoples, our entire people, united as one man, are resolved to fulfill their heavy but extremely glorious duty – to defeat the U.S. aggressors.³¹

As reports of US atrocities increased, it was this profound moralism that allowed Ho to win the hearts not only of the Vietnamese, but of sympathisers the world over. "Justice," he insisted, "is on the side

²⁹ Cf. Ho Chi Minh, On Revolution (New York/Washington/London: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967). For Ho's conversion to Leninism, cf. "The Path Which Led Me To Leninism" (On Revolution 5ff.).

³⁰ Ho Chi Minh 375.

³¹ Ho Chi Minh 377.

of our people."³² In another 1966 speech, Ho suggested that such righteousness, coupled with perseverance, could bring victory even against a militarily superior enemy:

Johnson and his clique should realise this: They may bring in 500,000 troops, 1 million, or even more to step up the war of aggression in South Viet-Nam. They may use thousands of aircraft for intensified attacks against North Viet-Nam. But never will they be able to break the iron will of the heroic Vietnamese people to fight against U.S. aggression, for national salvation. The more truculent they are, the further they will aggravate their crime. The war may still last ten, twenty years, or longer. Hanoi, Haiphong, and other cities and enterprises may be destroyed, but the Vietnamese people will not be intimidated! Nothing is more precious than independence and freedom. When victory day comes, our people will rebuild our country and endow it with bigger and more beautiful construction.³³

Ho's program – "Let the United States end its war of aggression in Viet-Nam, withdraw from this country all U.S. and satellite troops, and peace will return here at once"³⁴ – became that of leftists the world over. His candour and resolve were an inspiration to those

³² Ho Chi Minh 378.

³³ Ho Chi Minh 380. Compare the following statement from the RAF's hunger strike declaration of 6 February, 1981: "When the militant left grasps what imperialism discovered with each of its defeats - that its power ends when its violence is no longer a deterrent - the left will have fully solved the mystery of imperialism's apparent invincibility" (Hoffmann 287).

³⁴ Ibid.

Germans and Italians who decided to take up arms against their own governments, and against the imperialist institutions they suspected behind them. If the Vietnamese guerrillas could successfully stand up to the world's only capitalist superpower, there was hope for revolution – for war and “rebuilding” - at home.

Frantz Fanon

Doctor and psychiatrist Frantz Fanon (1925-1961) is generally considered the most important spokesman of the African liberation movement, and in particular of the Algerian revolutionaries. His most widely read book, The Wretched of the Earth, was published in France in 1961; Jean-Paul Sartre wrote the preface.³⁵

A committed Marxist, Fanon argues revolutionary struggle is necessarily violent. In particular, he insists decolonisation can never be a nonviolent process: “[...] decolonisation is always a violent phenomenon.”³⁶ Fanon arrives at this view not only through sober consideration of political power relations, but also by reflecting on the psychology of liberation; he believes the psychological damage suffered by the native can only be rectified through the experience of counterviolence: “The colonised man finds his freedom in and through violence.”³⁷ This point is underscored by Sartre in his

³⁵ Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth (New York: Grove Press, 1963).

³⁶ Fanon quotes Engels to support this view (Fanon 51).

³⁷ Fanon 67.

preface: "[...] no gentleness can efface the marks of violence; only violence itself can destroy them."³⁸

In accordance with the views of Lenin and Mao, Fanon rejects any distinction between (revolutionary) politics and military activity: "To fight the war and to take part in politics: the two things become one and the same."³⁹ The native's political education, Fanon insists, is simultaneously a military education.

Fanon's Marxist internationalism is evident in his insistence that the liberation struggles of African nations need to be viewed in the context of global insurrectionary violence. In particular, he relates African liberation to the struggle of the Viet Minh: "The great victory of the Vietnamese people at Dien Bien Phu is no longer, strictly speaking, a Vietnamese victory. Since July 1954, the question which the colonised peoples have asked themselves has been: 'What must be done to bring about another Dien Bien Phu? How can we manage it?'"⁴⁰

Fanon's anti-capitalism takes the forms of anti-imperialism and anti-Americanism; in a section of The Wretched of the Earth titled "Violence in the International Context," the Third World liberation movements become the paradigm of resistance to US imperialism.

³⁸ Sartre in Fanon 18.

³⁹ Fanon 105.

⁴⁰ Fanon 55.

Fanon's anti-Americanism may come as a surprise given that the colonisation of Africa was undertaken by European nations. Fanon is aware of the fact, which he points out repeatedly: "Europe is literally the creation of the Third World. The wealth which smothers her is that which was stolen from the under-developed peoples."⁴¹ While identifying the USA as the major imperialist power of the postwar era, he emphasises that a global socialist uprising will involve a revolt of the working class in Europe: "The closing of factories, the paying off of workers and unemployment will force the European working-class to engage in an open struggle against the capitalist regime."⁴² Sartre makes a moral point of this prediction, stressing the responsibility of Europeans to redress their ongoing complicity in colonialism: "[...] in Europe today, [...] even to allow your mind to be diverted, however slightly, is as good as being the accomplice in crime of colonialism."⁴³

Like a number of the writers discussed in this chapter, Fanon theorises the strategy of guerrilla warfare, characterised by mobility and unpredictability: "The fact is that in guerrilla warfare the struggle no longer concerns the place where you are, but the place where you are going."⁴⁴ The concept of guerrilla warfare,

⁴¹ Fanon 80ff.

⁴² Fanon 82. Cf. also Fanon 83: "This huge task which consists of re-introducing mankind into the world, the whole of mankind, will be carried out with the indispensable help of the European peoples [...]."

⁴³ Sartre in Fanon 20ff.

⁴⁴ Fanon 107.

transposed to an urban environment, was a central component of the thinking of the German and Italian militants.

Fanon does not write explicitly about "terrorism," but Sartre identifies the use of terror by those engaged in national liberation as the inevitable response to the terror of their oppressors: "You may fear or be feared; that is to say, abandon yourself to the dissociations of a sham existence or conquer your birthright of unity."⁴⁵ While never intended for application to First World nations, such remarks are likely to have inspired those European (and US) revolutionaries who saw no viable legal and nonviolent means for advancing their projects.

Jean-Paul Sartre and the Russell Tribunal

Bertrand's Russell International War Crimes Tribunal formed on 13 November, 1966, in response to Russell's appeal to investigate the nature of US activities in Vietnam. The Tribunal was comprised of a number of scholars from various countries and backgrounds, and not characterised by any particular political outlook. During its various meetings, it heard evidence from American GIs, including Special Forces troops, Vietnamese war prisoners, historians, and a number of figures respected for their contribution to both natural and human science. One of the questions it set out to answer was

⁴⁵ Sartre in Fanon 18. In the first German edition of The Wretched of the Earth (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1969), the phrase "You may fear or be feared" is translated as "Man bleibt entweder terrorisiert oder wird selbst terroristisch" ["You either remain terrorised or become a terrorist yourself"].

whether or not the US could reasonably be accused of committing war crimes, including that of genocide, in Vietnam.⁴⁶

The Tribunal concluded that US policy toward Vietnam had been aggressive from the 1950s onward. It based its judgement on the Nuremberg Tribunal's definition of "crimes against peace." The Russell Tribunal also concluded that the US attempted to deprive the Vietnamese of the rights to unity and dependence, explicitly recognised by the 1954 Geneva Accords, to which the US was a party. It pointed out that the US treated the provisional demarcation line between North and South Vietnam as a permanent political boundary and worked to prevent the general elections scheduled for July of 1956.⁴⁷

Among the evidence examined by the Russell Tribunal were reports of repeated and deliberate attacks on civilian targets such as dikes, dams, hospitals, schools, churches, and the Quinh Lap leper colony, which was attacked no less than thirty-nine times in 1965. The Tribunal established that in committing such actions, the United States violated the 1923 Hague Convention, which proscribes "aerial bombings destined to terrorize the population," as well as article 18 of the fourth Geneva Convention of 12 August, 1949,

⁴⁶ Like those that follow, these remarks on the Russell Tribunal paraphrase the introduction to the 1968 Beacon Press edition of Sartre's On Genocide (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968).

⁴⁷ The reason for the latter decision was candidly stated by President Eisenhower in his book Mandate for Change: "I have never talked or corresponded with a person knowledgeable in Indochinese affairs who did not agree that had elections been held [...] possibly 80% of the population would have voted for the Communist Ho Chi Minh as their leader [...]" (Eisenhower qtd. in Blum 126).

which states that "Civilian hospitals [...] may in no circumstances be the object of attack." The US was also shown to have violated its own constitution by disregarding treaties it had signed; Article VI, clause 2 of the US constitution states that "all Treaties made [...] under the Authority of the United States, shall be the supreme Law of the land [...]."

The Tribunal demonstrated that the US used chemical weapons illegal under the 1907 Hague Convention and the 1925 Geneva Protocol, as well as weapons clearly intended to cause a maximum amount of harm to civilians, such as CBU (cluster bomb unit) fragmentation bombs, which do not penetrate concrete or steel, but cause injuries that can only be treated by the most complex surgical operations, and result in lifelong medical complications when they do not cause death. It was also demonstrated that the US violated the principles of its own war manual ("The Law of Land Warfare") by employing defoliants on a massive scale, effectively starving and poisoning a large part of the civilian population.

Testimony presented before the Tribunal established that US treatment of war prisoners, which frequently took the form of torture, violated the third and fourth Geneva Conventions. The Tribunal also examined the nature of so-called "New Life" hamlets, into which approximately one third of the Vietnamese civilian population was transferred, and where it was in many cases

systematically starved. The Tribunal concluded that these activities amounted to genocide as defined in the International Convention on Genocide signed on 9 December, 1948.⁴⁸

Jean-Paul Sartre's essay "On Genocide" was unanimously endorsed by the Russell Tribunal.⁴⁹ In it, Sartre argued that the US was fighting a war of example to discourage the implementation of communist policies in Southeast Asia, or indeed anywhere, and that "The group which the United States wants to intimidate and terrorize by way of the Vietnamese nation" was "the human group in its entirety."⁵⁰ Based on the evidence brought before the Tribunal, Sartre concluded that the USA was committing the same crime as the Nazi dictatorship. Hitler had insisted that "A Jew had to be put to death, whoever he was, not for having been caught carrying a weapon or having joined a resistance movement, but simply because he was a Jew."⁵¹ US policy towards the Vietnamese was no different, Sartre argued; by implication, resistance to the USA was as justified as resistance to National Socialism.

⁴⁸ The Convention defines genocide as "any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group, such as: a) Killing members of the group; b) Causing serious mental or bodily harm to members of the group; c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group."

⁴⁹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *On Genocide* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968).

⁵⁰ Sartre 85. The point was already made by Herbert Marcuse. Cf. Herbert Marcuse, *Five Lectures*, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro/Shierry M. Weber (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970) 87: "The aim in Vietnam is to prevent one of the world's strategically and economically most important areas from falling under Communist control. It is a question of a crucial struggle against all attempts at national liberation in all corners of the world [...]."

⁵¹ Sartre 58.

Ernesto "Che" Guevara

In a speech held in Havana on 16 April, 1967, Che Guevara called for worldwide resistance to the imperialism of "the great enemy of mankind: the United States of America."⁵² This resistance, he argued, should take the form of guerrilla warfare, not just in the rural areas of the Third World, but also in the metropolises:

The struggle will be long, harsh, and its battle fronts will be the guerrilla's refuge, the cities, the homes of the fighters – where the repressive forces will go seeking easy victims among their families – among the massacred rural population, in the villages or cities destroyed by the bombardments of the enemy.⁵³

For Guevara as for many of his contemporaries, Vietnam was the paradigm of both US imperialism and successful guerrilla resistance. Arguably, the formation of the RAF was at least partly a response to Guevara's call for creating "two, three or many Viet Nams" in order to weaken US hegemony across the world:

What a luminous, near future would be visible to us if two, three or many Viet Nams flourished throughout the world with their share of death and their immense tragedies, their everyday heroism and their repeated blows against

⁵² Ernesto "Che" Guevara, "Create Two, Three, Many Viet Nams", in: Fann/Hodges 370.

⁵³ Fann/Hodges 367.

imperialism obliging it to disperse its forces under the attack
and the increasing hatred of all the people of the earth!⁵⁴

While Guevara was addressing Third World audiences, the left-wing militants of Germany and Italy applied his concept to the First World.⁵⁵ By some accounts, they wilfully misinterpreted him. In any case, the project envisioned by Guevara was clearly no longer to act only defensively, resisting US military action in Vietnam and elsewhere, but to wage a "total war" that targets not only the military installations of "the enemy," but also "his home" and "his centers of entertainment," thus denying that enemy "a moment of peace" and making him feel "like a cornered beast" – arguably a call for "terrorism."⁵⁶

Like some RAF documents, Guevara's speech refers to the importance of cultivating a strong sense of hatred:

Hatred as an element of struggle, relentless hatred of the enemy that impels us over and beyond the natural limitations of man and transforms us into effective, violent, selective and cold killing machines. Our soldiers must be thus; a people without hatred cannot vanquish a brutal enemy.⁵⁷

Unlike the RAF members, Guevara seems to have thought not so much of individual hatred as of a mass sentiment, a "galvanizing of

⁵⁴ Fann/Hodges 369.

⁵⁵ The statements released by the NAP during the di Gennaro kidnapping (6 May, 1975) may serve as an example of how Guevara's rhetoric was echoed by European militants. The statements typically end with the words: "Create and organise 10, 100, 1000 NAP" (eg. Progetto Memoria 1996 235).

⁵⁶ Fann/Hodges 368.

⁵⁷ Fann/Hodges 367.

the national spirit, preparation for harder tasks, for resisting even more violent repressions."⁵⁸ Nonetheless, his willingness to take political struggle outside the realm of sober strategic thinking by enlisting violent emotions seems to have impressed Baader, Ensslin, and others. The same is true of his militaristic rhetoric and contempt for death: "Wherever death may surprise us, it will be welcome, provided that [...] other men come forward to intone our funeral dirge with the staccato of machine guns and new cries of battle and victory."⁵⁹

Régis Debray

A student of Louis Althusser and professor of philosophy in Havana, Régis Débray wrote his Revolution in the Revolution? in close collaboration with Fidel Castro.⁶⁰ The book summarises Debray's experiences of guerrilla warfare in Bolivia, where he fought with Guevara, and proposes a strategy of international anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist insurrection. This strategy is based on the experiences of revolutionary struggle in Latin America. It is there, Debray argues, that the global struggle against US imperialism will be decided.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Fann/Hodges 370.

⁶⁰ Régis Debray, Revolution in the Revolution? (Evergreen: Black Cat, 1967). The French edition was also published in 1967.

Debray's central theoretical contribution to understanding revolutionary struggle in Latin America is the foco theory.⁶¹ The foco is a small group of guerrilla fighters that grows and splits into new groups, following the model of Fidel Castro's revolutionary army.⁶² It operates clandestinely, without close ties to the general population: "The revolutionary guerrilla force is clandestine. [...]" The guerrilla force is independent of the civilian population."⁶³

Despite not being tied to any part of civilian society, the foco mobilises the masses.⁶⁴ When successful, its military operations erode respect for government authority: "In order to destroy the idea of unassailability – that age-old accumulation of fear and humility vis-à-vis the patrón, the policeman, the guardia rural – there is nothing better than combat."⁶⁵ In this sense, each military victory is also a political victory. Accordingly, Debray insists repeatedly on the unity of the political and the military aspects of revolution: "[...] political struggle and armed struggle go hand in

⁶¹ The Spanish word foco (foyer in the French translation) refers to a mobile centre of guerrilla operations (as opposed to a conventional military base).

⁶² Cf. Debray 80: "Within the conditions peculiar to it, Cuba offers the example of a harmonious development of the guerrilla force, arising from a single central nucleus which grows naturally. This nucleus grows until the day when its troops, too numerous to be fed and supplied locally, must split up. From the mother cell, the Sierra Maestra, the other germ-carrying cells detach themselves, by natural selection."

⁶³ Debray 41.

⁶⁴ This is the import of Debray's much-cited metaphor of the "small motor" (the foco) that sets the "large motor" (the masses) in motion. Cf. Debray 88: "First, it is necessary to proceed from the small to the large. The smallest is the guerrilla foco, nucleus of the popular army. It is not a front which will create this nucleus, but rather the nucleus which, as it develops, will permit the creation of a national revolutionary front. [...] It is the 'small motor' that sets the 'big motor' in motion and precipitates the formation of a front, as the victories won by the small motor increase" (Debray 83f.).

⁶⁵ Debray 52.

hand; where one is weak, so is the other.”⁶⁶ He breaks with traditional Marxist-Leninist theory where it speaks of subordinating military to political organisations.⁶⁷ The foco operates in ideological, logistical, and organisational independence from all existing political parties. These have lost their revolutionary potential because they operate within the domain reserved for them within the existing state. They remain paralysed.⁶⁸

While mostly interested in problems of strategy, Debray comments occasionally on the moral character of the foco fighter. For example, he speaks of the fighter’s total dedication to the revolutionary cause, claiming that “To conquer is to accept as a matter of principle that life, for the revolutionary, is not the supreme good.”⁶⁹

Debray wrote about Latin America, not Europe, and his reflections are, for the most part, of a technical rather than a straightforwardly ideological nature. Nevertheless, they contributed

⁶⁶ Debray 50. Cf. also Debray 89 - “It is ridiculous to continue to oppose ‘political cadres’ to ‘military cadres,’ ‘political leadership’ to ‘military leadership.’ Pure ‘politicians’ – who want to remain pure – cannot lead the armed struggle of the people; pure ‘military men’ can do so, and by the experience acquired in leading a guerrilla group, they become ‘politicians’ as well” – and 106: “Under certain conditions, the political and the military are not separate, but form one organic whole, consisting of the people’s army, whose nucleus is the guerrilla army. The vanguard party can exist in the form of the guerrilla foco itself. The guerrilla force is the party in embryo.”

⁶⁷ Cf. in particular Debray 67ff. Arguably, Debray is restoring Lenin – his emphasis on concrete analysis of concrete situations and his emphasis on praxis – to honour. Debray repeatedly cites Lenin approvingly.

⁶⁸ “[...] the guerrilla force must be developed if the political vanguard is to be developed [...] the principal stress must be laid on the development of guerrilla warfare and not on the strengthening of existing parties or the creation of new parties [...] insurreccional activity is today the number one political activity” (Debray 116).

⁶⁹ Debray 58.

to the ideology of those European militants who conceived of themselves as the revolutionary vanguard in their own countries and echoed Debray's insistence both on independence from existing political organisations and the primacy of military operations.⁷⁰

Carlos Marighela

Carlos Marighela was a Brazilian guerrillero who died at the hands of the police in late 1969. A collection of his writings, For the Liberation of Brazil, was published in France in 1970, then banned following the intervention of the Brazilian intelligence service.⁷¹ In violation of the ban, a second edition was published collaboratively by twenty-three French publishing houses. Legal and illegal German translations circulated among German student protesters and militants in the early 1970s. Marighela's "Handbook of Urban Guerrilla Warfare" was particularly in demand.

Like Debray's essays, the handbook is not so much an ideological text as a collection of practical (strategic) insights. There can be little doubt, however, that many of its readers identified with the urban guerrillero as conceived of by Marighela, and took to heart passages such as this one (from the introduction):

To anyone who reads this handbook, and then decides he can no longer remain inactive, I can only urge that he follow the

⁷⁰ Debray hardly refers to Europe. In a footnote on p. 124, he does, however, speak warmly of a renewed European interest in forms of revolutionary struggle that venture outside the traditional arena of parliamentary politics.

⁷¹ Carlos Marighela, For The Liberation of Brazil (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971).

instructions I suggest, and join the struggle at once. For by any hypothesis, and under whatever circumstances he may find himself, the duty of a revolutionary is to make the revolution.⁷²

The urban guerrillero is a "political revolutionary" - "an armed man who uses other than conventional means for fighting against the military dictatorship."⁷³ He struggles "to set his country free, and is thus a friend of his people and their liberty. His battlefield consists of the major cities of our country."⁷⁴

The "military dictatorship" Marighela refers to is that of Brazil. His description of the urban guerrillero clearly situates him within the context of that nation's political struggles. Nonetheless, some of the guerrillero's traits had international appeal - in particular, his sense of moral obligation. As Marighela emphasises, the moral and political nature of the guerrillero's work sets him apart from the common criminal:

[Outlaws and guerrillas] are [...] totally different. The outlaw is concerned only with his personal advantage, and will quite indiscriminately attack exploiters and exploited - thus claiming many of the poorest as his victims. The urban guerrilla, on the other hand, is struggling for a political

⁷² Marighela 61. Cf. also the end of "Questions of Organization," an early document of Marighela's ALN (Action for National Liberation): "The duty of all revolutionaries is to make the revolution [...] We ask no one's permission or authorization to make the revolution [...] We are committed only to the revolution" (Marighela 60).

⁷³ Marighela 62.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

purpose, and attacks only the government, the large capitalists, and imperialist agents, especially North Americans.⁷⁵

The guerrillero is selfless. He does not seek to enrich himself, but only to bring down the mortal enemy of his people, a repressive puppet government: "The urban guerrilla is an implacable enemy of the government, and systematically works against the authorities, and those who rule the country and wield power."⁷⁶

To achieve his goal, the guerrillero engages in "expropriation" (bank robberies), the liberation of political prisoners, kidnapping, sabotage, and other operations intended "To force the army and the police, their commanding officers, senior and junior ranks, to leave the comfort and peace of their headquarters and routines, and keep them in a state of alert and permanent nervous tension, or lead them along false trails."⁷⁷ The guerrillero may also engage in "terrorism," which is defined by Marighela in terms of such activities as destruction of property, the planting of bombs, and arson:

By terrorism I mean the use of bomb attacks. These should be undertaken only by those who are technically proficient in using explosives, and completely level-headed in any crisis.

Terrorism may also include destroying human lives, and

⁷⁵ Marighela 62f.

⁷⁶ Marighela 63.

⁷⁷ Marighela 79.

setting fire to North American business establishments or certain plantations.⁷⁸

Marighela's guerrillero uses these tactics to do psychological as well physical damage. Like those of Debray's foco, his armed operations are forms of "armed propaganda." They reduce the population's respect for government authority while simultaneously increasing its support for the revolutionary project:

The work of armed propaganda really means the sum total of the actions achieved by the urban guerrillas, especially those carried out by force of arms. Modern mass media, simply by announcing what the revolutionaries are doing, are important instruments of propaganda. [...] it is vital to publish and distribute to everyone underground papers, manifestos and pamphlets attacking the misdeeds of the régime, or encouraging disturbances. The existence of this kind of press will also help to rally a lot of people to our cause.⁷⁹

While the guerrillero is aided in his struggle by underground publications, which would seem to presuppose a network of activists, he defines himself not through nonviolent political work, but through military operations. His most important activity is that of shooting his gun: "The whole purpose of the urban guerrilla, his

⁷⁸ Marighela 89.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

action and his survival, everything, depends on his marksmanship."⁸⁰

Stokely Carmichael

The same year Guevara called for global resistance to US imperialism, revolutionary violence of a Marxist mold was being advocated by the Black Power movement within the US. Speaking at the OLAS (Organisation of Latin-American Solidarity) conference in Havana, Stokely Carmichael directly related the aims of the Black Power movement to the struggle of the Third World. Pointing out the "bourgeois character" of the civil rights movement and the failure of that movement to recognise that the "problems" of African Americans are "an inherent part of the capitalist system," Carmichael spoke in favour of "armed resistance" to "the savagery of the white United States."⁸¹ He cited approvingly Guevara's concept of revolutionary hatred and spoke of the rioting "young bloods" of Watts as a prime example of this hatred in action.⁸² The "young bloods," Carmichael argued, are "the real revolutionary proletariat, ready to fight by any means necessary for the liberation of our people."⁸³

Ulrike Meinhof approvingly cited the actions of the Black Power movement in her columns. Unlike Mao and Guevara,

⁸⁰ Marighela 70.

⁸¹ Stokely Carmichael, "Black Power and the Third World", in: Fann/Hodges 346.

⁸² Fann/Hodges 347.

⁸³ Ibid.

Carmichael demonstrated that large-scale revolutionary violence was possible not only in colonised nations, but in the cities of the most advanced First World nation. If revolution had seemed possible, at least temporarily, in Watts, then perhaps it could also be staged in the capital cities of Europe.

George Jackson

Although his did not become a household name until after the formation of the first armed insurrectionary groups in Germany and Italy, George Jackson deserves to be mentioned as another influential member of the Black Panther Party. At age 18, Jackson was convicted of robbing \$70 from a gas station and convicted to a one-year-to-life sentence. In 1970, having already served ten years, he was accused, with other inmates, of murdering a guard at Soledad prison, California. The guard had been killed in retaliation for the murder of three black prisoners. Around this time, Jackson also became an honorary member of the Black Panther Party and a passionate spokesman for its revolutionary cause. He was gunned down in the courtyard of San Quentin prison during an alleged escape attempt on 21 August, 1971.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ For the controversy surrounding Jackson's death (by some accounts, he was murdered by the FBI), cf. Louis E. Tackwood, "My Assignment was to Kill George Jackson" (*The Black Panther*, 21 April, 1980, 4ff.); the *San Francisco Chronicle* of 28 August, 1971; and Howard Clark, *American Saturday* (New York: Richard Marek, 1981) 301ff. Cf. also Chapter 5 of *The COINTELPRO Papers*, by Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall (Cambridge: South End, 1990), for an overview of FBI operations directed against the Black Panther Party.

Jackson's letters from prison, published under the title Soledad Brother, were read widely in both the USA and Europe.⁸⁵ Jean Genet wrote the introduction, in which he identified racism as a central trait of US society, "diffused throughout the whole of America, grim, underhanded, hypocritical, arrogant."⁸⁶ He argued that "if the blacks do not undertake their own liberation, the whites will not make a move" and spoke warmly of the leaders of the Black Panther Party: "They are creating, each according to his means, a revolutionary consciousness."⁸⁷

In his letters, Jackson describes how he became a Marxist in prison: "I met Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, Engels, and Mao when I entered prison and they redeemed me. For the first four years I studied nothing but economics and military ideas."⁸⁸ He argues that African Americans live in a "colonial situation" characterised by "neoslavery," repeatedly dismisses the nonviolence of Martin Luther King, and proposes a US revolution based on the principles of guerrilla warfare.⁸⁹

For the militant left, Jackson provided both confirmation of their bleak view of US society, and inspiration. The combined Action Directe/RAF commando that launched the 1985 attack on the Rhein-Main-Air-Base was named after George Jackson. The authors

⁸⁵ George Jackson, Soledad Brother (New York: Bantam, 1970).

⁸⁶ Genet in Jackson 4.

⁸⁷ Genet in Jackson 8.

⁸⁸ Jackson 21.

⁸⁹ Jackson 12, 128, 169, 191, 223.

of the statement issued after the attack had this to say about their choice of name:

AD and we, the RAF, have named the commando after George Jackson because he is a reference point for us and all those who fight in the metropolises. Tough, single-minded, resolved to fight to the death, he fought for his own revolutionary identity and retained it against the permanent terror of the pigs. He embodies the rift in the metropolis, the struggle "in the belly of the beast," and the unity of revolutionary resistance in the metropolises.⁹⁰

Herbert Marcuse

In 1965, Robert Paul Wolff, Barrington Moore, Jr., and Herbert Marcuse published a collection of three philosophical essays on the subject of tolerance, titled A Critique of Pure Tolerance.⁹¹ Marcuse's contribution ("Repressive Tolerance") was of considerable influence on the international student movement, and foreshadowed the shift from legal to illegal struggle. In his essay, Marcuse evokes social contract theory and the notion of natural rights to argue there exists a natural right to resist – through violence and illegality, if need be – the existing political order:

⁹⁰ Hoffmann 359.

⁹¹ Robert Paul Wolff/Barrington Moore, Jr./Herbert Marcuse, A Critique of Pure Tolerance (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965).

[...] I believe there is a "natural right" of resistance for oppressed and overpowered minorities to use extralegal means if the legal ones have proved to be inadequate. Law and order are always and everywhere the law and order which protect the established hierarchy; it is nonsensical to invoke the absolute authority of this law and this order against those who suffer from it and struggle against it – not for their personal advantage and revenge, but for their share of humanity.⁹²

According to Marcuse, those whose resistance is genuinely such a defense of humanity have placed themselves outside the existing political order. They can square violence with their conscience because they know it to be revolutionary and progressive, rather than reactionary:

There is no other judge over them than the constituted authorities, the police, and their own conscience. If they use violence, they do not start a new chain of violence but try to break an established one. Since they will be punished, they know the risk, and when they are willing to take it, no third person, and least of all the educator and intellectual, has the right to preach them abstention.⁹³

In July of 1967, Marcuse joined the students of Berlin university for a discussion on left-wing resistance in the First World.

⁹² Wolff/Moore/Marcuse 116.

⁹³ Ibid.

His lecture "The Problem of Violence and the Radical Opposition"⁹⁴ offered a thumbnail sketch of the US student movement and developed a number of the ideas articulated in "Repressive Tolerance," including that of justified insurrectionary violence.

During the discussion following his lecture, Marcuse illustrated his distinction between progressive and reactionary violence with reference to the Russian civil war and the US war in Vietnam. He contrasted the violence of the aggressors (the White Army, the US armed forces) with the counterviolence of the revolutionaries (the Bolsheviks, the Viet Minh), and argued that revolutionary "terror" must not be conflated with that of the aggressors:

In my lecture I have emphasized that there are many different kinds of violence employed in defense and in aggression. [...] The violence of revolutionary terror, for example, is very different from that of the White terror, because revolutionary terror as terror implies its own abolition in the process of creating a free society, which is not the case for the White terror. The terror employed in the defense of North Vietnam is essentially different from the terror employed in the aggression.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Herbert Marcuse, Five Lectures 83ff.

⁹⁵ Marcuse 103. Marcuse applies this idea to the student movement and attacks the notion that nonviolence should be adhered to at all costs: "I have not asserted that nonviolence should be applied or preached as a principle of strategy. I have in no way equated humanitarianism and nonviolence. To the contrary I have spoken of situations in which it is precisely the interest of humanitarianism which leads to violence" (Marcuse 104). Cf. also Marcuse 105ff.: "No matter how nonviolent our demonstrations are or will be, we must expect

Marcuse's examples underscore a point he makes at the beginning of his lecture, which is that anti-capitalist resistance in the First World has to be seen in a global context: "Today radical opposition can be considered only in a global framework. Taken as an isolated phenomenon its nature is falsified from the start."⁹⁶

Like Ho, Sartre, Guevara, and many others, Marcuse identifies the US war in Vietnam as the event which revealed the destructive and inhuman nature of capitalism most clearly: "For these [oppositional] students the war revealed for the first time the essence of the established society: its innate need of expansion and aggression and the brutality of its fight against all liberation movements."⁹⁷ Again like Ho, he points to the success of the Vietnamese resistance as an indication that, in the struggle against US aggression, perseverance may compensate for any technological disadvantage:

Vietnam is [...] perhaps also a turning point in the development of the system, perhaps the beginning of the end.

For what has been shown here is that the human will and the human body with the poorest weapons can keep in check the

them to be met with institutional violence. We cannot calm ourselves with the thought that we are demonstrating peaceably, that therefore it's legal and nothing bad will happen. In this sense there is no general organization of 'manifest-material nonviolence.' What we must anticipate at every moment is that the established order will put into action the institutionalized violence at its disposal."

⁹⁶ Marcuse 47. Cf. also Marcuse 95: "From a general perspective I see the possibility of an effective revolutionary force only in the combination of what is going on in the third world with the explosive forces in the centers of the highly developed world."

⁹⁷ Marcuse 86.

most efficient system of destruction of all times. This is a world-historical novelty.⁹⁸

In other words, Vietnam highlights both the inhumanity and the vulnerability of international capitalism. There can be no solidarity with its defenders and representatives, Marcuse makes clear. His lecture ends with a scathing indictment of capitalism:

The fact is, that we find ourselves up against a system that from the beginning of the fascist period to the present has disavowed through its acts the idea of historical progress, a system whose internal contradictions repeatedly manifest themselves in inhuman and unnecessary wars and whose growing productivity is growing destruction and growing waste. [...] even if we see no transformation, we must fight on. We must resist if we want to live as human beings, to work and be happy. In alliance with the system we can no longer do so.⁹⁹

Rudi Dutschke

Rudi Dutschke - author of a dissertation on Lenin, spokesperson of the German League of Socialist Students (SDS) and the Extraparliamentary Opposition (APO) - was one of the main

⁹⁸ Marcuse 87. Cf. a similar statement on the importance of Vietnam from a 1982 RAF document: "In the struggle of the Vietnamese liberation front the long history of the liberation wars on the colonised continents was summarised, and the victory of the liberation front has decided the entire historical phase of the national and anticolonial liberation of the people oppressed by imperialism" (Hoffmann 294).

⁹⁹ Marcuse 94.

agitators of student protest. He was also a noted media figure, the victim of an extensive defamation campaign on the part of the right-wing newspaper Bild, and a personal friend of many later militants, among them "Bommi" Baumann and Holger Meins.

Following the attempt on Dutschke's life on 11 April, 1968, a collection of letters received by Dutschke in hospital was published under the title Briefe an Rudi D.¹⁰⁰ This collection contains a foreword by Dutschke in which he formulates a revolutionary program for the GFR. The program includes a (qualified) endorsement of militancy.

Dutschke begins his foreword by emphasising that the student movement is not in itself revolutionary; in fact, it is always in danger of being "integrated" into existing structures of power.¹⁰¹ Every genuine revolutionary movement is rooted in the proletariat. In order to contribute to the revolution, students and intellectuals must infiltrate state institutions and agitate the working masses. This is what Dutschke calls the "long march through the institutions."¹⁰²

Dutschke goes on to argue that no amount of propagandistic and agitative work obviates the need for some form of militancy. He explicitly distances himself from those who criticised the violent protests following the attempt on his life: "Theoreticians within and

¹⁰⁰ Rudi Dutschke et al, Briefe an Rudi D. (Frankfurt/Berlin: Edition Voltaire, 1968) (Voltaire Flugschrift 19).

¹⁰¹ The same point is made by Marcuse in his 1967 lectures.

¹⁰² Dutschke VII.

outside the SDS [...] declared: 'We ought not to have taken up arms.' They must be combated within our own ranks, because the escalation of the struggle will be inevitable."¹⁰³ The discussion on the appropriateness of violence is dismissed by Dutschke as "laughable."¹⁰⁴ Principles of non-violence, he insists, can only ever help to neutralise revolutionary movements: "The rhetoric of non-violence always means integration of the conflict."¹⁰⁵

Despite such claims, it would be facile to make of Dutschke an ideologue of "terrorism." Following Lenin, he dismisses "individual terror": "We don't combat individual 'character masks' in the metropolises by shooting them; in my opinion, that would be counterrevolutionary. The system will surely desire something of the kind, in order to strike us down more forcefully."¹⁰⁶ This last sentence shows Dutschke foresaw the usefulness of "terrorism" as a device for legitimating repression. What he advocated was not militancy for its own sake, but agitative work consistent with the fact that every genuine revolution has a military phase, for which it is necessary to prepare.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ Dutschke III. Dutschke is referring to those critical of the violent protests against Springer, the publisher of Bild, in April of 1968.

¹⁰⁴ Dutschke IV.

¹⁰⁵ Dutschke V.

¹⁰⁶ Dutschke IX-X.

¹⁰⁷ Rudi Dutschke's relationship to "terrorism" became the subject of a public debate following the funeral of Holger Meins on 18 November, 1974. During the funeral, Dutschke raised his fist and proclaimed: "Holger, the struggle goes on!" In a letter to the news magazine Der Spiegel, he later explained this did not amount to an endorsement of "terrorism": "Class struggle is a political learning process. Terror blocks every learning process on the part of the oppressed" (Der Spiegel 48/1974).

Ulrike Meinhof

Strictly speaking, Ulrike Meinhof was not an ideological precursor of the West German militants. Prior to actually joining the RAF, she produced, in the form of her columns for *konkret* magazine, what are not so much ideological statements as the reflections of an activist profoundly troubled by the escalation of political violence both in West Germany and elsewhere. Meinhof's 1967 and 1968 columns chart a gradual shift from deep outrage over state violence to a sense that, perhaps, the appropriate response to state violence is insurrectionary violence. This sense emerges from a conviction that nonviolent resistance remains agonisingly ineffective. Meinhof expressed this conviction clearly in an article on the Vietnam war: "Whoever has understood what is happening in Vietnam begins to walk around grinding his teeth and with a guilty conscience, begins to understand that his own inability to stop this war becomes complicity with those who wage it."¹⁰⁸ In the same article, Meinhof reported how West German activists fired rockets filled with flyers at a US military base, urging the soldiers not to allow themselves to be flown to Vietnam. She commented on the "daring" nature of such activism and the "scent of illegality" surrounding it, then directed

¹⁰⁸ Ulrike Meinhof, *Die Würde des Menschen ist antastbar* (Berlin: Klaus Wagenbach, 1980) 110. Jean-Paul Sartre expresses the same idea in *On Genocide*, where he writes of the US war in Vietnam: "This crime, carried out every day before the eyes of the world, renders all who do not denounce it accomplices of those who commit it [...]" (Sartre 1969 84ff.). For other important essays by Meinhof, cf. *Deutschland Deutschland unter anderm* (Berlin: Klaus Wagenbach, 1995). Cf. also Peter Brückner's *Ulrike Meinhof und die deutschen Verhältnisse* (Berlin: Wagenbach, 1976).

the reader's attention to the lives at stake in Vietnam. Without openly endorsing illegal resistance, Meinhof suggested it should not be dismissed too quickly:

This method of agitation is daring, surrounded by the scent of illegality. It means to save women and children, harvests and industries, human beings. Those who have the courage to use such methods of opposition obviously have the will to efficiency. That's worth thinking about.¹⁰⁹

In another article, from 1968, Meinhof discussed the Black Power movement's distinction between dissent and resistance: "Dissent is when I say: I disapprove of this and that. Resistance is when I make sure what I disapprove of can no longer happen."¹¹⁰ Meinhof immediately applied this distinction to the situation of West German activists. It is one thing, she argued, to express one's outrage over the publications of the right-wing Springer press, the bombing of Vietnam, and the repressive practices of middle Eastern and African regimes; it is another to actively try to make a change. Those who merely dissent, or who use these issues to garner political popularity, are "dishonest."¹¹¹ Demonstrations failed to prevent the attempt on the life of Rudi Dutschke, the "shackles of custom and decorum" were broken, and a new debate on violence and counterviolence was in order:

¹⁰⁹ Meinhof 1980 111.

¹¹⁰ Meinhof 1980 138.

¹¹¹ Meinhof 1980 139.

Now it's been shown there are other means at our disposal besides demonstrations, besides the means that failed because they could not prevent the attack on Rudi Dutschke, now the shackles of custom and decorum have been broken, a new debate about violence and counterviolence can and must take place.¹¹²

This article, declaring as it does the "failure" of mere dissent, marks a crucial benchmark in Meinhof's transformation from left-wing journalist to clandestine militant. In exploring the concept of resistance, Meinhof was not yet openly endorsing insurrectionary violence, but she was insisting on the need to rethink the left's perhaps overly hasty rejection of it.

A journal entry from this period betrays Meinhof's dissatisfaction with her middle-class lifestyle: "The house, the parties [...] all that's only partly enjoyable."¹¹³ While providing a basis for (legal) subversive activity, this lifestyle fails to satisfy an emotional need for solidarity. Worse, Meinhof's environment reduces her left-wing views to something quirky and clownish: "The role [...] conforms to my nature and my needs only very partially, because it appropriates my views as clownish views, forces me to say with a smile what is deadly serious to me, to all of us: grinning,

¹¹² Meinhof 1980 140. Compare the reply to the question "What are the Red Brigades?" offered in an April 1971 Red Brigades document: "They are groups of workers who have understood it's useless only to threaten verbally and go wild occasionally during a strike" (Progetto Memoria 1996 35).

¹¹³ Meinhof qtd. in Aust 49.

like a mask.”¹¹⁴ “All of us” clearly does not refer to Meinhof’s middle-class friends, but to those more serious - in fact “deadly serious” - about political resistance. When Meinhof did turn her back not only on her comfortable lifestyle, but also on her husband and children, in order to join a militant organisation, a desire for authenticity - for what the RAF members referred to as the identity of conviction and action, or the stripping of the mask – seems to have been one of her primary motivations.

Antonio Negri

While Italian university professor Antonio Negri never openly and unreservedly advocated the activities of any militant organisation, he has often been portrayed as a supporter of the Red Brigades and other Italian militants. In fact, his relationship to these militants very much resembles that of German advocate Horst Mahler to the RAF. Negri was never a member of any militant organisation, as Mahler was for some time, but both followed the activities of the militants closely and provided theoretical models to explain and occasionally justify those activities. Both were at least temporarily held in contempt by the militants themselves, as emerges from the RAF members’ venomous comments on Horst Mahler, quoted by Stefan Aust in Der Baader-Meinhof Komplex, and from Alberto Franceschini’s description of his heated encounter with Negri in

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

Mara Renato ed io. Both are still alive (unlike a significant number of militants), and continue to be treated with some degree of suspicion by the legislative authorities of their respective states. And while Negri (again, unlike Mahler) was never the ideologue of a militant organisation in any straightforward or unproblematic sense, many of his texts leave themselves open to wilful misinterpretation. Vague calls for a new form of communist struggle and ambiguous remarks on political violence have made it easy for Negri's enemies to condemn him as being at least partly responsible for the escalation of the militant conflict in Italy.

Operai e stato, a 1972 collection of essays by Antonio Negri and Sergio Bologna, contains reflections on the successes and failures of communist struggle in Italy, as well as offering practical suggestions for the future.¹¹⁵ From the point of view of his exculpation from the charge of insurrectionary agitation, Negri did himself no favours when he spoke, in an essay on the appropriate response to the crisis of capitalism, of the need for a "direct" attack on the state and quoted as a "certainty" the Maoist dictum that "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun." Embedded in one remarkably convoluted sentence is a revealing comment on the

¹¹⁵ Antonio Negri and Sergio Bologna, Operai e stato (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1972). Other important works by Negri include: Crisi e organizzazione operaia (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1974) (with Sergio Bologna and Paolo Carpignano), La forma Stato: per la critica dell'economia politica della Costituzione (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1977), and Il dominio e il sabotaggio: sul metodo marxista della trasformazione sociale (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1978).

“sterility” of any theoretical model that ignores the need for subversive political violence:

Without a doubt, every theory of labour power in the society of capitalist development and state control of the economy is entirely sterile, so long as it does not have as its main theme the problem of breaking the capitalist cycle at that special but necessary moment of development represented by the crisis, in the specific form that corresponds, on the side of the working class, to state violence – in an understanding of that network of repressive relations against which the actions of the worker can only make sense if they turn to the precise experience of destruction.¹¹⁶

Other statements by Negri, quoted by Zavoli in La Notte della Repubblica, lend further support to the view that whatever his disagreements with Franceschini and the Red Brigades, Negri was, in the 1970s, not only a fervently anti-capitalist intellectual, but also an advocate of political violence. While he was not the ideologue of any armed organisation, he was a radical intellectual who provided the militants and their supporters – whether willingly or unwillingly – with ideological “fodder” for the justification of their activities.

Members of the German and Italian militant left read most, if not all, the writers discussed above. This indicates the eclectic nature of

¹¹⁶ Antonio Negri and Sergio Bologna, Operai e stato (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1972) 233.

their ideology. When faced with the question of how to organise themselves and conduct their operations, the militants looked mostly to ideas propagated by Third World guerrilla fighters; simultaneously, they made use of traditional Marxism, and of insights garnered in Europe and the USA during the years of the student movement. Their ideological precursors ranged from political leaders in Southeast Asia to European professors of philosophy.

The rest of this chapter is devoted to exploring not the sources of militant ideology, but the ideology itself – the synthesis rather than its parts. This is done at the risk of glossing over significant ideological differences between and within the various organisations. While pointing out these differences where appropriate, the following pages focus mostly on similarities. In particular, they present an analysis of five central issues on which agreement was so widespread it makes sense to speak of a shared ideology at least as far as they are concerned.

Before entering into a discussion of these issues, it is worth addressing two fundamental questions: 1. Did the German and Italian militants formulate their overall aim in positive terms, and if so, what was it? 2. Who did the German and Italian militants think of themselves as representing? These questions are often overlooked as attention is focused on particular operations, or on statements of intent formulated in purely negative terms. Often, the

questions never even arise, as the stereotype of the militant as a demented thug or nihilist bent on destruction for its own sake is uncritically accepted.

Concerning the first question, it is true German and Italian militants seldom went out of their way to formulate their overall aim precisely. In part, this is because they had developed out of vibrant left-wing communities in which there was already considerable agreement on the ideals to be pursued; at least within these communities, there was an understanding about aims that obviated the need for detailed programs. There was also a sense – inherited from Marx and Lenin – that revolutionary processes are not entirely predictable, and that formulating too narrow and rigid a program is to lose sight both of larger ideals and of the frequently surprising possibilities for their realisation that present themselves in concrete historical situations. It might also be argued militancy was largely reactive; that is, it responded to existing conditions rather than being guided by a precise ideal.

In so far as the German and Italian militants were guided by a central aim, it can safely be said this was to bring about communist revolutions in those countries; what this meant in practice was not always entirely clear, although there was agreement on fundamental points. The 2 June Movement was not departing significantly from the aims of other organisations when it advocated the redistribution of property through the destruction of the

capitalist state and its replacement by workers' councils: "The struggle against the state and capital [...] is a struggle against those 1,3% of the population that control 74% of the means of production. [...] The aim is to create a democracy in the form of workers' councils."¹¹⁷ A similar future was envisioned by a GAP militant interviewed in 1970: "The problem is to make the transition to communism. To eliminate all political and administrative, parasitical bureaucracy and, at the same time, to modify the system of production; to expropriate the factories, the houses, the banks, and the land."¹¹⁸

Other statements are more vague and less obviously concerned with economic issues and property distribution. A document issued by the BR-PCC outlines the following program:

Freeing of time from necessary work – recomposition of the manifold human activities – a new purpose for human labour – satisfaction of all needs within the possibilities afforded by the development of the forces of production – forging of a new proletarian internationalism.¹¹⁹

A similar passage is found in the Strategic Command Resolution issued by the regular Red Brigades in February of 1978:

Emerging from the crisis means communism! It means: recomposition of manual and intellectual labour; the

¹¹⁷ Viett 116.

¹¹⁸ Progetto Memoria 1996 26.

¹¹⁹ Progetto Memoria 1996 485.

organisation of production in accordance with the needs of the people, in accordance with "use value" rather than with "exchange value" or the profits of a handful of capitalists and multinational corporations. All of this is historically possible today.¹²⁰

Arguably, these two passages express the embarrassment over the question of formulating precise aims mentioned above. While they seem to specify an agenda, this "agenda" consists essentially of slogans whose concrete meaning is not elaborated. There is no shortage of detailed theoretical analysis in documents such as the Strategic Command Resolutions, yet this analysis is largely devoted to existing conditions; the attempt to make the transition from a critique of the present to a program for the future typically remains somewhat half-hearted.

Often, the aim of bringing about a communist revolution was paired with an analysis of the political situations in Germany and Italy that devoted considerable attention to their global context, and in particular to Third World liberation movements. When the RAF explicitly formulated its aims, it did so in terms of international anti-imperialist struggle:

In any case the aim was to achieve the collapse of imperialism through the collaboration of Third World liberation movements, protected by the socialist states, with resistance

¹²⁰ Progetto Memoria 1996 92.

movements in the metropolises of the USA and Europe, thereby paralysing the First World to such an extent that it can no longer function.¹²¹

The second of the two questions raised – Who did the militants think of themselves as representing? – is the question of the revolutionary subject. In simple terms, organisations such as the RAF thought of themselves as representing those most affected by capitalist oppression, be it the people of the Third World, the First World proletariat, or the maladjusted and criminalised youth of the metropolises. Politicised by the armed attack on the state, these groups would become the agents of revolution (the revolutionary subject). Crucially, the politization of the masses and the emergence of a revolutionary subject were not something to wait for, but events for which “armed struggle” would serve as a catalyst: “The social agents of revolution – and this is orthodox Marx – are formed only in the process of the transformation itself, and one cannot count on a situation in which the revolutionary forces are there ready-made, so to speak, when the revolutionary movement begins.”¹²²

For the early Red Brigades, the revolutionary subject consisted essentially of northern Italy’s new proletariat: the factory workers of Turin and Milan, most of whom had travelled from the impoverished south in the 1950s. From the beginning, the RAF

¹²¹ Schiller 144f.

¹²² Marcuse 64.

spoke as much of the Third World as of the GFR. When it identified a potential revolutionary subject at home, it did so not in terms of class, but of wider (existential) categories:

In the metropolises, the system has succeeded in pulling the masses down into its own filth to the point where they seem largely to have lost the sense of their condition as objects of exploitation and oppression, and can hardly imagine or desire anything other than a car, a vacation, or a tiled bathroom. It follows from this, however, that the revolutionary subject is anyone who has freed himself from these obsessions and refuses to be complicit in the crimes of the system. Whoever discovers his political identity in the liberation struggle of the Third World, whoever refuses to go along with it all any longer is the revolutionary subject – a comrade.¹²³

In other words: "Whoever begins to fight and offer resistance is one of us."¹²⁴

The five ideological issues that feature most prominently in the documents issued by the German and Italian militants can be formulated as questions: 1. What ought to be the relationship between revolutionary theory and revolutionary practice? 2. What

¹²³ Hoffmann 166.

¹²⁴ Hoffmann 167. A number of writers have explained the RAF's internationalism by arguing the hypothetical "world proletariat" was intended to compensate for the absence of a strong West German labour movement. Cf. eg. Brückner 161: "I wonder whether it's not because of the specific situation of the left in West Germany that many groups [...] invoke a world proletariat in the absence of a working class organised in the Italian manner."

ought to be the relationship between legal and illegal operations? 3. What ought to be the relationship between the violence of the state and revolutionary counterviolence? 4. How ought the character of the revolutionary to be constituted? 5. What view of the individual ought the revolutionary to take?

By and large, these questions were answered as follows: 1. Revolutionary theory should always be accompanied by revolutionary practice. 2. Legal operations may be useful to the revolutionary, but revolutionary action is inextricably tied to illegality. 3. Revolutionary action cannot fail to provoke the violence of the state, which must be countered by revolutionary violence. 4. The revolutionary's actions must conform entirely to his or her convictions; he or she must achieve the identity of personal and political morality. 5. Individuals who resist or impede revolutionary action ought not to be thought of as individuals, but in terms of their sociopolitical function.

The following sections present passages from various documents circulated by the Red Brigades, the RAF, and others organisations, as well as remarks made by their members, to substantiate the claims that these issues were indeed central to the militants, and that they were answered in the way indicated.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Whether or not these answers were satisfactory, and if not, what more satisfactory answers might look like, is an issue that cannot be examined here. It concerns the problem of ethics and revolution and the relation of means to ends, as Herbert Marcuse argued convincingly in his 1964 lecture "Ethics and Revolution." For Marcuse's insightful comments on the RAF and the Schleyer-kidnapping, cf. "So sieht in der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft der Fortschritt aus," a

Theory and practice

From Marx's insistence (in his "Theses on Feuerbach" and elsewhere) that theory is not an end in itself, but a device whose value derives from its usefulness in the context of political praxis, to Lenin's dictum that theoretical frameworks must remain flexible, open to revision in the light of "concrete analysis of the concrete situation," the Marxist tradition is characterised by an emphasis on the primacy of action and the secondary nature of theory. Hence the authors of the RAF's first public statement, "The Concept of the Urban Guerrilla," revealed the extent to which they had internalised the spirit of Marxist discourse when they wrote: "The class analysis we require cannot be done without a revolutionary praxis, without revolutionary initiative."¹²⁶ The statement is preceded by a long rant against the purely theoretical work of many putatively "revolutionary" organisations – work characterised by a fetishisation of Marxist texts, excessive jargon, and a refusal to commit to genuine political praxis. Where it is not accompanied by practical activity, the RAF ideologues insisted, the elaboration of Marxist theories is nothing but idle chatter. Theory is not in itself subversive, and the theoretician remains in bad faith if he is not

discussion with Hans Christoph Buch, in: Gespräche mit Herbert Marcuse (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1978). For more general and theoretical examinations of the relation between revolution and terror, cf. in particular Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Humanisme et terreur (Paris: Gallimard, 1947).

¹²⁶ Hoffmann 39.

prepared to translate his words into action. Rather than theorising political struggle, the revolutionary must engage in it. The necessity of theoretical work is not given before the fact, but can only result from specific revolutionary activities. Praxis comes before theory, and cannot be understood purely by means of theory.

Without praxis, reading Capital is just middle-class higher education. Without praxis, programs are just talk. Without praxis, proletarian internationalism is just showing off. To take the position of the proletariat theoretically is to take it practically.

The Red Army Faction speaks of the primacy of praxis. Whether it's right to organise armed resistance now depends on whether it's possible; whether it's possible can only be determined practically.¹²⁷

In this sense, the liberation of Andreas Baader and the formation of the RAF constituted a return to the primacy of praxis as understood by Marx – the motives for it were not merely propagandistic, but pragmatic: “We’re not going to talk about ‘armed propaganda’; we’re going to do it. The liberation wasn’t for propagandistic reasons, but to get the guy out of there.”¹²⁸

In her memoir Nie war ich furchtloser, Inge Viett quotes the manifesto of the 2 June Movement, which expresses similar thoughts. A revolutionary movement, it insists, can only establish

¹²⁷ Hoffmann 40.

¹²⁸ Hoffmann 44.

its solidarity with the proletariat through revolutionary practice. Theory is insufficient; the revolutionary vanguard is characterised by its staging of concrete political activities the working classes can relate to directly, without the mediation of political discourse. Recalling the RAF members' insistence that revolutionary practice can only be understood by those who engage in it, not by those whom it merely provides with material for theoretical considerations, the manifesto of the 2 June Movement insists on the need to learn the techniques of political struggle first hand. These techniques are those of armed insurrection.

And it is precisely the examination of the German labour movement that shows us more than clearly that we must learn to combat. But combat is something we can only learn through praxis. For our purposes, praxis means: establishing militant legal groups, establishing militias, establishing an urban guerilla – right up to the people's army.¹²⁹

The Marxist is not so much concerned with analysing as with changing the world, and this can only be achieved through praxis. Hence the founders of the 2 June Movement concluded, with characteristic contempt for the "formulas" of theoreticians, that the overthrow of the capitalist order can only be achieved through

¹²⁹ Vielt 116. The idea of "learning to combat" through militant praxis is a staple of Third World liberation movements. Cf. eg. the quotations from Fatah publications assembled by Helga Baumgarten in her study of Palestinian militancy: Helga Baumgarten, Befreiung in den Staat (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1991) 194.

militancy: "The regime of the pigs will not be abolished by formulas, but by revolutionary struggle."¹³⁰

Legality and illegality

The German and Italian militants of the 1970s justified their activities by insisting that legality cannot be treated as a fetish. The laws of the state derive from the class interests represented by that state; hence those representing other (revolutionary) interests must not be afraid to violate these laws. In the words of the RAF ideologues: "Legality is a question of power."¹³¹

Rather than guaranteeing some form of fair play, the laws of the capitalist state are a weapon used against both the militant and the non-militant left: "Legality becomes a fetish when those who insist on it ignore that phone calls are listened in on legally, mail is checked legally, neighbours are questioned legally, informers are paid legally, surveillance is legal."¹³² Furthermore, legal operations that are truly effective in subverting existing power structures will be rendered illegal. As the members of the 2 June Movement declared: "Success is achieved only through operations the rulers call 'illegal.' A successful legal operation is rendered illegal. Those who refuse to accept this cannot be called revolutionary."¹³³

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Hoffmann 45. This idea is a staple of revolutionary Marxism.

¹³² Hoffmann 47. The notion of legality as a "fetish" is echoed in a 1975 Red Brigades document. Cf. Progetto Memoria 1996 55.

¹³³ Viêt 115. The position of the Red Brigades was much the same. Cf. Progetto Memoria 1996 34: "That revolutionary struggle frequently takes the form of direct

In fact, the original organisational concept of the RAF seems to have insisted on a combination of legal and illegal work.¹³⁴ In most cases, this straddling of the dividing line between legality and illegality proved impractical, and those operations that were legal had to be abandoned in order not to endanger those that were illegal.¹³⁵ What remained was total commitment to illegal operations, which amounted to total exclusion from conventional society. Some would argue the seeds of the increasingly self-referential thinking of the militants lay here; the militants themselves chose to believe that, rather than alienating the masses, they were preparing mass revolution: "Overcoming obedience to the middle class legal order is an essential precondition for revolutionising the masses."¹³⁶

action organised clandestinely is a fact that results not so much from us as from the repressive measures of the rulers."

¹³⁴ This model is also proposed in a June 1975 NAP document. Cf. Progetto Memoria 1996 240: "We feel it is possible, in Italy today, to organise oneself efficiently in a non-clandestine manner. One must be aware, however, that the harshness and violence of the class conflict ask of all revolutionary comrades, whatever sector of society they operate in, that they recognise the necessity, on their part, to establish levels of clandestinity that enable them not only to resist the repression they will encounter, but also to practice efficiently and with maximum security the illegal and violent forms of struggle their work among the masses, whatever it may be, necessarily requires and will continue to require."

¹³⁵ This development, and the shift to clandestine forms of organisations it entails, seems to lie in the logic of militancy. As Renato Curcio reports, the increasing clandestinity of the Brigades was not so much an ideal as a necessity: "The decision to become clandestine was not a free choice, but a step necessary for escaping the police. We became clandestine because we were all on the point of being arrested" (Curcio 63).

¹³⁶ Hoffmann 88.

Violence and counterviolence

While incarcerated in Stammheim, Andreas Baader considered the possibility of writing a book-length explication of the RAF's ideology. His suggested title was "The gun talks."¹³⁷ "The gun ends the deadlock" was another slogan coined by Baader, a propagandistic expression of his view that armed insurrection is the most effective means of escaping the determinism of existing social and political conditions: "Every armed operation subjugates the pressure of the condition to the pressure of events."¹³⁸

Peter Homann, an acquaintance of Baader who was also briefly a member of the RAF, has a story to tell about a possible source of this rhetoric. Recalling Baader's criminal activities as a drug-dealer in the mid-sixties, Homann writes:

Baader met a black dealer. During one meeting, he tried to "double cross" the African American, who had come with full pockets, and to take the dope without paying in cash. The black man thrust a gun into his gut and alluded to the classic line from the film The Big Sleep: 'Want me to let my little friend talk like the gangster in the movies?'"¹³⁹

"Baader was deeply impressed," Homann recalls. As disheartening as it may be to those who would like to draw a clear distinction

¹³⁷ Baader qtd. in Aust 270. The phrase has a more "proletarian" ring to it in German, as Baader uses a slang expression for "gun" ("Knarre") which has no corollary in English.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Peter Homann, "Nicht andere nur, auch uns töten wir...", Der Spiegel 43/2002 174.

between petty crime and the activities of the RAF, the experience that demands issued at gunpoint are hard to argue with seems very much to have informed the thinking of at least one German militant.

The classic justification of left-wing militants for violence amounts to the claim that violence was not introduced into the struggle by revolutionaries, but always existed. More specifically, insurrectionary violence is only ever a reaction to state violence.¹⁴⁰ Unlike state violence, it is not repressive but liberating. Far from wanting to perpetuate violence, the militant ultimately aims to abolish it. In the words of former RAF member Margrit Schiller:

If one rejects violence, despises it – and I despise violence! – that can only mean doing everything in one's power to abolish this despised violence. The violence of the rulers is that of inhumanity and oppression. Violence against it is violence against inhumanity and oppression, i.e. humane and liberating violence.¹⁴¹

More than in the putatively pathological characters of individuals, the "origins of terrorism" lie in the recognition that state violence exists, and in a sense that mere activism is often powerless against its ruthlessness.¹⁴² The 2 June Movement, named for a

¹⁴⁰ Cf. the 1974 political declaration by the XXII October Group reprinted in: Progetto Memoria 1996 29: "And don't denounce our violence; it's a conditioned response and nothing compared to the middle-class ferocity we've suffered helplessly for years, systematically for centuries."

¹⁴¹ Schiller 105. This statement was read by Schiller during her trial.

¹⁴² This point was made by a GAP militant interviewed in December of 1970. Cf. Progetto Memoria 1996 18: "The development of the struggle has led to a counteroffensive, the development of a repressive strategy on the part of the

paradigmatic example of ruthless state violence (the shooting of an unarmed protester), conceived of itself as a revolutionary organisation only in so far as it was irreducibly militant: "The military program of the 2 June Movement cannot be separated from its political program and is not secondary to it."¹⁴³

In an interview with Sergio Zavoli, former Italian militant Paola Besuschio took a more critical view of counterviolence. She blamed an "entirely materialistic and mechanistic" world view for fostering a sense that "nothing counts except power relations."¹⁴⁴ Whoever holds such a view, Besuschio argued, will necessarily prepare for engaging in violent political operations: "Whoever is convinced that nothing counts except power relations, in the factory, in society, on the street, [...] in government, between states [...] will not only prepare to use force, but will consider the use of violence the highest form of political intelligence."¹⁴⁵

Besuschio explained the actions of the Red Brigades on the basis of

bosses and the state, on all levels, including the specifically military one of counterrevolutionary war [...] the development and deployment of capital's entire arsenal of repression [...] forces [...] the revolutionary left to undertake a qualitative leap in its forms of organisation and struggle. [...] there arises the need [...] for a militant organisation comprised of left-wing comrades."

¹⁴³ Viètt 114. A similar statement is found in an April 1971 Red Brigades document. Cf. Progetto Memoria 1996 34: "It's completely extraneous to our work to 'separate' 'political organisms' from 'military organisms.'" Cf. also the 1975 Strategic Command Resolution, in particular the section on the urban guerrilla: "In the urban guerrilla there is no contradiction between thinking and acting militarily and giving politics the highest priority" (Progetto Memoria 1996 55). The idea is reiterated in a second resolution from 1978: "There no longer being a political phase distinct from the military one, because in the imperialist State reform and annihilation co-exist and are functional, the only way of making political headway in the struggle is with gun in hand" (Progetto Memoria 1996 67).

¹⁴⁴ Paola Besuschio qtd. in Zavoli 498.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

this world view. Indeed it seems a plausible explanation of the choices made by both Italian and German militants.

Identity

One of the more easily overlooked statements in an early RAF document concerns the relation of the revolutionary's personal convictions to his or her practical choices – the problem of political identity, formulated as follows by the founders of the RAF: "Under the given circumstances, a revolutionary political praxis [...] requires the permanent integration of the individual's character and his or her political motivation, i.e. political identity."¹⁴⁶ It is this concept of political identity that former RAF member Margrit Schiller referred to when she explained her choice to become militant: "I searched for the identity of political and personal morality, and this search led me to join the RAF."¹⁴⁷ The crux of the problem was formulated by Gudrun Ensslin when she declared: "We have learned it is wrong to talk without acting."¹⁴⁸

Before becoming militant, all RAF members went through a period of "talking without acting." As politically conscious but non-militant citizens, they were subject to "middle-class schizophrenia."¹⁴⁹ Ulrike Meinhof's journal entry on the rift between

¹⁴⁶ Hoffmann 28.

¹⁴⁷ Schiller 86.

¹⁴⁸ Ensslin qtd. in Aust 69f.

¹⁴⁹ "This middle-class schizophrenia goes so far that, in desiring a democratic society, one helps create a fascist society" (Ensslin qtd. in Aust 75).

her political views and her middle-class lifestyle, quoted above, addresses this "schizophrenia." As long as her political activity took the form of polemical journalism, Meinhof seems to have felt she was not acting at all, only talking, and that she was complicit in consolidating the very power structures she rejected. Meinhof's conversion to militancy, which took the form of a complete and irreversible break with her family and friends, was a conversion to what Stefan Aust calls Gudrun Ensslin's "new morality."¹⁵⁰

Shortly after being arrested, former militant Ulrich Scholze offered his account of the militant's typical "psychological disposition," which very much resembles Ensslin's "revolutionary morality." Scholze spoke of the "unity of reason and emotion" resulting from the conviction that legal reform merely consolidates the structures of capitalist society: "You have to be convinced emotionally that all reform efforts merely serve to stabilise the social order and consolidate capitalism. The unity of reason and emotion that then exists is the condition for resolute action."¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ "Gudrun Ensslin argued with the zeal of a missionary for a new morality, the morality of revolutionaries who dismiss their personal background and burn all bridges behind them" (Aust 88).

¹⁵¹ Scholze qtd. in Aust 138. In her 1999 memoir, Inge Viett described her own development of this "psychological disposition," which many would dismiss as fanaticism, as the most joyful experience of her life – a source of pride and independence, and of a new sense of responsibility: "I had a proud, powerful feeling of total devotion to a cause for which people had sacrificed their strength and their life throughout the centuries. I was fulfilled and satisfied by my existential choice to fight for the revolution" (Viett 119f.). (Scholze's rejection of reform in favour of revolution is of course a staple of revolutionary Marxism, and of the ideologies of the German and Italian militant left. Cf. eg. this passage from a 1978 Red Brigades resolution, reprinted in Progetto Memoria 1996 66: "Reformism is never distinct from annihilation. It's not something else. Reformism

Many Italian militants have commented on their own biographies as examples of total dedication to the revolutionary ideal. In doing so, they describe their own achievement of political identity. Anna-Laura Braghetti, one of the Red Brigades members involved in the Moro kidnapping, says the following about her life as a militant: "I had left everything and everyone from one day to the next, my work, my family, and I had irrevocably immersed myself in a world peopled only by 'revolutionaries.'"¹⁵² Another Italian militant, Sergio Segio of Prima Linea, describes the adoption of an increasingly self-referential way of thinking as the inevitable consequence of an agonising sense of alienation from conventional society. Before opting for militancy and clandestinity, Segio suffered from the sense of an "intolerable" rift between his social ideals and the reality of the society in which he lived – the "schizophrenia" described by Ensslin and Meinhof:

Words are only comprehensible to the extent that they are exchangeable and part of a conception of man that is in some sense mutual. I think there are developments that lead up to a wall. Because the expression of some sentiments, of some tensions that one experiences, is in a sense prohibited. If an idea of progress, or of material well-being, of success at the workplace or of a rewarding family situation render my life

is not a working class policy, but a policy employed by the imperialist state against the metropolitan proletariat."

¹⁵² Anna-Laura Braghetti and Francesca Mambro, Nel cerchio della prigione (Milan: Sperling & Kupfer, 1995) 61.

such that I feel it is not worth living and experience it as intolerable – or if there exists no social space for negating it, or finding an alternative – well, I gradually go out of my mind, because I feel this otherness growing inside of me and find no vent for it, no possibility of communication, because of this cancer that slowly devours me.¹⁵³

Regardless of whether or not Ensslin's concept of political identity can legitimately be equated with fanaticism, one of its origins would seem to lie in the sense of frustration identified by Segio.¹⁵⁴

The individual

One of Laqueur's more puzzling pronouncements on West German terrorism concerns the RAF's choice of targets. In The Age of Terrorism, Laqueur speaks of "several industrialists and bankers who were not particularly prominent and who, for all one knows, might have been picked at random from a telephone directory."¹⁵⁵

The RAF certainly did not select its victims at random, and

¹⁵³ Segio qtd. in Zavoli 372.

¹⁵⁴ It is not clear the concept of fanaticism can rightly be applied to this problem. In simple terms, the problem of identity is simply that of ensuring one's actions are coherent with one's ideals – in the words of a GAP militant: "the dilemma of whether or not to be consistent with oneself" (Progetto Memoria 1996 19). One of the more controversial comments on this problem was made by Heiner Müller. Cf. Heiner Müller, Krieg Ohne Schlacht. Leben in zwei Diktaturen (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1999) 312ff.: "The heart of the problem is that killing is conceivable. If one finds it necessary, one does not have the right not to do it oneself: simply to delegate it would be immoral." Whatever the merits of Müller's concept of delegation, he rightly points to the profound moral sentiment that unquestionably underlies the decisions taken by Ensslin and others. His remarks are a much needed corrective to the facile identification of the revolutionary with the common criminal.

¹⁵⁵ Laqueur 1987 237.

Laqueur's remark that the industrialists and bankers it targeted were "not particularly prominent" betrays the misconception that a militant left-wing organisation is more interested in attracting public attention than in striking at those individuals it perceives to be at the heart of the capitalist system, be they prominent or not. Arguably, Hanns-Martin Schleyer owes much of his "prominence" precisely to the fact that he was targeted by the RAF – had he not been, much of the German public would have remained ignorant of this NSDAP member turned business executive, a man who exemplified like few others the continuities between the Third Reich and the German Federal Republic.

What Laqueur fails to take into account is the peculiar concept of the individual that informed the thinking of many left-wing militants. Individuals that are targeted by militants mark the point where the sphere of the purely personal intersects with the larger mechanisms of state oppression. The German and Italian militants were wont to ignore the ramifications of their actions in the personal sphere – the shock and grief of friends and family members – by reducing the individuals they targeted to their symbolic roles or their function in the larger structures of social and political power. It is here that Marxism's traditional disregard for the individual – the notion that what matters historically is not the behaviour of single people, but the development of institutions and the growth of mass sentiment – bore particularly strange fruits.

Commenting on Sergio Zavoli's study of Italian militancy, Arnaldo Giuliani has remarked on the dehumanisation of individuals in the ideology of the Red Brigades and other militants. His comment may serve as an example of how the militant conception of the individual as a symbol holds the power to shock those who view individuality in more traditional humanist terms: "What struck me [...] was that judgement of the victims not as men, but as symbols, and hence as targets."¹⁵⁶

Many pronouncements by former Italian militants bear out this observation. As one former militant has said: "The choices were made with regard not to human objectives, but to contexts. That is, we had already erased the humanity of those we killed."¹⁵⁷ Another militant has described this willingness to understand individual enemies only in terms of their sociopolitical context as the result of an overly ideological way of thinking: "Then, everything was mediated by ideology, and hence by seeing persons as symbols. To me, that magistrate or any other person we decided to target was not a person, but a symbol."¹⁵⁸

A statement made by Ulrike Meinhof shortly after her decision to join the RAF may serve as a concise expression of the mentality that succeeded in reconciling a putatively humanist project with the

¹⁵⁶ Arnaldo Giuliani qtd. in Zavoli 11.

¹⁵⁷ Costa qtd. in Zavoli 380.

¹⁵⁸ Russo qtd. in Zavoli 385.

shooting of those who happened to find themselves on the wrong side of the conflict:

When you're dealing with the cops here, people argue they're brutal because of their function, they have to beat people up and shoot because it's their function, and because of their function they have to oppress, but that's only the uniform, it's only the function, and the man that wears it may be a nice guy at home. That's a problem, and of course we say the cops are pigs, we say the guy in uniform is a pig, he's not a human being, and that's how we have to deal with him. That is, we mustn't talk to him, and it's wrong to talk to these people, and of course it's alright to shoot.¹⁵⁹

Given the profound moralism of the RAF members – arguably a consequence of their religious backgrounds – the taking of human life remained for them a “problem.” They solved it by adopting the Black Power movement’s rhetoric of the policeman as “pig” – that is, by dehumanising the enemy.

The five ideological issues identified here constitute the core of a worldview that was shared by the German and Italian militants. Yet there is some difference of emphasis between the statements issued by the German and Italian groups. As will be shown in the following chapters, this difference of emphasis also characterises

¹⁵⁹ Meinhof qtd. in Aust 24.

the memoirs, novels, and films that emerged from the two countries. While the question of violence is so central to militancy that it received roughly equal attention from the German and Italian militants, the other four issues did not. Questions of praxis and illegality are elaborated at far greater length in the RAF documents than in those of the Red Brigades; the first RAF statement is devoted almost exclusively to these two issues. By contrast, questions of individual responsibility recur with far greater frequency in Italian texts. While the classic formulation of the problem – Ulrike Meinhof’s reduction of the policeman to a “pig” – comes from a RAF member, it remains an informal statement; most of the “official” RAF statements do not seriously address the issue. It does, however, become something of a leitmotif in the statements by Italian militants. Similarly, the concept of revolutionary identity is first formulated by RAF members, but subsequently disappears from their discourse, whereas it recurs constantly in statements by Italian militants. This will become evident in the next chapter, which analyses the memoirs of German and Italian militants. In so far as they relate more directly to the subjective experience of the militant, the questions of individuality and identity lend themselves to treatment in the context of the memoir; they are discussed at far greater length, however, in the Italian memoirs. On the other hand, the more “abstract” questions of praxis and illegality, which would seem to be less suited to the

memoir format, are in fact quite central to German memoirs, effectively displacing other ideological problems. This difference of emphasis persists throughout the novels and films devoted to militancy. How is it to be explained?

A first answer can be given here, with reference to the differences in the historical development of German and Italian militancy. It was pointed out in the preceding chapter that Italian militancy was more rooted in mass sentiment (the labour movement) than its German counterpart. Emerging during the decline of student protest, and characterised by the persistent absence of a labour movement, German militancy remained largely isolated from the general population and its concerns. This led to a certain didactic and proselytizing tendency in German militancy; there seems to have been a sense that militancy had first to be justified theoretically. In Italy, this was not as great a concern. The Italian militants already had an "audience" that shared their revolutionary outlook. What they introduced to the discourse of militancy was less an attempt at theoretical justification than a "phenomenological" description of the experience of militancy; speaking to those who did not require the need for praxis and illegality to be explained to them, they chose instead to articulate the lived situation of the militant, paying special attention to his or her interaction with the "enemy" as flesh-and-blood human being. Hence the centrality of the problem of individuality to the Italian

texts, which will become particularly evident in the following chapter.

III. Memoirs

The following discussion of selected memoirs will further illustrate the typical experiences of the German and Italian militants. More importantly, it will show how those experiences were responded to in very different ways. Italian memoirs tend to engage intensely with militancy as a subjective experience, whereas the German memoirs tend to disregard the subjective character of the memoir and make their texts platforms for theoretical elaboration and political arguments. This difference in the project of the German and Italian authors directly affects the formal features of their texts. Specifically, a concern with form, and particularly with the genre characteristics of the memoir, is far more evident in the Italian texts.

Like the traditional novel, the memoir is typically characterised by a linear (chronological) structure. The style of memoirs is typically homogeneous, consistent – a single style rather than a juxtaposition of several. Likewise, memoirs seldom make use of multiple narrators, and the one narrator is easily identifiable; the reader is urged to identify him with the author more readily than in the case of texts that openly declare themselves to be works of fiction. In this sense, the memoir occupies an unusual place in literature, and particularly in modern literature. The more the modern novel is characterised by fragmentation and a multiplicity of

perspectives and styles, the more the memoir is in danger of seeming antiquated.

Some of the texts discussed below, particularly the German ones, fit this description of the traditional memoir. The Italian texts begin to depart from the homogeneous structure and style of the traditional memoir. They go beyond the occasional use of flashbacks to make the disruption of chronology one of their principal formal features. They narrate events from a multiplicity of perspectives. While the perceived identity of author and narrator continues to guarantee a certain unity of the narrative voice, that unity is constantly on the verge of disintegrating; the single voice threatens to yield to several. One of the aims of this chapter is to demonstrate that this crisis of the narrator results at least in part from a biographical crisis: a crisis of the author. It is because of the peculiar sociopolitical context of the authors, and because of their psychologically problematic relationship to their own biographies, that a number of these texts display such a ruptured form.¹

¹ The political memoir is, of course, not a new genre. Victor Serge's Memoirs of a Revolutionary, 1901-1941 (London/New York: Oxford University Press, 1963) are one important antecedent for the texts analysed in this chapter. Two useful theoretical investigations of the memoir genre are: Michel Beaujour, Miroris d'encre (Paris: Editions de Seuil, 1989) and James Olney, Metaphors of Self: The Meaning of Autobiography (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1972). Cf. in particular Olney 36ff. (on history and autobiography). A number of theorists have examined questions of identity over time as they are raised by the memoir genre; their work is of particular interest here. Cf. Jean Starobinsky, "The Style of Autobiography" and Stephen Spender, "Confessions and Autobiography", both in: James Olney (ed.), Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989) (73ff. and 115ff. respectively). Cf. also Philippe Lejeune, Le pacte autobiographique (Paris : Editions de Seuil, 1975) 35ff.

Memoirs by German militants

If the memoirs of German militants (strictly speaking: ex-militants) are more linear and less fragmentary than those of Italian (ex-) militants, they are also markedly more defensive in their portrayal of militancy, insisting not only on the purity of its aims, but also praising many of its exploits. This is particularly true of the later ones, whose tone is markedly more defiant than that of their predecessors. In part, this results from a changed audience. Where texts such as Wie alles anfang and Rückkehr in die Menschlichkeit (published in 1975 and 1979, respectively) seem to be directed primarily at a left-wing audience, including readers who are either themselves militants or are considering such a choice, later memoirs are written out of an awareness that the left-wing culture from which militancy emerged no longer exists. (It was already noted that in Germany, this audience was always more marginal than in Italy, due to the absence of a strong labour movement.) The audience of these memoirs is more general, and their authors are aware they cannot expect much sympathy and understanding. Often, these later authors are concerned to explain not only their personal choices, but the phenomenon of militancy itself. They describe themselves as exiles in a society whose ideals they cannot share – ambassadors of an ideology and a culture no longer understood.

In justifying their choice of militancy, many of these writers invoke their childhood memories of a society still characterised by the totalitarianism of the Nazi regime. Authors such as Klein, Meyer, Viett, and Schiller point to the unrepentant Nazism of many Germans, and to the enshrinement of anticommunism as that aspect of Nazi ideology (almost) universally tolerated, if not encouraged, in the postwar years. The legitimacy of militancy is "demonstrated" through the construction of a past most readers could be expected to condemn. The one example of disrupted chronology found among these memoirs – Meyer's juxtaposition of his militant activities with his childhood memories – serves this purpose of making militancy more "understandable" by portraying it not as an attempt to dismantle a genuine democracy, but as an attack on a society that differed only superficially from that of the Third Reich. Other, more linear German memoirs, such as Schiller's Es war ein harter Kampf um meine Erinnerung, devote considerable attention to those repressive characteristics of the GFR that would be associated by the reader with the Nazi regime. In both cases, the effect is to subvert the standard condemnation of militancy as a proto-fascist attack on open society by reversing the roles: if the society under attack was not open, but itself proto-fascist, then by implication, the militant was defending the values associated with open society. In this sense, the memoirs do not so much seek to bring about a transvaluation of the reader's values as to use those

values to alter his perception of the militant conflict. The valourisation of militancy is accomplished through a demonisation of society, and this demonisation presents itself in the guise of revisionist history.

"Bommi" (Michael) Baumann: Wie alles anfang

Wie alles anfang was the first memoir by a German ex-militant, the first public renunciation of militancy by one who had not only endorsed but practised it.² Like that found in many later memoirs, the renunciation is a qualified one, recognising the failure of the militant project while insisting on its justification and necessity:

"Obwohl der Versuch gescheitert ist, war er richtig und nützlich."³

Like Hans-Joachim Klein and others, Baumann accepts that the revolutionary project of the RAF and the 2 June Movement went awry, without accepting the possibility of a nonviolent revolution:

"Für mich war das sowieso klar, Revolution ist 'ne Gewaltgeschichte [...]."⁴ While urging other militants to follow his example and

renounce "armed struggle," Baumann does not do so out of a principled endorsement of nonviolence, but out a (tactical)

² "Bommi" Baumann, Wie alles anfang (Munich: Trikont, 1975). This first edition of this book was banned in November of 1975. A second edition was published illegally by a number of European publishers with the support of Daniel Cohn-Bendit, Friedrich Christian Delius, Rudi Dutschke, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Peter Handke, Jean-Paul Sartre, Volker Schlöndorff, Peter Weiss, and others.

³ "Although the attempt failed, it was correct and useful." Baumann 5.

⁴ Baumann 20. Cf. also Baumann 20f.: "Für mich war Gewalt im politischen Bereich nie ein Problem" ["For me, political violence was never an issue"].

recognition of the state's superior might. This situation necessitates the formulation of an alternative revolutionary strategy:

Die Aufforderung, die Knarre wegzuschmeißen [...] sollte so verstanden werden, sich einem konstruktiven Konzept zuzuwenden, sich zu öffnen für neue Erkenntnisse und Experimente, versuchen Leben zu erhalten, damit wir nicht von den Trümmern des zusammenbrechenden Systems begraben werden. An Vernichtung denkt die andere Seite schon genug.⁵

In the first chapters of his memoir, Baumann sketches his working class background and chronicles his gradual politization, which resulted in part from his reading of US writers (the Beatniks), his subjection to rock'n'roll culture (the music of the Rolling Stones, Jimi Hendrix, and the MC5; long hair, drugs), and the experience of communal living. He recounts political discussions and describes the sense of frustration that prompted his first criminal activities (the slitting of car tires). As with many other members of his generation, the events that led to his endorsement of militancy were the shootings of Dutschke and Ohnesorg. When the unarmed protester Ohnesorg was shot, Baumann felt he himself had been targeted:

"Die Kugel war genauso gegen dich, da haben sie das erste Mal nun

⁵ "The call for throwing away the gun was to be understood in the sense of turning towards a constructive plan, opening oneself to new experiences and new experiments, trying to sustain life in order not to be buried under the rubble of the collapsing system. The other side is already sufficiently concerned with destruction." Baumann 7.

voll auf dich geschossen. Wer da schießt, ist scheißegal. Da war natürlich klar, jetzt zuhauen, kein Pardon mehr geben."⁶

After witnessing the dilletantism that characterised the student movement's first spontaneous illegal and violent activities, Baumann began to reflect on the necessity of a more carefully planned strategy of terror: "Jetzt waren Terrorprobleme sofort sehr aktuell. Du hast denn och gesehen, ohne Vorbereitung, ohne Logistik, ohne Wissen, ohne Erfahrung und so, bleibt es Fantasie, du kannst gar nichts machen."⁷ Baumann became a member of the Berlin Haschrebelln, and later of the Blues - semi-legal organisations that openly endorsed the strategy of terror. He began to rearrange his life in accordance with the requirements of clandestine militancy.⁸ Influenced by their readings of Mao, Fanon, Guevara, and others, some of his friends travelled to Jordan in order to undergo paramilitary training.⁹ He himself participated in bank robberies, spent time in jail, and witnessed the shooting of his close friend Georg von Rauch by the police.

⁶ "The bullet was directed at you too, it was the first time they shot directly at you. It doesn't matter who fires the shot. It was clear: strike now, make no more concessions." Baumann 38. A similar statement is made by Ralf Reinders, a former member of the 2 June Movement, in a 1992 interview. Cf. Reinders/Fritzsche 18: "After all the blows and punches we felt the pigs had shot at all of us."

⁷ "Now problems of terror were suddenly very topical. You quickly saw that without preparation, logistics, knowledge, experience and all that it remained a fantasy, you couldn't do a thing." Baumann 42.

⁸ Cf. eg. Baumann 55, where the necessity of living with a minimum of private property is discussed.

⁹ Cf. Baumann 63.

After his renunciation of militancy (Baumann was arrested once more and collaborated with the police after receiving vague threats concerning his girlfriend of the time), Baumann followed a path later chosen by other reformed militants, such as Alberto Franceschini: he distanced himself from violent political operations in order to engage in a private project of spiritual growth. Chapter 11 of Wie alles anfang is a curiously apolitical reflection on "love" as an alternative to "bombs," and on the necessity of overcoming not only the "fear of freedom" (as every militant has done, according to Baumann), but also the "fear of love."¹⁰ Baumann's memoir is one result of such reflections: a text that recognises the viability of militancy in particular social and political conditions, seeks to prompt a public discussion on the development of militancy in the GFR, and seeks also to introduce into this discussion considerations that are not so much political as spiritual and psychological.

Hans-Joachim Klein: Rückkehr in die Menschlichkeit

Rückkehr in die Menschlichkeit offers another critical inside view of the "urban guerrilla."¹¹ Klein repeatedly emphasises that he is anything but a professional writer, and apologises for the numerous stylistic shortcomings of his text by indicating the difficult conditions under which it was written. Klein wrote Rückkehr in die

¹⁰ Cf. in particular Baumann 131.

¹¹ Hans-Joachim Klein, Rückkehr in die Menschlichkeit (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1979).

Menschlichkeit while still clandestine, fearing both the police and those comrades from whom he was constrained to hide his manuscript. What his memoir lacks in elegance, and sometimes in coherence, it makes up for in moral forthrightness; recapitulating his participation in the 1975 OPEC kidnapping, Klein strives to dissuade his contemporaries from repeating what he has come to see as the central mistake of his life: taking up arms against the state.

Klein is by no means sympathetic to the social and political order the RAF and related organisations set out to dismantle. He ruthlessly portrays the unrepentant Nazism, ignorance, and economic exploitation that characterise his working class background. Raised on an explosive combination of domestic violence, racism, and conservatism, his first memory of a political event (the Hungarian uprising of 1956) established for him a lasting association between politics and fear.¹² His first encounters with socialists, his membership in the Frankfurt anarchist group Neue Linke, and his experiences of squatting and communal living introduced him to a world characterised not by antagonism, but by solidarity: "Solidarisches Miteinander, nicht das bisher praktizierte

¹² Cf. Klein 105.

Gegeneinander, war das eine. Liebe und Verständnis für den anderen, auch den schwächeren und seine Fehler, das andere."¹³

Following the failure of the student movement, and despite the warnings of his socialist friends, Klein became increasingly fascinated by the RAF. The death of Holger Meins sealed his decision to abandon legal resistance: "Der Tod von Holger Meins war der ausschlaggebende Punkt, nun Schluß zu machen mit der legalen Politik der Hilflosigkeit und Ohnmacht."¹⁴

Not much later, Klein became a member of the Rote Zellen. His participation in the OPEC kidnapping culminated in his being shot in the stomach; profoundly shocked by the violent reality of militancy, and increasingly alienated from his comrades, he claims to have deliberately slowed the healing process in order not to have to participate in further armed exploits.

Klein insists his militancy ought to be seen in the context of state violence, citing the GFRs support for the Vietnam war, the social injustice he witnessed first hand, and the insane military spending of First World nations. "Die Herrschenden haben mich zum Terroristen werden lassen, gemacht," he says.¹⁵ To reinforce this point, Klein quotes French psychologist J.R. Brissot de Warville: "Ein

¹³ "Solidarity, not the prior antagonism, was one thing. The other was love and understanding for the other, including those weaker than oneself, their flaws." Klein 121.

¹⁴ "The death of Holger Meins was the crucial factor in my decision to abandon the legal politics of helplessness and powerlessness." Klein 195.

¹⁵ "The rulers allowed me to become a terrorist, made me one." Klein 163. Cf. also Klein 11, 122, and 133.

Mensch wird nicht als Feind der Gesellschaft geboren. Es sind vielmehr die Umstände wie Armut und Unglück, welche ihm dieses Prädikat verleihen."¹⁶ Without downplaying the gravity of his own crimes, Klein refuses to accept that only he is responsible for them. The social and political context in which those crimes occurred remains unacceptable to him, and the revolutionary impulse is, he insists, not only understandable, but laudable.

Klein's disillusionment with German militancy derives from his view that its protagonists have lost sight of their original political aims, allowing their putatively revolutionary lifestyle to become an end in itself. He argues the relationship between the state and the militants has become symbiotic. Each profits from the other: "Staatsschutz und Guerilla bekämpfen sich, sind sich aber nicht mehr fremd; der eine braucht den andern."¹⁷ Hence, if Klein became militant to combat the state, he renounced militancy because he felt himself in danger of merely replicating its violence and repression.¹⁸ Quoting Che Guevara's final letter to Fidel Castro, and then referring explicitly to the liberation of Andreas Baader and the formation of the RAF, Klein suggests sometimes a revolution is

¹⁶ "No man is born an enemy of society. Rather, circumstances such as poverty and unhappiness bestow on him this predicate." Warville qtd. in Klein 122.

¹⁷ "State security services and the guerilla combat one another, but they are no longer hostile to one another; one needs the other." Klein 201.

¹⁸ Cf. Klein 201. Klein's disillusionment with the German militant left is part of a disillusionment with the revolutionary project in general. All revolutions must ultimately fail, he argues: "Wer garantiert uns, sollten wir es tatsächlich einmal schaffen, die Herrschenden von ihren Hockern zu fegen, daß der neue Apparat nicht genauso korrupt wird, wenn der Zahn der Zeit an ihm nagt" (Klein 184) ["Who can guarantee that, if we do manage to overthrow the rulers, the new system won't become just as corrupt after a while"].

not worth dying for, namely when it is the "wrong" one.¹⁹ Klein insists this is not a question of courage; he makes it clear his hostility towards the state is sufficiently strong to allow him to take up arms whenever that might be appropriate. He argues, however, that his courage was misapplied in the militant project, the degree to which militancy could stray from its original aims having been underestimated.

Till Meyer: Staatsfeind

Till Meyer was a member of the 2 June Movement and one of the masterminds of the Lorenz kidnapping. The title of his memoir is a defiant endorsement of the description applied to him by the authorities and signals his unrelenting hostility towards the GFR.²⁰ Like other militants, Meyer accepts the failure of armed struggle in Europe, but refuses to side with the victors. "Bekanntlich schreiben die Sieger die Geschichte," he notes. "Ich gehöre zu den Verlierern."²¹ A counterhistory from the point of view of the vanquished, Meyer's memoir is conceived of by him as an antidote to political obscurantism, an attack on the irresponsible blurring of every distinction between left and right: "Meine Lebensgeschichte habe ich in einer Zeit aufgeschrieben, in der landauf, landab nach Kräften daran gearbeitet wird, die Begriffe links und rechts, oben

¹⁹ Klein 191.

²⁰ "Staatsfeind" means "enemy of state."

²¹ "As everyone knows, history is written by the victors. I'm one of the vanquished." Meyer 7.

und unten zu verwischen. Ich komme von unten, und ich bin Sozialist [...] Ich bereue nichts.“²²

Staatsfeind begins with the 2 June Movement's most well-known exploit, the Lorenz kidnapping. A lengthy flashback then recalls Meyer's youth and politization. The narration of Meyer's incarceration and trial is interrupted by a second flashback, this one describing Meyer's childhood during the last months of World War Two and the first years of the postwar period. The final chapter of the memoir chronicles Meyer's dissociation from the 2 June Movement, his renunciation of militancy, and his return to civilian life. An epilogue describes his work as an investigative reporter for the left-wing newspaper taz (tageszeitung) and his collaboration (as an informant) with the GDR's intelligence service in the late 1980s. While focusing on his political activities, Meyer's narration of his adult life also describes his two marriages (one before his membership in the 2 June Movement, the other during and after his final years in prison), and his relationship to his son.

Meyer's investigation of the biographical and historical causes of his radicalisation lies at the heart of his text. It is only in the light of this investigation that Meyer's rejection of the term "terrorist" and his insistence on the progressive and humanist nature of left-wing militancy can be properly assessed. As Meyer says:

²² "I've written my life story at a time when a tremendous effort is underway to blur the distinction between left and right, ruler and ruled. I'm one of the ruled, and I'm a socialist. I regret nothing." Ibid.

"'Terroristen' nannte man uns, wir aber verstanden uns als Vorkämpfer für eine neue, bessere, eine gerechtere Gesellschaftsordnung."²³ Meyer's choice of militancy is portrayed by him as resulting from the need to resist the life-threatening pressure of his historical circumstances: "Die Überzeugung, daß es besser ist, die Verhältnisse zum Tanzen zu bringen, statt sich von ihnen erdrücken zu lassen, war zeitlebens Triebkraft meines Handelns."²⁴

That the story of Meyer's childhood is inseparable from its historical context becomes clear very quickly. Meyer was born in March of 1944 – "In einer Zeit, als der Krieg mit seiner ganzen zerstörerischen Wucht an seinen Ausgangspunkt zurückkehrte. Hitler-Deutschland sollte nur noch dreizehn Monate existieren."²⁵ His early acquaintance with war and the instability of repressive governments helps explain his later choices, as does his detailed description of the trauma of childhood in postwar Germany. He mentions the unusually harsh winter of 1946-47, during which some two hundred citizens of Berlin froze to death.²⁶ Although Meyer does not explicitly say so, his memories of the introduction of the Westmark by the Allied forces and of the resulting blockade of West

²³ "They called us 'terrorists', but we saw ourselves as the vanguard fighting for a new, superior, and more just social order." Meyer 71.

²⁴ "The conviction that it's better to upset circumstances than to allow oneself to be crushed by them was always my primary motive." Ibid.

²⁵ "At a time when the war returned to its point of origin with all its destructive force. Hitler's Germany was to exist only for another thirteen months." Meyer 206.

²⁶ Cf. Meyer 206ff.

Berlin by the Soviet Army amount to a first-person account of the origins of the Cold War. The clash between pro- and anti-communist ideologies is reflected in his experiences in the various sectors of Berlin. At school in West Berlin, he was exposed to the anti-communist rants of his teachers. During visits in East Berlin, he learned about the Holocaust and the ordeals suffered by the Red Army.²⁷

These visits set the stage for Meyer's later politization, and help to explain why (unlike many of his fellow militants) he remained an ardent supporter of the Soviet Union and the GDR. After an adolescence whose questionable highlights include a stint as a merchant seaman, involvement with a street gang, and a brief prison sentence for excessive absence from school, Meyer moved to the West German city of Trier (birthplace of Karl Marx), where he met French soldiers refusing to fight in Algeria, sold lunch snacks on US military bases, and met veterans of the illegal KPD (the German Communist Party). After a move to Berlin, he became involved with the APO (the Extraparliamentary Opposition), and met later RAF-members Baader, Ensslin, and Meinhof. He read Marx, Lenin, Mao, Reich, Lukács, Adorno, Marcuse, and later Marighela. He was immediately impressed with Marx, and spent hours discussing the theory of surplus value: "Von Anfang an spürte ich: Das ist eine vorwärtstreibende Idee und Ideologie, eine Wissenschaft, die alles

²⁷ Cf. Meyer 219, 227.

erklärt, eine konkrete Utopie."²⁸ His decision to become a "professional revolutionary" was the result of applying Marxist theory to his own situation: "Ich begriff die Ursachen meiner Chancenlosigkeit [...] Ich hatte das Prinzip von Lohnarbeit und Kapital, von Ausbeutung und Unterdrückung begriffen und sofort auf meine eigene Situation bezogen. Zu recht."²⁹ The final "Zu recht" emphasises that, at the time of writing, Meyer is far from revoking his original conviction about the value of Marxism.

Meyer's choice of militancy is understood by him not only as a radical break with conventional working class life, but also as the only humanly acceptable option available to someone with his class background: "Ich war bereit, für meine Ideale Leben und Freiheit in die Waagschale zu werfen. So weiterleben – gefressen, verdaut und ausgeschieden werden – war meine Perspektive nicht. Von nun an gab es kein Halten mehr."³⁰

Meyer's radicalisation was sped by the first RAF text - which he describes as "eine flammende Anklage gegen die herrschende Klasse in unserem Land und eine Solidaritätserklärung an die Völker

²⁸ "From the start I sensed: That's a forward-leading idea and ideology, a science that explains everything, a manifest utopia." Meyer 121.

²⁹ "I perceived the causes of my hopeless situation. I had understood the principle of wage labour and capital, exploitation and oppression, and immediately applied it to my own situation. Rightly so." Meyer 123.

³⁰ "I was prepared to risk life and freedom for my ideals. To live on that way – eaten up, digested, and shat out – was no option for me. From now on there would be no holding back." Ibid.

der dritten Welt in ihrem Kampf gegen den Imperialismus"³¹ – and by the escalating brutality of the US war in Vietnam. The latter seemed to require, like capitalism's more commonplace mechanisms of oppression and exploitation, a radical response: "Ich fand es richtig, den Protest gegen den Krieg der Amerikaner in Vietnam mit dem direkten Angriff auf Polizeistationen zu artikulieren, es leuchtete mir ein, die Kapitalismuskritik mit Attacken auf Banken zu verbinden."³² Meyer also notes the state's unduly harsh reaction to militancy and the student protests – most notably the so-called Radikalenerlaß, a legislative measure allowing for exclusion from certain professions on political and ideological grounds: "Für uns bedeutete der Radikalenerlaß geradezu eine Bestätigung für die Notwendigkeit des bewaffneten Kampfes."³³ He offers a number of other justifications for his choice of militancy, including Robert McNamara's repentant comments on the Vietnam war and Ho Chi Minh's statement that the Vietnamese revolution owed its triumph in part to resistance movements in the First World. Finally, he points to the Pinochet coup as a confirmation of the rightness of his choice: "Der Sturz eines gewählten Präsidenten, eines Sozialisten, der erstmals dem ausgepowerten Volk Arbeit und

³¹ "An inflammatory indictment of the ruling class in our country and a statement of solidarity with the people of the Third World in their struggle against imperialism." Meyer 161.

³² "I found it right to articulate the protest against the US war in Vietnam by direct attacks on police stations; it made sense to me to combine the critique of capitalism with attacks on banks." Meyer 154.

³³ "For us, the Radikalenerlaß was nothing short of a confirmation of the necessity of armed struggle." Meyer 186ff.

Brot sichern wollte, war für mich zusätzliche Legitimation, am bewaffneten Kampf festzuhalten.“³⁴

Like those of Patrizio Peci (discussed below), Meyer's descriptions of militant operations refute stereotypical notions of both the militant and the state by presenting the protagonists of the "terrorist" conflict as humanly flawed. The moral forthrightness of the state is rendered questionable by accounts of the dubious measures taken, for example, by the West German intelligence service.³⁵ One description of a 2 June Movement arms theft leaves the impression that both the members of that organisation and the police were, at least at times, thoroughly incompetent.³⁶ The buffoonish behaviour of many Berlin militants makes them seem likeable rather than threatening, and Meyer's description of the Lorenz kidnapping features such anecdotes as that of the laughter provoked by Lorenz's thermal underwear.³⁷

The description of the Lorenz kidnapping also highlights the particular features of the 2 June Movement and the ways in which it differed from the RAF: its structure was less hierarchic, the

³⁴ "The overthrow of an elected president, a socialist and the first to want to secure for his worn-out people work and bread, was for me an additional legitimization of ongoing armed struggle." Meyer 261. For a well-documented account of the Pinochet coup, cf. Peter Kornbluh, *The Pinochet File* (New York: The New Press, 2003).

³⁵ For example, Meyer mentions the efforts of the intelligence service to stall investigations into the death of student protester Ulrich Schmücker, as these would have revealed the extent to which its infiltration of the student movement endangered the lives of innocents. Cf. Meyer 292ff.

³⁶ Cf. Meyer 304ff.

³⁷ Cf. Meyer 21.

language of its proclamations more humorous.³⁸ The contrast between the 2 June Movement and the RAF emerges most clearly from Meyer's comments on the RAF's occupation of the Stockholm embassy, which he describes as a proto-fascist operation that discredited the militant left and eroded much of the sympathy won through the preceding Lorenz kidnapping. As Meyer says: "Der Sympathiebonus, den wir erworben hatten, war durch diese äußerst brutale und politisch dumme Aktion zunichte gemacht [...] Derartige Aktionen oder Flugzeugentführungen hätte der '2. Juni' niemals gemacht, da herrschte Konsens in der Gruppe."³⁹

Like Klein's, Meyer's rejection of militancy is a qualified one. He acknowledges that "armed struggle" failed to bring about a socialist revolution in the GFR, but continues to insist on the necessity of such a revolution, and allows for circumstances in which militancy may be appropriate. In this, he resembles the authors of many later memoirs by West German militants.

Inge Viett: Nie war ich furchtloser

Inge Viett is another former member of the 2 June Movement. After its dissolution, she joined the RAF. Viett began work on her memoir following the collapse of the GDR, where she had spent eight years

³⁸ Cf. eg. Meyer 21.

³⁹ "The extra sympathy we had won was gone following this extremely brutally and politically stupid operation. Such operations, or hijackings, would never have been carried out by the 2 June Movement; everyone in the group agreed on that." Meyer 53ff.

living under a false name, with the aid of the East German authorities, in order to escape incarceration in West Germany.⁴⁰ She describes her memoir as an act of resistance against the erasure of her political identity: "Ich schreibe, um hinter den Mauern lebendig zu bleiben."⁴¹

Nie war ich furchtloser is characterised by an act of twofold negation; while critical of her militant past, Viett is no less critical of how the history of militancy has been written by the government and the media. In this sense, Viett is writing from an ideological position removed both from that of her former self and that of victorious capitalism: "Ich muß eine Distanz überwinden, um mich zu erinnern an meine damalige Überzeugung, radikal handeln zu müssen, nachzuempfinden, aber sie ist nicht so groß wie meine Distanz zum kapitalistischen Lebenssinn."⁴²

Like other former militants, Viett paints a bleak picture of her childhood and youth. An orphan, she experienced the atmosphere in the rural home of her foster parents as profoundly oppressive: "Vertraulichkeit und Wohlgefühl wurden wie etwas Fremdes oder Ungehöriges aus dem Haus getrieben."⁴³ Her dominating foster mother taught her lessons in violence and the empowerment that

⁴⁰ Inge Viett, Nie war ich furchtloser (Hamburg: Edition Nautilus, 1996).

Quotations are from the Rowohlt edition (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1999).

⁴¹ "I write in order to stay alive behind the walls." Viett 11.

⁴² "I need to overcome the distance that separates me from my former conviction that I need to handle radically, in order to feel again what I felt then, but the distance is not greater than that which separates me from the meaning of life as conceived of in capitalism." Ibid.

⁴³ "Familiarity and comfort were driven from the house like something alien or inappropriate." Viett 26.

results from responding to it on its own terms: "Dann begann ich zurückzuschlagen, wenn ich geschlagen wurde, und machte dabei die Erfahrung, [...] daß es ein gutes Gefühl macht, daß es befreit und die Ohnmacht zerbricht."⁴⁴ Viett describes the Nazism of the GFR's rural inhabitants, recounting how it was common practice for visitors to greet her foster parents with the Nazi salute, and how the Holocaust was ignored at school: "Geschichte hatte einfach nicht stattgefunden."⁴⁵ Like Klein, she claims first to have experienced politics as something threatening; she recounts the sense of danger she associated with such names as Eisenhower, Ollenhauer, and Adenauer: "Allein schon aus der dröhnenden Roheit der Namen dieser Männer war Unheil zu spüren."⁴⁶ Also like Klein, she attributes her decision to become militant to a "heartless" and destructive social and political climate:

Was uns in die Radikalität trieb, war die soziale Kälte einer herzlosen Kriegsgeneration, die ihre beispiellosen Verbrechen leugnete oder verdrängte, die unfähig war, uns anderes als Besitzdenken und Anpassung zu lehren, die den Vietnamkrieg unterstützte, weil sie ohne Umschweife von der Vernichtungsstrategie gegen die "Jüdische Weltverschwörung"

⁴⁴ "Then I began to strike back when I was struck, and learned that it feels good, that it's liberating and destroys powerlessness." Viett 51.

⁴⁵ "History had simply not occurred." Viett 34.

⁴⁶ "The sonorous crudeness of those names conveyed trouble." Viett 319.

zur Vernichtungsstrategie gegen die "Bolschewistische Verschwörung" übergegangen war [...].⁴⁷

A journey to Africa, a showing of Gillo Pontecorvo's The Battle of Algiers, and Frantz Fanon's The Wretched of the Earth confronted Viett with Third World poverty and prompted her decision to wholeheartedly devote herself to activism. From this, she graduated to militancy, becoming one of the first members of the 2 June Movement. Her first stay in a PFLP camp confirmed her enthusiasm for armed struggle - Viett speaks positively about the solidarity of the Palestinian population with its militants - as well as her bleak view of the First World: "Europa ist weit und aus der Ferne noch häßlicher in seiner destruktiven Lebensart."⁴⁸

Two of the numerous operations described by Viett merit special attention. The first is the 1975 kidnapping, partly organised by Viett, of Peter Lorenz. Viett describes vividly how the militants engaged in lengthy discussions with Lorenz, but failed to convince him of the rightness of their position: "Er ist unfähig, Kausalitäten und globale Zusammenhänge zu erkennen. Wo wir sie ihm vorhalten, schweigt er verwirrt und ratlos."⁴⁹ While Lorenz was not

⁴⁷ "What drove us towards radicalism was the social coldness of a heartless generation of war veterans that denied or repressed its incomparable crimes, that was unable to teach us anything other than thinking in terms of property and conformism, that supported the Vietnam war, because it had made a direct transition from the 'international Jewish conspiracy' to the strategy of destruction directed against the 'Bolshevik conspiracy'." Viett 16ff.

⁴⁸ "Europe is far away and seems even uglier in its destructive life style." Viett 151.

⁴⁹ "He is unable to recognise cause and effect and global relationships. When we confront him with them, he falls into confused and helpless silence." Viett 148.

converted to their position, he seemed to tacitly accept that the state he represented is profoundly flawed: "Der Staat, für den er steht, ist keinen Märtyrertod wert."⁵⁰

The second operation described by Viett that merits special attention is one she did not actively participate in: the kidnapping of Hanns-Martin Schleyer, organised by the RAF. This operation is portrayed by Viett as the total failure that it was, beginning as it did with bloodshed (the shooting of Schleyer's bodyguards), and prompting an escalation of violence for which the RAF was not prepared: "Die Dynamik der Entwicklung war außer Kontrolle und steuerte ins Desaster. Die RAF war auf ihr Hasardieren selbst nicht vorbereitet."⁵¹

Crucially, the Schleyer-kidnapping was the more typical of the two operations. For Viett, it was the escalating violence of the conflict, coupled with the absence of support from the general population, that led to the failure of militancy.⁵² Unable to abandon her clandestine lifestyle, Viett saw no other option, after the dissolution of the 2 June Movement in 1980, but joining the RAF. There she felt profoundly out of place: "Der Schritt in die RAF ist ein

⁵⁰ "The state he represents isn't worth a martyr's death." Viett 148.

⁵¹ "The dynamics of the development were out of control and led to disaster. The RAF was not prepared for this disaster." Viett 184.

⁵² Cf. Viett 195f., where she quotes a fellow militant speaking shortly before the dissolution of the 2 June Movement: "Wir kämpfen für eine Schimäre [...] niemand in Westeuropa will revolutionäre Veränderungen, nur wir Träumer" ["We're fighting for an illusion. No one in Western Europe desires revolutionary transformations, apart from us dreamers"].

Schritt in die Fremde.“⁵³ For Viett, the RAF embodied that form of militancy which had, by the 1980s, become overly self-referential and detached from political reality. While dangerous and spectacular, it was politically powerless, a dead end: “Bewaffneter Kampf als Selbstverwirklichung [...] nicht mehr als eine Müsli-Kommune, nur gefährlicher und spektakulärer.“⁵⁴

The final chapters of Nie war ich furchtloser chronicle Viett's life in the GDR, after her decision to abandon militancy. She is concerned to dismantle clichés about the repressive nature of East German society by insisting on its moral superiority to the GFR. The collapse of the GDR is portrayed as the second major defeat in Viett's life, after the failure of militancy. Again she refuses to let history be written by the victors:

Ich sehe keinen Grund, den historischen Verlauf der Geschichte und meine eigene darin eingebettete Lebenszeit mit den Augen der derzeitigen Triumphatoren zu betrachten. Es sind die Augen von Betrügern, Dieben und Räubern, deren kollektives System davon lebt, sich über das Schwächere herzumachen.⁵⁵

Rather than accepting the history of the victors, Viett takes pride in having been part of what she calls “counterhistory”: “Ich war ein

⁵³ “Joining the RAF meant venturing into alien territory.” Viett 231.

⁵⁴ “Armed struggle as self-realisation, no better than a health club, only more dangerous and spectacular.” Viett 253.

⁵⁵ “I see no reason to contemplate historical developments and my own life time through the eyes of the current victors. They are the eyes of crooks, thieves and robbers, whose collective system survives only by exploiting the weak.” Viett 267.

Teil des ewigen Kampfes, der überall dort, wo die Unterdrückung nicht mehr ertragen wird, seine revolutionäre Spur hinterläßt. Die Spur der Gegengeschichte."⁵⁶ While it did not realise its practical aims, the revolutionary project of the West German militants continues to be for Viett, like all other attempts at dismantling capitalism, a morally laudable undertaking.

Margrit Schiller: Es war ein harter Kampf um meine Erinnerung

Former RAF member Schiller spent more time in prison than as a clandestine militant, and she was not directly involved in any major RAF operations. Nonetheless she was, due to misleading media representations, perceived for a time as the classic West German militant: "Ich war die Vorzeige-'Revolutionärin'."⁵⁷ Her memoir, characterised by a matter-of-fact tone and journalistic style, sets out to dismantle existing clichés about militancy by laying out her own life story and a number of little-known facts about the day-to-day behaviour of the RAF members and their brutal treatment in prison. In this sense, Schiller constructs an account of her past that "corrects" the inadequacies and omissions of the orthodox histories of militancy. She then uses this account to justify her ongoing adherence to radical leftism.

⁵⁶ "I was a part of the eternal struggle that leaves its revolutionary traces wherever oppression is no longer tolerated. The traces of counterhistory." Viett 120.

⁵⁷ "I was the showcase 'revolutionary.'" Schiller 117. This comment refers specifically to the way Schiller was perceived by left-wing activists after her first trial in 1973.

Schiller's childhood was typically bleak. She describes her father's alcoholism and sexual advances and states: "Ich verließ mein Elternhaus mit dem dumpfen Gefühl, verstümmelt worden zu sein."⁵⁸ Her time as a social worker first introduced her to a world radically different from her own putatively normal middle-class background. She says of the heroin addicts with whom she worked: "Sie waren aus dem 'normalen' Leben ausgebrochen."⁵⁹ After this first confrontation with an alternative (albeit unappealing and not overtly political) lifestyle, Schiller began analysing her own unhappiness in political terms. She joined the Sozialistisches Patienten Kollektiv, a politically active self-help organisation founded in 1970 by Heidelberg doctor Wolfgang Huber, and began to reflect, in the final days of the student movement, on the possibilities for combining self-realisation with the transformation of society through left-wing resistance: "Aus dem Leiden die Kraft zum Kampf entwickeln. [...] Den Stein meiner Einsamkeit und Verzweiflung aufzuheben und ihn gegen seine Ursache zu werfen. Die Ursache war die kapitalistische Gesellschaftsordnung."⁶⁰

Schiller's first encounter with the RAF occurred when Baader, Ensslin, Meinhof, and Raspe, always in need of new hide-outs, spent time in her apartment. Listening in on their political and strategic

⁵⁸ "I left home with the vague feeling of having been mutilated." Schiller 22.

⁵⁹ "They had escaped from 'normal' life." Schiller 27.

⁶⁰ "To develop out of suffering the power to fight. To lift up the stone of my solitude and despair and throw it against its cause. The cause was the capitalist social order." Schiller 55.

discussions, Schiller was impressed by a seriousness and dedication she claims never to have encountered before: "Sie lebten, was sie sagten, sie spielten nicht. Reden und Handeln standen in Einklang."⁶¹ Almost against the will of Baader and his companions, who doubted her own dedication to the revolution, she managed to become a RAF member – an event described by her as profoundly fulfilling: "[...] ich hatte erstmals das Gefühl, richtig zu leben."⁶²

This sense of fulfilment did not last long; unwittingly involved in a shoot-out with the police, Schiller was quickly arrested, tried, and incarcerated. Rather than serving her sentence, she joined the "second-generation" RAF members who were organising further militant operations after the arrests of Baader, Ensslin, Meinhof, and Raspe. Relations between these "second-generation" militants, however, were not characterised by the warmth and solidarity Schiller remembers from her days with Baader and his companions. Rather, the atmosphere was one of profound fear and aggravation. Given the heightened pressure of the state's repressive measures, the militants lived in an atmosphere of constant tension: "Wir schufen uns unseren eigenen Hexenkessel."⁶³ It was not long before Schiller was arrested a second time, and placed in solitary confinement like the other "first-generation" militants.

⁶¹ "They lived what they said, they didn't fool around. Saying and doing went together." Schiller 48.

⁶² "For the first time I felt properly alive." Schiller 56.

⁶³ "We created our own witches' cauldron." Schiller 135.

The bulk of Schiller's memoirs is devoted to describing the atrocious conditions in the various prisons where she was detained.⁶⁴ In two chapters, Schiller describes the psychological damage wrought by solitary confinement: "Ich mußte täglich ganz bewußt gegen das Verrücktwerden ankämpfen."⁶⁵ She argues the German authorities were committed to physically destroying their "political prisoners" and rejects the widely accepted claim that Meinhof committed suicide: "Ich erinnerte mich, daß die Nazis den Dichter Erich Mühsam nach der Methode 'Selbstmord durch Erhängen' umgebracht hatten. Auf der ganzen Welt wurde diese Methode gegen politische Gefangene eingesetzt, die sich nicht brechen ließen."⁶⁶ In much the same vein, the Stammheim trial, in which Schiller participated, is described as a show trial.⁶⁷

Schiller follows the precedent set by Vielt, and departs markedly from the authors of earlier memoirs such as Klein, by never letting her occasional criticism of German left-wing militancy become an outright condemnation, and by defending the militant

⁶⁴ There is no space here to enter into Schiller's highly revealing description of prison life, which offers valuable insights on the physical and psychological violence of the prison guards, and on the control of heroin sales by the authorities. Cf. Schiller 208ff. Cf. also Schiller 184 and 151, where the practice of force-feeding militants on hunger strike is described as a form of torture and rape.

⁶⁵ "Every day I had to consciously resist insanity." Schiller 140. Cf. also Schiller 162, where solitary confinement is related to Hamburg psychologist Jan Gross's research project on sensory deprivation.

⁶⁶ "I remembered the Nazis had killed the poet Erich Mühsam by 'suicide through hanging.' All over the world this method was used against political prisoners who refused to back down." Schiller 171. Cf. also Schiller 193, where the possibility that Meinhof committed suicide is explicitly rejected.

⁶⁷ Schiller 164.

organisations against what she perceives as their slanderous misrepresentation on the part of the government and the media. Unlike Viett, Schiller never allows herself poetic diction or general reflections on history; the radicality of her memoir derives in large part from her decision to let the facts speak for themselves.

Memoirs by Italian militants

As literary texts rather than historical documents, the memoirs of Italian militants are often more interesting than those of German militants. One (Fenzi's Armi e bagagli) is an intriguing blend of memoir and literary essay. Others (such as Balzerani's Compagnia luna) reveal an acute awareness of their status both as historical testimonies and literary artefacts; rather than merely recording facts about the past, they explore questions of narration, memory, and representation. Unlike the German memoirs, they do not present themselves as unproblematic historical accounts, but rather as meditations on the very nature of history, and on the way in which it is experienced subjectively. In so far as questions about the subjective experience of history imply further questions about the way in which such experience can be articulated, the more markedly self-reflexive nature of the Italian memoirs would seem to result from this concern with subjectivity. While the memoirs of Peci and Franceschini are overtly polemical, and thereby akin to the German memoirs discussed above, those of Fenzi, Braghetti, and

Balzerani seem to fall short of polemicism by presenting themselves as provisional and tentative, catalogues not so much of answers and arguments as of unanswered questions. These memoirs ask to be interpreted as having no “finished” accounts of history to offer, but rather as chronicles of abortive attempts to arrive at such accounts. As a consequence, they often resemble notebooks rather than finished texts; their fragmentary character stems from a refusal or failure to do what authors such as Viett and Meyer seem to accomplish quite easily: construct a coherent narrative of the past.

This feature of the Italian memoirs may well result from different perceptions of the left in Germany and Italy. Viett and Meyer published their memoirs after the fall of the Berlin wall, at a time when the socialist project had been relegated, in the minds of most German citizens, to Trotsky’s proverbial “dustbin of history.” Arguably, this situation gave Viett and Meyer greater freedom: their unabashed rants against capitalism would not be understood as extremist threats, but as legitimate, essentially harmless expressions of an open, pluralist society. In other words, in the post-1989 GFR, a coherent defense of revolutionary leftism was unlikely to be perceived as anything more than a nuisance. In Italy, however, the historical strength of the radical left, the relentlessness of militancy, and the constant possibility of its re-emergence led to a more guarded, if not outright hostile attitude toward radical leftism. As a consequence, the unapologetic tone of

the German memoirs would not have been well received in Italy. What was permissible, however, was an account that is not so much an overtly ideological attack on the state as an examination of subjective experience that openly plays with its own inherent ambiguities and deliberately stops short of pronouncing definite truths.

Enrico Fenzi: Armi e bagagli

Enrico Fenzi, professor of Italian literature at the university of Bologna, was arrested, at age forty, in May of 1979, following his involvement in the assassination of Guido Rossa, a Bologna factory worker who testified against a Red Brigades member.⁶⁸ Fenzi had previously witnessed the Coco assassination and participated (as a Red Brigades collaborator or "irregular" member) in the attack on Carlo Castellano, a PCI member accused of complicity in plans to reorganise factory production to the detriment of the workers. Following his incarceration in the high-security prison Palmi - where he met Curcio, Franceschini, and Negri - charges against Fenzi were dropped (in June of 1980). Shortly after his liberation, Fenzi became a "regular" or clandestine Red Brigades member. He was arrested with Mario Moretti on 4 April, 1981, survived a knife attack in Cuneo prison, and eventually broke with the Red Brigades. (Officially, he

⁶⁸ Enrico Fenzi, Armi e bagagli (Milan: Costa & Nolan, 1998). Cf. Zavoli 213ff. for an interview with Fenzi in which he discusses, among other subjects, the Rossa assassination.

was "expelled" from the organisation.) Armi e bagagli is skillfully written: well-paced, its imagery crisp and vivid, its more philosophical passages lucid and intelligent.

In large part, Armi e bagagli is a meditation on the nature of clandestinity. The memoir begins with a description of a train journey that is at once a description of an actual journey and a metaphor for clandestinity. Fenzi describes clandestinity in terms of otherness – a condition of being set apart from his environment. This otherness is not obvious to others, but the knowledge of it shapes Fenzi's interaction with them. Its symbol is Fenzi's hidden gun, which he likens to a hidden ulcer ("un bubbone") and then to a ball and chain.⁶⁹ These metaphors suggest a disparaging view of his condition; in particular, the image of the ball and chain suggests a loss of freedom. As Fenzi makes clear, this loss of freedom is also a loss of social ties. Fenzi meditates on his otherness – "la diversità" – while staring at his reflection in the window of the train compartment.⁷⁰ The window becomes a mirror; rather than establishing a relationship between himself and the world, it throws him back on himself. His gaze meets only with its own image. The secrecy with which Fenzi is forced to act isolates him. The possibility of being arrested forces him to live "Chiuso, autosufficiente."⁷¹ And

⁶⁹ Fenzi 6.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ "Closed off, self-sufficient." Fenzi 47.

the radicality of his political views places "un abisso" between himself and his former friends.⁷²

Considering the development of Italian left-wing militancy, Fenzi suggests this isolation and loss of liberty is more than his personal predicament. His condition is that of all militants. Motivated initially by a sense of responsibility – that is, by a relationship to others, in particular to their parents, long-time members of the PCI – the founders of the Red Brigades initiated a project that soon became irresponsible and self-referential: "Quello scrupolo verso gli altri, quella devozione, d'un tempo, non esiste più. È stata superata dai fatti, sepolta con i morti ammazzati."⁷³

This change in the quality of militancy is described as the fragmentation of an original unity. Recalling a conversation with Mario Moretti, Fenzi comments on Moretti's tendency to reify the past, to speak of the story of the Red Brigades as if it were "un capitolo consegnato all'archivio della storia della rivoluzione

⁷² "An abyss." Fenzi 51. Cf. also the description of Fenzi walking among a crowd of angry workers following the Rossa assassination (Fenzi 72). The assassination put an end to the solidarity of Genoa's factory workers with the Red Brigades; hence Fenzi's feelings of alienation, shame, and fear.

⁷³ "This scrupulousness towards others, this former devotion, no longer exists. It's been overcome by the facts, buried under the slain." Fenzi 9. Fenzi later returns to the theme of the isolation and self-referentiality of the Red Brigades. Cf. eg. Fenzi 141: "Non esistevano due società, e noi non rappresentavano le esigenze di potere della 'seconda' società, come qualcuno tra noi credeva. C'era una società sola e chi era fuori e contro non partecipava di nessun'altra. Era fuori e contro, e basta" ["There weren't two societies, and we didn't represent the prospects of the 'second' society, as some of us believed. There was only one society, and whoever was outside it and opposed to it wasn't part of any other. He was outside and opposed, no more"].

proletaria."⁷⁴ While Moretti treats the past as something both complete and distinct from him, Fenzi insists that "molte cose, invece, avrebbero dovuto crollare, e nessun artificio ideologico avrebbe più potuto legare insieme tanti frammenti, tante macerie [...]."⁷⁵ The past, for Fenzi, is neither orderly nor easily comprehensible; and the bloodshed characterising it links it irrevocably to those who decided to kill in the name of their perceived historical mission.

The first pages of Armi e bagagli describe Fenzi after his decision to become a clandestine Red Brigades member; much of the rest of the first chapter is devoted to Fenzi the sympathiser and collaborator, who witnesses Red Brigades operations as a non-member.⁷⁶ The shift from one time period to another is also a shift of perspective: once the Red Brigades are seen "from the outside," then they are seen "from the inside." The link between these two perspectives is Fenzi himself: the non-member who graduated, with the passage of time, to membership. Fenzi comments on the ease with which he made this transition, explaining it in terms of the

⁷⁴ "A chapter consigned to the archive of the history of the proletarian revolution." Fenzi 21.

⁷⁵ "Yet many things ought to have fallen apart, and no ideological artifice would have been able to hold together so many fragments, so many parts." Ibid. Cf. also Fenzi's description of the attempt on Moretti's life in Cuneo prison (Fenzi 181ff.), which is described as the final blow to Moretti's faith in the support of the prison inmates. "Tutta la sommaria mitologia di quegli anni andava in pezzi [...]" (Fenzi 184) ["The entire mythology of those years fell to pieces"].

⁷⁶ One way in which Fenzi makes use of this symmetrical structure is by recounting twice the procedure by which the Red Brigades recruit new members: the first time, he is being recruited; the second time, he himself recruits another future member. (This future member is Francesco Berardi, who committed suicide following his arrest. Cf. Fenzi 73ff.)

extent to which even the legal, non-clandestine left had come to accept political violence as a fact of life. He speaks of "questa naturale e quasi indifferente continuità tra il prima e il dopo, questa inesorabile progressione."⁷⁷ He also points out that the transition from observing (and theorising) violence to practising it was aided by "tanti programmi e minacce e preparative."⁷⁸

Fenzi's 1980 incarceration and trial offered an opportunity to break with the violent praxis of militancy. The charges against him having been dropped for lack of evidence, Fenzi might have turned his back on the Red Brigades. Instead, he chose to become a full member. He likens his decision to a gamble: "Per vincere alla roulette dicono che si debba radoppiare ogni volta la posta: per me era in qualche modo così."⁷⁹ The decision was not entirely frivolous, however. It was motivated by a sense of obligation towards those comrades who had died. Fenzi felt his choice would determine not only his own fate, but also the "meaning" of that suffered by them: "Decidevo del senso della morte di Berardi, di Arnaldi, dei quattro compagni di via Fracchia... Ma non solo delle loro morti, anche di quelle di tutti gli altri, da una parte e dall'altra."⁸⁰ This, then, is

⁷⁷ "This natural and almost indifferent continuity of before and after, this unfathomable progression." Fenzi 26.

⁷⁸ "Many programs and threats and preparations." Ibid.

⁷⁹ "To win at roulette they say you have to double the stakes each time; in a sense, that's what it was like for me." Fenzi 136.

⁸⁰ "I was deciding the meaning of the deaths of Berardi, Arnaldi, and the four comrades of via Fracchia... Not only their deaths, but also those of all the others, on both sides." Ibid. (Arnaldi was Fenzi's lawyer, who committed suicide following Patrizio Peci's disclosures about the role of Red Brigades lawyers as "messengers" carrying secret documents into and out of prison.) Cf. also a similar comment by

another explanation of why the bloodshed could continue for so long; to stop killing was perceived – perversely, perhaps – as a betrayal of those already killed. Far from being based on political or ideological considerations, Fenzi's choice to continue the militant project was driven by a peculiar form of fatalism, a resignation in the face of "il corso delle cose [...] il destino che va secondo le sue linee di forza, che cresce e grava con il suo stesso peso, e spinge in avanti."⁸¹

Perhaps inevitably, Fenzi's choice led him back to prison, where he witnessed the suicides and stabbings that Italian high-security prisons of the 1980s were infamous for, as well as engaging in protracted debates with Curcio and Franceschini. Fenzi's description of the high-security prison Palmi, where most prisoners indicted for "terrorism"-related charges were held, supplements his previous analysis of clandestinity. If the clandestine militant is a stranger almost everywhere he goes, the imprisoned militant in Palmi is surrounded by peers and equals; now, it is the world outside prison (in Fenzi's case, the world of his life partner Isabella Ravazza and their daughter) that has become wholly alien. Fenzi expresses this changed situation by the same mirror metaphor he uses at the beginning of his memoir. He says of the Palmi prisoners:

Franceschini: "Sono gli altri il nostro destino, la nostra ombra: non possiamo staccarcene, saremmo maledetti per sempre" (Fenzi 193) ["The others are our destiny, our shadow; we can't detach ourselves from them; we would be accursed forever"].

⁸¹ "The way of things. Destiny that moves on by its own strength, which grows and exerts pressure and drives things forward." Fenzi 137.

"Ognuno non è che lo specchio dell'altro; ognuno vede nei casi altrui i suoi stessi rischi, i suoi stessi dolori, le sue stesse malattie, il suo stesso destino..."⁸² In contrast, Isabella is to Fenzi "lo specchio impietoso nel quale vedevo la mia alienazione."⁸³

Unlike that which comes with clandestinity, the prisoner's alienation is imposed rather than chosen, and it results not so much from ideological differences or the need for secrecy as from the spatial and temporal rift incarceration opens between the prisoner and the world outside prison. The prisoner literally exists in his own world – a separate space and a separate time that are really a non-space and a non-time. Fenzi articulates this experience when he says of his conversations with visitors: "Il mio passato con loro s'allontanava."⁸⁴ Similarly, he says, after reflecting from his detachment from Isabella and his daughter: "Il tempo non mi apparteneva."⁸⁵

Fenzi's model of intersubjectivity, and in particular the notion that each subject establishes its identity through a confrontation with the other, recalls Sartre. In fact, Fenzi speaks at length about Sartre as the philosopher who unwittingly outlined (in Critique of Dialectical Reason) both the predicament and the convictions of the Italian militants. Fenzi mentions the murder of Giorgio Soldati in

⁸² "Each of us is nothing but the other's mirror; each of us sees in the situations of other people his own risks, his own pain, his own sicknesses, his own destiny..." Fenzi 85.

⁸³ "The cruel mirror in which I saw my own alienation." Fenzi 197.

⁸⁴ "My past with them was retreating into the distance." Fenzi 196.

⁸⁵ "Time didn't belong to me." Fenzi 188.

Cuneo prison on 10 December, 1981, and analyses it in the light of Sartre's comments on how the punishment of traitors reinforces solidarity between revolutionaries.

Like his references to his scholarly work on Dante (which he continued, bound by contractual obligations, even during his life in clandestinity) and his comments on a poem by Pasolini, Fenzi's reading of Sartre seems to confirm the media stereotype of him as the "intellectual" among the Red Brigades. In fact, Fenzi dissects such stereotypes as ably as he dissects Sartre's blend of existentialism and Marxism. In the final chapter of *Armi e bagagli*, he discusses the proliferation of myths concerning the supposed ties of the Red Brigades to the KGB, attempts on the life of the Pope, and the like. He speaks of a multiplicity of "truths" that threaten to overwhelm the ex-militant whose faith in his former ideology has been shaken: conspiracy theories, trivial facts blown out of proportion, lies, and politically motivated distortions. To surrender to these "truths," he suggests, is to surrender one's grasp of reality as something unified and coherent, and thereby to lose every sense of one's own identity: "[...] se la realtà non esiste, perché mai dovrei esistere io?"⁸⁶ This fate is not inevitable, Fenzi insists. It is possible to reject those theories, stereotypes, and labels whose accuracy is refuted by one's own memories, without falling back on inadequate but reassuring ideological positions. Against the

⁸⁶ "If reality doesn't exist, why should I?" Fenzi 202.

momentum of that process by which lies come to be accepted as true simply because they are repeated often enough, Fenzi insists on the validity of what "io sapevo e so."⁸⁷

It is for this faith in establishing the truth even in a climate of lies, and for his meditations on the condition of being a militant, rather than for particular facts, that Fenzi's memoir is without doubt one of the most valuable discussed in this chapter. Some of his statements – such as the one that Italian militancy foreshadowed the defeat of communism as a global movement, rather than announcing its final victory, or the one that an effort is underway in the Italian media to downplay the relevance of militancy to Italian history – are polemical and perhaps false (it is questionable to what extent the Red Brigades identified with the Soviet Union and related the victory of communism to the survival of that state, and the notion that militancy can be erased from the annals of Italy's postwar history is certainly not widespread).⁸⁸ Nonetheless, his perceptive analyses of militancy and incarceration as subjective experiences, and his critique of those who would downplay the political (rather than the criminological) importance of militancy, or use the Red Brigades as an element in fraudulent conspiracy theories, make his memoir required reading for all who would

⁸⁷ "I knew and know." Fenzi 203. Cf. Fenzi 216: "[...] molte cose possono apparire incerte, molte prospettive annebiate e insicure, ma, se lo si cerca, un punto fermo c'è sempre" ["Many things can appear uncertain, many prospects nebulous and doubtful, but, if one looks for it, there is always a fixed point"].

⁸⁸ These claims are made by Fenzi in the final chapter of his memoir (199ff.).

understand how the phenomenon of “armed struggle” shaped and continues to shape the sociopolitical reality of postwar Italy.

Patrizio Peci: Io, l'infame

Patrizio Peci has been called “il pentito per eccellenza.”⁸⁹ Following his arrest in February of 1980, after more than three years of militancy, he began to collaborate extensively with the police. This resulted in over seventy arrests and the shooting of four Red Brigades members in via Fracchia, Genoa (on 28 March, 1980). The Red Brigades circulated the story that he was arrested twice, having been released after the first arrest to act as a police informant. (Peci and the police have always denied this.) In 1981, Peci’s brother Roberto was held by the Red Brigades for 54 days, then killed. According to his kidnappers, Roberto was another “traitor.” By most other accounts, his “execution” was a particularly heinous act of retaliation (heinous also because of the style of the operation: Roberto’s kidnappers recorded both his interrogation and his death on film). In 1983, Peci participated in the Turin trial of Curcio and other militants. That year also saw the publication of Io, l'infame.⁹⁰

Peci’s memoir is in large part a reponse to the accusations brought against him – not only by the critics of militancy, but also by the Red Brigades. It begins with a lengthy list of the insults

⁸⁹ “The pentito par excellence.” Zavoli 463. Zavoli’s La notte della repubblica contains a number of interviews with Peci (eg. 463ff.).

⁹⁰ Patrizio Peci, Io, l'infame (Milan: Mondadori, 1983).

directed at him by his former comrades, and emphasises the hostility he faced "da una parte all'altra della barricata."⁹¹ Peci describes the behaviour of his ex-comrades in court in exceedingly disparaging terms, dismissing them as childish and "allucinanti nella loro follia."⁹² Yet his response to their insults and accusations is not much different. He speaks of his ex-comrades as "bestie" and goes out of his way to portray them as arrogant, stupid, and brutal.⁹³ Red Brigades leader Raffaele Fiore is an overweight glutton who cleaned his toes with the breadknife. Peci's former comrade and ex-girlfriend Maria Rosaria Roppoli is an unattractive and hysterical woman, a "piccola borghese complessata."⁹⁴ And so on.

One of the central aims of this memoir is to thoroughly discredit the Red Brigades. To achieve this aim, Peci offers unsympathetic portraits of his former comrades and recounts a number of (often humorous) anecdotes that serve to demolish whatever mystique may surround militancy.⁹⁵ His informal, conversational tone is likely to appeal to a young audience,

⁹¹ "From both sides of the barricade." Peci 12.

⁹² "Mindless in their folly." Ibid.

⁹³ "Animals." Ibid.

⁹⁴ "A petit-bourgeois woman with psychological problems." Peci 101.

⁹⁵ These anecdotes include that of Peci and one of his comrades more or less unwittingly being dragged into a marriage ceremony, or that of Peci's false moustache coming off in a bar (Peci 23ff., 26ff.). Peci repeatedly insists that "eravamo gente normalissima, con desideri e debolezze normali" (Peci 106) ["we were entirely normal people, with normal desires and weaknesses"]. Cf. eg. Peci 75: "La gente immaginava che la vita del brigatista sia tuta violenza, mistero e avventura. Macché. Quei momenti lì sono pochissimi, un'infima minoranza rispetto al resto. Il resto è fatto di problemi quotidiani e di banalità senza nome" ["People imagined the life of a Red Brigades member was all violence, mystery, and adventure. Nonsense. Those moments were rare, a vanishing minority with regard to the others. The others were made of everyday problems and unspeakable banalities"]. Cf. also Peci 114.

including those who might consider becoming militant themselves. Peci's aim is to discourage them – not by ponderous lectures, but by wit and ridicule.⁹⁶

The polemical character of Peci's memoir does not render it uninformative or uninteresting. Not only does Peci give the reader important insights into how the Red Brigades were organised.⁹⁷ He also makes revealing general observations on the experience of militancy; in particular, he confirms Fenzi's analysis of clandestinity as a state of extreme alienation: "Quando vivi in clandestinità per anni [...] hai rapporto solo con gente come te, sei fuori dal mondo."⁹⁸ Peci points out the clandestine Red Brigades member is alienated not only from conventional society, but from everyone who is not a member of the organisation, including members of the legal and non-clandestine left:

Quando sei nelle brigate rosse tutti i parametri cambiano, la formazione culturale che avevi prima non ti serve più, perché mancano i termini di riferimento. Uno può avere letto e sapere a memoria Marx, Marcuse e Mao, ma li si è fuori dal mondo, si

⁹⁶ Witness the sarcastic titles of many of the memoir's sections, eg. Peci 135, 140. Concerning Peci's style, cf. his own comment on p. 154: "Io con la scrittura non me la sono mai cavata tanto" ["Writing was never my strong point"].

⁹⁷ Cf. eg. the diagram on p. 59.

⁹⁸ "When you live clandestinely for years, you interact only with people like you; you're out of this world." Peci 30. "Fuori dal mondo" is also the title of the second chapter of Peci's memoir (Peci 45ff.).

parla di cose mai tentate prima, che non si sa bene dove
sbocheranno.⁹⁹

This is an observation not only on clandestinity, but also on the self-referential nature of the later Red Brigades and their detachment from left-wing culture. As Peci makes clear, the founders of the Red Brigades did not conceive of their organisation in this way. The original militant project, outlined by Peci in some detail, was that of stirring revolutionary sentiment through "armed propaganda," in order to draw an ever greater number of people into "armed struggle," with the ultimate aim of sparking a civil war that would result in a victory for communism.¹⁰⁰ Such a project could only be undermined by the opening of a rift between the Red Brigades and the general population.

For Peci, the central flaw of the project consists in an overvaluation of the potential for stirring revolutionary sentiment in an advanced industrial society. Specifically, he insists revolution remains impossible in countries where most people have enough to eat: "L'errore è stato il credere che, anche senza fame, si riuscisse a fare la rivoluzione semplicemente attraverso le persone che non

⁹⁹ "When you're in the Red Brigades all the parameters change; your cultural background is no longer of any use to you, because there are no common reference points. You can have read and memorised Marx, Marcuse, and Mao, but there you're out of this world. The talk is of things never previously attempted, of which no one knows where they'll end." Peci 54. Cf. also Peci 74.

¹⁰⁰ Peci 46.

volevano essere sfruttate economicamente."¹⁰¹ Besides misjudging the revolutionary potential of postwar Italy's socioeconomic crisis, the Red Brigades have destroyed whatever hope there was for revolution, by furnishing the state with the terrorist bogeyman that allowed for a criminalisation of the entire extraparliamentary left:

"[...] non abbiamo concluso niente se non criminalizzare tutta l'area di dissenso a sinistra del partito comunista. Di fatto ora chiunque si pone all'esterno o alla sinistra del sindacato o del partito comunista è un terrorista o un potenziale terrorista."¹⁰²

Why did Peci overlook these issues and become militant? He lists several reasons. Once, he mentions his interest in politics began around 1970 and was related to outrage over the harshness of the state's crackdown on the protest movement of 1968.¹⁰³ He speaks of his loss of faith in extraparliamentary groups such as

¹⁰¹ "The error consisted in thinking that, even without hunger, it would be possible to make the revolution simply with the help of people who refused to be exploited economically." Peci 47. Peci sees in this error an indication of how the Red Brigades were mentally "fuori dal mondo" ["out of this world"] from the very beginning.

¹⁰² "We haven't achieved anything besides criminalising every form of dissent left of the communist party. Now whoever positions himself left of the union or the communist party is a terrorist or a potential terrorist." Peci 49. This analysis – not wrong, but incomplete and superficial – recalls the scepticism and pessimism with which Klein speaks of revolution, much as the tone of *Io, l'infame* recalls that of *Rückkehr in die Menschlichkeit*. (As any reading of the most important Red Brigades and RAF documents shows, the leaders of these organisations were well aware of the fact that the comparatively high standard of living in Italy and the GFR would result in the formation of a "workers' aristocracy" whose political stance would be conservative and counterrevolutionary; they were also aware that militancy would result in the criminalisation of the legal left and heightened repression. Not only were these problems not overlooked, but reflection on them contributed crucially to the strategic decisions taken. Concerning the problem of repression, Marcuse already pointed out, in his 1967 discussions with Berlin students, the fallaciousness of the argument that one ought to refrain from opposing the state because this must lead to an increase in repression; Marcuse argued that this increase takes place in any case.)

¹⁰³ Peci 34.

Lotta Continua, which appeared to him supremely competent when it came to organising demonstrations and occupations, but also seemed (unlike the Red Brigades) to lack a concept of how the struggle for communism could go beyond such "azioni sporadiche, sterili."¹⁰⁴ He speaks of the great attraction exerted by all antifascist movements at a time when a right-wing coup seemed imminent (after the December 1969 Piazza Fontana bomb).¹⁰⁵ He also mentions how his politization and radicalisation were sped by his reading. His first political book, he says, was the Communist Manifesto – "[...] mi è piaciuto abbastanza."¹⁰⁶ This was followed by Potere Operaio documents, texts by Mao and Stalin, and later books on the Tupamaros and the IRA.

Peci lists three convictions that, he insists, were shared by all who became militant: that communism is worth bringing about, that "armed struggle" is the only way of bringing it about, and that victory for the communist insurrectionaries is possible. He also says, however, that he would never have joined the Red Brigades if he

¹⁰⁴ "Sporadic, sterile operations." Peci 35.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Peci 36. It was in the context of this renewed fascist threat that Peci and his friends organised the clandestine PAIL (Proletari Armati in Lotta or "Armed and Struggling Proletarians"). "Clandestine perché a quel tempo a picchiare un fascista andava sempre a finire che ti mettevano dentro, e poi perché l'esempio della clandestinità delle br funzionava: non li prendevano mai" (Peci 36) ["Clandestine because back then if you beat up a fascist you ended up in prison, and because the example of the clandestine Red Brigades worked: they never caught them"]. Later, Peci states: "Il punto di riferimento per me era sempre il fascismo, in quanto contrario del comunismo" (Peci 45) ["Fascism, as the opposite of communism, was always my reference point"].

¹⁰⁶ "I thought it was pretty good." Peci 38.

had been able to find work in Milan. Finally, he speaks of altruism – a desire to create a superior society for all – and adventurism.¹⁰⁷

Peci's rejection of militancy was motivated by his rejection of the third of the three convictions he lists (and perhaps also of the other two, although this is less clear); by the repugnance he was beginning to feel towards his comrades; by the pressures of clandestinity; and by moral considerations.¹⁰⁸ In particular, he seems to have been unable, after a point, to accept the disregard for individual human lives that characterised the *modus operandi* of the Red Brigades. As he says about himself and his former comrades: "Ci interessavano solo le conseguenze politiche delle nostre azioni, quelle umane dovevamo non considerarle nemmeno [...]."¹⁰⁹ It was during an attack on Giuliano Farina, a Fiat boss, that Peci first began to question this attitude. Peci reports that Farina was the first of his victims who spoke to him, pleading for his life, and adds: "Di colpo lui non era più un bersaglio, ma un uomo come me."¹¹⁰

This statement is revealing in a number of ways. First, it indicates that militancy always required, for Peci, a kind of tunnel vision; in order to participate in operations targeting individuals, he

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Peci 41ff.

¹⁰⁸ For Peci's revised position on communism, cf. p. 220: "Un paese veramente comunista l'Italia non lo diventerà mai [...]" ["Italy will never become a truly communist country"].

¹⁰⁹ "We were only interested in the political consequences of our operations; we couldn't think about the human ones." Peci 135.

¹¹⁰ "Suddenly he was no longer a target, but a man like me." Peci 132. Cf. Peci 158ff. for another poignant anecdote concerning the disparity between "target" and "man."

had to think of those individuals not in terms of their humanity, but in terms of their symbolic value. They were not so much people in their own right as pawns in the game of "armed propaganda."

Second, the statement reveals how easily such an attitude is subverted. It was enough for Farina to address Peci directly. This is also interesting in that it links the rediscovery of the victim's humanity to the faculty of speech. The implication is that the success of militancy presupposes the voicelessness of the victim; once the victim speaks, he becomes "un uomo come me" and therefore worthy of moral treatment. The ideological constructs that emerge from the proliferation of Red Brigades statements are called into question as soon as the voice excluded from those constructs – the voice of the victim – is heard.

Peci is surprisingly (perhaps suspiciously) nonchalant about how his decision to abandon militancy affected him psychologically. Once, he replies to those who accuse him of being a turncoat that theirs is a romantic and infantile view of life, and that they are driven by "idealismo maniacale."¹¹¹ He insists on describing himself in the rhetoric of self-improvement rather than that of treason; an insistence tied to his portrayal of the Red Brigades as a gang of homicidal madmen: "Perché se le brigate rosse sono davvero un esercito che combatte contro lo stato italiano e non una banda che uccide a vuoto, allora sì, io sono un traditore. Altrimenti sono uno

¹¹¹ "Manic idealism." Peci 199.

che ha sbagliato e che per sua e vostra fortuna si è accorto dell'errore."¹¹² The passage suggests Peci's venomous portrayals of his former comrades result from a need to maintain his own self-respect. If he is to think of himself as having made the right choice by becoming a police collaborator, he must portray the militant project and those complicit in it as thoroughly indefensible.

More than any of the other memoirs discussed in this chapter, Peci's betrays the upheaval of a subject that defined itself first by a negation of the dominant political culture, and then by a negation of that negation – an upheaval made all the more dramatic by the fact that neither negation was possible without the shouldering of the most burdensome responsibilities, including that of having presided – not once, but repeatedly – over the deaths of others.

Alberto Franceschini: Mara Renato ed io

Mara Renato ed io¹¹³ was written by one of the founders of the Red Brigades with the aid of two journalists, Pier Vittorio Buffa and Franca Giustolisi. In clear, journalistic prose, Alberto Franceschini describes his family background and youth, his friendship with Margherita Cagol and Renato Curcio, his role in various militant

¹¹² "Because if the Red Brigades really are an army fighting the Italian state, rather than a gang that kills senselessly, then yes, I'm a traitor. Otherwise I'm someone who was mistaken and has realised his mistake, fortunately for himself and you." Peci 200.

¹¹³ Alberto Franceschini with Pier Vittorio Buffa and Franco Giustolisi, Mara Renato ed io (Milan: Mondadori, 1988). This text is the first of two penned by Franceschini to be discussed in this study; the second is Franceschini's novel La borsa del presidente, analysed in the next chapter.

operations, his first years in prison, and the experiences that led him to revoke, in the 1980s, his endorsement of insurrectionary violence.

The early chapters of Mara Renato ed io are largely devoted to what Franceschini calls "the red thread," that is, to the link between the antifascist resistance of the 1940s and the militants of the 1970s. Franceschini is at pains to place the Red Brigades in the larger context of the Italian socialist and communist traditions. His argument is not unconvincing. Like other Red Brigades members, Franceschini was born into a family of communists; his grandfather was one of the first members of the PCI, and fought as a partisan during the Second World War. Franceschini emphasises that socialist and communist ideals had led to insurrectionary violence before – not in some distant past, but within living memory.

Yet Franceschini does more than merely point out the context of a long-standing left-wing tradition. He insists former partisans actively encouraged him and his friends to engage in armed insurrection, describing, in Chapter I, how one partisan handed him a gun and said: "Stai continuando il nostro lavoro e vi ho dato l'aiuto che potevo."¹¹⁴ Resorting to metaphors of family and

¹¹⁴ "You're continuing our work and I've given you what help I could." Franceschini 1988 6. Curcio reports similar experiences. Cf. Curcio 71: "Ho un ricordo tenero e malinconico di quei vecchi comunisti, ormai scomparsi, che vivevano l'amarezza della disillusione: 'Noi abbiamo fiducia in voi', ci dicevano, 'e la nostra speranza è che possiate riuscire lì dove siamo stati fregati'" ["I have an affectionate and melancholy recollection of those old communists, now gone, that

inheritance, Franceschini stresses that the relationship between the former partisans and the future militants was not simply pragmatic, but as emotionally invested - as informed by notions of gratitude, responsibility and obligation - as that between fathers and sons. In this context, the Browning Franceschini was given (originally that of a German soldier) becomes more than simply a tool; it is the symbol of a historical legacy, a "testimonial" that bridges past and future, authorising and encouraging the continuation of the revolutionary project: "Erano i nostri padri e un figlio diventa adulto solo quando gli viene passato un testimone: lo diventarono quelle pistole tedesche e le parole di chi me le aveva date."¹¹⁵ These remarks serve to lend credibility and dignity to the Red Brigades, resisting their facile demonisation, on the part of the media, as isolated criminals and madmen, rather than agents of a larger historical process.

That the Red Brigades did not uncritically accept, but substantially revised the revolutionary thought of earlier generations is stressed repeatedly by Franceschini, although he suggests the revisions were largely of a strategic, rather than of an ideological nature. The insurrectionary strategy of the Red Brigades

lived the bitterness of disillusionment: 'We trust you,' they said to us, 'and our hope is that you may succeed where we were cheated'".

¹¹⁵ "They were our fathers, and a son becomes an adult only when he is given a testimonial: those German guns and the words of those who gave them to me became that testimonial for us." Ibid. Cf. Curcio, loc. cit.: "'Consegnarci la pistola con cui avevano combattuto contro i fascisti, trent'anni prima, era come passarci un testimone' ["Handing over to us the gun with which they had fought the fascists thirty years earlier was like giving us a testimonial"].

departed most markedly from that of the partisans by emphasising the importance of the city. After meeting editor and left-wing agitator Giangiacomo Feltrinelli - who was not a former partisan, but who adhered to the partisan concept of rural resistance - Franceschini concluded that Feltrinelli's ideas of revolution are hopelessly outdated.¹¹⁶ Franceschini's encounter with Feltrinelli illustrates how the Red Brigades - not unlike the RAF - adopted the South American concept of urban guerrilla warfare, thereby departing from traditional European models of socialist insurrection. Franceschini saw no revolutionary potential in Feltrinelli's project of blowing up electricity lines.¹¹⁷

Not everyone approved of the Red Brigades' departure from traditional strategic models. After chronicling one of the first Red Brigades operations, the kidnapping of Siemens engineer Idalgo Macchiarini, Franceschini describes the disillusionment of one former partisan, Sergio, with the new militant movement. Having earlier provided the Red Brigades with Sten machine guns, Sergio voiced his disapproval of the Macchiarini kidnapping and broke off contact with Franceschini and his comrades.

While the project of the Red Brigades had not been dismissed on moral grounds, something of the legitimacy Franceschini and his

¹¹⁶ Cf. Franceschini 1988 46.

¹¹⁷ Franceschini's remarks on this project are tinged with irony; as most Italian readers would know, Feltrinelli died in the attempt to realise his plan.

comrades derived from the support of the partisans was lost.¹¹⁸ The earlier sense of solidarity between the two generations had given way to mutual disdain; no longer was it a case of the older generation handing over to the younger the task of organising the revolution, but rather of an originally serious project suffering disgrace at the hands of incompetent and immature upstarts.

Partisans dissatisfied with the Italian republic were only one of several groups in relation to which the Red Brigades defined themselves. Fiat factory workers and other members of the proletariat were at least as important. In describing his dealings with them, Franceschini is again concerned to provide the reader with a sense of context and, more specifically, to discredit the view that the Red Brigades were a historical and political accident, detached both from the current of history and from the political hopes of the general population. Like their German counterparts, the Italian militants were heavily criticised by members of the non-militant left who felt the movement was not merely misrepresenting, but in fact violating the interests of the working class. Franceschini cites the statement of trade unionists following the first Red Brigades operations: "La classe operaia è troppo

¹¹⁸ Sergio's disapproval was clearly based on strategic considerations rather than moral principles. He felt the kidnapping had been badly organised and that too many risks had been taken. In particular, he took issue with Franceschini insisting on waiting when Macchiarini did not appear at the expected time. Cf. Franceschini 1988 64.

matura per cadere in simili provocazioni.”¹¹⁹ Like the former partisan Sergio, the trade unionists refused to credit the Red Brigades with approaching the revolutionary project in a serious or “mature” manner. Unlike Sergio, the trade unionists felt the immaturity of the Red Brigades consisted not so much in their lack of caution, but in their readiness to use violence (which Sergio seems not to have disapproved of). Franceschini dismisses their view by suggesting it was really the trade unionists who did not understand the working class, characterised as they were by willful blindness to the proletariat’s own potential for violence. In fact, Franceschini suggests, the working class is not so much non-violent as deprived of a vehicle for its violent sentiments. He mentions the scrawlings in the restrooms of factories – places that certainly have connotations of immaturity and unsatisfied desire – to suggest that if the workers typically seemed nonviolent or “mature,” this was only because they were unable to express their true feelings other than secretly.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ “The working class is too mature to fall for these kinds of provocations.” Franceschini 1988 41.

¹²⁰ Cf. Franceschini 1988 41: “Il cesso era l’unico posto dove l’operaio poteva esprimersi liberamente, essere se stesso senza paure e condizionamenti: come a scuola, quando si va là dentro a fumare le prime sigarette. Era luogo di discorsi importanti, di graffiti contro capi e spie, con nomi, cognomi, numeri di targa delle macchine; l’informazione di fabbrica vi circolava realmente perché l’operaio poteva scrivere sui muri quello che aveva dentro restando assolutamente anonimo” [“The toilet was the only place where the worker could express himself freely, be himself without fear and conditioning: just like at school, when you go there to smoke your first cigarettes. It was a place of important verbal exchanges, of graffiti against bosses and spies, with names, surnames, car registration numbers; factory information circulated there because the worker could write on the walls what he knew and felt while remaining completely anonymous”].

Having made a case for considering militancy as the expression of larger historical and social forces, rather than only the misguidedness of individuals, Franceschini proceeds to describe the major Red Brigades operations he was involved in prior to his incarceration. It is here – after the dismissal of the traditional left-wing critique of “terrorism” – that he first suggests the Red Brigades project may have been not just strategically, but morally flawed. This suggestion turns on the concept of the individual – a concept that crucially informed the thinking of the militants while simultaneously forming the weak point of that thinking, a kind of ideological blind spot. Franceschini shows how the Red Brigades were constrained to rethink, in the wake of experiences made during the practical realisation of their program, their concept of individuality. It is this re-thinking, along with experiences made in prison, that eventually compelled Franceschini to revoke his endorsement of political violence.

At the centre of Mara Renato ed io is Franceschini’s account of the Sossi kidnapping. Even before the victim of the kidnapping operation has been selected, the Red Brigades agreed the crucial criterion in the selection process should be his symbolic value: “Per il nostro primo rapimento doveamo puntare ancora sui capi, individuandone uno importante, un simbolo.”¹²¹ In itself, this did not

¹²¹ “In arranging our first kidnapping we had to continue targeting the bosses, choosing an important one, a symbol.” Franceschini 1988 57f.

constitute a departure from previous operations such as the kidnapping of Macchiarini. The qualitative difference of the Sossi operation, according to Franceschini, consisted in a new willingness to treat the killing of the kidnapped person as a viable strategic option. This is what Franceschini calls "the planning of death": "Con Sossi entrò nelle Brigate rosse la pianificazione della morte: il sequestro del magistrato genovese fu la prima azione in cui avevamo previsto la possibilità di uccidere l'ostaggio."¹²² The reduction of the victim to his symbolic value entailed a willingness to overlook his humanity, and this became a willingness to take human life as part of the realisation of a political program.

While practically successful, the Sossi kidnapping marked the beginning of a more wide-reaching moral failure – a failure resulting from the inability to think of the enemy other than in abstract terms. As part of his chronicle of Sossi's detention in the "people's prison," Franceschini reports how the magistrate took issue with the slogan displayed in his cell, "Portare l'attacco al cuore dello Stato."¹²³ Sossi pointed out the gap between these abstract concepts and his own person, emphasising how unworthy he was of being targeted as an enemy: "'Non sono certo io il cuore,' comincio a dire, 'sono solo un sostituto procuratore che fa il proprio dovere di

¹²² "With Sossi the planning of death became part of the Red Brigades. The arrest of the Genovese magistrate was the first operation in which we foresaw the possibility of killing the hostage." Franceschini 1988 85.

¹²³ "Direct the attack at the heart of the state." Franceschini 1988 94.

magistrato.”¹²⁴ Even if Franceschini rejected this argument at the time, the disparity between his concept of Sossi as an enemy of the working class and the reality of Sossi as a human being seems eventually to have become a problem for the militants.

This problem first manifested itself linguistically, in the form of a modification of the Red Brigades’ jargon. Franceschini discusses the use of the expression “bring to justice” as an example of diction that attempts to hide the humanity of the enemy behind abstract terminology. Once they were confronted with Sossi as a physical presence, the Red Brigades began to feel uncertain about such terminology:

Prima di avere Sossi con noi dicevamo che, se le cose non fossero andate nel modo giusto, lo avremmo “giustiziato”. Ma usavamo questa parola come se fosse scritta su un libro, in modo impersonale, riferendo di un atto formale come è, ai fini della storia, una fucilazione. Vivendo con lui, provvedendo ai suoi bisogni elementari, vedendolo piangere, non ci commuovevamo certo, ma la frase “lo giustiziamo” sparì dai nostri discorsi.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ “‘I’m certainly not the heart,’ he started to say, ‘I’m just a deputy prosecutor doing his duty as a magistrate.’” Franceschini 1988 94.

¹²⁵ “Before having Sossi with us we said that, if things didn’t go the way we wanted them to, we would ‘bring him to justice.’ But we used this expression as if it had been written in a book, impersonally, referring to a formal act, which is what an execution is, in the end. Living with him, tending to his basic needs, seeing him cry, we certainly didn’t feel pity, but the expression ‘we’ll bring him to justice’ disappeared from our conversations.” Franceschini 1988 100.

Franceschini's reference to Sossi's basic needs identifies the experience of the victim's physicality as one which lastingly shakes the militant's overly abstract ideology. Similarly, displays of emotion such as Sossi's outbursts of tears revealed how reductive the concept of the class enemy is when applied to a specific person. The realisations resulting from such experiences were slow to take effect: Franceschini and his comrades maintained their façade of ruthlessness. Nevertheless, their altered language betrayed a gradual recognition of the moral flaw inherent in their thinking.

Franceschini's renunciation of militancy came in prison. It only became possible when two conditions had been met. First, the confrontation between the militants and the state had escalated to such an extent that Franceschini came close to losing his mind: "Il mio equilibrio psicologico, di cui ero andato sempre fiero e che mi aveva fatto superare gli anni del carcere duro, se ne stava andando."¹²⁶ Second, the initially brutal and humiliating treatment of Franceschini in prison had changed such that he could allow himself a sceptical re-examination of his earlier convictions. The importance of this second, objective condition can hardly be overestimated. It was only when Franceschini was no longer at the mercy of psychopathic prison directors that he could begin to relate

¹²⁶ "My psychological health, of which I had always been proud and which had allowed me to survive the hardest years of prison, was suffering." Franceschini 1988 202.

humanly to the prison authorities, and to abandon the reductive dichotomy of “revolutionary” and “class enemy.”¹²⁷

This ability to see others as more than mere “symbols” was the end of a development that began with the Sossi kidnapping. Yet it was not only a case of Franceschini’s judgements of other people becoming less reductive and more nuanced; his own sense of identity also began to change. Franceschini describes his interest in the philosophy of the American Indians as an example of his gradual emancipation from the ideology of the Red Brigades – an emancipation that amounted to the discovery of his own individuality:

Fu in quel periodo che cominciai a leggere libri che l’ortodossia brigatista aveva da sempre messo all’indice. Lessi degli indiani d’America e mi appassionò il loro modo assolutamente individuale di porsi di fronte alla vita e la loro capacità di accettare qualunque tipo di esperienza.¹²⁸

As during the Sossi kidnapping, Franceschini’s inner transformation expressed itself linguistically. Speaking of his failed

¹²⁷ His dialogues with the chaplain of Palmi prison played an important role in this development: “Stavamo diventando quasi amici, lentamente imparavo a vedere direttore e cappellano non più come ‘parte’ delle istituzioni ma come persone, persone come tante, non simboli” (Franceschini 1988 207) [“We almost became friends. Slowly I learned to see the director and the chaplain not as ‘part’ of the institutions, but as persons, persons like many others, not symbols”]. That the director of Asinara prison, Luigi Cardullo, had a psychopathic streak is confirmed by Curcio. Cf. Curcio 176ff.

¹²⁸ “It was then that I started reading books the Red Brigades orthodoxy had always placed on the index. I read about the American Indians and became passionate about their completely individualist attitude to life and their ability to accept all forms of experience.” Franceschini 1988 202f.

attempt to communicate his new insights to his former comrade Renato Curcio, Franceschini laments Curcio's insistence on continuing to use "brigatese" or Red Brigades jargon: "Lui rispondeva usando il brigatese, quel linguaggio criptico che eravamo andati coniando anno dopo anno, un'altra prigione in cui avevamo rinserrato I nostri cervelli."¹²⁹ Here, the language of the Red Brigades becomes a device for shielding oneself from the truth – a bulwark against insight, experience, and change. While physically imprisoned in Palmi, Franceschini claims to have succeeded in liberating himself from the "mental prison" of ideology. Curcio's putative inability to do the same is presented as tragic: "Vidi in Renato un velo di tristezza negli occhi."¹³⁰

Hence, while Mara Renato ed io begins by emphasising the continuities between the Red Brigades and earlier forms of left-wing militancy, introducing a metaphor – the "red thread" – that is at times suggestive of historical determinism, by the end of the memoir, the dominant motif is that of personal choice. This emerges even from the titles of the last two chapters: "Via, via da queste sponde"¹³¹ and "Ex brigatista". The epilogue – which cites

¹²⁹ "He answered using 'brigatese,' that cryptic language we had coined year after year, another prison in which we had placed our minds." Franceschini 1988 202. The denseness of the Red Brigades documents and their excessive use of jargon has often been pointed out to stand in crass contrast to the group's self-portrayal as the mouthpiece and defender of the working class.

¹³⁰ "I saw in Renato's eyes a veil of sadness." Ibid. In fact, Curcio went through a development similar to Franceschini's: he became increasingly interested in psychoanalysis, making a habit of writing down his dreams and going on to write experimental literary texts. Cf. Curcio 198ff.

¹³¹ "Away, away from these shores."

the document by which Franceschini officially “disassociated” himself from militancy - places renewed emphasis on the notion that, whatever his or her personal background and historical context, the individual is free to make a decision for or against the use of violence.

The overall effect of Franceschini’s memoir is ambiguous; in many ways, the text vindicates the Red Brigades as a movement whose formation was, if not justified or inevitable, strongly facilitated by the social and political history of the Italian republic, and while Franceschini’s repudiation of violence is unequivocal, it remains entirely personal, the decision of a single man who makes no claim to speak for others.

A.L. Braghetti: Il prigioniero

Like that of other memoirs by Italian militants, the structure of Il prigioniero¹³² is distinctly non-linear. Its non-linearity does not take the form of a dialogic, epistolary, or aphoristic structure, but that of a disregard for chronology. In jumping from the days of the Moro kidnapping to her childhood, then to her years in prison, Braghetti creates a formal corollary to the disrupted chronology of her life - one of the memoir’s main themes. Braghetti’s life time is characterised by disjunction and non-linearity in so far as her years in clandestinity and prison have precluded her from experiencing

¹³² Anna Laura Braghetti/Paola Tavella, Il Prigioniero (Milan: Mondadori, 1998).

the continuities that characterise other people's lives, and indeed the natural world:

Non ho visto queste persone che ora mi circondano crescere e invecchiare. Qualcuno è morto, altri si sono sposati o separati, i bambini sono nati e cresciuti. Gli oggetti si sono rotti e sono stati sostituiti. Al tempo in cui ho cominciato a sparire, a mentire, a cambiare strade se incontravo uno di loro, davanti alla finestra della mia camera di ragazzina c'era un arbusto che ora è un albero.¹³³

More than on the death of Moro, *Il prigioniero* focuses on the story of this disjointed life. Perhaps outrageously, it narrates not so much the suffering of the kidnapped politician, as that of her kidnappers – deconstructing the image of the cold-blooded “terrorist” and replacing it with that of the overly sensitive and tragically misguided idealist. This is at least partly a consequence of the historical context in which Braghetti's memoir was written: one characterised by a public debate over the granting of pardons to former militants. As someone directly affected by such a decision, Braghetti has an interest in portraying the ex-militant as someone who has been persecuted with excessive zeal and deserves a “second chance.”

¹³³ “I haven't seen any of the people who now surround me grow up and age. Some people have died, others have married and divorced, children have been born and have grown up. Objects have broken and been replaced. When I started shooting, lying, walking the other way when I met one of them, there was a little tree outside the window of my room which is now fully grown.” Braghetti 60.

The most obvious way in which Braghetti undermines notions of the "terrorist" as a moral monster or ruthless, unemotional strategist is by constantly drawing attention to the powerful emotions she experienced before and during the Moro kidnapping. On the first pages of the memoir, she describes herself waiting for her fellow Red Brigades members to return from via Fani with the kidnapped Moro. She does not, at first, mention the kidnapping at all, focusing instead on her tortuous experience of waiting.¹³⁴ She describes the state of nervous anxiety that characterised her and Germano, another militant not present in via Fani.

Braghetti's nervousness is relieved only temporarily when she learns that the kidnapping succeeded. At night, she finds herself trembling with fear: "Mentre mi lavavo i denti e mi infilavo il pigiama tremavo di paura."¹³⁵ When the kidnappers return with Moro, she does not so much gloat over the success of their operation as experience relief that her friends have not been killed: "Erano vivi."¹³⁶ This sense of relief is given as much emphasis as that of excitement: "Eravamo eccitati, e sollevati."¹³⁷ The implication is that Braghetti and her comrades were not so much brilliant strategists as the beneficiaries of outrageous good fortune:

¹³⁴ Cf. Braghetti 3.

¹³⁵ "While I brushed my teeth and slipped into my pajamas I was trembling with fear." Braghetti 9.

¹³⁶ "They were alive." Braghetti 3.

¹³⁷ "We were excited, and relieved." Ibid.

"Per come erano andate le cose quella mattina dovevamo rendere merito più alla fortuna che alla nostra preparazione meticolosa."¹³⁸

In later chapters, Braghetti describes how her ongoing anxiety expressed itself physically through nosebleeds and fainting spells.¹³⁹

Braghetti's anxiety also leads to a nightmare suggestive of her putative powerlessness: "Facevo un sogno, sempre lo stesso: di essere in un tunnel, o in una caverna, avvolta dal buio, predia di una fortissima sensazione di soffocamento, una situazione in cui sembrava impossibile trovare una via di uscita dall'oscurità."¹⁴⁰

The powerlessness Braghetti experiences contrasts sharply with the image of the militant circulated in the media. The failure of the telephone lines in via Fani, an unintended result of the kidnapping, is attributed by journalists to the craftiness of the Red Brigades.¹⁴¹ Again, Braghetti undermines the notion that she and her comrades were in complete control of the situation by pointing out that much of what happened was unforeseen and indeed unpredictable.

Not only do militants suffer anxiety and make mistakes; they are also, Braghetti suggests, prone to indulging their affection for

¹³⁸ "That things had worked out the way they had that morning was due more to good fortune than to our meticulous preparations." Braghetti 5. Implicit in these remarks is an attack on "dietrologia" - a tendency in Italian journalism and scholarship to view militancy as having been staged by crafty freemasons and scheming secret agents, typically exaggerating the slyness of the militants themselves.

¹³⁹ Cf. Braghetti 18f., 34.

¹⁴⁰ "There was a dream I had, always the same: I was in a tunnel, or a cave, surrounded by darkness, prey to a powerful sense of suffocation, a situation in which it seemed impossible to find a way out of the gloom." Braghetti 35.

¹⁴¹ Cf. Braghetti 6.

pets. Braghetti begins one chapter of her memoir as follows: "La gabbia era vuota, con la porta spalancata. Mi prese il panico. Come poteva essere successo? Dovevo per forza essere stata io a lasciarla aperta. Ora dovevo andare in cucina e dirlo a Prospero. Si sarebbe infuriato, e avrei passato un guaio, lo sapevo benissimo."¹⁴² Having mischievously misled her reader into believing she is revealing some hitherto unknown episode of the Moro kidnapping – an attempt by Moro to escape from his "cage" – Braghetti concludes that all was lost because "A quell'ora i canarini dovevano essere chissà dove."¹⁴³ It is not only politicians that militants are fond of locking up, but also birds, and since this is a practice many ordinary Italians also engage in, the distance separating the Red Brigades from these ordinary Italians is really less dramatic than one might suspect. This (implied) argument is certainly crude and presented in a way that is inappropriately silly – Braghetti's attempted "domestication" of the "terrorist" is unconvincing. The point made, however, is one that Braghetti takes very seriously, and returns to repeatedly. Speaking of Prospero Gallinari, she says: "Come lui ne ho conosciuti tanti nelle Brigate Rosse, gente che non avrebbe torto un capello a nessuno [...] e che, invece, sparò, uccise e provocò un'immensità di

¹⁴² "The cage was empty, its door open. I panicked. How could it have happened? I had to have been the one to leave the door open. Now I had to go into the kitchen and tell Prospero. He would have been furious, and I was going to be in trouble, I knew." Braghetti 73.

¹⁴³ "At that time the birds could have been who knows were." Ibid.

dolore in nome dell'ideologia."¹⁴⁴ Braghetti fully acknowledges she and her comrades ruined the lives of others. What she is concerned about is that no one should forget that the Red Brigades were motivated by ideals such as they might be embraced by even the most pacific individuals – that their violence was never an end in itself, but a device that seemed justified given their ideology.

It is with the aim of deconstructing another particularly widespread image of the militant – that of the lunatic for whom politics is as good an excuse to kill as any – that Braghetti elaborates on the ethos of the Red Brigades. She explains the singular code of honour that underpinned the organisation's use of political violence, referring, for example, to a concern for civilians likely to come as a surprise to anyone familiar only with the media's caricature of the left-wing militant: "Le Brigate Rosse si facevano un punto d'onore di non colpire accidentalmente o per errore i civili."¹⁴⁵

Braghetti is at pains to portray the life of the militant as a life of sacrifices. It is important to note, however, that there were differences in the kind of sacrifices made. Most of Braghetti's comrades led entirely clandestine lives. Her own situation was different in that she continued to work in the daytime, and hence to cultivate an image of normality. She led a double life, inhabiting two

¹⁴⁴ "I knew many like him in the Red Brigades, people who wouldn't have hurt a fly and yet ended up shooting, killing, and provoking tremendous pain in the name of ideology." Braghetti 33.

¹⁴⁵ "The Red Brigades considered it a question of honour not to shoot at civilians accidentally or by mistake." Braghetti 6.

worlds simultaneously: that of the left-wing militant and that of a regular civilian. Braghetti repeatedly stresses the contrast between these two worlds, as in Chapter XVII, which begins with the "condemnation" of Moro by his kidnappers – an act indicative of the full radicality of her life as a militant – only to end with the description of a boring neighbourhood party. Braghetti creates a similar contrast at the end of her memoir, when, after having described the "execution" of Moro, she closes with the banal image of a man walking his dog.

While it may seem that Braghetti was making less of a sacrifice than her comrades by continuing to live, at least part of the time, the life of an ordinary civilian, the schizophrenia of her existence constantly creates problems.¹⁴⁶ Meeting an old friend in the street, she is constrained to ignore her, because the obligatory hug would have revealed she was carrying a gun: "se mi avesse abbracciata avrebbe sentito la durezza della pistola nella fondina che portavo alla cintura. E avrebbe capito, o immaginato, chi ero diventata."¹⁴⁷ In fact, Braghetti's estrangement goes further than

¹⁴⁶ This thematic "schizophrenia" is of course mirrored formally. It will be remembered that the memoir is structured along two parallel chronologies: Braghetti constantly switches back and forth between episodes from her life as a militant and episodes from her life as an ex-militant.

¹⁴⁷ "If she had embraced me she would have felt the hardness of the gun I was carrying. And she would have understood or imagined what I had become." Braghetti 131. Cf. also Braghetti 133, where, describing a chance encounter with the comedian Roberto Benigni, who immediately begins to flirt with her, Braghetti notes that "Per una ragazza qualunque quello sarebbe stato un giorno fortunato" (Braghetti 133) ["For an ordinary young woman that would have been a lucky day"]. That she cannot afford to speak to strangers emphasises the extent to

this. In addition to being estranged from the world of ordinary citizens, she feels an outsider in the Red Brigades. This second aspect of her twofold "foreignness" is largely due to her being a woman in male-dominated organisation. As she writes early on in her memoir, "La guerra è una cosa dei maschi e, quando le femmine ci si trovano dentro, in un modo o nell'altro sono fuori posto."¹⁴⁸

This is reflected in the tasks allocated to her: "[...] io continuavo a non avere grandi rapporti con l'aspetto militare del sequestro."¹⁴⁹ In fact, Braghetti is expected to play the role of an ordinary, middle-class woman, maintaining a façade of normality by going to work, shopping, and keeping the house tidy. To some extent she enjoys her position and takes pride in making sure her comrades eat well: "Ero fiera delle mie virtù domestiche, in via Montalcini non si mangiavano certo panini e scatolette."¹⁵⁰

The question of why exactly Braghetti joined the Red Brigades, or of the extent to which this decision was determined by factors outside her control, is never satisfactorily answered in Il prigioniero. Braghetti's remarks on the subject are curiously ambiguous, characterised by a constant tension between a (never

which, despite appearances, she is not at all "una ragazza qualunque" ["an ordinary young woman"].

¹⁴⁸ "War is a male business, and when women become involved, they are always in some sense out of place." Braghetti 24.

¹⁴⁹ "I continued not to have much to do with the military side of the kidnapping." Braghetti 23.

¹⁵⁰ "I was proud of my domestic virtues; in via Montalcini no one had to live off sandwiches and canned goods." Braghetti 19.

fully clarified) concept of choice and a rigidly determinist view of her personal history. The following passage is characteristic:

La mia scelta di entrare in una organizzazione armata è stata il frutto di un lungo, lento corteggiamento, un avvicinamento graduale, passo per passo. Come un meccanismo che, prima di mettersi in moto, faccia scattare tanti clic impercettibili, uno dopo l'altro, fino al momento finale quando ogni passaggio è compiuto e la macchina è avviata in tutta la sua potenza.¹⁵¹

The ambiguity of this passage results from the fact while "scelta" suggests Braghetti's decision was taken autonomously, the metaphor of the machine suggests determinism. In fact, there is a sense of inevitability to many of the passages in which Braghetti describes the decisions that led her to become a militant. This sense is usually suggested by a mechanical metaphor; at one point, Braghetti speaks of herself and her comrades as "una fabbrica di omicidi."¹⁵² Another image she uses is that of the moving train; while allowing for the possibility of getting off the train, Braghetti also suggests that without such a conscious effort, there was no stopping her move towards both homicide and the ruining of her own life: "se mi fossi accorta che ogni tanto quel treno faceva una fermata, e che potevo scendere, avrei salvato delle vite, e fra

¹⁵¹ "My decision to join a militant organisation was the result of a long and slow courting process, a gradual, step by step approach. Like a mechanism which, before becoming properly active, sets off a number of imperceptible clicks, one after the other, until that final moment when every step has been taken and the machine functions at full power." Braghetti 14f.

¹⁵² "A homicide factory." Braghetti 133.

queste le mie."¹⁵³ The image does not suggest that it was ever impossible for Braghetti to act otherwise than she did, but it does suggest she was being driven by forces beyond her control.¹⁵⁴

Regardless of whether it ought to be explained in libertarian or determinist terms, at the heart of Braghetti's experience as a militant lies the "prisoner" from whom her memoir takes its title. Braghetti's description of the Moro kidnapping is riddled with references to the television and the radio, evoking the rift between an actual experience or an actual person and the representation of that experience or person in the media. When Braghetti speaks of the first news story about the Moro kidnapping, she seems struck by the fact that the name constantly coming up on the radio should be that of the person imprisoned in her apartment. Her detailed descriptions of Moro in his "prison" evokes the specificity of that situation, which could not but have contrasted sharply with what

¹⁵³ "If I had realised that every now and again that train stopped, and that I could get off, I would have spared many lives, among them my own." Braghetti 24.

¹⁵⁴ Similarly, when Braghetti says "è nel mio carattere andare sino in fondo, non lasciare cose fatte a metà" ["it's in my character to go all the way, not to do half things"], one wonders whether this does not imply determinism, since presumably Braghetti did not choose her own character (Braghetti 15). In fact, Braghetti suggests, with her usual ambiguity, that her character predisposed her towards militancy, but that it might also have led to completely different, more benign life choices. Comparing her earlier endorsement of insurrectionary violence with her current desire not to harm anyone, "qualunque sia il prezzo da pagare" ["whatever the price"], Braghetti finds that in both cases she displays a proclivity for extreme choices; to follow "la strade della rivoluzione" ["the path of the revolution"] without regard for the sacrifices made and to renounce all actions that harm other people are "Due estremi che si assomigliano, a modo loro" ["two extremes that resemble one another, in their own way"] (Braghetti 17). One might question whether one attitude is really as extreme as the other. In any case, the impression remains that Braghetti never unambiguously assumes responsibility for her actions; she allows for the possibility of having acted differently, but not without pointing out the pressures that conditioned her decisions.

was being reported.¹⁵⁵ The political value of Moro derives from the fact that he is a media figure, and that, whatever his characteristics as an individual, he is to most of Italy first and foremost a symbol. Yet it is precisely the success of the kidnapping that undermines the notion that Moro can ever be treated only as a symbol; by being immediately, physically confronted with him, the Red Brigades are constrained to acknowledge a "contrast" between Moro as a suffering human being and the symbolic representations of him circulated by the media: "Eravamo colpiti dal contrasto fra il manto di potere che ancora avvolgeva Moro, fosse pure rinchiuso nella prigione del popolo e ridotto all'impotenza, e la realtà delle sue angosce personali, della sua paura."¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, Moro repeatedly questions the symbolic value attributed to his person by his kidnappers. He is constantly concerned to emphasise his own humanity and to strip himself of his symbolic attributes: "per farci capire che era un uomo, non soltanto il simbolo dello Stato."¹⁵⁷ He

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Braghetti 6, where the physicality of Moro is emphasised, indicating the rift between Moro as media figure and Moro as flesh-and-blood human being. Braghetti's fascination with the latter continues throughout the kidnapping. She finds herself incredulously spying on him through the keyhole, again contrasting the specificity of what she sees with the wild media frenzy whipped up by those who quite literally do not see him, and who, unaware of Moro's whereabouts and largely in the dark about his mental and physical condition, lose themselves in speculation.

¹⁵⁶ "We were struck by the contrast between the aura of power that still surrounded Moro, even while he was in the people's prison and had been rendered powerless, and that reality of his personal worries, of his fear." Braghetti 55f.

¹⁵⁷ "To make us understand he was a man, not just the symbol of the state." Braghetti 57.

accuses the Red Brigades of having targeted the wrong man.¹⁵⁸ Worse, he inadvertently disappoints the expectations his kidnappers have of him. Hence, when Braghetti and her comrades search his briefcase and find only relatively unimportant documents, no grand plan for crushing the Italian left, they are astonished in a way that suggests their actions have been based on gross misconceptions.¹⁵⁹ Even a meticulous reading of Moro's documents yields nothing of importance, and the "delusion" of the militants, while never voiced, becomes all the more marked.¹⁶⁰

The problem remains unsolved throughout the kidnapping. In a sense, killing Moro was the only way to escape it. To kill Moro meant putting an end to his troubling scepticism as to whether he was really what he was taken to be; it also meant obscuring the

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Braghetti 22: "Perché avete rapito me, che sono un uomo mite, che ho sempre mediato fra destra e sinistra? [...] Voi dite di aver colpito me perché sono il presidente della DC, ma badate che non sono mica io il presidente del Consiglio" (Braghetti 22) ["Why have you kidnapped me, a moderate man who always mediated between left and right? You say you targeted me because I'm president of the Christian Democrats, but bear in mind that I'm not the prime minister"]. When Braghetti admits, in the next sentence, that "Il presidente del Consiglio era Giulio Andreotti" ["Giulio Andreotti was the prime minister"], the reader is left with the impression that Moro has succeeded in making her doubt the rightness of her actions (ibid.).

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Braghetti 7: "Eravamo esterrefatti: possibile che fosse quello il materiale di lavoro di uno degli uomini più potenti d'Italia?" (Braghetti 7) ["We were at a loss: Could it be those were the working materials of one of the most powerful men in Italy?"]. The experience foreshadows that of another left-wing militant, Dario, who, after assassinating his victim, discovers that the victim's bag contains not the gun he expected to find, but an apple: "Dario prima di scappare prese la sua borsa, certo che contenesse un'arma che avrebbe fatto comodo all'organizzazione. C'era solo una mela" (Braghetti 124) ["Before making his escape, Dario took the victim's bag, certain it contained a weapon his organisation could have used. There was only an apple"]. The disappointment of the Red Brigades over the contents of Moro's briefcase is perhaps less poignant, but creates a similar moment of crisis by casting doubt on an overly simplistic image of the enemy.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Braghetti 7ff.

ambiguities of his person through a powerful symbolic act. Once dead, Moro's body is reduced to its symbolic value. This emerges most clearly from the way that body is used to send a political message; by leaving the corpse parked halfway between headquarters of the Christian Democrats and those of the Communist Party, the Red Brigades make it signify both the "historic compromise" of the parliamentary left with conservatism and their uncompromising condemnation of that policy. Having been reduced to a lifeless body, and that body having been used in this way to make a political statement, Moro becomes simply an accusation, a gesture. This silencing of Moro was also a silencing of the doubts that had come to haunt Braghetti and her comrades.¹⁶¹ Far from being able to provide answers to all questions, Moro is himself "un continente sconosciuto."¹⁶²

The lesson Moro taught Braghetti – that an individual is always more complex than his or her symbolic representations – is learned neither by the media nor by the Italian public which relies

¹⁶¹ Moro addressed these doubts when he pointed to the skewed political perceptions of the Red Brigades in a statement that suggests the incompatibility of their discourse with his own: "Guardi, la politica dalla quale vengo non funziona come crede lei. Non c'è una risposta alle sue domande. E, soprattutto, le risposte non assomigliano affatto a quelle che cerca" (Braghetti 37) ["Look, the politics I come from doesn't work the way you think. There's no answer to your questions. And, most importantly, the answers don't resemble what you're looking for"]. Braghetti herself confirms this judgement when she says "Moro era il massimo virtuoso di un linguaggio che ci trovava orgogliosamente analfabeti" ["Moro was the greatest master of a language that found us illiterate"], adding that "Venivamo da un'altra storia, da un'esperienza politica radicalmente opposta" ["We came from a different history, from a radically opposed political experience"] (Braghetti 39).

¹⁶² "An unknown continent." Braghetti 39.

on them for its information about the militants. Rather than learning about the characters of Braghetti and her comrades, "terrorism experts" continue to circulate stereotypical ideas completely devoid of any factual basis. Braghetti points out perceptively that their lack of information rendered them susceptible to the most basic psychological errors.¹⁶³ It is this inability to see beyond stereotypes and to genuinely comprehend the other that tragically perpetuates what Braghetti calls "il cerchio infernale dell'azione e della reazione."¹⁶⁴

Barbara Balzerani: Compagna luna

Compagna luna tells the life story of former Red Brigades member

Barbara Balzerani in a distinctly fragmented, non-linear fashion.¹⁶⁵

Like Silvana Mazzochi's biography of Adriana Faranda, Nell'anno

¹⁶³ She cites psychologist Francesco Ferracuti conjectures on the treatment of Moro as an example: "Si chiamava Francesco Ferracuti, psichiatra, docente dell'Università di Roma. Esprimeva la tesi, ormai priva di ogni originalità, che lo drogassimo e lo sottoponessimo a una quantità di torture fisiche e psichiche. Le perversioni di cui ci riteneva capaci erano tali che pensai: 'Se mai ci fosse un'irruzione, meglio morire che cadere in mani a gente capace di immaginare simili schifezze'. Sarà anche stato un psichiatra di valore, il professor Ferracuti, ma l'elementare meccanismo della proiezione, per cui si attribuiscono agli altri le proprie intenzioni e fantasie, gli era del tutto sconosciuto" (Braghetti 116) ["His name was Francesco Ferracuti, psychiatrist, lecturer at Rome University. He took the view, hardly original at the time, that we were drugging Moro and submitting him to some degree of physical and psychological torture. The perversions of which he felt we were capable were such that I thought: 'If they ever get us, it will be better to die than to fall into the hands of people capable of imagining such horrors.' He may even have been a reasonably good psychologist, Professor Ferracuti, but the elementary mechanism of projection, through which one attributes to others one's own intentions and fantasies, was completely unknown to him"].

¹⁶⁴ "The vicious circle of action and reaction." Braghetti 119.

¹⁶⁵ Barbara Balzerani, Compagna luna (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1998). One section of this novel will be discussed in Chapter V of this study; in that section, Balzerani comments on Mimmo Calopresti's film La seconda volta.

della tigre (not discussed here), Compagna luna switches from the first to the third person and back. Like Mazzochi, Balzerani frequently makes use of quotations, although they tend to be taken from literary and philosophical texts rather than from the testimonies of people directly involved in the events described (as Mazzochi's quotations are). Many of the passages cited by Balzerani – such as that from German novelist Christa Wolf which opens the book – are characterised by a feminist outlook.

The most obvious function served by the switches between the first and the third person (which are underscored by the first-person sections being italicised) is to separate two different times, the past of Balzerani's militant activities (narrated mainly in the first person), and the present during which she recounts those activities (narrated mainly in the third person). Balzerani insists on the remoteness of the past she describes.¹⁶⁶ If the past appears to her as a time of certainties, the present is characterised by uncertainty, a point she repeatedly returns to, and which also helps to explain the (to some extent deliberate) failure of her text to present itself in a straightforwardly unified fashion.

Compagna luna explicitly concerns itself with problems of representation. In part this takes the form of reflections on how the militants were and are represented by the media. Yet Balzerani's interest in representation is also an interest in more general

¹⁶⁶ Cf. eg. Balzerani 51.

questions such as that concerning the extent to which persons willingly distort or obscure their identities in any form of interaction, whether political or not. Describing her childhood experience of lovelessness, Balzerani relates it to the habit of trying too hard to conform to the standards of others, and to a tendency to forget to consider one's own interests. It was her search for love and recognition, Balzerani suggests, that prompted her early on in life to strive to please those around her, when necessary by "dissimulating" her own character.¹⁶⁷ This yearning for love and its concomitant desire to please led, Balzerani argues, to a loss of self. Rather than disposing of a relatively unified concept of her own identity, she was left with an identity that was profoundly fractured (and hence can only be represented appropriately in a fractured or fragmented text).¹⁶⁸

Not only does Balzerani's text present itself as something other than an authoritative account of historical events; it also poses questions about the manner in which history is written. Far from promising certainty, it declares itself a product of doubt. Instead of invoking her privileged position and her access to first-hand information as they result from her former membership in the Red Brigades, Balzerani announces her inability to tell the story of that organisation. Rather than dictating truth, she records the

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Balzerani 24.

¹⁶⁸ This is expressed at one point through the image of a shattered mirror. Cf. Balzerani 63.

tentative outcome of an ongoing self-interrogation. Laying bare her own confusion, she produces not statements but questions. In this sense, she makes of her reader not the passive recipient of ready-made answers, but invites that reader to ponder the questions she raises, and to participate in a dialogue that may help to provide answers to those questions.

This concern with questions rather than answers is related to one with the imagination as that human faculty most capable of escaping the "death of meaning" by refusing to be constrained by the "overly contingent agendas" framing most debates on militancy.¹⁶⁹ Balzerani's evocation of the imagination is not so much an invitation to skirt important issues by drifting into shallow daydreams; it is rather related to an attempt to understand what happened in terms of what did not – to rethink history in terms of alternatives that were perhaps too hastily overlooked or dismissed, and which may yet contain lessons for the future. This imaginative manner of conducting an inquiry into militancy provides, for Balzerani, the hope of a society in which critical self-examination and unhampered dialogue replace bigotry and ostracism.¹⁷⁰ Balzerani's narrative presents itself as an attack on conveniently simplistic models of "Truth," calling instead for "personal

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Balzerani 31.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Balzerani 121.

engagement with what is true" in the form of critical self-examination.¹⁷¹

The representations Balzerani has in mind seem to be primarily those of the popular media. In the first chapter of her memoir, she refers to the publication of a childhood photograph of her by an Italian newspaper and associates the branding of her as an "assassin with an icy gaze" to the superstition that taking someone's photograph is equivalent to "stealing their soul."¹⁷² Balzerani suggests the media "stole her soul" in at least two senses: by reducing her to a mere caricature, and by portraying her as a soulless monster. Balzerani's strategy for subverting the media's representation of her is also twofold. On the one hand, she frames the chapter in which she discusses the photograph between two brief monologues directed at her deceased mother; simply by drawing attention to the emotional ties between herself and her mother, Balzerani casts doubt on the media's image of her as a soulless monster. Secondly and perhaps more interestingly, Balzerani begins to discuss the experiences that led to her endorsement of militancy, emphasising the political and social realities underlying these experiences.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ Cf. Balzerani 9.

¹⁷² Cf. Balzerani 13.

¹⁷³ In particular, she embarks on a bleak description of her proletarian childhood milieu that leads up to the question: "E dunque, perché avrebbe dovuto sorridere quella bambina della foto?" (Balzerani 17) ["What reason was there, then, for the girl on that photograph to smile?"]. Balzerani's scepticism towards cliché and simplistic representations underlies much of her childhood narrative. The society

After one chapter on her loveless childhood in a depressingly proletarian environment, Balzerani spends five chapters telling the story of her subsequent involvement with militancy: from her enthusiastic participation in the 1968 student uprisings, her decision to join the Red Brigades, her participation in the kidnappings of Sossi, Moro, and Dozier, and her increasing disenchantment with the militant left, to her arrest and imprisonment.

The Moro kidnapping provides Balzerani with an opportunity to discuss the nature of Italy's political system. Much like the media stereotypes of militancy she repeatedly criticises, Balzerani views the behaviour of Italy's political parties as indicative of an overly rigid way of thinking.¹⁷⁴ The reaction of the Italian state to the Moro kidnapping was not one of critical self-examination, but of refusal to recognise the Red Brigades as a political entity and rigidly insisting on the unconditional liberation of Moro. Balzerani subscribes to the view, also voiced by Leonardo Sciascia and others, that by refusing to negotiate with the Red Brigades, the Christian Democrats

Balzerani describes is characterised not only by "manifesta disparità di opportunità di partenza" ["manifest inequality of opportunity"], but also by the existence of social roles - "maschi e femmine, padroni e operai, ricchi e poveri, belli e brutti, eruditi e ignoranti" ["men and women, employers and workers, the rich and the poor, the beautiful and the ugly, the educated and the ignorant"] - that perpetuate this inequality (Balzerani 15). Like the media image of the militant as a soulless monster, these social roles are, for Balzerani, not natural categories but politically useful constructs, representations that ought not to be unquestioningly accepted, but rather critically examined, and ultimately revealed as part of a "deformante visione di un mondo inamovibile, immodificabile, conformato alla misura dell'inguistizia e della illibertà" (Balzerani 16) ["misleading vision of an unalterable world tailor-made to accomodate injustice and lack of freedom"].

¹⁷⁴ Cf. Balzerani 72.

effectively chose to sacrifice the life of Moro for the sake of their own authority. Rather than risk a dialogue with the militants, hence acknowledging the genuinely political nature of their grievances, they opted for the "autocannibalismo" of letting their party leader be killed.¹⁷⁵ For Balzerani as for Sciascia, the behaviour of the Italian state during the Moro kidnapping exposed the ruthlessness not only of the militants, but of the ruling political parties. In so far as the government's dubious "victory" over the Moro kidnappers was the result of a refusal to negotiate with them, it was a "defeat" for Moro, who had pleaded, both before and after being kidnapped, for trying to understand the social and political roots of militancy, and showing some willingness to enter into a dialogue with that substantial part of the Italian population whose despair over the country's political situation had pushed them so far as to reject the rule of law. Of course, Moro was also "defeated" in the very straightforward sense of being killed.

A significant part of Compagna luna is devoted to another kidnapping, that of the US general James Lee Dozier. By targeting a representative of US power rather than a member of the Italian government, this kidnapping marked an important shift in Red Brigades thinking. The original policy of "attacking the heart of the state" no longer seemed viable. Instead the Red Brigades decided, like their German counterparts, to target not merely the

¹⁷⁵ Roughly "self-mutilation." Ibid.

"counterrevolutionary" forces in their country, but those institutions they perceived as the representatives of US imperialism.¹⁷⁶

The final chapters of Compagna luna are devoted to a description of prison life. Balzerani describes a new and heightened sense of physicality as one result of time spent in prison. After the demands of political militancy, prison is experienced first and foremost as a different kind of test, related not so much to problems of ideology and strategy as to the needs and desires of the body, which express themselves so forcefully as to reduce the prisoner to something less than human.¹⁷⁷ The moon Balzerani evokes in the title of her memoir is to her the symbol of a restored balance between mind and body: "la sensazione unica che mette insieme viscere e cervello."¹⁷⁸ In a passage which curiously mystical overtones, she describes its promise of an extratemporal, immutable state of peace: "È là. [...] E se muore è per rinascere. Sempre daccapo."¹⁷⁹ The temporality of prison being a tortuous one, it is hardly suprising Balzerani should wish to escape from it. The moon becomes to her the metaphor for this escape, which is

¹⁷⁶ Cf. Balzerani 81. Balzerani is keen to place the kidnapping in the context of North America's entry into World War II. Cf. Balzerani 79. Dozier is described as a profoundly unlikeable character. Much emphasis is placed on his unrepentant militarism (Balzerani 83).

¹⁷⁷ Cf. Balzerani 136.

¹⁷⁸ "The unique sensation that combines body and mind." Balzerani 139.

¹⁷⁹ "It's there. And if it dies, it's only to be reborn. Always da capo." Balzerani 137.

also an escape from history and politics, formulated in vitalist language.¹⁸⁰

Balzerani's semi-poetic reflections on the moon are curiously at odds with the rest of her memoir. While one might expect her to invoke the moon as a symbol of that flux she seems to value as an antidote to overly schematic thinking, she in fact makes of it a symbol of changelessness, or of a permanence that merely disguises itself as flux. Given the forceful political statements she makes elsewhere, it also comes as a surprise that she should relate her memoir's central symbol to a desire to escape the specificity of her sociopolitical condition. Balzerani's meditations on the moon are preceded by an extended rant against those who would speak of the Red Brigades without reference to the sociopolitical environment from which they were born. Balzerani laments that the Red Brigades should be placed, by the dominant discourse on militancy, "fuori da ogni dinamica politica comprensibile."¹⁸¹ She laments the inability of scholars to engage in critical reflection rather than mere sensationalism. Yet she herself articulates an intense desire not to "act" and not to "ask."¹⁸²

Balzerani's rejection of overly stereotypical representations, of declamatory historiography, of Truth as opposed to truth, her emphasis on the provisional nature of all representation, and her

¹⁸⁰ Cf. Balzerani 138.

¹⁸¹ "Outside of any understandable political development." Balzerani 120.

¹⁸² Cf. Balzerani 127.

project of creating a discourse that allows for change, fluidity, dialogue, questioning, and self-examination are perhaps best summarised in a remark on Justice "changing sides" that Balzerani quotes from Simone Weil: "bisogna [...] essere sempro pronti a cambiare parte, come la Giustizia, questa 'fuggitiva dal campo dei vincitori.'"¹⁸³ While this refusal to commit clearly to one position, to pass a final judgement or proclaim a Truth for all time may seem like an attempt on Balzerani's part to avoid taking responsibility for her actions, it finds at least a partial justification in the fact that the vast majority of pronouncements on militancy – particularly those circulated in the Italian media – have been overly reductive.

While Italian memoirs such as Balzerani's are less obviously ideological than many of the German memoirs discussed above, they are nevertheless polemical. Typically, reductive media representations of militancy are the main object of their polemic. In the case of Compagna luna, this polemic has a strong anti-ideological thrust: the media image of the "terrorist" is exposed as no less ideological than the worldview of the Red Brigades, and if the ideology of the Red Brigades needs to be criticized as blindly destructive, then so does the hateful rhetoric of the media. To some extent, all memoirs discussed in this chapter are driven by this

¹⁸³ "One must always be ready to change sides, like Justice, that 'fugitive from the camp of the winners.'" Simone Weil qtd. in Balzerani 115.

impetus to dismantle standard conceptions of militancy; in the case of many German memoirs, such as those by Viett and Schiller, this leads to one ideology (that of an anti-capitalism that has renounced militancy, but remains theoretically indebted to its premises) being played out against another (that governing the state-sanctioned view of the militant as "terrorist"); only Balzerani goes so far as to denounce all ideology (all statements of "Truth" as opposed to "truth").

Obviously, this is far from itself being a non-ideological position. Balzerani seizes on the pejorative connotations of "ideology" to bolster her critique of the media, but the notion that "ideology" is harmful is itself ideological; it is a staple of the orthodox media critique of "terrorism." Much as authors such as Meyer make use of the ideal of an open society, typically employed to denigrate militancy, in order to portray the militant as the defender, rather than the enemy of that open society, Balzerani seizes on the widespread distrust of "ideology," again typically employed to denigrate militancy, to argue against the critics of militancy. In both cases, the critique of society is formulated in the very language that society holds dear (e.g. that of "free thinking" as opposed to "ideology").

Balzerani's authorial voice, which formulates this putative critique of ideology, presents itself as the product of a transformation: from former ideologue to critic of ideology.

Balzerani would have her reader think that, having herself been in the grip of a destructive ideology, she can now recognise it in others. Yet rather than transcending all ideology, she too has merely exchanged one of its forms for another. She has traded the ideology of militancy for the “anti-ideological ideology” of Italian society. Her critique shares with its object the same ideological premises. Balzerani has “come home” to the dominant outlook of the society she once contested; her transformation, which declares itself a transcendence, is in fact a return.

Despite the special status of Compagna luna, it can be said that all authors discussed above are engaged in a project of twofold negation. First, they articulate their negation of their own past – their renunciation of militancy. They are ex-militants writing about their lives as militants. Second, the ex-militants strive to deconstruct a pre-existing concept of militancy: the stereotypical image of the militant circulated by the media and sanctioned by the government. Hence it can be said that the texts of the ex-militants are both self-critical and polemical.

Their polemic takes various forms. In the case of Schiller, it is formulated in the rhetoric of outrage – that is, in a relatively straightforward, and perhaps somewhat humourless way. Other memoirs, such as Peci’s, verge on the satirical. Where the author is particularly devoted to destroying the mystique of the “terrorist,” as

Peci is, he makes use of irony and low comedy, contrasting the stereotype of the cold-blooded assassin with images of blundering would-be revolutionaries who are not so much monsters as misguided everymen. This satirical form of polemic is a characteristic mainly of the Italian memoirs; it is found even in Franceschini's Mara Renata ed io, which otherwise quite closely resembles the German memoirs. (Witness, for example, Franceschini's highly comical portraits of Toni Negri and prison director Luigi Cardullo.)

To some extent, this satiric and ironic quality results from another feature of the Italian memoirs: their concern with the personal and with issues of domesticity (particularly evident in Braghetti). These concerns sit better with comedy than the austere political thrust of the German memoirs. Exceptions might be made for some passages in the memoirs of Baumann and Klein. Yet the exceptions confirm the argument in so far as these early German memoirs are in many ways closer to the Italian than to the later German memoirs; written a short time after the actual experience of militancy, and before its failure was declared, they are not yet characterised by the totalising and ideological discourse typical of Viett, Schiller, and Meyer. The latter engage in a project of revisionist history, but there was not yet any orthodox history of militancy to revise at the time when Baumann and Klein were writing.

While their forms vary from one memoir to another, and from the German to the Italian memoirs, polemic and the negation of stereotypes remain central components of all texts discussed in this chapter. The negation is twofold because the ex-militants are exposed to criticism from two sides: from those loyal to the state, and from those (still) loyal to the concept of armed struggle. Their decision to write typically involves a recognition of this dilemma. In the words of Till Meyer: "[...] war es nicht [...] selbstmörderisch, sich zwischen alle Stühle zu setzen und den doppelten Druck auszuhalten, den von seiten der Genossen und den von seiten des Staates?"¹⁸⁴ Inge Viett's comments on the "distance" separating her both from militancy and conventional society express a similar sentiment.

The twofold pressure the ex-militant exposes himself to brings with it the risk of a total loss of self. This emerges from Enrico Fenzi's description of the peculiar predicament of the ex-militant who is asked about his motives. Typically, Fenzi explains, the question is asked in expectation of an answer to the effect that the motives were indefensible. Yet in so far as the ex-militant wants to preserve some sense of his own identity over time, he cannot fully

¹⁸⁴ "Was it not suicidal to position oneself between the fronts and endure a twofold pressure, that from the comrades and that from the state?" Meyer 426ff. Even those ex-militants who continued to insist on the justified nature of militancy, such as Viett and Meyer, were exposed to some degree of "pressure from the comrades." While the RAF welcomed efforts by ex-militants to insert themselves into the public debate on "terrorism," it also criticised the disclosure of information that might aid the police in its investigations. Cf. eg. Hoffmann 501, 508.

renounce his motives; he must insist he acted on the basis of moral values that are, to some extent, still valid. Nonetheless, he is constantly tempted to placate the questioner and thereby to annihilate his own sense of self, reducing himself, effectively, to a madman: "[...] su questa strada la distruzione sistematica delle proprie ragioni [...] equivale alla distruzione di se stessi, perché il nesso tra quello che si è fatto e le ragioni per le quali lo si è fatto ne riesce disarticolato, e sono i pazzi che agiscono senza motivo, i pazzi pericolosi..."¹⁸⁵

The ex-militant's temptation of renouncing his past totally is that of becoming his own accuser and thereby taking on the identity of the questioner: "Credo possa nascere di qui, allora, lo zelo autoaccusatorio, il desiderio di non essere se stessi ma altri: di essere quello che fa le domande, per esempio, e la voglia di compiacerlo, di prevenirlo, di annularsi in lui."¹⁸⁶

Fenzi insists that, for these reasons, the ex-militant is justified in refusing to reply to his questioner. Such silence constitutes a refusal to be drawn into a discourse that is framed by the questioner, and an effort to retain the otherness which sets the ex-militant apart from those who always already rejected militancy. In

¹⁸⁵ "The systematic destruction of one's true reasons equals self-destruction, because the link between what one has done and the reasons for doing it is broken, and only the mad act without motives, the dangerously insane..." Fenzi 208.

¹⁸⁶ "I believe this is where self-accusatory zeal can originate, the desire to be not oneself but someone else - to be the questioner, for example - and the willingness to placate him, to pre-empt him, to erase oneself in him." Ibid.

this sense, "c'è da difendere quella zona di silenzio nella quale batte il cuore muto del discorso."¹⁸⁷

The authors of the memoirs discussed in this chapter obviously do not opt for silence. They are also writing of their own accord rather than responding to a specific questioner; they insert themselves into the discourse of "terrorism" autonomously, and are to some degree able to establish the terms of that discourse themselves (often by rejecting the term "terrorism" altogether). Nonetheless, these texts continue to partake of the paradox of a past renounced and yet not fully disavowed; they are founded on the series of negations mentioned above – first of what their authors were, and then of what others would have them be. They express the situation of a subject at odds both with itself and with the world, and constantly tempted to abandon one for the sake of the other – a subject in crisis.

The crisis is most evident in the memoirs of Fenzi, Braghetti, and Balzerani, which venture beyond the mere narration of the past to reflect on questions of identity and representation. What is striking about these memoirs is their disjointed form. Compagna luna's transition from the first to the third person, the disrupted chronology of Il prigioniero, and the shifts of perspective in Armi e bagagli indicate fractured identities whose recomposition turns out

¹⁸⁷ "One must defend that zone of silence where the mute heart of the discourse beats." Fenzi 207.

to be the very function of the narrative project. To reassemble the fragments of the shattered mirror to which Balzerani likens her identity is at once unthinkable and necessary. It is unthinkable because it would mean a return to that self which defined itself through militancy, and hence the erasure of the very precondition of the act of writing (which in the case of each of these memoirs was the renunciation of militancy). It is necessary because, without some stable sense of identity, the subject is threatened by either insanity or annihilation (as suggested by Fenzi and Viett, respectively). What results is a compromise – a qualification of the original rejection of militancy (as it is offered by most of the authors, particularly Baumann and Klein) or the peculiar vacillation between libertarianism and determinism by which Braghetti at once assumes and denies responsibility for her past. The very appearance of a text like Balzerani's – with its subdivisions, aphoristic and poetic interludes, and its plethora of quotations – suggests that text is somehow provisional and inadequate – both incomplete and impossible to complete.

Ironically, the one concept that might stabilise this situation is itself founded on the notion of instability – the concept of transformation. By his transformation from militant to ex-militant, the memoir writer appears to gain a vantage point from which to describe and analyse militancy "objectively." Yet no reader will forget that the writer was a protagonist in the militant conflict. The

temporal notion of transformation formulated by the author clashes with an atemporal concept of identity in the mind of the reader. The situation is aggravated when the author qualifies his rejection of militancy and refuses to break completely with the past. When Balzerani writes as if she occupied a "third position" from which she can criticise both militancy and Italian society, she exposes herself to the criticism that this "neutrality" is mere mystification, that she is in fact mendaciously and covertly defending militancy against its critics (although the opposite is probably the case, as was argued above: she has in fact simply "come home" to the standard ideology of Italian society). The "transformed" author evokes scepticism, as the reader immediately asks whether the transformation is genuine. If the militant is exposed to criticism both from those still loyal to militancy and from those who always already opposed it, he has to justify his transformation to each of these groups. But how is this to be done? In what language ought the justification to be formulated – that of militancy, or that of those who condemn militancy? Baumann and Klein opt for the former, criticising militancy from its own premises, while Peci opts for the latter, echoing the standard anti-militant rhetoric of the media and presenting himself as a reformed transgressor. More problematic is the stance of those who stand somewhere in between, such as Meyer and Viett. Do they coin their own discourse – one neither of militancy nor of its critics, the discourse of the ex-militant? They often write as if they had

accomplished this. But this is almost certainly mystification, for behind the apparent neutrality of this "third discourse" there usually lies a strongly partisan position. Meyer and Viett essentially endorse the militant project, mildly qualifying this endorsement by regret over what they perceive as the project's flawed realisation. Nor does the rhetoric in which Margrit Schiller's critique of the GFR's repressive measures is couched stand "between" or "above" those of the revolutionary and the state; it is quite clearly that of the state – the legalistic, humanist rhetoric of the GFR's constitution, founded on the notion of human dignity.

By not reflecting on these issues as directly as Fenzi and Balzerani, Viett, Meyer, and Schiller succeed in giving their texts a semblance of unity and coherence – the semblance of objective historical reportage – which other writers never set out to achieve. Ultimately, it is this second type of writer, of whom Balzerani remains the paradigmatic example, who acts more honestly, even if her text cannot be taken at face value either. Whether explicitly reflected or not, the "torn" situation of the ex-militant informs all the memoirs discussed here. Where that situation is reflected on (i.e. where it becomes the object of the writer's criticism), it results precisely in the destruction of unity – in the disintegration of the monolithic and linear traditional memoir into a fragmentary and episodic text.

With the notable exception of those who are also ex-militants, the situation of the authors and directors whose works the following chapters are devoted to is a different one. Yet what Adorno said of the relationship of art to society holds true both of the memoirs discussed here and the novels and films analysed below: "The unresolved antagonisms of reality return in artworks as immanent problems of form."¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁸ Adorno 6.

IV. Fiction

This chapter examines two categories of literary works: those read and responded to by German and Italian militants, and those written about them. Only four texts from the first category will be discussed in detail (two novels and two plays); the second category includes nineteen German and nineteen Italian texts, most of which are novels, although some are novellas, two are literary essays, and two are collections of aphorisms. Non-fiction works are included because they explicitly address a question that also arises in a number of novels: the relationship of the militant conflict to fiction or, more precisely: the way in which works of fiction might help one interpret that conflict. This question is also at the heart of the discussion of texts read and responded to by militants. The militant reception of such works as Moby Dick and Die Maßnahme will reveal how literary texts can (and have been) read in an overtly ideological manner. The analysis of texts written about the militant conflict will then show how works of literature can “read” or analyse ideology. It will be demonstrated that, much as with the memoirs discussed above, this interpretation frequently pretends to occur from a position that is somehow beyond ideology, while what in fact occurs is the encounter of two ideologies, one overt and acknowledged, the other disguised through mechanisms of mystification. The insights already gained about form and its relationship to the (implicit or

explicit) ideological stance and possible mystificatory function of a text will inform the analyses presented here.

Prior to discussing the texts read and interpreted by militants, a few general points need to be made concerning the views that some authors take of the relationship between the militant conflict and fiction. A number of the novels discussed in this chapter reflect directly on the relationship between militancy and literature. In the case of Horst Bienek's novella Bakunin, this reflection remains within the bounds of the analysis of a particular ideological question, that of the relation between theory and practice: the literary texts Bienek's protagonist reads are interpreted by him as calls to action, and his increasing immersion in literature reflects his fear of making the transition from theory to practice. For two other German writers, Judith Kuckart and Rainald Goetz, writing – be it journalistic or poetic – becomes an alternative to militancy. The life of the writer is compared to that of the militant – both are possible answers to the questions of how to lead an authentic existence. This model of the relationship between militancy and literature effectively reduces militancy to a purely existential, rather than a political choice. Other texts take a wider view of the relationship between militancy and literature. Leonardo Sciascia, Adriano Sofri, Alberto Franceschini, Filippo Canu, and Nanni Balestrini all explicitly treat literature as a tool for understanding the militant conflict. They propose a model of literature as a depositary of truths that must by

definition remain excluded from any purely factual – journalistic or historical – discourse. The disregard for factual accuracy that comes with this is not entirely frivolous. It rests on the premise that fiction makes up for its lack of factual accuracy by its tendency to exercise the imagination and the critical faculties of the reader. Fiction cannot answer specific existing questions of fact, but it can teach the reader to ask new questions, and to probe issues that are not immediately evident from a purely factual account. By using elements of the detective novel – in which the reader is constantly reminded of what he does not know – Alberto Franceschini takes this concept of fiction to its logical conclusion.

That fiction might be a crucially important device in "decoding" the militant conflict and the ideology (or ideologies) that drove it was also the position of the militants themselves. There is ample information on what literary texts the German and Italian militants of the 1970s read.¹ In several cases, these readings were not purely for entertainment, but ideologically motivated. Not all the texts seem obvious choices. Those that seem least obvious merit

¹ According to Aust, the seventeen-year-old Baader read Sartre, Nietzsche, Balzac, Thomas Wolfe, and Raymond Chandler, in addition to writing poetry (Aust 18). Aust also informs us that Gudrun Ensslin's cell in Stammheim contained roughly 450 books, including the works of Marx and Lenin, but also literary texts such as Enzensberger's *Der kurze Sommer der Anarchie* and plays by Brecht. Prison obviously afforded the RAF members plenty of time to read. As Ulrike Meinhof wrote to her children on 15 September, 1972: "Now and then a lawyer comes by and wonders about all the things that aren't allowed here. And then I read a few books I always wanted to read – that's about all you can do in prison" (Meinhof qtd. in Aust 264). In a letter from December of that year, Meinhof suggests to her children they might bring their uncle a copy of *Lord Jim* the next time they visit him in hospital, and mentions another story of the sea: *Moby Dick* (Aust 274).

special attention. Considering, for example, how Gudrun Ensslin went about relating Moby Dick to the situation of the RAF in 1977 may prove crucial to later, more elaborate and theoretically informed investigations of the relation between literature and militancy. The following discussions of texts read and responded to by militants – Melville’s Moby Dick, Brecht’s Die Maßnahme, and Enzensberger’s Der kurze Sommer der Anarchie – will also illustrate what motifs might have been applied to the literary analysis of militancy instead of or in addition to the ones that were. It is striking, for example, that the motif of madness upon which the RAF members seized in their reading of Moby Dick is almost entirely absent in the work of the authors who wrote about militancy from 1970 onward; the same is true of the motif of the failed revolution, central to the work of Brecht. The disappearance of these themes was probably at least partly related to their loftiness: while the militants themselves were eager to associate themselves with the superhuman and quasi-mythological madness of Ahab, or with the grand tone of Brecht’s didactic plays, the authors who chose to write about the militants approached their topic with a more sceptical mindset and generally shied away from motifs that might seem to lend a sublime quality to what the dominant discourse was already condemning not just as criminal, but as morally despicable.

Melville: Moby Dick

In a 2002 article for the German news magazine Spiegel, Peter Homann, former acquaintance of Andreas Baader and, for a brief time, a member of the RAF, recalls the following episode from the group's 1970 excursion to Jordan:

"You're hiding a book and taking notes", Gudrun Ensslin [...] blurted at me angrily [...] The book was full of my written notes, highly suspicious notes in her view. Moby Dick by Melville had accompanied me for many years on my travels through Europe and to northern Africa.²

Suspected of treason and having narrowly escaped execution, Hodann turned his back on the RAF after his experiences in Jordan. Years later, after the deaths of Baader and Ensslin in Stammheim, he found they had not forgotten his favourite novel:

After the death of the terrorists in Stammheim I learned that this Leviathan-bible had also been read by Gudrun Ensslin and the other RAF prisoners in the high security ward. They gave each other the names of the whale hunter's crew members. Andreas Baader became Ahab, the captain, his cell the captain's quarters.³

In his study of the RAF, Der Baader-Meinhof Komplex, Stefan Aust discusses in detail how Gudrun Ensslin came to identify her various

² Peter Homann, "Nicht andere nur, auch uns töten wir...", Der Spiegel 43/2002.

³ Ibid.

comrades with characters from Melville's epic novel.⁴ In fact, Moby Dick served Baader and his companions in more ways than as a source of code names. Melville's epic was ideologically appropriated by them, becoming a metaphor of their own political struggle and, in many ways, a rhetorical vindication of their militant activities.

The symbol that allowed RAF members to relate Melville's epic to their own experience was that of the leviathan – that Biblical monster equated throughout Moby Dick with the white whale. When Thomas Hobbes outlined his theory of the state, noted for its markedly pessimistic view of human motivation and its insistence on the need for total subordination to the rule of a harshly repressive sovereign, he chose Leviathan as the title of his work and the biblical monster as a symbol of his ideal commonwealth – a fact Melville acknowledges by quoting Hobbes: "By art is created that great Leviathan, called a Commonwealth or State."⁵ Once the white whale had been equated with the state, the members of the RAF could begin detecting analogies between their own struggle and that of Ahab's colourful whale-hunting crew. As Homann writes: "The greatest American epic was made for metaphysically expanding the RAF ideology."⁶

⁴ Cf. Aust 274ff. For readings of Moby Dick that focus particularly on the issues discussed here, cf. Harold Bloom (ed.), Ahab (New York: Chelsea House, 1991); Paul McCarthy, The Twisted Mind: Madness in Herman Melville's Fiction (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1990); and Manfred Siebald, Auflehnung im Romanwerk Herman Melvilles (Frankfurt: Lang, 1999).

⁵ Hobbes qtd. in Herman Melville, Moby Dick or The Whale (New York: Random House, 1992) xxiii.

⁶ Homann, loc. cit.

Hence Ahab shouting to his men "this is what ye have shipped for [...] to chase the white whale on both sides of land, and over all sides of earth, till he spouts black blood and rolls fin out" became a metaphor of Baader urging his companions to wage their own relentless war against the government of the German Federal Republic.⁷ The aggressively authoritarian manner of Baader – his refusal to share his decision-making power with other members of the RAF – found its corollary in the fury with which Ahab meets challenges to his own authority, and in his megalomaniac assertion of the leadership principle: "There is one God that is Lord over the earth, and one Captain that is lord over the Pequod."⁸ Baader was and continues to be dismissed as a drug-crazed lunatic (by Laqueur and others); Ahab's only quarrel with those who would describe him as insane is that this description does not go far enough: "They think me mad – Starbuck does; but I'm demoniac, I am madness maddened!"⁹ If Baader was happy to identify himself with the crazed whale-hunter, this may in part have been because Ahab's madness is not that of a mental imbecile, but a methodical one, "calm to comprehend itself."¹⁰ It consists, in fact, not in a reduction of intellectual ability, but in the courageous acceptance of a nigh-impossible task, the decision to take on an apparently indestructible enemy. Whether it be Ahab and the whale, or Baader and the state,

⁷ Melville 234f.

⁸ Melville 682.

⁹ Melville 242.

¹⁰ Ibid.

the opponents seem to be unequal, but neither Ahab nor Baader is prepared to refuse the challenge. As Ahab says: "I will not say as schoolboys do to bullies, - Take some one of your own size; don't pommel me! No, ye've knocked me down, and I am up again."¹¹ Like those of Baader, the weapons at Ahab's disposal are limited; he has "no long gun" to "reach" his enemy.¹² The strength of both Baader and Ahab consists in their monomaniacal resoluteness:

Swerve me? The path to my fixed purpose is laid with iron rails, whereon my soul is grooved to run. Over unsounded gorges, through the rifled hearts of mountains, under torrents' beds, unerringly I rush! Naught's an obstacle, naught's an angle to the iron way!¹³

In this sense, "madness" become a redeeming rather than a demeaning characteristic. It may be disease, but it is also greatness; in fact, as Melville's narrator Ishmael notes, "all mortal greatness is but disease."¹⁴

If Ahab is moved by mad hatred for his chosen enemy, what of his crew? Melville's narrator Ishmael may serve as an example of their motives. Describing his attraction to whaling life, Ishmael speaks of his fascination with the monstrous leviathan, a love of what is "forbidden" and "barbarous," and a desire for adventure

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Melville 242f.

¹⁴ Melville 108.

and "peril" – "an everlasting itch for things remote."¹⁵ Love of adventure and, more specifically, of the thrill that comes with illegality and clandestinity – the appeal of youthful rebellion – seem to have played some part in motivating the RAF militants. Ishmael's remark that "Not ignoring what is good, I am quick to perceive a horror, and could still be social with it" is also highly suggestive.¹⁶ As emerges from the writings, both personal and propagandistic, of the RAF members, one of the central dilemmas facing the left-wing militant is precisely the need to "become social" with violence – to appropriate for oneself the morally dubious behaviour one condemns in others.

By identifying themselves with the crew members of a whaling vessel, the imprisoned RAF members found a compelling image of their own relationship to each other and to society. Much as the *Pequod's* crew is a band of outsiders, a race apart from land-dwellers, the RAF members led a migrant and clandestine existence that forever exiled them from the ranks of ordinary citizens. Yet they continued to move among them, albeit clandestinely.¹⁷ To recall Mao's image of the guerrilla, which might have been offered by Melville: they moved through society like fish through water, at once familiar and apart. Their relationships to each other were

¹⁵ Melville 8.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ The notion of a false or assumed identity is, of course, also present in Melville's text. The first sentence of *Moby Dick* ("Call me Ishmael") suggests the narrator is writing under a false or invented name.

characterised by a constant tension between the Marxist principle of solidarity, the need to subordinate one's own needs and desires to the cause of the revolution, and the fiercely individualistic, even egomaniac characters many of them displayed from an early age. In describing the crew members of the *Pequod*, Melville stresses their peculiar combination of individualism and *esprit de corps*:

They were nearly all islanders in the *Pequod*, Isolatoos too, I call such, not acknowledging the common continent of men, but each Isolato living on a separate continent of his own. Yet now, federated along one keel, what a set these Isolatoes were! An Anacharsis Clootz deputation from all the isles of the sea, and all the ends of the earth, accompanying Old Ahab in the *Pequod* to lay the world's grievances before that bar from which not very many of them ever come back.¹⁸

While the description of the *Pequod*'s crew members as "Isolatoos [...] each [...] living on a separate continent of his own" recalls the world view of Thomas Wolfe (whom Baader read as a young man) and may have appealed to some RAF members' fascination with the urban guerillero as a lone hero, Melville insists that while each crew member is highly independent-minded, they are nevertheless, by virtue of their common cause, "federated along one keel."¹⁹ This common cause is of global significance – like Ahab's mission, anti-imperialist struggle as conceived by the RAF is an attempt to

¹⁸ Melville 174.

¹⁹ Ibid.

address "the world's grievances" – and it carries the risk of death: "not very many" of those engaging in it "ever come back."²⁰

A final striking parallel between the RAF members and the Pequod's crew is the modified – some would say perverted – religiosity of both. A number of Baader's companions came from Protestant backgrounds that recall the Quaker ideology of Nantucket's whalers. In 1968, Ensslin's father, a Protestant pastor, spoke of her "entirely holy self-realisation," and the playwright Heiner Müller has remarked on the "theological" quality of many RAF pronouncements.²¹ Melville waxes eloquent on how the Quaker religiosity of the Nantucket whalers, "variously and anomalously modified by things altogether alien and heterogeneous," predisposed them to lives of violence and adventure:

[...] to this day its [sc. Nantucket's] inhabitants in general retain in an uncommon measure the peculiarities of the Quaker, only variously and anomalously modified by things altogether alien and heterogeneous. For some of these same Quakers are the most sanguinary of all sailors and whale-hunters. They are fighting Quakers; they are Quakers with a vengeance.

So that there are instances among them of men, who, named with Scripture names – a singularly common fashion on the island – and in childhood naturally imbibing the stately

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Cf. Aust 72, Müller 316.

dramatic thee and thou of the Quaker idiom; still, from the audacious, daring, and boundless adventure of their subsequent lives, strangely blend with these unoutgrown peculiarities, a thousand bold dashes of character, not unworthy a Scandinavian sea-king, or a poetical Pagan Roman. And when these things unite in a man of greatly superior natural force, with a globular brain and a ponderous heart; who has also by the stillness and seclusion of many long night-watches in the remotest waters, and beneath constellations never seen here at the north, been led to think untraditionally and independently; receiving all nature's sweet or savage impressions fresh from her own virgin voluntary and confiding breast, and thereby chiefly, but with some help from accidental advantages, to learn a bold and nervous lofty language – that man makes one in a whole nation's census – a mighty pageant creature, formed for noble tragedies.²²

Regarding Ensslin and Meinhof, a case could certainly be made for the “unoutgrown peculiarities” of their childhood Protestantism having combined with the “audacious, daring, and boundless adventure” of their experiences in the increasingly violent student uprisings, as well as with the “stillness and seclusion” of their subsequent clandestinity and the propensity to “think untraditionally and independently” which led them to reject the values of their

²² Melville 107.

middle-class background, in order both to teach them “a bold and nervous lofty language” and to predispose them toward fates that may or may not have been “noble,” but certainly merit description as “tragedies.”²³

The RAF’s ideological appropriation of Moby Dick, in which Ensslin seems to have been instrumental, comes close to being one of the extraordinarily rare admissions, among German militants and writers, that the RAF’s struggle was characterised by something akin to religious fanaticism. It will be seen below that the motif of religion is largely absent from German analyses of militancy (both literary and non-literary), although it does appear – and in a less roundabout manner – in several Italian texts. By and large, German writers have accepted that, as dialectical materialists, the militants had nothing to do with religion or religiosity. This view may appear at first to be supported by the RAF’s ideological appropriation of another literary text, Brecht’s Die Maßnahme, although it will be shown that there may have been a “theological” dimension to this too.

Brecht: Die Maßnahme, Der Untergang des Egoisten Johann Fatzer

Brecht’s 1930/1931 play Die Maßnahme²⁴ tells the story of a group of communist agitators who find themselves compelled to murder one of their comrades because his incompetence endangers their

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Bertolt Brecht, Die Maßnahme. Zwei Fassungen (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1998).

mission. Written not so much for public staging, but rather as a Lehrstück or educative exercise for actors, this play was among the imprisoned RAF members' favourite reading material.²⁵ It had already caused Brecht some trouble, during his stay in California, with US authorities, and it was an obvious literary source for the vindication of the RAF's violent operations, concerning itself as it does with the need for taking unlawful and "lowly" measures in the name of lofty ideals:

Mit wem säße der Rechtliche nicht zusammen

Dem Recht zu helfen?

Welche Medizin schmeckte zu schlecht

Dem Sterbenden?

Welche Niedrigkeit begingest du nicht, um

Die Niedrigkeit auszutilgen?

Könntest du die Welt endlich verändern, wofür

Wärest du dir zu gut?

Wer bist du?

Versinke in Schmutz

Umarme den Schlächter, aber

Ändere die Welt: sie braucht es!²⁶

²⁵ Cf. Aust 461.

²⁶ "Who would the righteous not sit with / In order to aid rightfulness? / What medicine would seem too unpleasant / To the dying? / What lowly action would you not commit, in order to / Eradicate lowliness? / If at last you could change the world, what / Would you find below you? / Who are you? / Sink into filth / Embrace the butcher, but / Change the world: it needs it!" Brecht 1998 263f.

From the necessity of performing acts that are in themselves despicable to that of subordinating personal preference to a higher cause (changing the world), these lines address many of the issues at the heart of the RAF's ideology. A later section of the play concerns itself specifically with the need to sacrifice human lives – both those of others and one's own.

Furchtbar ist es, zu töten.

Aber nicht andere nur, auch uns töten wir, wenn es nottut

Da doch nur mit Gewalt diese tötende

Welt zu ändern ist, wie

Jeder Lebende weiß.

Noch ist es uns, sagten wir

Nicht vergönnt, nicht zu töten. Einzig mit dem

Unbeugbaren Willen, die Welt zu verändern, begründeten wir

Die Maßnahme.²⁷

What distinguishes the violence of the left-wing militant from that of fascism and imperialism, according to Brecht, is the fact that it is committed in order to promote not a reactionary, but a progressive or revolutionary agenda. It is intended not to secure existing property relations, and with them the social order which makes killing necessary, but to change them, and thereby to create a world in which political violence will no longer be necessary. The motives

²⁷ "It is terrible to kill. / But not others only, ourselves too we kill, if necessary / Since only by violence this murderous / World can be changed, as / Everyone alive knows. / As yet, we said, / It is not given to us not to kill. Only on our / Unbending resolve to change the world did we base / The measure." Brecht 267.

of the homicidal revolutionary are not selfish; rather, he is acting selflessly, against his own moral inclinations. Behind revolutionary violence lies a vision of a better world. As Brecht wrote in 1939: "Ach, wir / Die wir den Boden bereiten wollten für Freundlichkeit / Konnten selber nicht freundlich sein."²⁸

The extent to which the imprisoned RAF members appropriated Brecht's ideas becomes clear from the fact that beyond studying and quoting his plays, they partially rewrote them. While in prison, Ulrike Meinhof renamed Brecht's song "Lob der Partei"²⁹ "Lied der RAF"³⁰, as well as adding a subtitle ("Lob des antiimperialistischen Kampfes"³¹) and a quotation from Kurt Tucholsky: "Schlagt die Faschisten, wo ihr sie trifft."³²

Given the analogies the RAF members discovered between themselves and the protagonists of Die Maßnahme, it is worth noting there are also important differences. The RAF members were tried by the state they sought to dismantle; Brecht's communist agitators justify their activities before a tribunal representing their own party (and convince it of the rightness of those activities). The need for a critical self-examination on the part of the agitators, as described by Brecht, may have inspired the RAF members' practice of engaging in written "criticism and self-criticism" in Stammheim,

²⁸ "Alas, we / Who wanted to prepare the ground for friendliness / Could ourselves not be friendly." Brecht, "An die Nachgeborenen", in: Bertolt Brechts Gedichte und Lieder (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1956) 160f.

²⁹ "In Praise of the Party."

³⁰ "Song of the RAF."

³¹ "In Praise of Anti-Imperialist Struggle."

³² "Strike the fascists wherever you meet them." Qtd. in Aust 263.

but the tone of the often slanderous and vulgar RAF texts is certainly a marked departure from the coolly pragmatic reasoning of Brecht's protagonists.³³ Also, Brecht's song "In Praise of Illegal Activity" identifies the heroism of revolutionaries with their willingness to operate clandestinely, and hence without hope of future fame: "Wer täte nicht viel für den Ruhm, aber wer / Tut's für das Schweigen?"³⁴ Whether the RAF members were heroes or villains continues to be a subject for debate, but their trial in Stammheim certainly earned them considerable publicity and a prominent place in the history books of the GFR.

These differences indicate how the RAF's appropriation of Brecht was motivated by an ideological agenda. The central aim was to give the RAF's project a semblance of legitimacy. Associating the RAF with Brecht's party agitators served to attack the widespread notion that Baader and his companions were simply a band of outlaws, answerable to no one. There was also an attempt to reclaim Brecht from a popular culture that has essentially sanitized

³³ Cf. Pieter H. Bakker Schut (ed.), Dokumente. das info, Briefe der Gefangenen aus der RAF 1973-1977 (Kiel: Malik, 1989).

³⁴ "Who wouldn't do much for fame, but who / Would do it for silence?" Brecht 1998 23. Asked for performance rights to Die Maßnahme in 1956, Brecht explained he had long since stopped granting them, as he felt the effect of the play was typically to rouse the emotions of the audience without prompting the rational reflection for which he had hoped: "Aufführungen vor Publikum rufen erfahrungsgemäß nichts als moralische Affekte für gewöhnlich minderere Art beim Publikum hervor. Ich gebe daher das Stück seit langem nicht für Aufführungen frei" (Brecht 1998 103) ["Experience has shown that public performances provoke in the audience only moral sentiments, typically of the baser sort. For this reason, I have long since stopped granting performance rights for the play"]. Hence, while Die Maßnahme remains one of Brecht's technically most accomplished works, he himself thought of its content as problematic, and feared misinterpretation.

him, to play out the revolutionary against the canonical Brecht, whose more "harmless" works are read in state schools.

In a letter dated 4 January, 1977, East German playwright Heiner Müller made his own connection between Die Maßnahme and West German left-wing militancy. Rather than seeing the two as complimentary, he suggested the actions of the RAF constituted a departure from Brecht – not ideologically, but in so far as the RAF no longer sought to change the world through didactic drama, but through violent praxis. The historical development of which both Brecht and the RAF are a part – left-wing opposition to capitalism and imperialism – is no longer played out, according to Müller, on the stage, but on the street. In this sense, "terrorism" is both continuous with and a replacement for Brechtian humanism. Where Die Maßnahme presents, for Müller, an apocalyptic vision that recalls Christianity (the final days of the capitalist order), the actions of the RAF replace this vision with a genuine apocalypse:

Die christliche Endzeit der MASSNAHME ist abgelaufen, die Geschichte hat den Prozeß auf die Straße verlagert, auch die gelernten Chöre singen nicht mehr, der Humanismus kommt nur noch als Terrorismus vor, der MolotowCocktail ist das letzte bürgerliche Bildungsgerlebnis.³⁵

³⁵ "The Christian apocalypse of the MASSNAHME is over, history has deposed the development to the street, nor do the learned choruses sing any longer, humanism now takes the form of terrorism, the Molotov cocktail is the last educative experience of the middle-class." Müller, "Verabschiedung des Lehrstücks", in: Material. Texte und Kommentare (Göttingen: Steidl, 1989) 40.

According to Müller, Brecht's unfinished 1927 play Der Untergang des Egoisten Johann Fatzer³⁶ provides a more useful model for understanding the RAF than Die Maßnahme. Fatzer tells the story of a group of deserters in the final years of the First World War. Hiding in the city Mülheim and waiting for the outbreak of a socialist revolution, the soldiers end up killing one of their own, the irresponsible and undisciplined Johann Fatzer.

Fatzer features calls for the dismantling of the corrupt capitalist social order and the "handing over" of the state to revolutionaries. As published by Brecht, the play leads up to a chorus calling for the sacrifice of human life as the necessary "insertion of a blank sheet" into the history of humanity. Obviously, the RAF members would have endorsed this position; it is through such parallels that Müller relates Brecht's Fatzer fragment to the history of left-wing militancy in the GFR. Careful and passionate reader of Brecht that he was, Müller was fully aware the ideological position taken by the chorus is not obvious or unproblematic; in fact, rather than presenting it directly, Brecht leaves it in the context of a question that needs to be debated. For Müller, the decision to take human life did not come easily to the RAF members; in his words, they had to "force themselves" to kill because their analysis of the political situation led them to believe that no other course of action would have been responsible: "Diese

³⁶ Bertolt Brecht, Der Untergang des Egoisten Johann Fatzer: Bühnenfassung von Heiner Müller (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1994).

Verbindung von Demut und Töten ist ein Kernpunkt [...] der RAF-Ideologie. Leute, die sich zum Töten zwingen müssen.“³⁷ When Müller detects in Fatzer the blueprint of West German militancy, he does so on the basis of what he calls the RAF's "theological" attitude to violence – a sense that the taking of life is undesirable in itself, but instrumentally desirable, and that what is called for is a revolutionary who can "kill humbly," in full awareness of this paradox: "Töten, mit Demut, das ist der theologische Glutkern des Terrorismus.“³⁸

The revolutionaries portrayed by Brecht in Fatzer are failed revolutionaries. Absent the mass insurrection without which no revolution can succeed, their violence turns on itself. It is here that Müller sees the tragic character of the play, which is also that of any militant group dissociated from the general population: "Es gehört zur Tragik von militanten Gruppen, die nicht zum Zug kommen, daß die Gewalt sich nach innen kehrt.“³⁹

The anarchic protagonist Fatzer is portrayed by Brecht in highly positive terms; he recalls earlier Brecht protagonists such as Baal and Kragler, to name only two. Fatzer refuses to bend to the revolutionary discipline advocated by the other characters: "Eure

³⁷ "This link between humbleness and killing is a central aspect of the RAF ideology. People who need to force themselves to kill." Müller 1999 312.

³⁸ "To kill humbly, that is the fiery theological notion at the heart of terrorism." Müller 1999 316. The phrase "theologischer Glutkern" was first coined by Walter Benjamin in a comment on Marxism.

³⁹ "It's part of the tragedy of militant groups that don't realise their projects that their violence turns on itself." Müller in Brecht 1994 9.

ungesunde Lust / Wie Räder zu sein / Ich aber wills nicht."⁴⁰ As the character Büsching tells him, such individualism is of no use to the revolution: "Was du tust, weil du Lust hast, das gilt / Nichts, Fatzer, bei uns."⁴¹ Ultimately, the austerity and discipline of the character Koch, who is compared by Müller to Lenin, triumphs over Fatzer's hedonism, even if it remains empty and purely destructive – an insistence on the need for discipline and rigour that is well aware of its historical powerlessness. Koch's shallow glory consists only in never having bent to the temptations of individualism, and in having eradicated their symbol by bringing about the death of Fatzer:

Seid nicht hochfahrend, Brüder
 Sondern demütig und schlägt es tot
 Nicht hochfahrend, sondern: unmenschlich!
 Tut nicht zwei Dinge, sondern
 Eines. Nicht leben und töten, sondern
 Nur töten.⁴²

In so far as he can only destroy, Koch is arguably no less tragic a character than Fatzer. Their story becomes, in Müller's adaptation of Brecht's fragment, a parable on failed revolutionary movements

⁴⁰ "Your unhealthy desire / To be like wheels / But I don't want it." Brecht 1994 101.

⁴¹ "The things you do because you feel like it / Mean nothing to us, Fatzer." Brecht 1994 114f.

⁴² "Don't be self-important, brothers / But humble, and strike it dead / Not self-important, but: inhuman! / Don't do two things, only / One. Not living and killing, but / Only killing." Brecht 1994 110f. The character Büsching formulates a similar position: "Der Mensch ist der Feind und muß / Aufhören" (Brecht 1994 17) ["Man is the enemy and must / Cease"].

that anticipate too eagerly social and political transformations for which the time is not yet ripe – thereby succeeding only in speeding their own (self-)destruction. Appropriately, Müller asks for a chorus articulating this problem to appear before a backdrop featuring the images of Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, and Ulrike Meinhof. Without renouncing the view that what Fatzer and his communist comrades called for was right, the chorus laments their failure to realise projects that must remain utopian, because their social and political context is not such as to allow for revolution:

So verlassen die Besten, ist an einem
 Punkt der Erdoberfläche
 Eine Idee aufgetaucht, sofort die
 Position und nichts
 Hält sie zurück, die Zeit spaltet
 Sich in alt und neu, sie tun nichts
 Altes mehr.
 Aber die Zeit rollt noch weiter.⁴³

This sense that the revolutionary project was right, but ahead of its time, is characteristic of many of the later RAF texts, as well as of pronouncements by surviving German and Italian militants – proof that Müller's interpretation of Brecht's fragment in terms of post-1969 militancy is not gratuitous, but profoundly insightful.

⁴³ "Thus, when somewhere / On the earth's surface / An idea has appeared, / The best immediately vacate their position and / Nothing holds them back, time splits / Into old and new, they no longer do / Anything old. / But time still rolls on." Brecht 1994 26.

Enzensberger: Der kurze Sommer der Anarchie

Hans Magnus Enzensberger's 1972 documentary novel Der kurze Sommer der Anarchie was read by Gudrun Ensslin in Stammheim. It tells the life story of the Spanish anarchist Buenaventura Durruti (1896-1936) by assembling a plethora of quotations (from both primary and secondary sources), interspersed with original essays on the nature of history, the revolution, heroism, and the Spanish anarchist movement.⁴⁴ The device of montage corresponds to Enzensberger's conviction that history is a construction or "invention" that utilises the "material" offered by reality, but does so on the basis of particular interests and desires, rather than neutrally or objectively.

Die Geschichte ist eine Erfindung, zu der die Wirklichkeit ihre Materialien liefert. Aber sie ist keine beliebige Erfindung. Das Interesse, das sie erweckt, gründet auf den Interessen derer, die sie erzählen; und sie erlaubt es denen, die ihr zuhören, ihre eigenen Interessen, ebenso wie die ihrer Feinde, wiederzuerkennen und genauer zu bestimmen.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Der kurze Sommer der Anarchie (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1972). For a discussion of the negative reception Enzensberger's experimental novel received (most critics denied it was a novel), cf. Ulrich Schmidt, Zwischen Aufbruch und Wende: Lebensgeschichten der sechziger und siebziger Jahre (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1993) 155ff.

⁴⁵ "History is an invention for which reality provides the material. But it is not a gratuitous invention. It is interesting because it is founded on the interests of those who recount it; and it allows those who listen to recognise and determine more precisely their own interests, as well as those of their enemies." Enzensberger 13.

Refusing to present his readers with history as a finished product, Enzensberger urges them to assemble their own narrative on the basis of the information he provides in his "novel as collage," but also to take account of the contradictions inherent in that information; he demands an active, discerning reader, capable of pondering the questions raised by the past from the point of view of the present: "Die Widersprüche dieser Überlieferung sind von ihrem Inhalt nicht zu trennen. Eine passive Lektüre lässt dieses Material nicht zu. Lesen heißt hier unterscheiden, urteilen, Partei ergreifen."⁴⁶

Published some two years after the liberation of Andreas Baader, Enzensberger's novel indirectly expresses a critical view of the student movement and the militant organisations that emerged from it.⁴⁷ The historical figures Enzensberger brings to life by his collage of quotations in many ways invite comparison with the German militant left; apart from their leftist ideology and revolutionary ambitions, they engage in expropriation, believe in loose, non-hierarchical forms of organisation, and conceive of

⁴⁶ "The contradictions of this narrative cannot be separated from its content. This material does not allow for a passive reading. Here reading means making distinctions, judging, taking sides." Enzensberger 259.

⁴⁷ Enzensberger's negative judgement on militancy dates back at least to 1962, at which time he wrote two essays on Russian anarchism for German public radio, in one of which he declares: "Kein Bombenwerfer kann die großen und anonymen gesellschaftlichen Kräfte verändern [...]" ["No thrower of bombs can alter the great and anonymous social powers"]. Cf. Enzensberger, *Politik und Verbrechen* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1978) 328. Cf. also Enzensberger's reflections on militancy in "Berliner Gemeinplätze", *Kursbuch* 11 (January 1968), 151ff. For insightful remarks on Enzensberger's political disillusionment after 1968, cf. Reinhold Grimm, "Bildnis Hans Magnus Enzensberger: Struktur, Ideologie und Vorgeschichte eines Gesellschaftskritikers", in: Reinhold Grimm (ed.), *Hans Magnus Enzensberger* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1984) 139ff.

themselves as members of that revolutionary vanguard that has something to "give" to the masses: "Sie warteten nicht auf die Massen, sie verlangten nichts von ihnen; im Gegenteil, sie hatten ihnen etwas zu geben und mitzuteilen."⁴⁸ Some of the events Enzensberger describes – such as the hunger strike Durruti and his comrades engage in at one point – foreshadow later RAF activities. Enzensberger's reflections on violent death as that which permanently renders the revolutionary heroic, "crystallising" his "legend," also shed light on the attitude of the more death-defying West German militants, who were, arguably, not above a desire for self-aggrandizement through the orchestration of a violent demise. As Enzensberger says about the moment of the revolutionary's tragic death: "Erst in diesem Augenblick kristallisiert sich die Legende."⁴⁹

Yet while in many ways celebrating the Spanish revolution, Enzensberger is concerned to distinguish it from the postwar left, and in particular from the student movement. First, he insists, anarchism has been vanquished; it is a "revolution grown old."⁵⁰ Second, and despite superficial similarities, an anarchist revolution cannot legitimately be claimed by the student movement as an antecedent, because it was a "proletarian mass movement":

⁴⁸ "They did not wait for the masses, they demanded nothing from them; on the contrary, they had something to give to them, to convey to them." Enzensberger 67.

⁴⁹ "It is only now that his legend crystallises." Enzensberger 260.

⁵⁰ Enzensberger 282.

Der spanische Anarchismus, für den diese Männer und Frauen ihr Leben lang gekämpft haben, ist nie eine Sekte am Rande der Gesellschaft, eine intellektuelle Mode, ein bürgerliches Spiel mit dem Feuer gewesen. Er war eine proletarische Massenbewegung.⁵¹

- For Enzensberger, the German postwar left – both militant and non-militant – is not the expression of widespread revolutionary movement, but a fad and an intellectual aberration – a politically meaningless distraction for bored middle-class students.

The two final quotations in Enzensberger's novel reinforce his point that the revolution is a thing of the past. The first quotation expresses the enthusiasm of a Spanish expatriate, Florentino Monroy, who announces his plans for returning to Spain and continuing his insurrectionary activities: "Ich habe vor, sobald wie möglich nach Spanien zurückzugehen. Nein, nicht der Familie wegen, sondern weil ich weitermachen will. Es ist der gleiche Kampf wie damals, als wir jung waren."⁵² The second (and last) quotation expresses the scepticism of Emilienne Morin, Durruti's widow, about the enthusiasm of aged and exiled revolutionaries like Monroy: "Die meisten bilden sich ein, sie bräuchten nur nach Spanien zurückzukehren, wenn es soweit ist, und da wieder anzufangen, wo

⁵¹ "Spanish anarchism, for which these men and women fought all their lives, was never a sectarian movement on the fringes of society, never an intellectual fad, an example of the middle class playing with fire. It was a proletarian mass movement." Enzensberger 283.

⁵² "I intend to return to Spain as soon as possible. No, not because of my family, but because I want to continue. It's the same struggle as when we were young." Enzensberger 292.

sie 1936 aufgehört haben. Aber was vorbei ist, ist vorbei. Man macht nicht zweimal dieselbe Revolution."⁵³ This scepticism about the possibility of continuing the revolutionary project makes it seem likely that, when Gudrun Ensslin read Enzensberger's novel in prison, she was more interested in the Spanish anarchists themselves than in the author's interpretation of them. Although little is known about Ensslin's reading of Enzensberger beyond the fact that it occurred, it can safely be asserted that it must have constituted a clash of two worldviews: one that relegates the revolution to the historical past and draws a clear distinction between that past and the present, and one that analyses the relationship of the past to the present in terms of continuity, rather than difference.

A point made in the previous chapter – that German ex-militants have tended to speak about their past in more overtly ideological terms than their Italian counterparts – is supported by the fact that the reception of literary texts among Italian militants and ex-militants has also been less ideological. There is no known case of Italian (ex-)militants subjecting a literary text to the kind of elaborate ideological interpretation that Moby Dick received at the hands of Ensslin. Often, the readings mentioned by the Italian

⁵³ "Most of them imagine they only need to return to Spain when the time comes, in order to continue where they left off in 1936. But what's over is over. You don't stage the same revolution twice." Enzensberger 293.

protagonists of the militant conflict are never given any kind of ideological interpretation; where this is not the case, the interpretation is less developed than those given by German militants.

Nel cerchio della prigione, a collection of letters exchanged in prison by former Red Brigades member Anna Laura Braghetti and right-wing terrorist Francesca Mambro, contains numerous references to their reading. Unlike Mambro, who refers mainly to popular fiction (such as the works of Stephen King, J.R.R. Tolkien, Roddy Doyle, and Peter Hoeg), Braghetti relates her situation to various works of the Western canon, among them Virginia Woolf's To the Lighthouse and Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner." The latter is interpreted by Braghetti in the light of her sense of moral guilt; she also relates it to her image of herself as the "depository" of a truth that needs to be told (that of the experience of militancy): "mi sento nella scomoda posizione di chi è depositario di una verità e deve raccontarla. Come il vecchio marinaio nella ballata di Coleridge."⁵⁴

Asked in 1993 about his first three months in solitary confinement, Mario Moretti said he read War and Peace twice in a

⁵⁴ "I feel myself to be in the uncomfortable position of one who is the depository of truth and needs to communicate it. Like the old mariner in Coleridge's ballad." Braghetti/Mambro 94. Cf. also Braghetti/Mambro 162. Other texts mentioned in Nel cerchio della prigione are theoretical; they include works by Valéry, Benjamin, and Bloch.

row: "Mille e settecento pagine di Tolstoj riempiono di gente una cella di isolamento per ben piú di tre mesi."⁵⁵

According to Silvana Mazzochi, former militant Adriana Faranda cherishes Elio Vittorini's story of the Italian partisan struggle, Uomini e no, in particular the episode in which a young partisan finds himself unable to shoot a German soldier.

Le era sempre piaciuto uno dei libri piú belli di Elio Vittorini: Uomini e no. Aveva amato l'umanità di quella storia e aveva riletto tante volte le ultime pagine, quando il giovane partigiano non riesce a sparare contro il soldato tedesco. Perché lo vede come lui, inerme e costretto a uccidere o a morire. E non ce la fa, anche se si sente in colpa per la sua debolezza.⁵⁶

According to Mazzochi, Faranda's fascination with this episode earned her the rebuke of her fellow militants; while she interpreted it as expressing the "eternal legitimacy" of doubt, they rejected it as "defeatist."⁵⁷

The reference to Uomini e no in Mazzochi's biography of Faranda is symptomatic of a general trend in recent biographies and memoirs of Italian militants: that of rendering the militant more

⁵⁵ "One thousand and seven hundred pages of Tolstoy will populate a solitary confinement cell for a good deal longer than three months." Moretti 229.

⁵⁶ "She always liked one of Elio Vittorini's most beautiful books: Uomini e no. She had always loved the humanity of that story and had often re-read the final pages, in which the partisan is unable to shoot the German soldier. Because he sees in him the image of himself, helpless and forced to kill and die. And he can't do it, even if he feels guilty for his weakness." Silvana Mazzochi, Nell'anno della Tigre: Storia di Adriana Faranda (Milan: Ballini & Castoldi, 1994) 94.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

humane and sentimental than he is typically perceived to be. Implicit in this is a critique of the notion of revolutionary identity; inherent in this ideal, Mazzochi and Faranda seem to suggest, is an uncritical fanaticism.

It is striking that Italian ex-militants have almost always invoked literary texts as part of a project of self-criticism (however mendacious that project may ultimately be). Canonical texts are used by the Italian ex-militants to supplement arguments that essentially confirm the dominant discourse, whereas the RAF members used such texts to subvert that discourse. In Italy, literature seems to have been perceived as an "other" from which militant ideology could be critiqued, whereas in Germany, literary texts had already been appropriated by unrepentant militant ideologues. It will be seen below that a number of Italian essayists (most prominently Leonardo Sciascia) have formulated their critique of militancy in terms culled from canonical literary works. This is not something done by German writers.

The following discussion of post-1970 literary texts on militancy will reveal a number of other differences between the discourse of militancy in Italy and the GFR. It will be seen that the shifts of emphasis that occur between the memoirs of German and Italian ex-militants also occur in the texts discussed here. In many ways, these shifts become more marked; hence the issue of domesticity

that is evident in a memoir such as Braghetti's Il prigioniero will feature more prominently in this chapter, as it becomes the central concern of an entire set of Italian texts. Likewise, the concern with questions of legality and the more overtly theoretical and ideological thrust of many German memoirs will be seen also to be a key feature of literary texts from the GFR.

For example, the texts that offer an extended analysis of the ideological position that revolutionary theory should always be accompanied by revolutionary practice were almost exclusively written and published in the GFR. The issue is subjected to particularly close scrutiny in Horst Bienek's novella Bakunin, which portrays the very situation repeatedly decried by the RAF - an overabundance of theory which stalls revolutionary action, rhetorical battle cries notwithstanding - and then presents a case in which the RAF's proposed remedy fails. The RAF and other groups demanded a total break with middle-class life and the immediate displacement of the "arms of critique" by the "critique of arms" (Marx). Bienek indicates the crucial shortcoming of such a demand: it is itself only another statement, and cannot breach the chasm between talk and action. Another German writer, Judith Kuckart, touches on the same problem - the central aporia of the RAF's ideological position on theory and practice - when she has one of her protagonists say: "Es gibt Dinge, die [...] nur getan werden [können], weil sie nur dann

als Aussage existieren."⁵⁸ Kuckart shows the transition to revolutionary praxis that is demanded by militant ideology cannot be brought about by that ideology itself. To become fully consistent with itself, the militant discourse must abolish itself as discourse. It must relinquish what can only be said in favour of what only be done.

Another German novelist, Christian Geissler, involuntarily furnishes further evidence for the powerlessness of mere discourse. Geissler's protagonists, some of whom are militants, echo the RAF's position by repeatedly emphasising the importance of praxis: "wir sind nur das, was wir gegen sie tun."⁵⁹ Formulated thus, this view cannot but indicate its own limits. Taken to its logical conclusion, the statement that revolutionary identity can be achieved only through praxis becomes a comment on its own insufficiency: it is itself only a statement, and can never realise the ideal it posits. For all their poetic beauty, such phrases become mere rhetorical flourishes, forever appended to a praxis from which they are by definition distinct. Like the theories mentioned in an Italian novel, Carlo Castellaneta's Cerchi nell'acqua, they are superfluous or "masturbatory" – surrogates for a praxis separated from speech by an insurmountable rift.

⁵⁸ "There are things that can only be done, because it is only then that they exist as statements." Judith Kuckart, Wahl der Waffen (Frankfurt: S. Fischer, 1990) 25.

⁵⁹ "we're only what we do against them." Christian Geissler, kamalatta (Berlin: Rotbuch, 1988) 13.

Some novels – most notably Die Glücklichen, by Peter-Paul Zahl – fall short of identifying this problem by simply decrying the praxis of militancy as one founded on a flawed theory. While legitimate, this approach ignores that no call to arms can itself bring about the transition from theory to practice. It also largely ignores the ways in which praxis retroactively affects the theories rightly or wrongly associated with it. The latter problem is explored in Michael Zeller's Follens Erbe and Vincenzo Mantovani's Il cattivo maestro. In both of these novels, theories initially thought of as “innocent” become “guilty” by their association with a praxis that was either not foreseen, or whose consequences were underestimated. That such a situation should become possible in the first place results from the essential disparity between all theory and praxis. It is this disparity that another German writer, Rainald Goetz, speaks to when he says: “Handeln folgt nicht theoretischer Begründung, sondern handelt für sich logisch einfach Schritt für Schritt nach einer jeweils neuen Augenblickslogik. Deshalb ist es Unsinn, vom Täter auch noch Theorien zu verlangen.”⁶⁰

In many of the novels discussed, the view that revolutionary action fundamentally requires illegality is analysed within a larger meditation on the nature of the legal order. Again, this is typically the domain of German writers such as Christian Geissler, Peter O.

⁶⁰ “Action does not obey theoretical justifications, but acts by itself, logically, step by step, according to an ever changing logic of moments. That’s why it’s silly to ask the one who acts for theories.” Rainald Goetz, Kontrolliert (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1988) 60.

Chotjewitz, Alexander Kluge, Franz-Josef Degenhardt, and Peter-Paul Zahl, although it is also given considerable attention in one Italian novel, Nanni Balestrini's Gli invisibili. Often, the conclusion arrived at by these authors is that the "justice" meted out by the state is that of a ruling class whose hegemony is founded on repression. Their texts portray the legal order as a mere facade for repression. Occasionally, the facade crumbles. This is the case, for example, in Chotjewitz's Die Herren des Morgengrauens, in which scarcely even the letter of the law is observed (and when it is, it is the letter of laws left on the books from the Nazi period). For Chotjewitz, as for Kluge and Zahl, the law is little more than a farce, and deserves to be portrayed as such. It functions as an alibi for those whose goal is not justice but power. Like one of the protagonists of Kluge's Lernprozesse mit tödlichem Ausgang, they begin to treat the law as a nuisance when it no longer adequately fulfils its repressive function. The deceased lawyer in another German text, Eva Demski's Scheintod, uses the farcical character of the legal order to his advantage; he exploits gaps in the law to defend the state's declared enemies.

In formulating their critique of the legal order, many of these writers were drawing conclusions from their own experience. Zahl and Balestrini were unjustly, although not illegally incarcerated; Chotjewitz, Kluge, and Degenhardt were lawyers. More than any other, the subject of legality has allowed for the inclusion of

strongly autobiographical elements: Die Glücklichen contains a passage in which Zahl narrates his own trial, and Die Herren des Morgengrauens is strongly autobiographical. Nonetheless, writers like Zahl and Chotjewitz do not dwell on their experiences for the sake of exploring their personal character; rather, they draw conclusions that present themselves as objective truths. This is important because it sets these writers apart from many of their Italian colleagues; it will be seen below that Italian writers such as Ginzburg take even apparently "abstract" problems as a starting point for elaborating on questions of personal experience.

It fits well with this that while "abstract" questions of legality receive so much attention from German writers, the one aspect of militancy's ideological stance on the question of legality and illegality that has a direct and obvious bearing on the subjective experience of the militant - clandestinity - is treated repeatedly by Italian writers. Novelists such as Cesare Battisti, Natalia Ginzburg, and Dacia Maraini offer a critique of that valourisation of clandestinity that resulted from an excessive emphasis on extralegal operations. Battisti portrays clandestinity as the counterpart to incarceration – a mental and emotional impoverishment that mirrors the deprivation of prison. Ginzburg similarly exposes aspects of clandestinity never mentioned in militant ideological texts. Where the latter adopt the militant's point of view, Ginzburg adopts that of the family member left behind. She explores the absence that is left

once someone decides to remove themselves, for political reasons, from the network of social relations within which they have lived and grown. In Ginzburg's novel Caro Michele, clandestine militancy is a profoundly male ideal, one of violent adventurism in which women are allowed to participate only marginally, and by which they are victimised. This feminist critique is developed further by Maraini, who illustrates how the ideal's realisation is founded on a conception of women as sexual and domestic objects. In her novels Donna in guerra and Lettere a Marina, Maraini shows that the clandestinity of males goes hand in hand with the replication of profoundly misogynist tendencies. It will be recalled that this feminist approach to questions of clandestinity is implicit in Braghetti's memoir Il prigioniero: there, too, the hardships of clandestinity are discussed alongside those of being a woman in a male-dominated (and possibly misogynist) environment. Much like Maraini, Braghetti also devotes considerable attention to domestic values. It seems that a concern with domestic life has given female Italian writers a way of approaching the issue of clandestinity that is not apparent in German texts.

Questions of family are central to many of the novels discussed, but again, they recur particularly frequently in Italian novels. The family is inserted by many Italian writers as a "third protagonist" in the clash between the state and the insurrectionary. It occupies a curious middle ground: the militant typically breaks

with her family, which is associated with the social order she contests, but the break is often problematic, seldom a clean one, as the militant's family relations catch up with her. Foregrounding questions of family is one of the techniques employed by Italian writers to examine the experience of clandestinity. The ideal of the family is that of a community in which secrecy is reduced to a minimum; where the militant has not relinquished her family ties, her clandestinity becomes problematic. The protagonist of Carlo Castellaneta's novel Cerchi nell'acqua is one who is haunted by the family she has left behind. It turns out to be the one middle-class institution she cannot renounce:

Si ha un bel persuadersi e leggere e imparare che dall'istituto della famiglia discendono tutta una serie di umane bassezze: classismo, razzismo, senso di proprietà, egoismi d'ogni genere, ma quando tocca a te è come se fossi la prima ad affrontare questa rivoluzione sempre rimandata, questa contro la famiglia, l'unica che non si fa mai.⁶¹

The family is so central to many of the Italian texts discussed below that, in numerous cases, it becomes not so much an extra component of the militant conflict as an opportunity to grasp that conflict in its entirety. The social tensions between those who opt

⁶¹ "You can convince yourself, reading and learning, that an entire catalog of human depravity derives from the institution of the family: class bias, racism, the sense of property, all manner of selfishness. But when it comes to you it's as if you were the first to confront this eternally postponed revolution, the one against the family, the only one that never happens." Carlo Castellaneta, Cerchi nell'acqua (Milan: Mondadori, 1995) 64.

for illegality, clandestinity, and violence and those who do not are reflected in many of the families that feature in the novels discussed. Even a writer like Nanni Balestrini, whose concerns are in many ways closer to those of German authors, gives a family of sorts a prominent place in one of his novels: like many of the actual families in other novels, the group of friends at the heart of Balestrini's novel L'editore functions as a microcosm of society; it is "una piccola società contraddittoria."⁶²

Related, but not identical to the theme of the family is that of generational conflict. In the discourse of the media, the motif of generational conflict is frequently used to explain the domestic political conflicts of the West German and Italian states during the 1960s and 1970s. Curiously, however, this motif is far more prominent in the Italian than in the German fiction on the topic. Several Italian writers, such as Nerino Rossi and Vincenzo Consolo, use the generational theme to place militancy in its historical context. In Rossi's La voce nel pozzo, for example, militancy is compared to the struggle of the partisans, and the militant and the partisan conflicts are identified with the younger and the older generation. (This is also done, it will be recalled, by Franceschini in his memoir.) Similarly, Consolo's Lo spasimo di Palermo takes a family relationship – that of two sons to their fathers – as its starting point for an examination of the historical trends by which

⁶² "A small antagonistic society." Nanni Balestrini, La grande rivolta (Milan: Bompiani, 1999) 285.

militancy is conditioned. Whence this proclivity, among Italian novelists, for analysing militancy in generational terms? After all, historical context might just as well be provided by other means; German writers such as Hannelies Taschau evoke parallels between the past and the present without resorting to the generational motif. A partial answer to this question can be given here: the near-total absence of an antifascist resistance in Germany made the militant generation seem to exist in a historical vacuum. Its actions were obviously conditioned by history, and by the way history continued to shape the present, but the militants had virtually no role models in the preceding generation. They could compare themselves to individuals, such as Brecht, but not to an entire generation of armed Marxists. In this sense, juxtaposing generations would seem to have been a more fruitful enterprise in Italy, where there was a tradition of "armed struggle." The German reluctance to make generational comparisons may also be related to the persistent taboo that surrounds references to the Third Reich. It is also probably due to the greater concern with family issues among the Italian writers, which would itself seem to be the product of a greater emphasis on those ideological problems that bear most clearly on concrete, subjective, and interpersonal experience.

Like the family, the generation of the partisans is a "third protagonist" inserted into the conflict between the state and the insurrectionary. The effect of inserting such a third protagonist is to

subvert certain kinds of ideology - that of the militants, but also that of the state, both of which have tended to deny that there could be a relevant third protagonist. Third protagonists typically appear in Italian texts. They include the student movement (in Balestrini's Gli invisibili); the media (in Balestrini's La violenza illustrata and Filippo Canu's Funerale di stato, but also in F.C. Delius's Mogadischu Fensterplatz, a German novel); intelligence services (in Castellaneta's Cerchi nell'acqua, Mantovani's Il cattivo maestro, and Franceschini's La borsa del presidente); and academia (again in Il cattivo maestro, but also in one German novel, Michael Zeller's Follens Erbe). The tendency to introduce a third protagonist frequently goes hand in hand with that of portraying militancy as an instrument in the hands of one of these third parties. While the utility of militancy to political power is a theme in some German novels, such as Delius's Himmelfahrt eines Staatsfeindes, notions of militancy's instrumentalisation (by intelligence services or political interest groups) are particularly widespread in Italian fiction. This may be a consequence of the standard discourse of Italian "terrorism," which conflates the kidnappings and assassinations of left-wing groups with massacres such as those in Milan and Bologna. Many historians hold that the latter were organised by political interest groups seeking to create a climate conducive to a right-wing coup; by association, the activities of left-wing militants

have also come to be thought of as parts of a larger (typically right-wing) scheme.

Two Italian texts – L'affaire Moro and Lo spasimo di Palermo – introduce the mafia into their analysis of militancy, arguing that both express Italy's traditionally troubled relationship to the state, and result from the same faith in the possibility of resolving long-standing historical conflicts by recourse to illegal, clandestine, and violent activities. In this analysis, the militant is not the enemy of the state par excellence, but only one possible expression of a much larger hostility towards state authority. As plausible as it may at first appear, the comparison between militancy and the mafia is problematic. It is made by only two writers, both of whom are concerned, in the bulk of their work, with the Italian south, and obfuscates the character of militancy as an urban industrial, therefore northern Italian phenomenon. The mafia developed out of the semi-feudal social structures of Italy's rural south, militancy out of the industrial society of the north. The mafia was initially a regional phenomenon; militancy was characterised ab initio by awareness of its global context and, in many cases, by an internationalist agenda. The mafia is reactionary in its attitude to property relations; militancy sought to overthrow the very social structure that makes the maintenance of those property relations possible. Once militancy is recognised as a political rather than a

purely criminological phenomenon, comparisons between it and the mafia become much less plausible.

Whatever the merits of introducing any of these various third protagonists into the discourse of militancy, the fact that Italian writers tend to do so more frequently than their German colleagues raises the question of why this is so. A partial answer is that the theme of instrumentalisation is far more dominant in the Italian than in the German texts. Of course, this is itself in need of explanation. It is partly related to the fact that the history of Italian militancy does seem to have involved substantial deceit and manipulation on the part of intelligence services and other more or less obscure groups (such as the P2 Masonic lodge, of which many influential politicians were members). Yet what is also interesting is the anti-ideological thrust, noted above, of most attempts to introduce a third protagonist into the discourse. Doing so seems to say to both the state and the ideologues of militancy that their self-representations are incorrect and perhaps mendacious. There is little room in the ideologies of the state and the militants for (possibly manipulative) third protagonists. It seems that here and elsewhere, many German writers have tended to take militant ideology at face value, accepting the RAF's dichotomous and Manichean worldview as more or less accurate. Their faith in such a worldview was never shaken by the kinds of intelligence scandals that Italy witnessed, many of which led Italians - not just common

citizens, but historians and other scholars - to believe that perhaps even the Red Brigades never knew who was controlling them.

This tendency of German writers to accept the basic framework of militant ideology is also reflected in their often uncritical acceptance of the portrayal of militant violence as revolutionary counterviolence. Much as these writers accept that the militant conflict is essentially one between the state and insurrectionaries, they accept that the violence of the state is primary, whereas the violence of the putative insurrectionaries is counterviolence. The militant position that militant violence is a justified response to the violence of the state (which, according to some, is coordinated within a global imperialist system) is echoed particularly clearly in the work of Christian Geissler. His protagonists take the view found in many RAF documents, that the rhetoric of nonviolence only becomes possible from a highly privileged position - from within the First World, which is perceived as an island of prosperity and political stability in an otherwise war-torn world. A causal relationship between the prosperity of the First World and the misery of the Third World is set up, the former being perceived as founded on the latter. The revolutionary subject then becomes the mass of violently oppressed people across the globe, the victims of imperialist exploitation. To be a revolutionary in the First World is to identify with these people and support their struggle against one's own sociopolitical order. Geissler's protagonists not only

constantly reiterate this argument in their statements. It is also borne out by the experience of the protagonist Proff, whose militancy stands at the end of a chain of experiences that begins with his torture at the hands of a Special Forces officer in Guatemala.

While no one formulates this view as starkly as Geissler, it informs at least two other German novels. The internationalist component of Geissler's view is also found in Zahl's Die Glücklichen and in Peter-Jürgen Boock's Abgang. Authors such as Zahl and Boock reiterate the militant position that the violence of the German and Italian "revolutionaries" must be seen in the context of, for example, the USA's military intervention in Vietnam, or the political conflicts in the Middle East. Like Geissler, Zahl and Boock insist that questions of violence need to be discussed in a global context. A similar position is found, albeit less pronouncedly, in the work of Italian novelist Nanni Balestrini: his La violenza illustrata begins and ends with references to Vietnam, and another Balestrini novel, L'editore, also contains numerous references to international political developments. Similarly, the notion, dear to so many German writers, that militant violence is counterviolence informs Balestrini's Gli invisibili. These are only some of the ways in which Balestrini's work is closer to that of German authors than to that of his compatriots; like the former, but unlike the latter, Balestrini makes use of experimental and avant-garde techniques such as

montage. This is part of his project of writing texts that are "epic" in that they make themselves vehicles for collective, rather than individual experience. Balestrini's interest in collectivity sets him apart from the bulk of the other Italian writers, whose main concern is the articulation of a particular kind of subjectivity; even where they engage with issues of intersubjectivity, this occurs on a personal, rather than a collective level. Balestrini's special status is particularly evident in his La violenza illustrata. Even the voice of the first-person narrator of Gli invisibili, however, is really a collective voice; it is telling that the narrator remains nameless.

In Gli invisibili, militancy is portrayed as a desperate reaction, on the part of a radical but largely nonviolent movement, to massive state repression. The "revolutionary violence" of Balestrini's protagonists pales in comparison to the atrocities carried out in the service of the state. Again like German writers (in particular Guntram Vesper and Hannelies Taschau), Balestrini demonstrates that state repression does not target militancy alone. Rather, it is directed against all forms of perceived opposition, and in many cases ruins or ends the lives of innocents. It is more likely to affect an unsuspecting airplane passenger like the protagonist of Taschau's Erfinder des Glücks than the militant right-wing groups that enjoy the support of the police in Gli invisibili, or those about whose violence another German writer, Gert Heidenreich, says it will never be perceived as uncanny ("unheimlich") because it has

always already belonged to the German homeland ("Heimat"). In the novels of Heidenreich and Taschau, West German state violence is portrayed as so extreme it makes the GFR unliveable, a country whose nature is best grasped (as in Erfinder des Glücks) by metaphors of prison and torture. Like Vesper, Taschau expands the concept of state violence to include the technology of surveillance. Non-physical "violence" is also the subject of La violenza illustrata, which portrays the interpretative violence of the media as the corollary of the physical violence of the police.

Much as the issue of counterviolence more markedly informs German than Italian texts (again, with the notable exception of Balestrini), possible cases of massive state-sponsored violence in Italy, such as the bombs of 1969 and 1980, enter only marginally into most Italian works. The view that political interest groups support and profit from massacres on their own population informs the novels Cerchi nell'acqua, Il cattivo maestro, La borsa del presidente, and Funerale di stato. It goes hand in hand with the view (discussed above) that militancy was instrumentalised by such interest groups. A more original analysis of the logic of "state massacres" is found in a German text, albeit one that does not overtly deal with that subject at all: Alexander Kluge's dialogue from Lernprozesse mit tödlichem Ausgang. Kluge demonstrates that in seeking to consolidate their power, state institutions may engage in precisely those murderous activities they are supposed to

combat. An analysis such as Kluge's might more readily have been derived from the history of Italian militancy than from that of its German counterpart; that it should nevertheless be formulated in a German text indicates the degree to which certain issues, such as that of counterviolence, seem to have been excluded a priori from the work of many Italian writers - arguably a consequence of the greater attention those writers pay to subjectivity and more or less personal issues. It will be seen below that where the problem of violence does assume an acutely personal dimension - in the problem of individual responsibility - it does receive considerable attention from Italian writers.

Apart from Balestrini, three other Italian writers - Ferdinando Camon, Nerino Rossi, and Vincenzo Consolo - devote substantial attention to questions of violence. Unlike many of their German colleagues, however, they do so in order to formulate a critique of the militant valourisation of violence as counterviolence. They insist that a violent sociopolitical order can never be overcome by violent means. According to Rossi, it is ignorance of this that constitutes the tragedy of militancy: "Fatalmente, ancora e sempre armi."⁶³ For Camon and Consolo, armed struggle is merely the latest manifestation of a historical trend that ought to be disrupted, rather than continued: the valourisation of armed solutions to social and political problems. Both propose as their remedy a closer look at

⁶³ "Fatally, arms still and always." Nerino Rossi, *La voce nel pozzo* (Venice: Marsilio, 1990) 129.

Italian history. This, Camon says, would reveal that great revolutionary movements were always nonviolent. Apart from the fact that this is a somewhat dubious assertion, Camon's critique misses its mark in so far as it is founded on a concept of revolution that is not that of left-wing militancy; when Camon speaks of the cultural transformations of Christian culture as revolutionary, he ignores that the revolution of Marxist discourse is of another kind, and that it is inextricably bound to a program of armed insurrection. Nonviolence remains a remote aim of this program; its immediate aim is to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. Camon's blunder is telling, and accords well with the rhetoric of nonviolence found in Rossi. These writers attempt to refute militant ideology from the premises of a different, more opaque but no less ideological worldview: one that couples the ideal of nonviolence with a peculiar historical fatalism. By contrast, even those German writers who are clearly at odds with militant ideology write from a position that shares at least some of its premises: particularly the one that historical processes are driven by the conscious and calculated employment of violence - or that violence is the *sine qua non* of any attempt to bring about historical change.

Camon is also the writer who seizes most readily on the ideological concept of "revolutionary identity" - to such an extent that it effectively displaces much of the rest of militant ideology, and to some degree even the theme of militancy itself. This is the

case in his novel Storia di Sirio, which elaborates on the existential dimension of militant ideology - most evident in the concept of revolutionary identity. Storia di Sirio is one of several Italian novels that effectively relegate political problems to a secondary level, giving primacy to existential questions of self-realisation. Storia di Sirio shows that, because the ideal of revolutionary identity is existential, not political, it can be accommodated as easily by a non-political as by a political life practice. The novel's protagonist pursues an authentic, uncontradictory existence, equated by him with "revolution." This leads him further and further away from political praxis.

Similarly, German novelist Judith Kuckart foregrounds existential issues in her Wahl der Waffen. The two protagonists of this novel, Katia and Jette, are both pursuing what they perceive to be an authentic existence – but only one of them opts for militancy. Thomas Hoeps has argued that this foregrounding of existential issues is a recent development in the German literature of militancy; he explains it by arguing that the more recent German publications, such as Kuckart's, were written by authors for whom militancy was a "finished" historical event, rather than an ongoing political crisis, and for whom it was hence more conducive to essentially apolitical interpretations.⁶⁴ Interestingly, this development is exactly contrary to that evident in the development

⁶⁴ Cf. Hoeps 311ff.

of German memoirs on militancy; as was demonstrated in the previous chapter, German ex-militants have tended, in their memoirs, not so much to abandon political interpretations of militancy as to articulate them more forcefully. Arguably, one motive for their doing so was a desire to react against the kind of development evident in the fiction of militancy. Whatever the case may be, strongly existentialist interpretations of militancy were already current in Italian fiction early on (as is testified by Camon's work, which predates that of Kuckart by more than a decade).

The ideological concept of revolutionary identity is dealt with by a substantial number of German authors, although it is never given the centrality it occupies in a work such as Storia di Sirio. The militants in Eva Demski's novel Scheintod, monkish in their austerity, are striking images of the identity of personal and political morality militant ideology demands. Demski's protagonist is fascinated by them, but ultimately prefers her own, more contradictory existence. Unlike Camon's protagonist, she realises existentialist rhetoric does not bode well for political progress. Demski and other German authors also demonstrate the simple truth that merging one's personal and political morality may be an impressive achievement, but that it can never guarantee the flawlessness of either. Demski's narrator comments repeatedly on the political blindness of the RAF, the absence of a positive political program or "Weltentwurf." In Demski's novel as in those of other

writers, this crucial shortcoming emerges from the RAF's increasingly blind and desperate praxis. Insight into the powerlessness of the RAF's praxis provokes doubt, and doubt dissolves revolutionary identity by prompting a reconsideration of both personal and political morality. This is what happens to the protagonist of Boock's Abgang, and to the Conni of Delius's Himmelfahrt eines Staatsfeindes. The latter realises that the ideal of political identity always went hand in hand with the suppression of doubt, and decides: "Ich weiß nur ich will nichts mehr zu tun haben mit einer Gruppe in der das Wort nein gar nicht mehr vorkommt [...]".⁶⁵ Demski identifies one crucial shortcoming in the militant's personal morality when she points to his inability to respond adequately to the experience of loss. Delius indicates a flaw in the RAF's political morality when he indicates how it serves the very state it set out to contest.

A number of writers, among them the outspoken RAF-supporter Geissler, contend that the identity of personal and political morality is an ideal that can never fully be achieved. This is the import of Geissler's constant recurrence to Adorno's dictum that there is no true or good life within a society whose ideals and life practice are false or corrupt. The shame Geissler's protagonists feel at being constrained, as First World citizens, to partake in the

⁶⁵ "I only know I don't want to have anything to do with a group in which the word no doesn't even exist any longer." Friedrich Christian Delius, Deutscher Herbst (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1997) 636.

mechanisms of exploitation is one consequence of this dilemma. Like the doubt described by Boock and Delius, such shame renders the ideal of revolutionary identity problematic. It indicates its ultimate impossibility, the insurmountable rift between the ideal and the possibilities society offers for its realisation. In none of the novels discussed in this chapter does anyone succeed in completely removing himself from the mechanisms of a repressive society. The narrator of Rainald Goetz's Kontrolliert rants against the state only to then express his gratitude for the comforts and opportunities it provides. Texts such as Natalia Ginzburg's Caro Michele and Eva Zeller's Heidelberger Novelle address the extent to which even the most radical insurrectionary praxis remains contaminated by the society it contests. The "revolutionaries" of Ginzburg and Zeller lead a parasitical existence; they inhabit and profit from a non-revolutionary or even reactionary environment.

The ideological position that individuals who resist or impede revolutionary action ought not to be thought of as individuals, but in terms of their sociopolitical function, is almost universally rejected by the writers discussed. This may result from the difficulty of portraying a character in such a reductive manner; in so far as traditional literary fiction aims for vivid, believable characterisation and an impression of concreteness, it cannot afford characters who are abstract or stereotypical. Yet the problem runs deeper. Many writers deliberately set out to refute the militant conception of the

individual by exposing its shortcomings. Often, this effort involves emphasising the physicality of individuals targeted in militant operations. While the protagonist of Mogadischu Fensterplatz is not the victim of a German or Italian militant organisation, the point Delius makes about her is a general one: she is not simply “the enemy,” but a flesh-and-blood human being. By dehumanising her, the militant effectively dehumanises himself. This is the import of a statement made by a militant in Erri De Luca's novella Aceto, arcobaleno: he says he has reduced himself to a body that kills other bodies. The ideal formulated by one of Geissler's protagonists – “mensch bleiben erstmal”⁶⁶ – necessarily clashes with the militant concept of individuality, and Geissler's attempt to escape this dilemma remains unsatisfactory; his portrayal of the enemy is too schematic and reductive to be plausible. (Geissler refuses even to give conventional names to those characters he identifies as enemies; they are typically identified by such nicknames as “the White Eye” and “the Neck.” The effect of these nicknames is further dehumanisation.)

Mogadischu Fensterplatz is not the only text that makes the victim of a militant operation its protagonist; Canu also does this in Funerale di stato, and the essays of Sciascia and Sofri are largely devoted to Moro, who is portrayed as a human being as much as in terms of his sociopolitical function. The Delius of Ein Held der

⁶⁶ “remain human first of all.” Geissler 40.

inneren Sicherheit portrays not the victim of militancy, but one whose relationship to that victim turns out to be more personal than it first appears to be. Like Sciascia and Sofri, Delius shows that erasing the humanity of the victim is not the prerogative of militants; servants of the state are no less likely to do this, when the consolidation of political power requires sacrificing their friend or colleague. Goetz's portrayal of the kidnapped Schleyer wavers from sympathy for the RAF's reductive concept of individuality to recognition that Schleyer is more than an enemy that must simply be eliminated. It is the kidnapping itself that exposes Schleyer's humanity; as easy as it was to think of him in reductive and dehumanising terms before, his victimisation exposes a vulnerability that is as much that of a human being as of the state.

To go beyond these preliminary remarks, it will be necessary to look in more detail at the individual texts. They will be discussed in chronological order, beginning with texts published in the GFR.

Horst Bienek: Bakunin, eine Invention

Bakunin, eine Invention⁶⁷ tells the story of an unnamed student who travels to Neuchâtel in order to unearth whatever traces remain there of the Russian anarchist Mikhail Bakunin (1814-1876). Condemned to death by the Prussian military, exiled by the Russian authorities, and excluded from the Socialist International by Marx, Bakunin spent the last four years of his life in Switzerland. The student for whom he is an object of reverence reads Bakunin's texts in the hope of overcoming an existential crisis that results from a profound sense of alienation and contempt for society. Disillusioned with the protests of the late 1960s, the student entertains the possibility of taking part in a "terrorist" attack on an oil tank in Ingolstadt, but refrains from doing so out of a mixture of cowardice⁶⁸ and general despair.

The dominant stylistic feature of Bakunin is that of montage; the text consists largely of quotations.⁶⁹ This reflects an aspect of

⁶⁷ Horst Bienek, Bakunin, eine Invention (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1970). For a comparison of Bienek's protagonist to Turgenev's Bazarov, cf. Hoeps 132ff. For remarks on Bienek's experimental style, cf. Peter Laemmle, "Horst Bienek: Bakunin, eine Invention", in: Tilman Urbach (ed.), Horst Bienek: Aufsätze, Materialien, Bibliographie (Munich/Vienna: Hanser, 1990) 136ff. For a discussion of Bienek's use of montage in the light of historiographical problems, cf. Forest Pyle, "Das Erfinden von Geschichte", in: Michael Krüger (ed.), Bienek lesen (Munich: Hanser, 1980) 44ff. For Bienek's own views on polyphonic narration, cf. Horst Bienek, "Das allmähliche Ersticken von Schreien: Sprache und Exil heute", in: Münchener Poetik Vorlesungen (Munich/Vienna: Hanser, 1987) 87ff.

⁶⁸ "Zum individuellen Terror habe ihm ganz einfach der Mut gefehlt, ja, das gebe er zu" (Bienek 59) ["He simply lacked the courage to engage in individual terror, he openly admitted it"].

⁶⁹ Bienek quotes extensive sections from Rules for Revolutionaries, an 1869 publication by Bakunin and his fellow revolutionary Netchaev. Bienek's text also features quotations from Max Nettlau, Walter Benjamin, Alexander Herzen, Jean-Luc Godard, Samuel Beckett, Witold Gombrowicz, Jorge Luis Borges, Jean-Paul Sartre, Jean Genet, Nathalie Sarraute, Georges Bataille, Herbert Marcuse, and Noam Chomsky, as well as passages reproducing graffiti, interviews, and the protagonist's reading lists.

the student's existential crisis: his sense that he is living in a world deprived of possibilities for authentic existence, in which individuals can define themselves only by what others have said and done.

Bakunin's rhetoric of absolute freedom is interpreted by the student in terms of an escape from the causality and determinism of everyday life. His ambition is to live a life characterised by constant surprises, devoid of repetition: "[...] er wünschte sich so sehr, kein Tag wäre wie der andere und keine Nacht wie die vorhergehende und kein Morgen wie das Gestern, er wollte sich entziehen den Wiederholungen [...]." ⁷⁰ This ambition is never realised; the student is plagued by constant boredom. ⁷¹ His hope of achieving mental and emotional clarity simply by travelling to a place associated with Bakunin remains unfulfilled: "Hier, wo alles an ihn erinnern sollte, erinnerte nichts an ihn. Es war nur seine Erinnerung, die ihn, B, aus dem Nichts imaginierte." ⁷²

The student's only joyful memories are those of his participation in "happenings" and demonstrations at German universities. Crucially, he views the value of these events not in terms of politics, but of existential fulfilment. He is more concerned to achieve the personal gratification of feeling himself to be

⁷⁰ "He yearned so much for no day to be like the other, no night like the one before, no tomorrow like yesterday, he wanted to extract himself from repetition." Bienek 7. Cf. also Bienek 25: "[...] man müsse den Dingen und den Verhältnissen die Kausalität entziehen [...]" ["one ought to deprive things and relations of causality"].

⁷¹ Cf. Bienek 8f.

⁷² "Here, where everything ought to have been a reminder of him [sc. Bakunin], nothing was. It was only his [sc. the student's] memory that imagined him, B[akunin], out of nothing." Bienek 35.

revolutionary than to stage an actual social and political revolution: "[...] diese Augenblicke leben, eine Existenz daraus machen, das ist das einzige, was wir heute können. Die praktische Revolution, die werden wohl die andern machen."⁷³ The student finds a justification for this attitude in the marked individualism and dismissal of organised resistance that characterises many of the anarchist texts he reads.⁷⁴

Replicating the fulfilling "revolutionary" moments the student experienced during the days of student protest proves difficult. The student's obsession with the concept of praxis⁷⁵ only betrays his state of paralysis. While he fails to forsake thinking for thoughtless action, the student satisfies another requirement of the revolutionary lifestyle as understood by Bakunin; he succeeds in becoming a complete outcast: "Das hatte er eigentlich gewünscht, das hatte er gewollt: dieses Ausgeschlossensein. Nicht zu ihnen zu gehören, zu den anderen, zu den vielen."⁷⁶ Although noted with

⁷³ "To live these moments, to make an existence out of them, is all we can do today. The practical revolution will be staged by others, I suppose." Bienek 14.

⁷⁴ Cf. eg. the quotation from Franco Venturi, Bienek 16: "DER ANARCHISMUS SCHAFFT NICHT SO SEHR EINE REVOLUTIONÄRE ORGANISATION ALS EINE REVOLUTIONÄRE SITUATION" ["ANARCHISM DOES NOT SO MUCH CREATE A REVOLUTIONARY ORGANISATION AS A REVOLUTIONARY SITUATION"].

⁷⁵ Cf. Bienek 14: "Die Theorie der Gewalt Die Theorie der Aggression / Die Theorie der Zerstörung Die Theorie der Veränderung / Die Theorie des Aufstands Die Theorie des Staatsstreichs / Die Theorie der Revolution Die Theorie des neuen Menschen / Die Theorie der Theorien: Nein: Die praktische Praxis" ["The theory of violence The theory of aggression / The theory of destruction The theory of change / The theory of revolt The theory of the coup d'état / The theory of revolution The theory of the new man / The theory of theories: No: practical praxis"]. Cf. also Bienek 77: "statt Vergangenheit: Gegenwart / statt Reflexion: Aktion / statt zu schreiben: handeln" ["instead of the past: the present / instead of reflection: action / instead of writing: action"].

⁷⁶ "That's what he had wished for, really, what he had wanted: this exclusion. Not to belong to them, to the others, the many." Bienek 38. Bakunin said of the

satisfaction, this alienation ultimately leads to profound depression. Its outcome is not self-fulfilment, but growing despair, which manifests itself in the student's attempts to erase his own individuality and specificity by disregarding what is perhaps its ultimate expression, the body: "Wolff, der ihn damals in Neuchâtel besucht hatte, erzählte, daß er ihn in einem Zustand angetroffen habe, den man am besten mit 'Totales Desinteresse an seinem eigenen Körper' bezeichnet."⁷⁷ The student justifies his attempted erasure of the self by reference to one of Bakunin's less characteristic pronouncements, a vindication of collective action:

ICH WILL NICHT ICH SEIN
 ICH WILL WIR SEIN
 DENN DAS WIEDERHOLE ICH TAUSENDMAL
 NUR UNTER DIESER BEDINGUNG WERDEN
 WIR SIEGEN WIRD UNSERE IDEE SIEGEN⁷⁸

Yet having already renounced the possibility of a revolution that manifests itself collectively, rather than individually, the student finds he has manoeuvred himself into a dead end: he exists in total isolation from larger social and political forces, while his cowardice

revolutionary: "In der Tiefe seines Wesens, nicht nur in Worten, sondern wirklich, hat er jedes Band gelöst, das ihn mit der bürgerlichen Ordnung und der gesamten zivilisierten Welt verknüpft [...]" (Bakunin/Netchaev qtd. in Bienek 56) ["in the depths of his being, not only in words, but actually, he has severed all ties to the bourgeois order and the entire civilised world"].

⁷⁷ "Wolff, who visited him in Neuchâtel then, recounted having found him in a state best described as 'total lack of interest in his own body.'" Bienek 65.

⁷⁸ "I DON'T WANT TO BE I / I WANT TO BE WE / BECAUSE I'LL REPEAT IT A THOUSAND TIMES / ONLY UNDER THIS CONDITION WILL / WE TRIUMPH WILL OUR IDEA TRIUMPH". Bakunin qtd. in Bienek 68.

and lethargy prevent him from realising any genuinely revolutionary project on his own. All that remains, then, is continued immersion in anarchist texts, and the attempt to express vague revolutionary sentiments verbally. The only violence the student can successfully relate to is the violence of a language that speaks in fragments and quotations, that seeks to transcend syntax and signification: "Die Sprache der Anarchie ist [...] gegen die Logik verstoßen, die Ordnung der Syntax zerstören [...]." ⁷⁹ This is the language of Bienek's text; while speaking of action, it is indicative of a rage and despair that can find no practical expression: "[...] er wollte alles ausdrücken mit diesen Wörtern, wollte sie ausbeuten, auspressen, auswringen, hin und her walken, ausquetschen, abklopfen, aufsprengen, zerstören [...]." ⁸⁰ Bienek's protagonist is very different, then, from those German and Italian militants who dedicated their lives to revolutionary praxis; while sharing with them a profound disenchantment with middle-class existence, he fails to find a satisfactory and politically meaningful channel for his rage. He is no stranger to the ideology of praxis, but fails to make the transition from ideology to praxis.

Alexander Kluge: Lernprozesse mit tödlichem Ausgang

⁷⁹ "The language of anarchy is the defiance of logic, the destruction of the order of syntax." Bienek 91.

⁸⁰ "He wanted to express everything by these words, wanted to exploit them, wring them out, flatten them, rupture them, destroy them." Bienek 79.

Alexander Kluge's 1973 prose collection Lernprozesse mit tödlichem Ausgang⁸¹ contains a fictitious interview titled "Wenn man sein Gewissen dressiert, so küßt es uns zugleich, indem es beißt."⁸² In this interview, A. Merkl, an agent of the German Verfassungsschutz⁸³ arrested for shooting a government minister, explains his frustration over the state's powerlessness in the face of left-wing groups that have not yet committed any crimes, but may do so in the future. He claims he intended to demonstrate the state's vulnerability. Rather than merely wire-tapping and observing members of the left, the state needs to use the knowledge it has gathered about its enemy to move aggressively:

Ich habe es satt, mit unserem gesammelten Wissen herumzulaufen, das wir über gewisse Gruppen, die wir observieren, besitzen, ohne handeln zu dürfen. Wir sind vorbereitet und leistungsfähig – darauf wollte ich mit meinem Schuß aufmerksam machen.⁸⁴

In his trademark mock-documentary style, Kluge exposes the rationale of those so terrified by the left they will go to any lengths to legitimate its persecution. Merkl effectively creates precisely the

⁸¹ Alexander Kluge, Lernprozesse mit tödlichem Ausgang (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1973). The text discussed here was also made by Kluge into part of a film. For background on Kluge, cf. Peter C. Lutze, Alexander Kluge: The Last Modernist (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998). Cf. Also Rainer Stollmann, Alexander Kluge: Zur Einführung (Hamburg: Junius, 1998).

⁸² "If one trains one's conscience, it kisses us even as it bites us."

⁸³ The "Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz" or "Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution" is the GFR's intelligence service.

⁸⁴ "I'm sick of walking around with the knowledge we've acquired about certain groups we observe, without being allowed to act. We're ready and competent – that's what I wanted to draw attention to with my gunshot." Kluge 21.

disaster he means to warn against (an assassination), but his bureaucratic frame of mind and desperate urge to take action prevent him from perceiving the irony of this.

Merkel insists the left can be combated effectively only if laws restricting the power of the intelligence service are abolished. Quite simply, the intelligence community should be legally allowed to do whatever it has the ability of doing: "Zunächst wäre erforderlich, daß wir dürfen, was wir können."⁸⁵ Merkel is not afraid to justify this in Marxist terms: "Der Gegner, dessen Schriftgut wir ebenfalls observieren, nennt das 'Entfesselung der Produktivkräfte', so betrachten wir uns als Produktivkraft, deren Gegenstand die Produktion von Verfassungsmäßigkeit ist."⁸⁶ The interviewer refrains from commenting on the (at best) paradoxical nature of an argument both premised on a hostile view of the left and phrased in leftist vocabulary, but does point out that shooting a government minister in the jaw hardly amounts to the "production of constitutionality." Merkel insists he did not mean to actually hit the minister, but admits he was willing to run the risk – so unbearable, had his sense of frustration become. A state employee paid to observe enemies of the state, but legally prevented from taking action against them, is, Merkel insists, a man forced to lead a

⁸⁵ "First of all, it would be necessary for us to be allowed to do what we can do." Kluge 22. Cf. also Kluge 24: "Wir haben gelernt, gelernt, gelernt und wollen jetzt endlich auch eingesetzt werden" ["We've studied and studied and studied and now want to finally be put to use"].

⁸⁶ "The opponent, whose writings we're also observing, calls this 'unleashing of the forces of production.' We think of ourselves as a force of production, whose object is the production of constitutionality." Kluge 22.

meaningless life: "Ich habe ihn in die Backe geschossen, weil unser Leben überhaupt keinen genauen Sinn hat. Da kann man nicht immer genau schießen."⁸⁷

This is surely one of the more bizarre apologies for political violence. It exposes the moral grotesqueness of most such apologies. Kluge suggests that when those in positions of power begin to exaggerate the extent of a threat to themselves or the public, the risk of undifferentiated and unjustifiable bloodshed increases. It then no longer matters whether there are legal grounds for attacking the enemy, or whether the action taken in fact does more harm to oneself or those one is charged with protecting. In extreme cases such as the one described by Kluge, those whose declared aim is to combat a perceived threat become one themselves. Yet if Merkl, a man terrified by the possibility of terrorism, himself engages in a terrorist act⁸⁸, this is not so much a result of his abandoning his beliefs as of his taking them to the extreme: Merkl's fear creates what he is afraid of, his need for security spawns terror, and his conviction that the enemy must be stopped at all costs leads him to adopt precisely those

⁸⁷ "I shot him in the cheek because our life has no precise meaning. Under such circumstances, you can't expect gunshots to be fired with precision." Kluge 23. The reader is left hoping Merkl's life will never have the "precise meaning" he yearns for, thus never allowing him to "shoot with precision."

⁸⁸ Merkl's act is terrorist in so far as it aims to make lawmakers share his extreme fear of the left in order to provoke political change (the militarisation of the intelligence service).

characteristics for which he opposes it.⁸⁹ As demonstrated below, this notion of the state turned terrorist was subsequently elaborated by many of Kluge's contemporaries.

Franz Josef Degenhardt: Brandstellen

Franz Josef Degenhardt, born in 1931, was the lawyer of various members of the West German extraparliamentary opposition (APO). He has published several novels, but is perhaps best known as a political songwriter. His 1969 album Im Jahr der Schweine contains a number of explicit references to left-wing militancy, including a reference to the department store arson of that year.⁹⁰

Degenhardt's markedly autobiographical novel Brandstellen⁹¹, first published in 1975, chronicles the experiences of Bruno Kappel, a Hamburg lawyer who becomes involved in a campaign to prevent a NATO base being constructed in a wildlife protection area in the Ruhr. During his involvement with the campaign, Kappel hears repeatedly about his former girlfriend Karin, now a member of the

⁸⁹ The introductory text on page 2 of Lernprozesse mit tödlichem Ausgang identifies this kind of paradox as the book's central theme: "Es ist der gleiche Lebenswille dieser Menschen [sc. der Charaktere in Lernprozesse], ihre individuelle Suche nach Glück, der auf kollektiver Ebene das gesellschaftliche Unglück produziert – eine schiefe Welt, aufgebaut auf dem Wunsch der Menschen nach einer geraden. / Diese Menschen lernen permanent. Aber es sind Lernprozesse mit tödlichem Ausgang. Sie lernen, sich ins Unglück einzufügen, und sie lernen zu spät; das Unglück ueberholt die Lernprozesse" ["It is the very will to live of these people, their individual search for happiness, that produces, on the collective plane, social misery – a skewed world built on people's desire for a level one. / These people learn constantly. But their learning processes have a lethal outcome. They learn to adapt to unhappiness, and they learn too late; catastrophe overtakes the learning processes"].

⁹⁰ In the song "Fast autobiographischer Lebenslauf eines westdeutschen Linken."

⁹¹ Franz Josef Degenhardt, Brandstellen (Munich/Gütersloh/Vienna: Bertelsmann, 1975). Quotations are from the Aufbau edition (Berlin 1997).

RAF. The RAF is attempting to agitate the local protesters and hence to instrumentalise their campaign for its own political purposes.

In describing the Ruhr's inhabitants, Degenhardt paints a portrait of a working class oppressed and disenfranchised by a legal apparatus geared to the interests of the middle class. The RAF is consistently portrayed as being itself a middle-class organisation - not the revolutionary vanguard, but the insane brainchild of bookish and misguided outsiders. It exists in isolation from the workers it claims to represent, much like those middle-class campaigners who object to the NATO base on the basis of ecological considerations.⁹² The RAF's ignorance of the working class is aggravated by arrogance:

Nach Brunos Erfahrungen hatten die BRD-Guerrilleros und mehr oder weniger auch deren Sympathisanten etwas an sich, das sie nicht unterdrücken konnten oder wollten. Das war, nahm Bruno an, für sie zum Überleben nötig: diese lächelnde

⁹² Cf. Kappel's conversation with the mechanic Ronsdorf, who is worried the base will be bad for his business, but is entirely indifferent to ecological issues (Degenhardt 95). Brandstellen describes many such instances of how divergent class backgrounds lead to divergent attitudes and opinions. On page 96, Ronsdorf mocks Kappel, who has just helped him repair a car, for his remark "Arbeit kann schön sein" ["work can be nice"], implying that such a remark could never have been made by someone who depends on physical labour for his livelihood. Kappel's own class background is ambiguous: he comes from a working class family but practices a distinctly middle-class profession. While familiar with both classes, he is also an outsider to both. He knows the working class "Mischung aus Ohnmacht und Aggression, Isolation und Geilheit, Ratlosigkeit und Brutalität" ["mixture of powerlessness and aggression, isolation and horniness, helplessness and brutality"] as well as the phony antics of his colleagues; both they and his working class friends treat him with suspicion or amusement.

Verachtung von Auserwählten, die er schon im Tonfall
heraushören konnte.⁹³

For Kappel, the actions of the RAF members result from a combination of detachment from the working class with an overly ideological world view. Kappel's friend Doris – who, like him, comes from a working class background, but has become estranged from it – is a prime example: "Kappel hatte miterlebt, wie sie sich mit der Zeit – und das hieß mit Gymnasium, Studium und später als Arztfrau – von ihren Leuten und deren Wirklichkeit immer weiter entfernt hatte. Aber im Kopf geblieben war die revolutionäre Theorie, und die wucherte wild und phantastisch."⁹⁴

⁹³ "In Bruno's experience, there was something about the GFR-guerrilleros and, more or less to the same extent, their sympathisers, that they could not or did not want to suppress. It was, Bruno assumed, necessary to their survival: this smiling contempt of the chosen, which he already detected in their tone of voice." Degenhardt 201.

⁹⁴ "Kappel had witnessed how, in the course of time – and that meant during high school, university, and later her marriage to a doctor – she had drifted further and further from her people and their reality. But the theory of revolution had remained in her head, and had spread wildly and fantastically." Degenhardt 73. Kappel's own estrangement from his working class background emerges when he expresses his disdain for department stores. His friend Maria identifies this as a profoundly middle-class attitude. In doing so, she alludes to the department store arson that first brought public attention to the later RAF-founders Baader and Ensslin: "Solche hätte sie gern, Bürgerkinder, immer alles zu Hause gehabt, und nun seien sie sauer, weil jetzt auch die anderen vieles kaufen könnten. Ätsch, würden sie eben das Warenhaus anzünden, Papi und Mami und allen anderen eins auswischen" (Degenhardt 110-111) ["That was just her type, children of the middle class, always had everything at home, and now they were mad, because the others were able to shop a lot too. Gotcha, so they set the department store on fire, just to spite mom and dad and everyone else"]. The implication, here as elsewhere, is that the RAF is the brainchild of spoilt middle-class children who understand nothing about the needs and desires of the working class. Cf. also the dialogue between Bruno and Maria about a friend of Maria's who has visited an imprisoned RAF-member: "Sie hat vor zwei Wochen einen Besuch im Knast gemacht bei einem RAF-Typ, den sie kennt, sagte Maria. / Und? / Sie war entsetzt über die Isolation. / Echt? / Ja, über die Isolation vom Volk" (Degenhardt 210) ["Two weeks ago she visited a RAF-guy she knows in prison, Maria said. / And? / She was terrified by the isolation. / Really? / Yeah, isolation from the people"]. Maria puns on the German word "Isolation," which, apart from its

Kappel speaks of the RAF's arguments as laughable, of its putatively revolutionary project as mere self-stylisation: "Er kannte die Argumentation der Gruppe, erklärte zunächst die Lächerlichkeit ihres Anspruchs, sprach von der peinlichen Erfolglosigkeit der RAF-Guerrilleros. Alles sei nichts weiter als Selbstdarstellung, revolution-art sozusagen, mit sehr hohem Einsatz."⁹⁵ A well-read Marxist, he also endorses the traditional Marxist-Leninist condemnation of individual terror as counterrevolutionary: "Immer sei diese Art spontaner Aktion Ersatz gewesen für Massenmobilisierung, er führte Beweise an, auch dafür, daß über diesen Weg immer Agenten in die Befreiungsbewegungen eingeschleust worden waren."⁹⁶ When he hears the clichéd slogans of the RAF documents – "daß es gelte, die antiimperialistische Front durch bewaffneten Kampf in die Zentren des Imperialismus zu tragen"⁹⁷ – Kappel's only response is a tired "Ach ja."⁹⁸

The methods of the RAF are portrayed as anachronistic. Kappel remembers how Karin once approvingly cited George

general meaning (identical to that of the English "isolation"), also refers to solitary confinement ("Isolationshaft").

⁹⁵ "He knew the arguments of the group, talked of the RAF guerrilleros' embarrassing lack of success. All that was nothing but self-stylisation, revolution art so to speak, with very high stakes." Degenhardt 41.

⁹⁶ "This type of spontaneous action had always been a surrogate for the mobilisation of the masses, he offered proof in support of this, and also of the fact that, in this way, agents had always been introduced into the liberation movements." Ibid.

⁹⁷ "That it was a question of bringing the anti-imperialist front into the centers of imperialism through armed struggle." Degenhardt 70.

⁹⁸ "Ah yes." Ibid.

Dimitrov's slogan "Hammer sein, nicht Amboß."⁹⁹ This metaphor of political power relations, Degenhardt suggests, is woefully simplistic and outdated. When Kappel quotes Dimitrov to a group of workers in a bar, they point out that in the post-industrial era, hammers and anvils have been replaced by far more sophisticated machinery, and later, Kappel himself likens the relations between militancy and the state to those between the various parts of a complex "kybernetische Maschine,"¹⁰⁰ a kind of perpetuum mobile in which militancy is only a component serving the larger "system." In substituting this metaphor for that of the hammer, Kappel suggests the problem of political resistance has become diabolically complex since Dimitrov's time; what Dimitrov did not know, and what Karin ought to be aware of but refuses to accept, is that the postwar sociopolitical order is able to "perversely" utilise even those forces that seek to destroy it: "Wer immer das konstruiert hatte – oder hatte es sich selbst konstruiert? –, davor mußte man Achtung haben und Angst, vor dieser hohen Schule der Perversion."¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ "To be the hammer, not the anvil." Degenhardt 274, 277. George Mikhailovich Dimitrov (1882-1949) was the leader of the Bulgarian Communist Party, a member of the executive committee of the Third International, one of the leaders of Bulgaria's guerrilla resistance to its pro-axis government, and the first prime minister of Bulgaria's post-war socialist government. In the 1930s, he was one of several communists accused by Hitler of being responsible for the Reichstag arson. The phrase "to be the hammer, not the anvil" was part of his defense speech in Leipzig.

¹⁰⁰ "Cybernetic machine." Degenhardt 271.

¹⁰¹ "Whoever had constructed it – or had it constructed itself? –, you had to respect and fear that school of perversion." Ibid.

What remains, according to Degenhardt, for those who seek to combat the state's terror against the working class¹⁰², is the organisation of legal resistance in the form of trade unionism and demonstrations. This is the conclusion reached by Kappel after attending a left-wing demonstration for the first time in years:

Das war die erste Demonstration seit Jahren, an der Bruno Kappel wieder teilgenommen hatte, und als sie auf dem Marktplatz standen, rauchten, den Reden zuhörten [...] hatte er gewußt, daß es nur so weitergehen würde, wenn es weitergehen sollte.¹⁰³

Published two years before the "German autumn" and the deaths of the first generation RAF members¹⁰⁴, this vindication of legal activism is also an implicit rejection of militancy and a warning about its potential for interfering with what Rudi Dutschke called the learning process of the masses. It occurs in the context of what might be construed as an overly romantic, and perhaps outdated, conception of the working class. The Marxist category of class is played out against what is perceived to be an aberration of Marxism: the middle-class adventurism of the militants.

¹⁰² The word "terror" is hardly used in Brandstellen. When it first appears, it refers to humiliating and intimidating legal action taken against left-wing activists. Cf. Degenhardt 10.

¹⁰³ "It had been the first demonstration Bruno Kappel had participated in for years, and as they stood on the marketplace, smoked, listened to the speakers, he had known that it would only continue this way, if it was to continue at all." Degenhardt 305.

¹⁰⁴ And two years before the Schleyer kidnapping. Schleyer is already mentioned by Degenhardt as a prime example of the continuities between the Third Reich and the GFR. Cf. Degenhardt 285ff.

Peter O. Chotjewitz: Die Herren des Morgenrauens

Die Herren des Morgenrauens¹⁰⁵, published in 1978, is a fragment, the legacy of Peter O. Chotjewitz's attempt to articulate in the form of a novel his experiences of police surveillance and legal persecution.¹⁰⁶ Chotjewitz combines realism (see, for example, his factually accurate description of the conditions in Stammheim¹⁰⁷) with surrealism (a number of passages have a profoundly dreamlike quality, and the distinction between dreams and waking life is constantly blurred). The resulting evocation of a "nightmarish" sociopolitical reality finds its literary antecedent in Franz Kafka, whose work is constantly alluded to.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Peter O. Chotjewitz, Die Herren des Morgenrauens (Berlin: Rotbuch, 1978). For a discussion of this text that focuses particularly on the function of the dream motif, cf. Klaus Hartung, "Die Repression wird zum Milieu: Die Beredsamkeit linker Literatur", in: Literaturmagazin 11, Reinbek 1979 52ff. This aspect of Die Herren des Morgenrauens is also discussed by Wolfram Malte Fues in "Die Wirklichkeit der Unwirklichkeit der Wirklichkeit: Über Peter O. Chotjewitz's Romanfragment Die Herren des Morgenrauens", in: Basis 10 (1980) 78ff.

¹⁰⁶ Chotjewitz was, for a time, the lawyer of Andreas Baader. His repeated criticism of prison conditions in Stammheim led to legal accusations against him. As a result, the publishing house Bertelsmann reneged on its commitment to publish Die Herren des Morgenrauens. The book was published instead by Rotbuch.

¹⁰⁷ Chotjewitz describes in detail the sleep deprivation and humiliating strip searches undergone by the Stammheim prisoners. Cf. Chotjewitz 69ff. He also describes the extraordinarily brutal practice of force-feeding (Chotjewitz 74), the physical and psychological effects of solitary confinement (ibid.), and hallucinations that correspond almost exactly to those reported by Ulrike Meinhof (Chotjewitz 77). Chotjewitz claims that to commit suicide under conditions such as those in Stammheim is really to have been murdered: "Wenn er jetzt Selbstmord beging, war es ein Mord [...]" (Chotjewitz 89) ["If he committed suicide now, it was murder"]. This notion that the Stammheim prisoners were "murdered" metaphorically was already articulated by publisher Klaus Wagenbach in a speech held at the funeral of Ulrike Meinhof. Wagenbach stated Meinhof had died as a result of the "German situation" ("die deutschen Verhältnisse"). The speech is reprinted in Brückner 197f.

¹⁰⁸ The allusions are mainly to The Trial. The opening sentences of Die Herren des Morgenrauens and The Trial are almost identical. Fräulein Bürstner, a character

Observed by the police at the height of the "terrorist" conflict, Chotjewitz's narrator Fritz Buchonia is plagued by nightmares of armed vehicles pulling up in front of his house; later he imagines himself as a prisoner in Stammheim. Summoned to court for an unspecified political crime, his initial conviction that the matter will be swiftly resolved yields to a paralysing sense of horror as he finds himself the victim of increasingly absurd and humiliating legal procedures. Buchonia eventually decides to articulate his experience in the form of a novel. He invents the autobiographical character Westphal, but soon finds that his experiences do not allow for satisfactory literary expression. The story of Buchonia's writer's block functions as a commentary on the fragmentary nature and intricate narrative structure of Die Herren des Morgengrauens¹⁰⁹; these result not only from the conviction that when reality assumes an agonisingly absurd character, it can only be rendered bearable through its transformation into literature, but also from the realisation that once a certain level of absurdity (and injustice) has been reached, the attempt to articulate it literarily can reach no

from The Trial, makes an appearance in Chotjewitz's fragment. For the longest time, the crime of which Chotjewitz's protagonist Buchonia is accused remains unspecified, much as K never learns what he is guilty of, and in typically Kafkaesque fashion, Buchonia is accused, when it turns out he is not the person against whom a court summons has been issued, of denying his true identity: "Sie bestreiten also, derselbe zu sein, der Sie sind" (Chotjewitz 47) ["So you're claiming not to be the person you are"]. Cf. also Chotjewitz 181 for an example of the Kafkaesque motif of the guilty victim.

¹⁰⁹ Westphal is based on Buchonia much as Buchonia is obviously based on Chotjewitz (both are lawyers and legally persecuted left-wing writers). Chotjewitz's literary articulation of his experiences is mirrored in his text: the protagonist, who undergoes the same experiences as Chotjewitz, himself attempts to articulate them poetically.

conclusion, but must remain a constant groping for new means of expression that can produce only textual fragments.¹¹⁰

Before his first appearance in court, Buchonia retains some measure of optimism; he is convinced the legal system is just. Buchonia's initial belief in the justness of the state is almost mythical: "Das Recht schützte unerschütterlich die Guten und bestrafte die Bösen, egal, ob einer gut oder böse war. Nie wären ihm Zweifel an der Gerechtigkeit der Gerechtigkeit gekommen."¹¹¹

Buchonia's faith in the "justice of justice" renders him vulnerable because it ensures his obedience: "Man hat zu kommen, wenn die Justiz kommt, so absurd die Vorwürfe auch sein mögen."¹¹² As soon as he meets his prosecutor in court, Buchonia notices a difference between the old and the modern parts of the building complex: the modern buildings are gloomier – a fact suggestive of how modern justice may be less innocent and transparent than some would imagine. Buchonia soon realises his is an illusory view of justice.¹¹³ In outlining the case against him, his prosecutor Prophetter refers gleefully to legal precedents from the

¹¹⁰ Cf. Chotjewitz 178: "Über die Schwierigkeit, die Tatsachen so darzustellen, daß sie unwirklich werden, weil die Wirklichkeit unerträglich wäre" ["On the difficulty of representing the facts in such a way that they become unreal, because reality would be unbearable"].

¹¹¹ "Justice inevitably protected the good and punished the bad, no matter who was good or bad. He would never have doubted the justice of justice." Chotjewitz 10. Cf. also Buchonia's description of the judiciary as "the great mother" (ibid.).

¹¹² "One has to obey when the judiciary calls, no matter how absurd the accusations." Chotjewitz 22.

¹¹³ Cf. Chotjewitz 35.

1930s, and adopts the mannerisms of a hunter preparing a trap.¹¹⁴

During the following months, Buchonia's legal status becomes no clearer, until Propheter dismisses the question of guilt by declaring that the legal proceedings have become an end in themselves: "Was haben sie davon, wenn sie jetzt freigesprochen oder verurteilt werden? Seit Monaten beschäftigen Sie sich mit nichts anderem als mit Ihrem Strafverfahren, ja es ist sogar schon an die Stelle ihrer Existenz getreten."¹¹⁵

Soon after he decides to write about his experiences, Buchonia finds himself unable to work. It is precisely the ongoing and agonising uncertainty of his legal status that stalls his creativity. Buchonia's situation is that of a man who has something to say but finds himself unable to say it. The very condition he feels compelled to describe demoralises him to the point of rendering him inarticulate. The repressive nature of the state's anti-"terrorism" measures also robs him of all illusions concerning the government's trustworthiness. Rather than protecting its citizens, the state is out to demonstrate its authority: "Schon der Aufwand, mit dem der Staat seine Wachsamkeit inszenierte, zeigte ihm deutlich, daß es

¹¹⁴ Cf. Chotjewitz 40.

¹¹⁵ "What good would it do you if you were now exculpated or condemned? For months now, you've occupied yourself solely with the legal proceedings against you; they've replaced your existence." Chotjewitz 167.

nicht um Verbrechensbekämpfung, sondern um Machtdemonstrationen eines verunsicherten Apparates ging."¹¹⁶

While the general population uncritically accepts and internalises the government's representation of itself as benign¹¹⁷, Buchonia's increasingly horrific visions of prison and murder speak the truth about state repression. Buchonia repeatedly imagines his own legally sanctioned execution:

Stets war es früher Morgen, wenn er getötet wurde, und es graute schon. Die Herren des Grauens kamen immer am Morgen. Stets auch wurde zuerst eine gläserne Ampulle in den Raum geworfen, die mit kaum hörbaren Klirren zersprang und deren Inhalt zusammen mit dem Sauerstoff der Luft ein betäubendes Gas entwickelte, das später im Körper nicht nachweisbar ist und ihn lähmte, ohne ihn bewusstlos zu machen. Stets also wurde er Zeuge seiner eigenen Tötung, konnte er sich davon überzeugen, daß sie die üblichen Mittel anwandten und keine Unbefugten waren.¹¹⁸

A writer whose literary project remains permanently stalled and a lawyer deprived of his faith in justice, Chotjewitz's narrator

¹¹⁶ "The effort with which the state displayed its alertness made it clear to him that this was not about fighting crime, but about demonstrating the authority of an insecure apparatus." Chotjewitz 59.

¹¹⁷ This point is made repeatedly. Cf. eg. Chotjewitz 49, 66, 186.

¹¹⁸ "It was always early morning when he was killed, just after dawn. The lords of dawn [or horror] always came in the morning. And a glass container was always thrown into the room first, which broke with a barely audible sound. Its contents combined with the oxygen in the air to make a gas which paralysed him without rendering him unconscious, and which left no physical traces. Thus he was always the witness of his own death and could convince himself that his killers were qualified and employed the usual techniques." Chotjewitz 74.

voices unequivocally his condemnation of a state whose (putatively) anti-“terrorist” measures succeed only in dismantling justice and sowing their own brand of terror: “Warnen sie lieber die Öffentlichkeit vor dem Treiben der Staatsschützer und Verfassungsschutzagenten, die von dem, was sie schützen sollen, nämlich Recht und Verfassung, nicht die leiseste Ahnung zu haben scheinen.”¹¹⁹

Heinrich Böll: Fürsorgliche Belagerung

Böll’s 1979 novel¹²⁰ tells the story of a wealthy and politically powerful family subjected to stringent security measures intended to protect it from possible “terrorist” attacks. The novel does not so much attempt to reconstruct the psychological motives of

¹¹⁹ “You ought rather to warn the public about the activities of state employees who obviously have no concept of what they’re supposed to defend: justice and the constitution.” Chotjewitz 55. For a similar comment on the danger of an increasingly self-serving legislative, cf. Chotjewitz 46: “Er [sc. Propheten] gehörte zu den Juristen, die einen Angeklagten lieber wegen einer Tat bestrafen, die er mit Sicherheit nicht begangen hat, die ihm aber nachgewiesen werden kann, anstatt ihn laufen zu lassen, weil ihm eine Tat, die er möglicherweise begangen hat, nicht nachzuweisen ist” [“Propheten was one of those members of the judiciary who would rather convict a defendant for a crime he certainly hasn’t committed, but which can be linked to him, than to exculpate him for a crime that can’t be linked to him, but which he may have committed”].

¹²⁰ Heinrich Böll, Fürsorgliche Belagerung (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1979). For a discussion of Böll’s use of multiple narrators, cf. Hoeps 259ff. For a critique of Böll’s analysis of the “German autumn,” cf. Bernd Balzer, “Ausfall in die Sorglosigkeit? Heinrich Bölls Fürsorgliche Belagerung”, in: Materialien zur Interpretation von Heinrich Bölls Fürsorgliche Belagerung (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1981) 37ff. Cf. also Delabar/Schütz 160ff. Materialien also contains Böll’s own comments on his novel and its relation to the problem of “terrorism” (13ff.). Cf. also Jochen Vogt, Heinrich Böll (Munich: Beck, 1987). An earlier Böll novel, Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1974), is not discussed here because its subject is not militancy, despite frequent claims to the contrary. The novel features a character who has sometimes been taken to be a left-wing militant, although nothing in the text justifies this reading, as Böll himself pointed out in his 1984 afterword. For a conclusive discussion of the issue, cf. Hoeps 49ff.

"terrorists" as to examine the effects of police protection on their potential victims. Böll's portrayal of life under surveillance is an exploration of a deeply divided society in which extreme security measures are only the outer corollary of widespread fear, distrust, and alienation.

The character Blurtmehl offers an example of how life in a "terrorised" society renders problematic even the most innocent pleasures, denying individuals that basic sense of security and peace of mind without which self-fulfilment and meaningful human interaction become impossible. Increasingly isolated from the outside world in Fritz Tolm's carefully guarded estate, Blurtmehl realises he cannot even engage in his past-time of bird-watching without worrying about the possibility of a "terrorist" attack:

Gewiß war es doch möglich, ferngesteuerte mechanische Vögel zu entwickeln, die, mit hochexplosivem Stoff gefüllt, plötzlich in den Waagerechtfzug übergangen, in ein geöffnetes Fenster flogen, Unheil in ihrer künstlichen Brust, im künstlichen Bauch.¹²¹

Blurtmehl's fear may seem ridiculous; it certainly indicates the extent to which Böll departed from the historical reality of West German militancy (bombs disguised as birds were well beyond the technological means of the RAF). However, the outlandishness of

¹²¹ "It was certainly possible to develop remote-controlled mechanical birds filled with highly explosive materials, which would suddenly fly horizontally, into an open window, doom inside their artificial bodies." Böll 84ff.

Blurtmehl's fear emphasises that what is often seen as the primary goal of militancy has been successfully achieved: people find themselves paralysed, even in their most harmless activities, by the knowledge that nothing can be counted on any longer to be safe or innocent. If birds suggest the grace and beauty of the natural world, the suggestion that a deadly weapon may be disguised as a bird indicates that nothing remains untouched by a society that is not only deeply torn, but also characterised by a combination of technological skill and contempt for human life. It is a society in which science and the imagination are used to kill – an increasingly inhuman and mechanised society that cannot be escaped through a Romantic retreat into the natural world.

For Böll, the tragedy of characters like Blurtmehl consists in the fact that, despite the many sacrifices they make in the interest of their own security, that security remains elusive. As Blurtmehl says of his potential killers: "[...] sie werden durch alle Sicherheiten hindurch einen anderen Weg finden."¹²² Among other possibilities, he entertains the suspicion that left-wing militants might enlist his own nephew as an assassin:

[...] oder sie werden mir meinen Enkel Holger auf den Pelz schicken, wohltrainiert, gestählt durch alpine und andere Übungen, zwölfjährig, fünfzehnjährig, unbewaffnet wird er kommen, wird alle Kontrollen passieren: Enkel besucht

¹²² "Despite all security measures they will find another way." Böll 113.

Großvater – und er wird mich möglicherweise erwürgen,
braucht nichteinmal ein Messer [...] ¹²³

Blurtmehl's fear is not entirely unjustified; the Tolm family is in fact comprised of individuals from both ends of the political spectrum and all spheres of society. Tolm is a businessman; younger members of his family are former left-wing activists and personally acquainted with left-wing militants. This divided family, in which mutual distrust threatens permanently to poison human interaction, becomes a metaphor for the West German society of the 1970s – a society of which Böll had already offered a highly pessimistic portrayal in his earlier novel Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum.

Although Fürsorgliche Belagerung features both characters who are sympathetic to the militant left and others who actually engage in militant operations, Böll focuses on those who are not necessarily hostile to, but largely out of touch with the extraparliamentary left: either for generational reasons or because they are more interested in their personal lives than in larger political issues. When speculations on the psychology of the terrorists are offered, they are the speculations of those who are certainly affected by the social effects of militancy, but remain ignorant of its particular motives.

¹²³ "Or they'll send Holger after me, well-trained, steeled by alpine exercises, twelve, fifteen, he'll arrive unarmed, pass all security checkpoints: a family visitor – and maybe he'll strangle me, won't even need a knife." Böll 113.

One character suggests the militants are not so much motivated by hatred of their victims as driven by a technocratic way of thinking that causes them to decide questions of life and death without emotional involvement. In this sense, there is no (personal or emotional) reason for any specific assassination attempt: "Es gibt garkeinen Grund."¹²⁴ The militant does not think of the individual whose life he is taking – "es geht nicht gegen Personen"¹²⁵ – and may even target someone he would otherwise find quite likeable: "[...] sie sind auf ihre Weise Technokraten, trennen Geschäft und Gefühle – haben sicher noch Gefühle, und vielleicht so nett wie wir."¹²⁶ This rift between reason and emotion is the psychological precondition for the virulence with which the larger political and ideological divisions within society manifest themselves. It is a rift that characterises both the militants and their intended victims – the defining malaise, in Böll's view, of the German Federal Republic.

Böll explores this problem at some length by chronicling the affair of Sabine Fischer with Hubert, a policeman paid to protect her house. Profoundly disillusioned with her vulgar and insensitive husband, Sabine discovers emotional fulfilment in her relationship with Hubert – a relationship intended to be impersonal, but which ends up being more emotionally involving than its socially sanctioned counterpart, marriage.

¹²⁴ "There's no reason." Böll 93.

¹²⁵ "It's not about persons." Ibid.

¹²⁶ "In their own way they're technocrats, separate business and feelings – surely they still have feelings, maybe they're as nice as we are." Ibid.

Böll plays on the common root of the words "vertraulich"¹²⁷ and "Vertraulichkeiten"¹²⁸ to suggest how the constant proximity of Sabine and Hubert encourages the transformation of their relationship from a professional to a sexual one: "Es war schon schwierig, so vertraut miteinander zu werden und Vertraulichkeiten zu meiden."¹²⁹ When Sabine and Hubert first make love, the situation is at once awkward and natural, an extension of their daily routine and transgressive. Sabine finds she already knows Hubert like a close friend, and the act of love-making occurs with perfect mutual consent.¹³⁰ Böll shows that the bureaucratic and impersonal security measures that lead to Sabine acquaintance with Hubert, and ultimately to their sexual relationship, fail to successfully exclude the irrational and unpredictable aspects of human nature; rather than protecting and simplifying their lives, they create new, unforeseen, and highly problematic situations – most strikingly when it turns out Sabine is pregnant, a circumstance that is understandably troubling to Hubert's boss. It is troubling not only because it is likely to lead to a scandal, but also because it shows how security measures designed to make the life of a potential "terrorist" victim entirely secure and controllable are flawed, powerless against chance: "Und nun die Fischer, deren Schwangerschaft ihn insofern kränkte, als sich damit die

¹²⁷ "Familiar."

¹²⁸ "Intimacies."

¹²⁹ "It really was hard to be so familiar and avoid intimacies." Böll 63.

¹³⁰ Cf. Böll 65.

Lückenlosigkeit der Bewachung als fragwürdig erwies."¹³¹ Hubert's boss is embarrassed by the situation because he does not want to interfere too directly with Sabine's personal life; at the same time, he is forced to abandon the all-too-neat distinction between personal and professional life on which his work has until then been premised, acknowledging the existence of grey areas that create risk by defying categorisation: "Es war nicht seine Sache, Ehebruch aufzuspüren und Ehen zu zerstören, er war doch verflucht keine Detektei – und doch gabs eben Übergangszonen, risikoreiche Konflikte, in die man sich hineinbegeben mußte."¹³² The affair between Sabine and Hubert destroys the innocence not only of a wife who was, until then, the model of fidelity, but also that of a policeman who lived under the illusion that changes as far-reaching as his stringent security measures could leave unaffected the personal sphere of the individuals involved.

The tremendous power that comes with extensive police surveillance will sooner or later be abused, Böll implies. Tolm himself cannot resist examining the files of the people around him: "Diese nette junge Frau [...]: es gab ein Dossier über sie, und er hatte Einblick darin genommen, vorschriftswidrig [...]."¹³³ As with the relationship between Sabine and Hubert, irrational impulses

¹³¹ "And now Fischer, whose pregnancy insulted him in so far as it rendered the totality of security measures questionable." Böll 176.

¹³² "It wasn't his job to investigate marital infidelity and destroy marriages, he wasn't a detective, damn it – and yet there were transitional areas, risky conflicts one had to face up to." Böll 176-177.

¹³³ "This nice young woman: there was a file on her, and he had taken a look at it, despite regulations." Böll 200.

refuse to be tamed: "Es war ihm peinlich, und er hatte doch der Neugierde nicht widerstehen können."¹³⁴ While the "terrorists" represent to Böll, if not an irrational, then certainly an unpredictable force, he is ultimately hopeful about such unforeseen events as Sabine's affair. Her first sexual encounter with Hubert is presented as a utopian moment. In it, the alienation that characterises the relations between most characters, and of which the social division that leads to militancy is only a continuation, is, at least temporarily, overcome. It is this alienation that Böll presents as the most profound threat both to individual happiness and to the well-being of West German society. Holger I, a child of the Tolm family whom the militants have brainwashed into attempting to kill Fritz, becomes the ultimate symbol of this intense alienation that divides both individuals and the nation:

Sie mußte dringend mit Rolf oder Katharina sprechen, ihnen klarmachen, daß der Junge, daß Holger I, die Bombe war; der war ihr fremd geworden, fremder, als sie ihren Eltern und ihren Schwiegereltern sein konnte, das Wort Ent-Fremdung bekam in ihm, mit ihm eine ganz neue Bedeutung.¹³⁵

Holger I embodies the ruthlessness and inhumanity not only of the militants but also of a society on its way to becoming a police state;

¹³⁴ "It was embarrassing, but he hadn't been able to resist his curiosity." Ibid.

¹³⁵ "She urgently needed to speak to Rolf or Katharina, to explain to them that the boy, Holger I, was the bomb; he had become estranged from her, more strange than she could be to her parents and in-laws; the word estrangement assumed an entirely new meaning with him." Böll 280.

the alienation he symbolises is more dangerous than any bomb: "In Holger hatten 'sie' –wer, wer?- wohl auch Bew, etwas hineingefüttert, das gefährlicher war als das Zeug, aus dem man Bomben macht; Holger mußte sofort – behandelt werden."¹³⁶ To heighten security measures is to skirt the problem posed by militancy, Böll suggests. What is required is the ability to defuse the "mental bomb" of estrangement: "Das Wort 'Bombe im Gehirn' war gefallen – da braucht man weder Dynamit noch Zünder mehr, und offenbar hatte der Junge die Bombe im Gehirn, sie mußte – wie? wie? wie? – entschärft werden."¹³⁷

Peter-Paul Zahl: Die Glücklichen

Die Glücklichen¹³⁸ adopts the anecdotal structure, satirical style, and linguistic playfulness¹³⁹ of the German Schelmenroman to tell the story of a West Berlin family of bank robbers whose members, well-versed in dialectal materialism, entertain close ties to the

¹³⁶ "They' – who, who? – Bew too, probably, had fed Holger something more dangerous than the stuff bombs are made of; Holger had to be treated instantly." Ibid. The abstractness and vagueness of the pronoun "they" points to the lack of communication and understanding that has allowed for the rise of radically hostile forces within the Tolm family and within West German society.

¹³⁷ "Someone had said 'bomb in the brain' – dynamite was no longer needed, and obviously the boy had this bomb in his brain; it had to be defused – how, how, how?" Böll 281.

¹³⁸ Peter-Paul Zahl, Die Glücklichen (Berlin: Rotbuch, 1979). For a discussion of this novel as the only major attempt to articulate poetically the experiences of the extraparliamentary left in the late 1960s, cf. Ingeborg Gerlach, Abschied von der Revolte: Studien zur deutschsprachigen Literatur der siebziger Jahre (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1994) 81ff. For Zahl's poetics, cf. Ralf Schnell (ed.), Schreiben ist ein monologisches Medium: Dialoge mit und über Peter-Paul Zahl (Berlin: Rotbuch, 1979).

¹³⁹ For two hilarious examples of word play (a speech in which the word "Terrorismus" is replaced by "Tourismus," and a passage that plays on the fact that "RAF" is the abbreviation not only for "Rote Armee Fraktion" but also for "Royal Air Force"), cf. Zahl 450ff. and 462ff.

extraparlimentary left, publish an underground newspaper praising the virtues of unemployment, and occasionally offer shelter to left-wing militants. While doubting the strategic utility of militancy, the apprentice bank robber Jörg and his girlfriend Ilona, a former prostitute and heroin addict, at one point feel compelled by the escalating violence of the Vietnam war to participate in a night-time attack on an IBM plant.¹⁴⁰

Zahl consistently refers to militants as "the Unnamable" in order to avoid what he perceives as the problematic nature of the term "terrorist."¹⁴¹ His conviction that the true terrorists are those complicit in imperialist warfare emerges from his description of the public reaction to Jörg's "terrorist" act:

Die eine, mittags erscheinende Tageszeitung brachte am nächsten Tag WUMM auf der Titelseite. Desgleichen die anderen Blätter am übernächsten. Sie schrieben von TERROR und meinten damit nicht die Vertreter der Schutzmacht, die einige tausend Kilometer entfernt Völkermord beging. Sie schrieben von TERRORISTEN und meinten damit nicht die Herren in dezenten Anzügen, die an diesem Völkermord glänzend verdienten, nicht die Herren in lamettastrotzenden,

¹⁴⁰ IBM provided the US army with computers crucial to its bombing operations.

¹⁴¹ Cf. the glossary at the end of the novel, Zahl 523: "Unnennbare, die, heißen bei den herrschenden Terroristen 'Terroristen', begreifen sich selbst als Stadtguerilla" ["The Unnamable, labeled 'terrorists' by the ruling terrorists, think of themselves as an urban guerrilla force"].

sauber gebügelten Uniformen, die im Süden der Stadt junge Männer zum Massenmord in Südostasien abrichteten.¹⁴²

Zahl is far from valourising militancy. One of the subplots of his novel tells the story of the Italian reporter Giangiacomo Rossi, who meets German militants in Berlin's sewer system in order to discuss with them their background and ideology. Rossi's attitude towards his interlocutors is characterised by healthy scepticism. When his question about the motives behind militancy prompts a lengthy theoretical speech on the failure of the student movement and the need for a new form of resistance, he stifles a sigh: "Ogott, dachte der Reporter. Daß die immer die gesamte Menschheitsgeschichte bemühen müssen, um zu rechtfertigen, daß sie den Herrschaften ins Knie schießen."¹⁴³ The language in which the militants formulate their ideology is a constant source of desperation for the reporter, who struggles to translate their statements into something the general public can understand.

Scepticism towards ideology is a redeeming trait of many of Zahl's characters. Those who accept ideological explanations uncritically and transform their lives in order to conform to

¹⁴² "The next day, the only daily newspaper, which was sold at midday, featured the headline BOOM. Likewise the other papers, two days later. They wrote about TERROR and didn't mean the representatives of the security force committing genocide several thousand kilometres away. They wrote about TERRORISTS and didn't mean the gentlemen in suits who were making good money from this genocide, nor the gentlemen in neatly pressed uniforms in the south of the city, who were training young men to commit mass murder in Southeast Asia." Zahl 234.

¹⁴³ "O lord, the reporter thought. Why do they always have to evoke the entirety of human history to justify the fact that they shoot people in the knee." Zahl 62. Cf. Zahl 73 for a similar comment.

simplistic political ideals are portrayed as "infected" by a virus that destroys their intelligence and sense of humour. Zimmermann, a student of German literature who discovers for himself the works of Marx and Lenin, is a prime example of such an unfortunately afflicted individual: "Da kam der Marxismus-Leninismus über ihn. Zuhülf, die Pest! [...] Da löste sich das Gehirn spurlos auf, da waren Witz und Humor und Esprit an der Garderobe abgegeben. Da wuchs der Traum vom Genickschuß."¹⁴⁴ As the reference to the "dream of execution" makes clear, it is only a small step from being infected with the virus of ideology to the dogmatic and self-referential thinking of the militants, whose activities, Zahl insists, stand in no relation to any social or political ideal, but become an end in itself: "Auch die Militanz hatte sich verselbständigt, war nicht mehr Mittel und Medium."¹⁴⁵

Not all militant movements are equally dogmatic in their attitude toward ideology. Unlike the militants interviewed by Rossi, who display all the dogmatism and austerity of the RAF members, the more anarchic Blues (the semi-militant West Berlin organisation from which the 2 June Movement emerged) arrives at its endorsement of illegal activities through a playful critique of Marxist ideology. Aware of the traditional Marxist rejection of "terrorism,"

¹⁴⁴ "Marxism-Leninism assailed him. Help, the plague! His brain dissolved without a trace, humour and wit were left at the coat check. The dream of execution took shape." Zahl 69.

¹⁴⁵ "Militancy had become self-referential too, was no longer a means to an end." Zahl 196.

the Blues members are less inclined to bend the pronouncements of Marx to suit their purposes than to launch into an extended harangue on Marx's detachment from the working class. Zahl entertainingly sketches the relationship between the scholarly Marx and the proletarian Blues by having them discuss the Vietnam war while drinking beer and Coca Cola. The Blues members end up accusing Marx and Lenin of an exaggerated fondness for theory.¹⁴⁶ Rather than produce extensive theoretical texts, the Blues members react spontaneously to what they perceive as an intolerable political situation. Their reaction is hardly an intellectually sophisticated one, but it is endearingly human: "Man muß doch wat tun, eh.

Ehrlich."¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Zahl 225ff: "Dagmar, Ilona und Irene kannten Marx und Engels. Die holten sie an den Tisch. Gibste ne Cola aus, eh? Und hör mal zu. Enthüllten Pläne. Marx und Engels waren entsetzt. Gegen individuellen Terror. Kotzebue, Sand, Karlsbader Beschlüsse, Narodniki, das bringt doch nichts, die Verzweiflung von Kleinbürgern. Das verstehen die Massen nicht. Ihr versteht das nicht. Fast hätten Irene, Ilona und Dagmar Marx und Engels einen Satz blauer Augen verpasst. Affen. Wir stammen aus Arbeiterfamilien. Schisser, sagten sie zu Marx und Engels. Was macht ihr denn gegen die Amis? Labern, labern, das ist alles, wasser könnt. [...] Rein dastehen. Wichser" ["Dagmar, Ilona and Irene knew Marx and Engels. They asked them to the table. Buy us a coke, yeah? And listen. Revealed plans. Marx and Engels were horrified. Against individual terror. Kotzebue, Sand, the Karlsbad laws, Narodniki, that's useless, the desperation of the petit bourgeoisie. The masses won't understand it. You don't understand it. Irene, Ilona, and Dagmar came close to socking Marx and Engels in the eye. Monkeys. We come from working class families. Cowards, they said to Marx and Engels. What are you doing against the Americans? Talk, talk, that's all you can do. Stand around. Wankers"].

¹⁴⁷ "Hey, you gotta do something. Honestly." Zahl 226. While Zahl's protagonists are familiar with Marxist ideology and sympathetic to Marxist ideals, their attitude towards Marx is not one of reverence; it is playful, at times disrespectful. Marxist texts are as useful for rolling joints as for understanding the mechanisms of capitalism: "Hat jemand einen Filter? Nimm den Einband der Grundrisse, sagte Renate gleichmütig und riss ihn los" (Zahl 78) ["Got a filter? Take the cover of the Grundrisse, Renate said indifferently, and tore it off"]. The author's own treatment of Marx and Engels is hardly more reverential; witness his frequent references to Marx as "Charly" and the beginning of Chapter 10, which sees Marx and Engels drinking beer and listening to psychedelic rock.

The anarchic but non-violent lifestyle of Zahl's protagonists is presented by him as an alternative to militancy.¹⁴⁸ In chapter 7, which describes the experience of communal living, he puns on the identical endings of the German words for "life story" ("Lebenslauf") and "gun barrel" ("Gewehrlauf"): "Hände hoch: Sie blicken in die Mündung eines kollektiven Lebenslaufs!"¹⁴⁹ By referring to the "shared life story" in the language of violence, Zahl stresses how very different the project of communal living is from the antics of those who wield guns and go about intimidating others¹⁵⁰ - although, he suggests, it may in its own way be revolutionary. At times, Zahl portrays the joyfully anti-authoritarian and sexually liberated lifestyle of Jörg, Ilona, and their friends as a "practical refutation" of militancy.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ In a letter to her boyfriend, former prostitute Ilona characterises the attitude of Zahl's protagonists as one that endorses the humanist and progressive elements of Marxism but, unlike that of the militants, rejects any activities that might be grievously harmful to others: "Ich fühle mich in Übereinstimmung mit Dir und mir und allen Menschen, die nichts Böses im Sinn haben, die leben wollen und ein besseres Leben FÜR ALLE" (Zahl 99) ["I feel in harmony with you and all human beings who have no evil intentions, who want to live and want a better life FOR EVERYONE"]. The political stance of these protagonists is not that of an insurrectionary organisation aiming to reform society through violent means, but one that begins with simple, everyday experiences and emphasises the need for pleasure and self-respect. It rejects the notion that "political work" is somehow distinct from the quotidian. Cf. also Zahl 100.

¹⁴⁹ "Hands up! You're facing the barrel of a shared life story!" Zahl 119.

¹⁵⁰ One such wielder of guns, the mysterious B, is mentioned in passing (Zahl 227). Those familiar with the origins of the RAF cannot but suspect that this "crazy guy" is none other than Andreas Baader. He is not mentioned again.

¹⁵¹ Only rarely do Zahl's protagonists make an effort to refute the RAF's ideology theoretically. When they do, (eg. Zahl 365ff.), they identify as the main weakness of the RAF its lack of a popular base. Such a popular base is a strategic necessity; without it, the RAF's revolutionary project can only fail: "Wenn er [sc. der Widerstand] [...] nur den imperialistischen Überbau angreift, ohne in den Fabriken und Stadtteilen verankert zu sein, kann der kapitalistische Staat ihn ohne große Schwierigkeiten mit rein polizeitaktischen Mitteln einkreisen und vernichten" (Zahl 368) ["When resistance only attacks the imperialist superstructure, without being rooted in the factories and neighbourhoods, the

Zahl consistently places insurrectionary violence in the context of state violence.¹⁵² His account of a student demonstration turned street fight is the story of "wie Blut vergossen wird im Kleinen aus Protest gegen Blutvergiessen im Großen."¹⁵³ That outrage over state violence might lead to the endorsement of insurrectionary violence is understandable for Zahl. Even the relatively pacific Ilona is left doubting the possibilities of nonviolent resistance after witnessing the clash between protesting students and the police: "Da fallen Bomben in Kambodscha. Haben wir auch nur einen Abwurf verhindert? [...] Das ist doch alles noch Zirkus, sagt Ilona."¹⁵⁴

capitalist state can easily encircle and destroy it through a police strategy"]. More importantly, insurrectionary activities are morally questionable when they are conducted without popular support. That their violence is only counterviolence – a reaction to prior state violence – does not alter this basic truth. Such counterviolence too closely resembles state violence. It leads not to revolution, but to a bloody spectacle: "High-Noon in Bonn" (Zahl 369). Zahl's crucial criticism of the RAF remains that which points to the organisation's lack of ties to the non-militant left: "Die RAF war allein, von Anfang an. Sie entstand nicht aus der Stärke der Bewegung, sondern aus ihrem Zerfall" (Zahl 356) ["The RAF was isolated from the start. It was born not from the strength of the movement, but from its decline"]. For insightful remarks on the increasingly absurd character of escalating militant violence, cf. Zahl 466.

¹⁵² Cf. chapter 18, which tells the story of the Schleyer-kidnapping, and in which Schleyer's Nazi background is ruthlessly exposed. The events are recounted with Zahl's usual humour; the title of the chapter is "Spekulant wird Spekulationsobjekt" ["Businessman becomes object of speculation"]. Cf. in particular Zahl 446, where the debate on whether or not the Stammheim prisoners committed suicide is satirised: Zahl ironically speculates that Schleyer may have committed suicide: "War er immer noch der getreueste Gefolgsmann des Führers und scheute deshalb vor der eignen Endlösung nicht zurück?" ["Was he still the devoted follower of the Führer, not afraid of applying the final solution to himself?"]. Zahl clearly suggests that Baader and his companions were murdered. He refers to the case of George Jackson, gunned down in San Quentin prison. Cf. Zahl 447.

¹⁵³ "How minor bloodshed occurs out of protest against major bloodshed." Zahl 103.

¹⁵⁴ "Bombs are falling in Cambodia. Have we prevented even one from falling? It's all a circus, Ilona said." Zahl 116-117.

Not only do the protesters act in the context of military violence in Southeast Asia; they are also confronted with police violence in the German Federal Republic, and – more insidious, but equally serious – with the gradual transformation of West German society into a police state. For Zahl, one of the prime examples of the latter development is the extensive police surveillance of anyone even remotely sympathetic to the student movement.¹⁵⁵ He does not refrain from comparing the Federal Republic's anti-"terrorism" measures with Nazi policies: "Gegenüber der Erfassung im PIOS-Computer war die der Staatsfeinde mit einem gelben Stern geradezu stümperisch."¹⁵⁶

One of Zahl's more striking descriptions of police repression involves him making an appearance in his novel: in Chapter 19, his house is searched.¹⁵⁷ Zahl describes the arrogant and aggressive behaviour of the police, in particular their disrespectful treatment of his young daughter, which leaves him choked with rage: "[...] und das war Krieg, und ich wußte, wir sind Todfeinde, und der Haß schnürte mir den Hals zu, daß ich nicht atmen konnte und das Wasser mir in die Augen schoss. Die führten Krieg, selbst gegen

¹⁵⁵ Unsurprisingly, this group of people includes Zahl's protagonists, whose enjoyment of a pleasant summer night is spoilt by the presence of two undercover police men. Cf. Zahl 169.

¹⁵⁶ "Compared to the tracking of public enemies by the PIOS-Computer, the yellow star system was sheer diletantism." Zahl 469. PIOS was a computer system used by the German police to track suspected "terrorists."

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Zahl 482.

Kinder [...]."¹⁵⁸ The episode expresses Zahl's profound distrust of the German authorities: "Ich blieb stumm. Aus dem Schlaf gerissen, aus dem Traum gerissen, aus den Träumen gerissen, aufgeklärt, gründlichst. Deutsch."¹⁵⁹

Other passages address a classic example of how "terrorism" can serve to legitimate the rolling back of civil liberties: the infamous "Sympathisantenhatz" or "hunt for sympathisers," in the course of which many prominent West German writers faced court summons for behaviour thought to betray their sympathy for the RAF. In Chapter 10, Zahl is summoned to court for having printed a poster urging the liberation of "political prisoners."¹⁶⁰ Zahl's trial is presented in the form of a farcical dramatic text titled "JE UNSCHULDIGER, DESTO SCHULDIGER."¹⁶¹ At one point, the court subjects Zahl to treatment not unlike that received by the RAF prisoners in Stammheim. While the Stammheim prisoners were not "inflated" through pumps inserted into their bowels, they were force-fed like Zahl: "Bereitschaftspolizisten zerren den Angeklagten

¹⁵⁸ "And it was war, and I knew: we're mortal enemies, and hatred constricted my throat so I couldn't breathe and tears appeared in my eyes. They waged war, even against children." Zahl 484.

¹⁵⁹ "I remained silent. Yanked awake, yanked from my dreams, thoroughly enlightened. The German way." Zahl 483. This passage is followed by a quotation from Grimmelshausen's *Simplicissimus*, describing the torture of farmers during the Thirty Years War.

¹⁶⁰ Zahl was in fact a victim of police persecution. Cf. Erich Fried, Helga M. Novak (eds.), *Am Beispiel Peter-Paul Zahl: Eine Dokumentation* (Frankfurt, Initiativgruppe P.P. Zahl, 1978). For the facts concerning the actual poster printed by Zahl (and designed by Holger Meins), cf. the interview with Zahl in Gerd Conradt, *Starbuck: Holger Meins: Ein Portrait als Zeitbild*. Cf. also Zahl's volume of poetry *Alle Türen offen* (Berlin: Rotbuch, 1977), which contains two poems about a RAF hunger strike in which Zahl participated.

¹⁶¹ "THE MORE INNOCENT, THE MORE GUILTY." Zahl 239.

aus seinem niedrigen Käfig [...] pumpen ihn mit der Pumpe durch den Darm auf und ernähren ihn künstlich durch einen Plastikschlauch durch die Nase.¹⁶²

By the end of Die Glücklichen, Zahl's protagonists face a decision: their equal condemnation of state repression and left-wing militancy, combined with the increasing difficulty of continuing their "alternative" lifestyle in a changing Berlin, poses the question of whether they want to continue living in the GFR at all. They choose not to: in one of the novel's more fantastic passages, they gain access to a hot air balloon and leave the country.

Guntram Vesper: Nördlich der Liebe und südlich des Hasses

Nördlich der Liebe und südlich des Hasses¹⁶³ is an extended literary essay with fictional interludes¹⁶⁴ that articulates Vesper's profoundly critical view of the GFR in the late 1970s. The penultimate chapter,

¹⁶² "Attendant policeman yank the defendant from his cramped cage, inflate his bowels and force-feed him by a plastic tube inserted through his nose." Zahl 246.

¹⁶³ Guntram Vesper, Nördlich der Liebe und südlich des Hasses (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1979). Quotations are from the 1981 Fischer edition (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1981). For a critical reading focusing on Vesper's notions of terror and violence, cf. Josef Quack, "Angst in der Provinz", Frankfurter Hefte 35, 68ff.

¹⁶⁴ One of these fictional interludes, "Eduard," tells the story of a 19th century serial killer pursued by the authorities. Eduard's story is clearly intended as a commentary on post-1969 left-wing militancy; in setting up historical parallels, it follows Balzac's dictum "Das Heute ist nur der jüngere Bruder vom Gestern" (Balzac qtd. in Vesper 6) ["Today is only the younger brother of Yesterday"]. At one point, Vesper relates the "general condition of fear" he describes in the chapter discussed here ("Geräusche beim Entsichern von Pistolen") to the fear of Eduard: "In Wirklichkeit ist die Angst zum allgemeinen uferlosen Zustand geworden, wie bei Eduard [...] gehetzt von Steckbriefen, Spitzeln, einem Heer von Polizisten und Soldaten" (Vesper 207) ["In reality, fear has become a general, boundless condition, just as with Eduard, hunted by 'wanted' notices, informers, an army of policemen and soldiers"]. The story of Eduard is not discussed in this study because it does not directly articulate the experience of post-1970 militancy. For an extended discussion of "Eduard," cf. Hoeps 153ff.

"Geräusche beim Entsichern der Pistolen," describes the climate of fear that resulted from the government's anti-"terrorism" measures.

This climate of fear is not so much the product of actual violence and repression as of their threat. It is characterised by constant uncertainty. Vesper suspects the police might be observing him due to his left-wing sympathies, but he does not know:

Dann die fremden Autos. Fortwährend ertappe ich mich dabei, wie ich in unserer Straße nach ihnen Ausschau halte. Ich wünsche sie nicht herbei, nur zeigen sollen sie sich. Hellgrau oder dunkelblau müßten sie sein, in Northeim oder Osterode zugelassen; auf den Vordersitzen Männer ohne Gesichter mit auseinandergefalteten Zeitungen. Ist das Bild aus der Luft gegriffen, entstehen so Widerstandskämpfer. Ich habe Angst, nur von ihr kann ich reden.¹⁶⁵

Vesper finds himself wishing for visible proof of police observation; such proof, he suggests, is more bearable than to be kept guessing. He is terrified by the anonymity of his observers (their facelessness): this condition is so overpowering that he can express nothing else.¹⁶⁶ It is the uncertainty accompanying Vesper's fear that lends it the power to eliminate all other states of mind. His remark on resistance fighters suggests the inherent irony of the

¹⁶⁵ "Then the unknown cars. I constantly catch myself looking out for them. I'm not wishing for them to appear, but I want them to show themselves. They ought to be grey or ultramarine, registered in Northeim or Osterode; faceless men with open newspapers on the front seats. Is this image gratuitous, is this how resistance fighters are born. I'm scared, that's all I can talk about." Vesper 199.

¹⁶⁶ This point is confirmed at the end of the text, where the word "Angst" ["fear"] is repeated twice, as if it were the only word that can still be spoken.

state's anti-"terrorist" measures; themselves a source of terror, they might conceivably contribute to what they are putatively intended to combat.

Vesper is plagued not only by fear and uncertainty, but also by suspicion. Because almost anyone could be a police informer, the trustworthiness of every stranger becomes questionable. At one point, Vesper is warned by the owner of a used bookshop that another customer may be an informer.¹⁶⁷ Hence as innocent an activity as browsing for books becomes dangerous. Later in his essay, Vesper mentions one of his readers, who argues that any, even the most apolitical statement, can be turned against a person by those wishing to portray him as an enemy of the state.¹⁶⁸

At least initially, Vesper is not convinced by such claims. Yet he is not able to refute them either. The question remains undecided, like that of whether or not the GFR has become a police state: "Polizeistaat ja oder nein, das kommt darauf an, was man hört."¹⁶⁹ Vesper's fear is perpetuated precisely by his inability to determine whether or not it is justified. Only a direct confrontation with the police, such as it might result from his house being searched, could settle the issue.¹⁷⁰ While such a confrontation might

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Vesper 206.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Vesper 209: "Drei Zeilen von Ihnen, und ich bringe Sie in Schwierigkeiten" ["Three lines of yours, and I'll get you into trouble"].

¹⁶⁹ "Police state yes or no, it depends what you hear." Vesper 206.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Vesper 205: "Ist meine Angst berechtigt oder übertrieben, die Angst, einige Wochen nach der Unterschrift unter eine Resolution aus der Stadt nach Hause zu kommen und vor einer aufgebrochenen Wohnungstür zu stehen, in Zimmer, in unsere Zimmer voller Polizisten treten zu müssen" ["Is my fear

itself cause fear, this fear would be different from that described by Vesper; it would no longer be mingled with doubt, and instead of being anticipatory, it would be a reaction to a specific threat.¹⁷¹

Vesper's predicament is not a freak case. Far from it: the entire country has become infected with sentiments similar to his. This is the import of his remarks on a public discussion about censorship in the GFR; according to Vesper, the state's renewed willingness to censor books and newspapers results from a "paranoid" reaction to left-wing militancy and recalls the book burnings of the 1930s.¹⁷² Censorship and persecution, Vesper points out, are not unheard of in Germany. He insists, however, that the character of persecution has changed in so far as it has become more anonymous, more invisible and effective. It is persecution in the information age: "totally abstract" until it manifests itself concretely in the form of a broken door.

Irgendwo ist jemand gegen dich. Riesige Apparate, Behörden,
Institutionen, von deren Funktionsweisen, Aufgaben,
Beschränkungen, Kontrollen ich im lange zurückliegenden

justified or exaggerated, the fear of coming from the city a few weeks after signing a resolution and finding myself in front of a broken door, of having to step into a room full of policemen"]. Cf. also Vesper 199: "Das Schlimme, das Schlimmste ist, daß wir wissen, es könnten Zufälle sein, daß wir aber nicht wissen, ob es welche sind" ["The terrible, the most terrible thing is that we know they could all just be coincidences, but we don't know for certain that they are"].

¹⁷¹ In other words, the fear described by Vesper is that which precedes, not that which follows "understanding." Cf. his remark on the kidnapping of the Landshut: "[...] ein paar von uns werden im Flugzeug verschleppt, aus dem dann, als es in der Wüste steht, etwas herausrutscht, was uns erschreckt, bevor wir es erkennen" (Vesper 208) ["A few of us are kidnapped in an airplane, and while the airplane stands in the desert, something comes sliding out – it terrifies us, until we recognise it"].

¹⁷² Cf. Vesper 204.

Sozialkundeunterricht einmal gehört habe, ganz abstrakt war das, wie wenn man eine Maschine erläutert und ihren Nutzen; sie bekommen jetzt ein anderes Gesicht, sie wechseln richtiggehend das Wesen. [...] Ich meine die Ferne und Undurchdringlichkeit, es geht schon Monate, du ahnst nicht einmal davon, und eines Tages ist die Wohnungstür aufgebrochen.¹⁷³

Here as in the passage on police observation cited above, Vesper emphasises the absence of specific information about those "working against him." In so far as his condition of uncertainty is a profoundly tortuous one, he comes close to yearning for as inherently undesirable an event as a house search. Such events would at least replace doubt with knowledge. They become the last hope of clarity; catastrophe becomes a promise of relief.

As his description of a policeman pointing a gun at him during a traffic control¹⁷⁴ makes clear, Vesper is afraid not only of legal proceedings, but also of physical violence. Crucially, the title of his reflections refers not to this violence itself, but to its anticipation: not to the firing of gunshots, but to what precedes them (the unlocking of guns). Specifically, Vesper refers to the "sound" of

¹⁷³ "Somewhere someone is hostile to you. Huge apparatuses, ministries, institutions, about whose *modus operandi*, tasks, limits, controls I heard something a long time ago, in social studies class. That was totally abstract, like explaining a machine and its use; it assumes a new character now, completely changes its nature. I mean the distance and impenetrability, it's been going on for months, you don't have a clue, and then one day the door of your apartment is broken down." Vesper 207f.

¹⁷⁴ Cf. Vesper 198.

guns being unlocked. This suggests the invisibility of the threat he feels exposed to; even when the gun is not seen, its unlocking may be heard. The sound, suggestive of imminent disaster, "echoes throughout the entire world," much as Vesper's fear takes over the whole of his consciousness, eliminating all other sentiments: "Die Geräusche beim Entsichern der Pistolen. Das Knacken ist so laut, daß die ganze Welt davon widerhalit."¹⁷⁵

In German, to "unlock" a gun ("entsichern") literally means to "make [it] unsafe." This suggests that the effect of the state's "security" measures is really to eliminate security: both because it condemns individuals to a condition of suspicion and uncertainty and because it increases the likelihood of physical violence.¹⁷⁶ In this sense, Vesper is in agreement with Chotjewitz and Zahl, both of whom identify the state as the true "terrorist." He is also in agreement with Böll (and other writers, discussed below) in so far as they share a distrust of surveillance technology.

Friedrich Christian Delius: Ein Held der inneren Sicherheit

Friedrich Christian Delius's first work of fiction examines the phenomenon of German left-wing militancy from the point of view of a character who in many ways embodies everything the RAF

¹⁷⁵ "The sound of guns being unlocked. The snapping sound is so loud it echoes through the whole world." Vesper 211.

¹⁷⁶ Hence when Vesper speaks of his need to re-establish security for himself – "Das Bedürfnis, mich in Sicherheit zu bringen" (Vesper 210) ["The need to save myself/establish my own security"] – he is referring not only to physical safety, but also to a psychological state: that of a (self-)confidence rendered impossible by his current condition of uncertainty.

declared itself an enemy of: the narrator, Roland Diehl, is a public relations manager (a "Menschenführer" or "leader of men," in Delius's Orwellian terminology) and a man whose egoism and cynicism have led him to embrace consumer culture and the capitalist ethos of self-advancement despite his growing insight into their inhumanity.¹⁷⁷ When Diehl's boss Alfred Büttinger - a Nazi official turned president of the "Verband der Menschenführer" ("League of the Leaders of Men") - is kidnapped by terrorists, Diehl enters a personal crisis that leads him to question his life choices. The outcome of this crisis is not moral betterment in any straightforward sense; when Büttinger is killed, Diehl abandons his original idea of quitting his job and instead takes Büttinger's place. Delius uses this story to examine the nature of postwar Germany's consumer culture, the role of the media in that culture, and problems of authority (Diehl's crisis partly results from the fact that he loses in Büttinger a powerful father figure); the novel also illustrates how "terrorist" acts can serve to reinforce existing power structures.

From the beginning, the kidnapping of Büttinger - a character based on Hanns-Martin Schleyer, the SS-member turned

¹⁷⁷ Friedrich Christian Delius, Ein Held der inneren Sicherheit (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1981). Quotations are from Deutscher Herbst, the joint edition of Ein Held der inneren Sicherheit, Mogadischu Fensterplatz, and Himmelfahrt eines Staatsfeindes (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1997). For a discussion of Delius' protagonist as the representative of a society characterised by a propagandistic rhetoric of efficiency, cf. Franz Futterknecht, "Brüchige Sprachfestungen - Zu Friedrich Christian Delius' Ein Held der inneren Sicherheit", in: *Literatur für Leser* 1995 11ff. Cf. also Delabar/Schütz 163f. for a discussion of how West German society defined itself, in the 1970s, by its opposition to the RAF.

businessman and kidnapped by the RAF in 1977 – is represented as a media spectacle. The kidnapping, a “ridiculously simple” operation, has yanked Büttinger from his previous anonymity and turned him into a household name – a process that mesmerises and terrifies Diehl:

Seit Tagen konnte er sich nur schwer mit etwas anderem beschäftigen als mit seinem Chef, Präsident des Verbandes der Menschenführer Alfred Büttinger, der auf so lächerlich einfache Weise entführt versteckt gesucht und in den Mittelpunkt der Aufmerksamkeit gezerzt war, phantastischer Gesprächsstoff, Futter der Schaltzentralen und schon zum Objekt erstarrter Name auf dem schwärzer bedruckten Zeitungspapier.¹⁷⁸

The insights Diehl will gain into the nature of media culture begin with this astonishment over how a man he was personally close to has suddenly been reduced to a name in a newspaper, rendered mere prop in a “horrible, prolonged operetta.”¹⁷⁹ Diehl and his colleagues are similarly “discharged” from their previous “anonymity” as their own helpless and “panicky” reactions become the subject of public scrutiny:

¹⁷⁸ “For days now he could hardly think of anything other than his boss, Alfred Büttinger, president of the League of the Leaders of Men, who had in such a ridiculously simple manner been kidnapped hidden was being looked for and yanked into the center of attention, a fantastic subject for conversation, work for telephone operators, and a name already become object on more densely printed newspaper pages.” Delius 13.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

Seit Tagen wurde die gewaltige Aufmerksamkeit auch auf Roland Diehl und die anderen Angestellten des Verbandes geladen, die aus ihrer jahrelangen Anonymität plötzlich entlassen waren und so viele panische Regungen zeigen mußten wie nie zuvor.¹⁸⁰

No one knows better than the Menschenführer that successful public relations work has little to do with authentic and honest behaviour; while this knowledge predisposes them toward becoming complicit in the phoniness of the media spectacle, they cannot completely escape the fact that this time the spectacle is beyond their control, and that it directly concerns their own lives. For Diehl, the challenge posed by the kidnapping is both the professional one of the public relations man struggling to control the effects of an unforeseen event and keep negative publicity at bay, and the existential one of re-examining his relations to other people, his work, and society in general.

The transformation of Büttinger into a media figure entails a kind of dehumanisation; while his name is familiar to all, his person is not, and he is really no longer anything more than a symbol. This dehumanisation is so troubling to Diehl because it emphasises the absence of humanly satisfying interaction that was already a feature of his prior relationship to Büttinger; it is by virtue of the alienation

¹⁸⁰ "For days the tremendous scrutiny was also directed at Roland Diehl and the other employees of the League, who had been discharged from their years of anonymity and had to display more panicky reactions than ever before." Ibid.

that always already characterised Diehl's interaction with Büttinger, and indeed with other people in general, that the ambitious PR man can marvel at the filmic "perfection" of the kidnapping: "Der Überfall war für ihn eine vielleicht ungewöhnliche, in ihrer Perfektion aber kaum noch brutal wirkende Filmszene."¹⁸¹

Diehl's experience of the kidnapping is an experience of relativity. That truth is not an absolute value when it comes to manipulating public opinion Diehl already knows. As the "Leaders of Men" become increasingly willing to let Büttinger die, basing their new public relations strategy on the assumption that he will indeed be killed, Diehl also discovers that Büttinger's authority and importance are relative to his usefulness. This relativity – which points to the interchangeability of individuals within the hierarchies of capitalist society – first presents itself as a riddle to Diehl, who only gradually overcomes his attachment to Büttinger. Delius first introduces the motif of relativity by describing a print in Diehl's office. The title of the print is "Relativität." Diehl is both puzzled and fascinated by the disorienting instability it portrays:

Ein Druck schwarz viel grau wenig weiß, Roland Diehl starrte auf ein Bild an der Wand. Mehrere Treppen führten zugleich aufwärts und quer und diagonal und aufeinander zu und voneinander weg, auf und unter den Treppen gingen mehrere Personen in aufrechter Haltung in die Richtungen, die ihnen

¹⁸¹ "The kidnapping was a film scene to him – a strange one perhaps, but hardly brutal in its perfection." Ibid.

die Treppen vorschrieben. Sie schritten so selbstverständlich, als hätten sie ein Ziel, als hätten sie noch einiges zu tun. Hinter hellen Torbogen saßen weitere gesichtslose Figuren beim Essen oder verließen verschränkt die Szene. Dunkle Türen, Gitter und schiefe Balkone drohten dem Betrachter, der in diesem Bild vergeblich nach einem Halt, nach einem Ruhepunkt suchte. [...] Er wußte immernoch nicht, was ihn da anzog, das Rätsel, das glasklare Durcheinander, vielleicht auch nur der Witz, der in dem Titel lag, Relativität.¹⁸²

Delius's novel is in many ways an analysis of how a life such as Diehl's can be organised on principles of efficiency and self-advancement that present themselves as "crystal clear" while retaining the "confusion" of one who can neither control nor understand his own emotional reactions. The straightforwardness with which the figures on the print go about their business is one which Diehl reacquires only gradually after the shock of the kidnapping; when he does, it is because he realises that there is still "much to do" for the "Leaders of Men" whose task is to preserve the general population's sympathy for the echelons of the capitalist order, and because he has learned there is no fulfilment for him

¹⁸² "A print lots of grey not much white, Roland Diehl stared at a picture on the wall. Several stairs led simultaneously up and across and diagonally towards and away from one another, on and under the stairs several people walked upright in the directions dictated by the stairs. They walked as naturally as if they had a destination, as if they still had much to do. Behind lit portals other faceless figures sat eating or left the scene arm in arm. Dark doors, bars and crooked balconies threatened the onlooker, who searched in vain for a fixed point. He still didn't know what attracted him about this picture, the riddle, the crystal clear confusion, maybe just the joke in the title, Relativity." Delius 48.

outside this work. Looking again at his print shortly before the end of the novel, Diehl describes it in terms reminiscent of the personal crisis he has only just overcome:

Die Treppen auf dem Bild waren untereinander verbunden, man könnte treppab im eckigen Kreis gehen, im Dreieck mit Geländern an den gefährlichen dunklen Löchern vorbei. Die vorübergehend Hinabsteigenden schritten, auch wenn sie horizontal im Bildausschnitt lagen, so sicher über die Stufen, als stiegen sie doch hinauf, als müssten sie nur einen Moment lang hinab, um wirklich oben zu sein. Ein Triumph über die Schwerkraft, und auch die Dimensionen waren verrutscht.¹⁸³

The image of people descending only to rise again might be reassuring to Diehl, whose descent into mental and emotional turmoil has proven to be nothing but the prelude to renewed clarity and a defining career move (he has successfully escaped his own "dangerous dark hole" and replaced Büttinger), but he continues to be troubled and disoriented by the print: "Aber je länger Diehl nun hinsah, desto brüchiger und unheimlicher wurde die Konstruktion, desto weniger wußte er sich zu orientieren."¹⁸⁴ Rather than be reminded of the chaos wrought by the Büttinger kidnapping, Delius

¹⁸³ "The stairs on the picture were connected, you could go downstairs in a square circle, walk past the dangerous dark holes in the triangle with banisters. Those walking downstairs temporarily moved with such self-assurance as if they were really walking upstairs, as if they only had to walk down for a moment, in order really to get to the top. Gravity defeated, and the dimensions were skewed too." Delius 210.

¹⁸⁴ "But the longer Diehl looked, the more fragile and uncanny the construction became, the less he was able to orient himself." Ibid.

decides to close his eyes to it and ignore the lessons he has learned about the relativity not just of authority, but also of friendship and fidelity – values that cannot be accommodated in the “construction” that is postwar West German society: “Im neuen Büro werde ich den Druck nicht mehr aufhängen, das steht fest.”¹⁸⁵

The beginning and the end of Diehl’s crisis are marked by a second recurring image, that of the river Rhine, which Diehl can see from his office. If the print troubles Diehl by suggesting the insanity and instability of the life he lives, the river is a reassuring image of continuity. Ships continue to travel the Rhine much as society continues to function despite successful militant operations, and Diehl’s original fear of catastrophe proves unwarranted:

Auf dem Rhein, hinter einem dünnen Spalier von Bäumchen, wiederholte sich immer wieder die gleiche stumme Szene: Ein schnelles Schiff stromab begegnet einem langsameren, und sie stossen nicht zusammen, obwohl es vom Ufer aus so aussieht zwei Sekunden lang, obwohl du es erwartest, obwohl du vom Fenster hier oben die Breite der Fahrrinne und den langweilig großen Abstand siehst, obwohl du in diesem Augenblick nichts anderes wünscht als den lauten Crash, das Rammen, das Leck, das sanfte Absaufen eines Kahns, in der Luft ein Heck.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵ “I’m not hanging up the print in my new office, that’s for sure.” Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ “On the Rhine, behind a thin row of trees, the same scene repeated itself again and again: a fast ship heading downstream encountered a slower one, and

That Diehl momentarily desires an accident to disrupt the boring sameness of the scene points to what is perhaps the most serious danger both for the ships transporting raw materials and commodities and for the society they represent: the irrational impulses of individuals. Diehl's brief wish is not, however, fulfilled; as Delius shows, the mechanisms of the society in which Diehl lives are sufficiently robust to accommodate his temporary lapse of instrumental reason. Capitalism continues "without accidents":

Da draußen lief alles so selbstverständlich ab, ein Kreislauf,
reibungsfrei, unfallfrei. Lastwagen mit Heizöl Zement
Tiefkühlkost Möbeln, alles mit Kraft, mit beschränkter
Geschwindigkeit über die Straßen gejagt, eben produziert
bestellt geliefert verbraucht alles wie geschmiert, und auf den
Schiffen tief im Wasser hängend Schotter Kohle Weizen Gase,
ja die Schornsteine rauchen im weiten Rund um Köln, und die
endlose bunte Blechprozession der Mittelklassewagen der
Einkäufer Makler Kreditgeber Verbraucher Verbraucher alle
aufgereiht alle da, und die Armee der Vertreter
ununterbrochen im Einsatz für die nächsten Abschlüsse die
höheren Zielzahlen, im drahtlosen Kontakt gelenkt von den
Umsatzgenerälen im Hauptquartier, das lief doch alles, alles in

they did not collide, although it looks that way for two seconds from the shore, although you expect it, although from the window here you can see the breadth of the river and the boringly ample room, although in this moment you want nothing more than the loud crash, the impact, the hole, the gentle sinking of a ship, its rear in the air." Delius 56.

strenger Eile da draußen, das griff alles ineinander, das funktionierte wie grüne Welle, ein friedliches Bild vom freien Wettbewerb der Fleissigen, die Steuerprüfer korrigierten die Zahlen hinterm Komma, Abschreibungen garantierten den nächsten Aufschwung, es war die lebende, sich schwunghaft bewegende Ordnung.¹⁸⁷

This image of capitalism's vitality, a robustness no militant can weaken, is soothing to Diehl. Unlike that of the print he no longer wants in his office, the sight of the Rhine affords him pleasure. While the river is not without blemishes – its foulness indicates the ecological costs of the capitalist system of production – the efficiency with which the ships continue to travel encourages Diehl to overlook these blemishes, and the ultimate impression is one of "tranquility":

Der Blick auf den Strom hinab beruhigte. Der Dreck darin imponierte ihm nicht. Roland Diehl ist kein Spinner, der nicht weiß, in welchem Zeitalter wir leben. Vom braungrauen Rhein ging trotz allem, was in den Zeitungen stand, immer noch

¹⁸⁷ "Out there everything worked so naturally, a cycle, smooth, without accidents. Trucks with petrol cement frozen food furniture, everything driven over the streets with limited speed, just produced ordered shipped no hassle, and on the ships heavy on the water gravel coal wheat gases, yes the chimneys smoke all around Cologne, and the endless colourful tin procession of mid-price cars of shoppers real estate agents moneylenders consumers all lined up all there, and the army of representatives constantly working for the next business decision the higher profit rates, wirelessly connected steered by the profit generals in their headquarters, it all worked, everything strictly efficient out there, it all fit, it worked like a series of green lights, a peaceful image of free competition between the prolific, the accountants corrected the figures behind the decimal point, tax benefits guaranteed the next economic boom, it was living, vitally moving order." Delius 57.

eine solche Ruhe aus, auch über den von Fensterscheiben gedämpften, krachenden Autoverkehr hinweg.¹⁸⁸

The reference to traffic foreshadows the final paragraph of the novel, in which the movement of cars along a highway supplants the more organic image of the river to suggest the same efficiency and continuity. Describing Diehl and his colleagues at the end of the Büttinger crisis, Delius suggests the instability of their renewed peace of mind; paradoxically, it is precisely the regularity with which traffic continues to flow that now poses a threat to that peace of mind. For a brief moment, Delius suggests, the representatives of that society which has overcome the militant threat fear that this victory may itself be the greatest failure – because the system they have salvaged is itself flawed. Its apparent robustness itself becomes a source of terror – one that can only be avoided by the wilful blindness Diehl displays when getting rid of his print:

Selten blickten sie auf, blickten mit gewandter Gleichgültigkeit auf das wütende Wettrennen der Autos auf der Uferstraße, blickten über den geduldig seine Last fortwälzenden, den geräuschlosen und nie mehr berührbaren und immer noch gemächlich sich bewegenden Strom. Und zwischen dem leise trommelnden Surren der Klimaanlage hörten sie dann und wann ein trotziges Flügelschlagen der Hubschrauber über den

¹⁸⁸ "The view of the stream below was soothing. He wasn't impressed by the dirt. Roland Diehl isn't some dreamer who doesn't know what age we live in. Despite everything written in the papers, the brownish grey Rhine still exuded such calm, even with the thunderous traffic noises, dulled by the window panes." Delius 58.

Dächern. Dann zogen sie ihre Fühler rasch wieder ein und füllten, immer weniger unterscheidbar in ihren Karrierebahnen, weiter ihre Posten aus, immer feindseliger gegeneinander, und liessen sich weiter treiben, als wollten sie nicht wissen, was sie taten, als wollten sie nicht wissen, was geschah.¹⁸⁹

The social order in which Diehl has once more found his place is one he cannot exist outside of, but it can easily do without him; it is, Delius suggests, entirely self-perpetuating. His personal crisis overcome, Diehl finds he has turned his back on his own individuality, become as dispensable as Büttinger – one of many interchangeable non-individuals who, while putatively “pursuing” their careers, are in fact only allowing themselves to be carried blindly and powerlessly on a current whose final destination they prefer not to ponder.

The Biblical allusion at the end of the above quotation suggests guilt. What exactly are people like Büttinger and Diehl guilty of? Delius answers this question explicitly. Like Hanns-Martin Schleyer, Büttinger is a former Nazi representing the continuities between the Third Reich and the business community of the

¹⁸⁹ “They rarely looked up, glanced with efficient indifference at the angry car race on the riverfront, glanced at the stream that patiently moved its burden along, soundless and untouchable and still moving comfortably. And occasionally they heard a stubborn sound of helicopter rotors over the quiet whirring of the air conditioning. Then they quickly pulled back and, increasingly indistinguishable on their career paths, occupied their positions, more and more hostile towards one another, and they let themselves drift along, as if they didn’t want to know what they were doing, as if they didn’t want to know what was happening.” Delius 220.

German Federal Republic; the younger Diehl represents the revisionism of a later generation that is willing to turn a blind eye to injustice and inhumanity. Büttinger is not only unapologetic about his past, but insists that, in 1945, industrialists like him were unjustly victimised. Büttinger suggests the American occupation force was too quick to accuse him and other industrialists, who, he suggests, had no choice but to comply with Hitler's policies.¹⁹⁰

Büttinger is a veteran of the Third Reich; Diehl lives under a social and economic order that is outwardly more free, but requires the sacrifice of human sentiment. The prime lesson learnt by Diehl is that he must overcome his personal attachment to his protector and learn to express pity or compassion only where public relations work requires it. The "proper" relationship to Diehl is not one of genuine compassion, but of a pragmatism that reduces human beings to pawns in a power game – pawns that may legitimately be sacrificed as part of a ruthless calculation of (political and economic) profits and losses.¹⁹¹ By the end of the novel, the only shame Diehl feels is that over having failed for so long to grasp the simple truth everyone around him seems always to have understood - that Büttinger must not be thought of in human terms, as a friend, but as an instrument that may lose its value and needs then to be discarded.

¹⁹⁰ Cf. Delius 87.

¹⁹¹ Cf. Delius 212.

It is not merely the particular work done by Diehl that requires such dehumanisation. Delius sees similar mechanisms at work in the rest of society. When Diehl takes a walk through Cologne's city centre, a consumer's paradise of stores and advertisements, he is confronted with the absurd excess of a commodity economy that stands in no meaningful relation to the actual needs of citizens.¹⁹² As Diehl comes to understand, the culture of the German Federal Republic – and, by implication, of any capitalist state – is one that fosters profound alienation. No German citizen will care much if Büttinger dies, because Büttinger is merely another name, another image in a chaos of commodities and symbols. Worse, Büttinger is a "stranger" to the average consumer, someone from the distant and only dimly understood sphere of the politically and economically powerful: "[...] mit dem Leben der Konsumenten mit den Plastiktüten hat er nichts zu tun, mit ihrer Kaufeile, mit ihrer Müdigkeit, mit dem kurzen Feierabendstolz."¹⁹³ Cologne's shoppers will "walk past him" as they walk past the advertisements surrounding them.¹⁹⁴

Diehl's personal acquaintances confirm this picture of West German society. When Diehl asks his friend Poll, an advertising agent, for advice, he finds Poll's suggestions convincing but curiously unsatisfying. He realises that Poll has been speaking to

¹⁹² Cf. Delius 149ff.

¹⁹³ "He's got nothing to do with the life of the consumers their plastic bags, their urge to shop, their tiredness, their brief weekend pride." Delius 150.

¹⁹⁴ Cf. Delius 150.

him in the language of a salesman, unable to treat even his friend other than he would a potential customer. The conciseness of Poll's statements is really only glibness; it conceals the vacuity of what he says.¹⁹⁵ The statements seem convincing, but Poll is in fact a man without convictions. He only has "ideas" - presumably because they are more marketable. Diehl's final impression is that Poll's sales talk offers a façade of respectfulness while betraying a failure to grasp the human import of the situation: "Poll zeigt Respekt, er geht auf mich ein, aber er soll mir doch nichts verkaufen."¹⁹⁶ While he has learned to comport himself "respectfully," Poll does not in fact have any genuine respect for Diehl.

The only character who confronts Diehl honestly and with genuine concern for his situation is his girlfriend, who suffers from his obsession with Büttinger and his lack of emotional engagement. She is the only one who points explicitly to the weakness of Diehl's characters as the reason for his workaholic antics.¹⁹⁷ Perhaps unsurprisingly, the relationship ends. Once the League of the Leaders of Men recovers from the initial shock of the Büttinger kidnapping and Diehl is able to focus once more on his career, the one person who might have helped him bring his self-examination to a humanly fruitful conclusion becomes a mere nuisance. Rather

¹⁹⁵ Cf. Delius 161.

¹⁹⁶ "Poll treats me respectfully, he takes account of what I say, but he's not supposed to sell me anything." Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Cf. Delius 175ff.

than achieving the "innere Sicherheit"¹⁹⁸ he so obviously lacks, Diehl succeeds only in fortifying those career commitments and life habits of which his prison-like home is only the outward symbol; when he is not physically "walled up in his enclave," Diehl is certainly emotionally and intellectually imprisoned.¹⁹⁹ The effect of the Büttinger kidnapping – which consists, as Wolfgang Hoeps has written²⁰⁰, not so much in spreading fear of further violence as in exposing the inhumanity of the capitalist system – remains entirely temporary. The shock of the event is absorbed by a thoroughly indoctrinated society, neutralised through assimilation into a sensationalist and superficial media culture, and Diehl is left a more efficient, self-reliant, and successful manipulator of public opinion.

Hannelies Taschau: Erfinder des Glücks

The nameless female protagonist of Erfinder des Glücks²⁰¹ is a West German writer who returns home from a series of readings in Norway shortly after the events of the "German autumn." During a police control at Frankfurt airport, her shoulder is dislocated by an overzealous police officer. The injury becomes a metaphor for a

¹⁹⁸ "Inner security" – also "national security."

¹⁹⁹ Cf. Delius 183.

²⁰⁰ Cf. Hoeps 200.

²⁰¹ Hannelies Taschau, Erfinder des Glücks (Zürich/Cologne: Benziger, 1981). Quotations are from the Fischer edition (Frankfurt 1984). For an account of the controversy Taschau's account of the "German autumn" caused among West German writers and literary critics, cf. Liz Wieskerstrauch, Schreiben zwischen Unbehagen und Aufklärung (Weinheim: Quadriga, 1988) 93ff. Thomas Hoeps reads Taschau's novel as one of the harshest condemnations of West German government repression to date. Cf. Hoeps 228ff.

more wide-reaching psychological paralysis that results from the increasingly inhuman character of the German state.²⁰²

Taschau rejects any facile distinction between private and public, personal and political.²⁰³ Much of her novel chronicles the narrator's relationship with her son Ben, and with Ben's father. The narrator's discussions with Ben almost always lead to larger political problems. Ben speaks for those too young to have consciously witnessed the shift from student protest to militancy, but old enough to be curious and troubled by the phenomenon. While constantly posing questions to his parents²⁰⁴, he finds they rarely have accurate answers.²⁰⁵ It is the curiosity of the younger generation, as represented by Ben, that prompts a gradual self-examination on the part of the older generation.

²⁰² This metaphor is discussed by Hoepts (p. 228).

²⁰³ Even the apparently innocent games played by German children reflect changes in the social and political situation: "Die Kinder spielten im Bleibaum 'Hausbesetzung'. Heute spielen sie 'Hausdurchsuchung'" (Taschau 48) ["The children in the tree played played squatters. Today they're playing house search"]. The narrator nicknames the tree "Bleibaum" ("leaden tree"); "lead" has become a classic signifier of 1970s militancy (as in the expressions "bleierne Zeit" and "anni di piombo" – "time of lead" and "years of lead").

²⁰⁴ Cf. eg. Taschau 12: "Wie ist denn das gekommen, daß man sich heute ver mummt, wie ist das gekommen, ihr müßt das wissen, ihr wart dauernd da, ihr habt doch merken müssen, wie das vor sich ging, wie das alles immer enger wurde, immer schärfer, immer weniger, immer schlimmer" ["How did that come about, people covering their faces in public, how did that happen, you ought to know, you were there the whole time, you ought to have noticed everything becoming more and more oppressive, harsher, reduced, worse"].

²⁰⁵ Cf. Taschau 65: "Seit wann hat man sich eigentlich maskiert. Ab wann wart ihr nicht mehr dabei. Wann hat das angefangen mit dem Datensammeln. / Du weißt das nicht, du warst meist in Bordeaux. / Ich weiß das auch nicht genau, wahrscheinlich 1972" ["From what point on did people begin to wear masks. When was it that you no longer joined in. When did surveillance start. / You don't know, you were mostly in Bordeaux. / I don't know exactly, it was probably 1972"].

The intersection of private and public life is particularly evident in a brief dialogue between the narrator and a friend:

Was war vor zehn Jahren, weißt du es noch?

Wir haben uns getrennt.

Benno Ohnesorg fällt mir ein.

Ben war fünf.²⁰⁶

Beginning with a personal event (the end of a relationship), then switching to larger political developments (the shooting of Benno Ohnesorg), the narrator's thoughts return to her personal life (her son Ben). The switch from the political back to the personal occurs via the association of "Benno" with "Ben" – and demonstrates how inseparable the personal and the political are. "Ben was five" when Ohnesorg was shot – that is, he existed in a specific political context.

The distinction between private and public is rendered problematic by the events of the German autumn themselves. In particular, the Schleyer kidnapping makes public the private life of its victim. It also makes that private life a part of the private lives of ordinary German citizens.²⁰⁷ The larger transformation of West German society of which this kidnapping and other militant activities

²⁰⁶ "What happened ten years ago, do you remember? / We split up. / I remember Benno Ohnesorg. / Ben was five." Taschau 47.

²⁰⁷ Cf. Taschau 17: "Ein Mächtiger, mit NS-Vergangenheit, vielleicht ein 700 000-Mark Mann, hatte sich uns von einer unvorhersehbaren Seite genähert, war uns aufgedrängt worden in einem Zustand, der unverhofft tief traf [...] hat ein privates Leben, eine Familie [...]" ["One of the powerful, a man with a Nazi past, earns maybe 700,000 a year, has approached us in a surprising way, was forced on us in a state that struck us more deeply than could have been expected. He has a private life, a family"].

are only symptoms involves both the private and public domains. When Taschau's narrator muses on the vague sense of horror she feels after returning from Norway, she insists its causes are not private: "Das Grauen, das ich seit einiger Zeit empfand, war aufrichtig, aber ungenau. Die Gründe schwerwiegend und nicht privat."²⁰⁸ And as her experience shows, there is no space so private as to remain untouched by the changes in legal procedure and the general climate of fear characterising the GFR in the late 1970s.

The events of 1977 are frequently related by Taschau to Germany's Nazi past. Her narrator finds it is almost impossible for Germans to travel abroad without being confronted with this past – as when a teacher she meets in Norway reveals his concentration camp tattoo.²⁰⁹ The very constitution of the GFR contains hints of earlier German inhumanity. As Ben remarks: "Selbst wenn ich nicht wüßte, was früher war, ich müßte doch fragen, was war früher los in diesem Land, das in seine Verfassung schreibt: Jeder hat das Recht auf Leben."²¹⁰

Because of Germany's past, the events of 1977 seem all the more uncanny. The threat posed by these events is only

²⁰⁸ "The horror I had been feeling for some time was genuine, but not precise. The reasons weighty and not private." Taschau 22.

²⁰⁹ Cf. Taschau 160.

²¹⁰ "Even if I didn't know what happened before, I ought to ask what went on in this country, in whose constitution it says: Everyone has the right to life." Taschau 34. For another passage suggesting the burden of Germany's past, cf. Taschau 10f., where the narrator describes how the swastika has become for her the eternal symbol of National Socialism, even when it appears in Asia, Polynesia, Africa, or central America.

superficially that of an attack on the state; what truly troubles Taschau's narrator is the possibility that the militant conflict may be used by the state to expand those powers of repression curtailed by its postwar constitution. Like the house to which the narrator returns from Norway, West German democracy is an unstable construction: "Der Spiegel meines Kaffees schwankt und hört nicht auf zu schwanken, dieses Haus scheint ständig zu beben."²¹¹ After her return to Germany - that is, after the Schleyer kidnapping, Mogadishu, the Stammheim deaths, and her own experience of police violence - the narrator is rendered insecure: "Obwohl niemand zusieht, obwohl ich niemandem etwas zu beweisen habe, versuche ich, den Eindruck zu erwecken, als ob ich mich mit derselben Sicherheit bewege wie vor meiner Reise."²¹² This personal insecurity mirrors that of the political situation. Its onset marks the end of a journey.

The journeys described by Taschau are multiple. There are the journeys of the narrator: one actual (to Norway) and one metaphorical (the development of her relationships to Ben and his father). There is also the "journey" undertaken by her country, its transformation, in 1977, from its democratic origins to the police

²¹¹ "The surface of my coffee is moving and continues to move, this house seems constantly to be shaking." Taschau 153.

²¹² "Even though no one is watching, even though I have nothing to prove to anyone, I try to create the impression that I'm moving with the same self-assurance as before my journey." Taschau 134. The word translated here as "self-assuredness" ("Sicherheit") is also that for "security."

state envisioned by counter-“terrorism” specialist Horst Herold.²¹³ Taschau’s narrator hints at the interrelatedness of these multiple (private and public, personal and political) journeys when she uses the phrases “unsere Geschichte” (“our story” or “our history”) and “diese Geschichte” (“this story” or “this history”) instead of “diese Reise” (“this journey”).²¹⁴ The ambiguity of the German word “Geschichte” implies she is concerned with both the personal “story” of a family and the national “history” within which that story is situated.

There is an obvious contrast between Norway with its (real or imagined) “nordische Balance”²¹⁵ and the obvious political chaos of the GFR in 1977. Norway is a place in which Germany can be escaped. It is also the place from which Germany can be better observed – a vantage point like the Calar Alto, “auf dem man begonnen hat, die Geburt und das Sterben von Sternen zu beobachten.”²¹⁶ The narrator’s desire for an “empty apartment” is a desire for tranquility in a place that is also a home. It is during the (German) autumn of 1977 that this wish becomes particularly strong. “So oft habe ich mir gewünscht, von einer Reise

²¹³ This is a rapid transformation: “‘Früher’ ist nicht länger her als ein Jahr” (Taschau 38) [“‘Back then’ is no longer ago than one year”]. For background on Horst Herold, cf. Aust 196ff.

²¹⁴ Cf. eg. Taschau 74.

²¹⁵ “Nordic balance.” Taschau 47.

²¹⁶ “Where they’ve started to observe the births and deaths of stars.” Ibid.

zurückzukommen, in eine leere Wohnung zu kommen, auch hier noch eine Weile allein zu bleiben, am liebsten im Herbst [...]."²¹⁷

At one point, the narrator describes an apartment that may soon be torn down; as a result, no one bothers to repair anything anymore. The apartment assumes an increasingly provisional and decrepit character, in which the simplest activities become complicated and dangerous.²¹⁸ What Taschau describes is a place in which life is poisoned by uncertainty – a place that ought to be a home but is prevented from being one by an unpredictable situation in which important decisions are postponed, defects are allowed to proliferate, prohibitions and special rules complicate the simplest activities, and every experience is coloured by the constant premonition of a dangerous accident.²¹⁹ Here as elsewhere, the private home becomes a metaphor for the nation as home. Taschau poses the questions of what it means to live, or dwell, in certain private and political spaces, each of which is always also already a situation.

How is "dwelling" to be defined, and who defines it? At one point, the narrator suggests West German society operates on a definition that excludes those whose unusual TV habits render them suspicious.²²⁰ The passage indicates the extent to which the GFR is

²¹⁷ "I often wanted to return to an empty apartment, to be alone for a while after a journey, most of all in the fall." Taschau 53.

²¹⁸ Cf. Taschau 77.

²¹⁹ Cf. the narrator's remarks on the landlord's house rules. Ibid.

²²⁰ Cf. Taschau 86: "'Wohnen' unsere Mitbewohner, das heißt, sind sie zu den üblichen Tagesschau-, Sportschau- und Krimi-Zeiten in ihrer Wohnung? Oder

already characterised by the widespread distrust typical of police states. In another passage, questions of living and dwelling are raised in the context of a discussion on the "imaginary prisons" of Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720-1778): "Wir haben über die 'erfundenen Gefängnisse' von Piranesi geredet und warum es so schwer sei, bei ihm Architektur und Leben voneinander zu unterscheiden, nämlich auch darum, weil Architektur die Form von Leben sei, die er schildere."²²¹ This reference to Piranesi only renders Taschau's portrayal of the GFR more bleak. Piranesi's "imaginary prisons" are ancient ruins converted into torture chambers. Read in the light of Taschau's recurring architectural metaphors of the state, and in particular of her descriptions of the GFR as an edifice constructed on the "ruins" of the Third Reich, the passage suggests that life in the GFR of the 1970s is best understood in terms of prison and torture.

The violence of torture is physical (like that suffered by the narrator at the Frankfurt airport), that of prison at least partly psychological – a violence of regimentation and surveillance.²²² In

haben sie etwa gar keinen Fernsehapparat? Dann wären sie momentan besonders verdächtig? Besonders unverdächtig?" ["Do our neighbours 'dwell,' that is, are they in their apartment when the news, the sports show, and the crime story are shown? Or don't they have a television? Would that make them particularly suspicious? Or particularly unsuspicious?"].

²²¹ "We talked about the imaginary prisons of Piranesi and about why it's so difficult to distinguish between architecture and life in his work: because architecture is the form of life he describes." Taschau 42.

²²² This is of course famously argued by Michel Foucault in his classic *Discipline and Punish* (London: Penguin, 1991). Cf. in particular the passages on "complex spaces that are at once architectural, functional and hierarchical," that "guarantee the obedience of individuals," and on "an architecture that would operate to transform individuals" (Foucault 148, 172).

Erfinder des Glücks, this latter form of violence appears in the form of Inpol, one of several computer systems used by the police to track suspected "terrorists," and itself a source of terror, or at least of unease, to the narrator: "Wie wird dir, wenn du das hörst: 'Inpol' ist ein maschinendichtes Schleppnetz, das mit Lichtgeschwindigkeit funktioniert."²²³ Inpol is presented by Taschau as an example of a technology that is "inhuman" in the sense that those designing and employing it have forgotten the most basic human values and needs. Taschau's novel is in large part a critique of such "technocratic" thinking, which is characterised by a means-to-end logic and ideals of efficiency and usefulness. The narrator's reflections explicitly constitute themselves as an alternative to such thinking; they are "nicht dokumentarische, nicht praktische, nicht nützliche, fabellose."²²⁴ She is critical of Ben's father when, during a discussion on nuclear power, he seems more interested in the viability of "technical solutions" than in human needs: "[...] wo

²²³ "How do you feel when you hear that: Inpol is a dragnet functioning with mechanical precision, at the speed of light." Taschau 65. In a later passage, the narrator remembers her amusement at the failure of a word processing program to deal intelligently with language: "Lachen muß ich auch, als sie ankündigt, jetzt werde der Computer alle in diesem Text vorkommenden UND erstzen durch IST, und dann macht der Computer aus 'Freundliche Grüße' freistliche Grüße. Das kann der Computer nicht 'wissen', sagt sie streng zu mir" (Taschau 72) ["I have to laugh when she announces the computer will now replace every UND [AND] in the text with IST [IS], and then the computer turns 'Freundliche Grüße' ['Best wishes'] into 'freistliche Grüße' [a nonsense phrase]. The computer can't 'know,' she says solemnly"]. What is described humorously here - the threat posed by technological systems that can only "obey orders," that do not "know" or fail to understand the meaning of what they are applied to, and that ultimately "scramble" the most elementary forms of human communication, in particular those characterised by "friendliness" - is later described in increasingly pessimistic terms.

²²⁴ "Not documentary, not practical, not useful, plotless." Taschau 153.

technische Lösungen sich menschlichen Bedürfnissen unterzuordnen haben, interessieren sie dich nicht."²²⁵ A public discussion on the death penalty outrages her because in it moral problems are replaced by purely practical ones.²²⁶

Arriving at Frankfurt airport, the narrator is involved in a discussion on "triage," the practice (first introduced by the French military) of placing medical patients in one of three categories, based on the gravity of their injuries, and treating only those whose survival can be predicted with certainty.²²⁷ When the narrator's interlocutor suggests the application of this system to global humanitarian issues, this is only one more example of ruthless technocratic thinking: "Das angewendet auf die Dritte Welt. Das stellen Sie sich mal vor. Alle Probleme wären gelöst."²²⁸ The same thinking underlies the indifference displayed by the GFR's general population toward the Stammheim deaths: "Wie ich denken heute die meisten im Land, die beste Lösung, auch für die drei, und die

²²⁵ "Where technical solutions need to be subordinated to human needs, they don't interest you." Taschau 144.

²²⁶ Cf. Taschau 159: "Das, was sie erblast, ist der Verlauf dieser Debatte. Daß sich die Diskussionen nur noch im 'Handwerklichen' bewegen. Es würden keine ethischen, keine moralischen Bedenken mehr geäußert, die seien ja alle längst bekannt" ["What outrages here is the way this debate is conducted. That the discussions occur entirely in the realm of practical problems. No ethical or moral concerns are expressed; they are dismissed as being long since familiar"]. Cf. also the narrator's remarks on the Eichmann trial, in which she emphasises the presence of a statistician (Taschau 103), and a passage in which she demonstrates how technocratic thinking entails a change in language, in so far as jargon is used to obscure the inhuman nature of certain (political) "solutions": "Einzelhaft in toten Trakten" = Isolationsfolter / 'Finaler Rettungsschuß' = Todesschuß / 'Radikalenerlaß' = Berufsverbot" (Taschau 111) ["solitary confinement in high security wards" = torture through isolation / 'Final redeeming gunshot' = lethal gunshot / 'decree on radicals' = a law depriving one of the right to practise one's profession"].

²²⁷ Cf. Taschau 174.

²²⁸ "Imagine that applied to the Third World. All problems would be solved." Ibid.

preisgünstigste."²²⁹ Informed of the storming of the Landshut and the deaths of Baader, Ensslin, and Raspe, someone on the plane to Frankfurt proposes a toast to these efficient "solutions": "Dann hatten endlich alle einen Becher in Händen und tranken auf zwei Lösungen, die Mogadischu- und die Stammheimer Lösung."²³⁰

Although this point is never made explicitly by Taschau, such willingness to accept state violence recalls the Third Reich, just as the word "Lösung" recalls Hitler's "Endlösung." The unease the narrator feels in the GFR results from her realisation that despite its horrific historical precedent, technocratic thinking has once more become dominant in the GFR. The town of Evenes, in which everything is organised according to principles of efficiency and usefulness, becomes a symbol of the nation: "In Evenes ist nichts mehr überflüssig, alles, was es gibt, wird gebraucht, hier zählt nur noch, was funktioniert und sich bewährt hat [...]."²³¹

²²⁹ "These days most people in this country think the way I do: the best solution, for those three too, and the most economic." Taschau 173.

²³⁰ "Finally everyone had a cup and drank to the two solutions: the Mogadishu solution and the Stammheim solution." Taschau 169.

²³¹ "In Evenes nothing was superfluous any longer, everything you see is needed, nothing counts but what has proven functional." Taschau 145. For further criticism of this ideology of rationality and efficiency, cf. Taschau 131, where the narrator discovers in the late Thomas Hobbes an unlikely antecedent of her own scepticism towards technology and technocratic thinking: "Nicht der Denker des modernen Staates, der ein Naturrecht ablehnt, der Rationalist, Nominalist, für den alles Denken nur Rechnen ist und sich in mechanischen Operationen vollzieht [...] Sondern der Hobbes, der, 84jährig, seine Autobiographie in lateinischen Versen geschrieben, die Odyssee und die Ilias übersetzt hat. [...] Das Eingeständnis vielleicht, daß ihm in seinem großen frostigen Entwurf der Zukunft in einer befriedeten Welt der Mensch abhanden gekommen war?" ["Not the thinker of the modern state, who rejects natural law, the rationalist and nominalist for whom thinking is only calculation, mechanical operations. But the eighty-four-year-old Hobbes who wrote his autobiography in Latin verse, translated the Odyssey and the Iliad. Was it the admission that, in his great, frosty conception of a pacified world, he had lost sight of man?"].

To the narrator, the "order" and "security" that are established by technocratic thinking and the state violence it sanctions are illusory, premised on the erasure of a more fundamental order, that of morality. The police violence she suffers at the airport expresses a larger disregard for human dignity that constitutes itself precisely as a destruction of order: "Was seine Ordnung gehabt hatte, was an der richtigen Stelle gewesen war, ineinander gehört und gepasst hatte, war zerstört, die Würde des Menschen ist antastbar."²³² In so far as it attributes excessive authority to the state, West German technocracy is an attack on the individual. Specifically, the narrator's injury is an attack on her agency; unable to use her arms, she is helpless. This helplessness becomes the metaphor of a more general passivity – one encouraged by a state that would prefer its citizens to remain observers as it resolutely advances its "solution" to the "terrorist" conflict: "Ich soll sitzenbleiben, nicht weggehen, ich soll abschalten, es folgt eine Terroristenfahndung."²³³

Gert Heidenreich: Der Ausstieg

²³² "What had been well-ordered, what had been in the right place and had fit together, had now been destroyed, human dignity is assailable." Taschau 172. "Die Würde des Menschen ist antastbar" ("Human dignity is assailable") is the title of an Ulrike Meinhof essay that polemically subverts the first sentence of the West German constitution ("Human dignity is unassailable"). Taschau confirms Meinhof's analysis: the German Federal Republic has departed from the values of its constitution and lost sight of the most fundamental human values.

²³³ "I'm supposed to stay seated, not walk away, I'm supposed to switch off, what follows is a police operation against terrorists." Taschau 175.

Der Ausstieg²³⁴ narrates a personal crisis: West German journalist Heinrich Bode, sacked for his putative left-wing sympathies²³⁵, has moved to France, where he discusses the social and political situation of the GFR and eventually chooses to commit suicide. Bode's death wish is explicit from the start. Like Taschau's protagonist, he is presented to the reader in a state of physical and mental paralysis, sitting by the sea in a state of dull rage and despair: "Heinrich Emmanuel Bode stirbt am Meer. [...] Ziemlich genau eintausendzweihundert Kilometer weg von Bodes letztem Wohnsitz in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland."²³⁶ The narrator informs us that Bode's rage, which becomes self-destructive in the form of his death wish, might just as well be directed outward: "Bode will sterben. Oder töten."²³⁷ The main source of this rage is a sense that the most outrageous acts of injustice are being committed in Germany: "Jeden Tag neue Nachrichten über die Verbreitung des Unrechts."²³⁸ While far from endorsing militancy,

²³⁴ Gert Heidenreich, Der Ausstieg (Düsseldorf: Claassen, 1982). Hoeps compares this novel to Taschau's Erfinder des Glücks, arguing that it constitutes a shift from an emphasis on sociopolitical to psychological problems. Cf. Hoeps 233ff.

²³⁵ Cf. Heidenreich 34: "Kein schlechter Journalist, hat der neue Abteilungsleiter gesagt. Leider aber ein politischer Gegner" ["Not a bad journalist, the director said. But a political enemy, unfortunately"].

²³⁶ "Heinrich Emmanuel Bode dies by the sea. About 1200 kilometres from his last place of residence in the German Federal Republic." Heidenreich 7.

²³⁷ "Bode wants to die. Or kill." Heidenreich 33. Cf. also Heidenreich 34: "Bode hat die Bombe im Kopf" ["Bode's got the bomb in his head"]. This sentence recalls Böll's "Bombe im Gehirn" (see discussion of Fürsorgliche Belagerung above). It is only in Heidenreich's novel, however, that the "mental bomb" is explicitly linked to notions of self-destruction.

²³⁸ "Every day: new reports on the spread of injustice." Heidenreich 24.

Bode claims to understand it: "Seither weiß Bode, wie ein Extremist entsteht."²³⁹

Again like Taschau, Heidenreich relates the events of the "German autumn" to Germany's Nazi past. What characterises the present state of affairs in Germany, apart from renewed injustice and repression, is the denial of this past. Bode's conviction that his countrymen have failed to confront the crimes of their fathers is expressed in his recurring references to Germany as "the silent land."²⁴⁰ Like Taschau's protagonist, Bode is forced by the experience of being in a foreign country to confront the issues surrounding his nationality. As in Taschau's novel, this confrontation is deeply disconcerting; it entails an acknowledgement of historical guilt: "Nie war ihm seine Nationalität sonderlich bewusst gewesen; jetzt hatte er das Gefühl, einen deutschen Geruch am Körper zu tragen: den Geruch einer Vergangenheit im Schlachthaus."²⁴¹

²³⁹ "Now Bode knows how extremists are born." Heidenreich 34.

²⁴⁰ Cf. Heidenreich 9: "Befragt, woher er komme, antwortet Bode: Aus dem stummen Land, le pays muet" ["Asked where he comes from, Bode replies: from the silent land, le pays muet"]. Cf. also Heidenreich 41, where the narrator says of the events of 1977: "Das sind nur Mauern aus Nachrichten gewesen. Und in diesen Mauern Verstummung" ["Those were just walls of news. And behind those walls: silence"]. While the state's temporary censorship measures (the so-called Nachrichtensperre) amounted to a very concrete form of "silencing," this passage seems also to accuse Germans of falling once more into "moral silence" – that is, of failing to articulate and confront the moral problems raised by the "German autumn."

²⁴¹ "He had never been very conscious of his nationality; now he felt as if his body smelled German: the smell of a past in the slaughterhouse." Heidenreich 26. Cf. also the passage on the graffiti Bode notices during a trip to Paris: "Die halbe Nacht unterwegs mit der Métro. Am Étoile die Parole 'Baader assassiné', beide Doppel-S als SS-Rune gezackt [...]" (Heidenreich 26) ["Travelling on the métro half the night. 'Baader assassiné' at the Étoile station, both 'ss' written as SS-runes"].

In a central passage, Bode's uneasy relationship to Germany is expressed in the form of a nightmare:

Immer wissend, daß ich träumte, liess ich jetzt geräuschlos
einen Vogel auf dem Fensterbrett landen, ein kurz geratenes
Wappentier, silbern, eckig, und solide. Der D-Mark-Adler
war's, jener vom Fünfmärkstück.

[...] Das Ding tat seinen gefährlichen Schnabel auf und
fragte mit einer kläglich dünnen Stimme: Nun komm ich noch
einmal, Heinrich Emmanuel Bode, und frage dich: Liebst du
dein Land?

[...]

Ich schrie: Nein! [...] Nein, ich liebe es nicht!

Schamlosigkeit, Mord, Überheblichkeit! Verbotsland!

Kasernenland! Ich möchte gern, ich kann es nicht lieben, es
ist nicht danach!²⁴²

Bode's inability to muster the patriotism expected of him results from his sense that West Germany is a repressive and militarist state (hence the references to prohibitions and military bases). Crucially, it is the German eagle adorning the Deutschmark coin that demands this patriotism of him: the implication is that the

²⁴² "Always aware that I was dreaming, I allowed a bird to land soundlessly on the windowsill, a stunted heraldic animal, silver, angular, solid. It was the Deutschmark-eagle, the one on the five DM coin. / The thing opened its dangerous beak and asked in a pitifully weak voice: Here I am again, Heinrich Emmanuel Bode, and I'm asking: Do you love your country? / I yelled: No! No, I don't love it! Shamelessness, murder, self-importance! Land of prohibitions! Land of army bases! I'd like to, but I can't love it, it's not that kind of place!" Heidenreich 19.

denial of history and blind adulation of the fatherland are the basis of postwar Germany's economic prosperity (which went hand in hand, despite the intentions of the republic's founding fathers, with rearmament). Other passages, in particular those chronicling Bode's conversations with his father²⁴³, point to unbroken tolerance of right-wing violence as a source of Bode's problematic relationship to Germany: "Terror von rechts gehört zur Heimat und kann darum nicht unheimlich sein."²⁴⁴

The events of the "German autumn" are characterised by a universal condition of fear. Whether Bode imagines himself as one of the Landhut's passengers, as Schleyer, or as a prisoner in Stammheim, the result is fear:

Bode denkt sich in die Maschine hinein und hat Angst.

Er denkt, er sei Schleyer, und fürchtet sich.

Er denkt, er sei Häftling in Stammheim, und fürchtet sich.

Er fürchtet sich als Entführer, als Bewacher, als Geisel.

Als einer von denen, die entscheiden sollen.²⁴⁵

The reference to "decisions" suggests an entirely hopeless situation: no one with the power to determine the course of events is in the right; every possible decision is dangerous or even disastrous.

Hence Bode's fear results not only from the repression and violence

²⁴³ Cf. Heidenreich 43ff.

²⁴⁴ "Right-wing terror is part of the homeland and therefore can't be uncanny." Heidenreich 82.

²⁴⁵ "Bode imagines himself in the airplane and is afraid. / He imagines himself as Schleyer, and he is afraid. / He imagines himself as a prisoner in Stammheim, and he is afraid. / He's afraid as kidnapper, as guard, as hostage. As one of those who have to decide." Heidenreich 69.

he has experienced or observed first hand, but from a more general sense that the "terrorist" conflict has escalated to the point where catastrophe is inevitable.

As Thomas Hoeps has shown, the events of 1977 merely form a backdrop to the story of Bode's self-destruction; Heidenreich is more concerned with a personal than with a larger political crisis. Bode's death wish is metaphorically articulated in his memory of watching a scorpion kill itself: "Er krümmt seinen Hinterleib mit dem Stachel gegen sich selbst. Er spürt zwischen den Ringen des Panzers die Stelle auf, wo er verletzbar ist. Er richtet den Giftdorn in den eigenen Körper. Er sticht zu."²⁴⁶ The scorpion's behaviour results from a sense of entrapment; a circle has been drawn around it in the sand, and the scorpion is unable to venture outside this circle. Bode is similarly "encircled," despite having physically left the GFR, by his experiences of German persecution and repression, and by his sense that the sociopolitical situation in the GFR is an entirely hopeless one.

Bode's friend Marzin urges him to return to Germany, but Bode rejects this option, preferring the lostness characterising his existence in France to any attempt to return to his former life. The Englishman Edward, who attempts to drown himself but is saved, expresses a similar attitude. Edward prefers death by drowning to

²⁴⁶ "It arches its lower body, pointing its sting at itself. It searches for its own weak point between the rings of its armour. It inserts the poisonous tip of its tail into its own body. It stings itself." Heidenreich 63.

the shallow and disturbing life he has created for himself by marrying into an upper-class English family: "[...] die Angst vor dem Untergang irgendwo draußen war geringer als die Angst, noch einmal so an Land geworfen zu werden wie damals bei meinem Eintritt in die höheren Kreise."²⁴⁷ Edward's suicide attempt closely corresponds to Bode's decision to die in France. Like the encircled scorpion, both Edward and Bode reject existence in the restrictive personal and sociopolitical situation into which their experiences and choices have manoeuvred them.

That Bode's crisis is primarily an existential one, in which sociopolitical issues are secondary with regard to personal ones, emerges from the emphasis, in the final chapters of Der Ausstieg, on the challenges posed by the experiences of love and death. Bode's new acquaintance, the philosophically-minded Doctor Bazille, constantly ruminates on these challenges; his discourse reduces political problems to existential ones. When the more politically-minded Marzin visits Bode and tries to convert him to his latest ideology, that of pacifism, he is accused by Bazille of failing to recognise that political talk merely obscures more fundamental existential issues. While acknowledging his good faith, Bazille rejects Marzin's pacifism because it is only political talk: "Ich unterstelle Ihrem Freund Marzin eine große, aufrichtige Bemühung."

²⁴⁷ "The fear of doom out there was weaker than the fear of being thrown ashore again, the way I had been thrown ashore when I entered the higher circles." Heidenreich 95.

Aber er lässt sich ein auf den allgemeinen politischen Diskurs."²⁴⁸

The crucial flaw of the "general political discourse," according to Bazille, is its inappropriate relationship to the problem of death. Marzin and those like him fail to grasp the existential import of death, treating it as a purely statistical phenomenon.²⁴⁹ Marzin's pacifism is misguided because it fails to recognise that changing the world requires the abandonment of conventional political language in favour of a discourse founded on such existential terms as "life" and "death":

Wie sollte sie [sc. die Welt] anders werden, wenn wir nicht lernen, anders von ihr zu sprechen? [...] wenn sie eine Bewegung in Gang bringen wollen, ja? Dann dürfen Sie nicht von dem reden, was jeder kennt, sondern Sie müssen über das sprechen, was jeder will, Leben, und über das, was jeder fürchtet, Tod.²⁵⁰

Heidenreich's sympathies clearly lie with Bazille rather than with Marzin, whom he portrays as an immature would-be revolutionary. The author sanctions Bazille's reduction of political problems to existential ones, implicitly endorsing the position that the crucial

²⁴⁸ "I attribute to your friend Marzin a great and honest effort. But he accepts the general political discourse." Heidenreich 121.

²⁴⁹ Cf. Heidenreich 121, where Bazille explicitly designates this as the key characteristic of the "general political discourse": "[...] daß der Tod zu einer statistischen Grösse verkommen ist" ["That death has been reduced to a statistical figure"].

²⁵⁰ "How can the world change unless we learn to speak differently of it? If you want to provoke changes, you mustn't talk about what everyone knows. You have to talk about what everyone wants, life, and about what everyone fears, death." Heidenreich 120f.

criterion for judging a state is its relationship to problems of love and death: "[...] man müsse einen Staat danach beurteilen, wie in ihm mit dem Tod und mit der Liebe umgegangen werde."²⁵¹ Bode's dismissal of the West German state ultimately results from a sense that love and death have only ever been handled shamefully and clumsily there.²⁵² Militancy does not interest him as a political problem, but only as the expression of a larger disregard for existential issues. The situation created by this disregard is not one that can be altered by conventional political means, and the only viable existential option is that of suicide. Bode's "Ausstieg"²⁵³ is a renunciation not only of a particular political situation, but of politics in general, and ultimately of life.

Eva Demski: Scheintod

²⁵¹ "You have to judge a state by how death and love are managed in it." Heidenreich 64.

²⁵² Cf. Bode's assessment of his relationship to his former girlfriend Marianne: "Vielleicht war, was sie Liebe genannt hatten, nur Trotz gewesen" (Heidenreich 74) ["Maybe what they had called love had only been spite"]. After making love to Marianne, Bode feels shame: "Bode schämte sich unendlich" (Heidenreich 29) ["Bode felt endlessly ashamed"]. Similarly, Bode remembers the feelings of shame and guilt he and his sister felt during the death of their mother: "In ihren Träumen fühlen die Kinder sich schuldig" (Heidenreich 68) ["In their dreams the children felt guilty"]. That this emphasis on personal (psychological and existential) issues, the privileging of each character's interiority (expressed in the last quotation by the reference to dreams), results in a downplaying of the political becomes clear in the passage in which Bode remembers how he went to a bar and discussed the Schleyer-kidnapping in order to escape from the existential experience of witnessing his mother's death: "In der Kneipe war von Schleyer die Rede. Dort frißt sich der Krebs durch den Leib der Mutter" (Heidenreich 65) ["In the bar people talk about Schleyer. Back there, cancer eats its way through his mother's body"]. Here as elsewhere, the political dimension (signified by the Schleyer-kidnapping) is clearly secondary to the existential one (signified by the mother's death).

²⁵³ "Withdrawal" or "retreat."

Like Heidenreich's Der Ausstieg, Demski's 1984 novel²⁵⁴ is premised on a contrast between existential and political issues. A left-wing lawyer with ties to the RAF dies in his apartment; his former girlfriend, the novel's nameless protagonist, becomes involved in the police investigation that immediately ensues. She is also contacted by various RAF members who ask her for documents and ammunition stowed in the man's basement. What would ordinarily be a personal event (the death of a loved one) immediately becomes political, whereby the ordinary rituals of mourning are rendered impossible.²⁵⁵ Like Heidenreich's *Bode*, Demski's protagonist ultimately rejects the primacy of politics and insists on the failure of political discourse to address basic existential issues. She arrives at this position through being constrained to order the man's affairs: "Mit dem Tod des Mannes waren Anfänge von Geschichten in ihr Leben gekommen, und sie mußte die Enden dafür suchen."²⁵⁶

²⁵⁴ Eva Demski, Scheintod (Munich/Vienna: Hanser, 1984). Liz Wieskerstrauch discusses the autobiographical elements of this novel (Wieskerstrauch 53ff.). Hoeps rightly emphasises that the novel's central theme is not left-wing militancy, but the experience of mourning (Hoeps 161ff.).

²⁵⁵ Cf. eg. Demski 9f.: "Sie sehen doch, die Kripo ist bei ihm. Da erst fiel der Frau ein, daß der Mann katholisch war und daß es hätte heissen müssen, der Pfarrer ist bei ihm" ["Can't you see, the police is there with him. It was only then the woman realised the man was Catholic and that she should have been told: The priest is with him"]. Cf. also Demski 16: "Es war dies eben kein Sarg, sondern ein Leichenbehälter, in dem sauberen Silber, das auch die Wurstwannen der Metzger zeigen" ["Because this was not a coffin, but a container for corpses, that clean silver colour also displayed by the sausage trays of butchers"].

²⁵⁶ "The death of the man had brought beginnings of stories into her life; she had to find endings for them." Demski 179.

The woman acts alone, constantly evading the policemen the man has taught her to distrust.²⁵⁷ Her distrust of militants²⁵⁸ also relates to him; the man was always sceptical of their seriousness and the austerity of their ideology: "Der Mann war nämlich nicht ernsthaft gewesen. Systeme, die ihre Vertreter grämlich erscheinen ließen, waren ihm zuwider."²⁵⁹ While willing to defend the RAF in court and sympathetic to the revolutionary project, the man never conceived of himself as a revolutionary: "Ich mach doch keine Revolution! Ich versuch nur die Staatsmacht davon zu überzeugen,

²⁵⁷ The man's warning concerns not only policemen, but everyone professionally associated with the state. Cf. Demski 11: "Zu viele Jahre hatte der Mann ihr beigebracht und immer wieder bewiesen, daß man ihnen nichts glauben darf, weder denen im weißen Kittel noch denen in den grünen Uniformen, denen in den schwarzen Roben nicht und auch nicht denen in jener bewußt legeren Freizeitkleidung, denen noch am allerwenigsten" ["For too many years the man had taught her and repeatedly proven to her that you mustn't believe anything said by them, neither by those in white nor by those in green uniforms, not by those in black robes and not by those in deliberately casual weekend clothes, those least of all"]. Cf. also Demski 14: "Das sind Feinde, hatte er ihr immer wieder bewiesen, du hast sie mit listigen, würdigen Mittel zu bekämpfen. Schon Schweigen ist eine scharfe Waffe. Dennoch ertappte sich die Frau dabei, daß sie diesen herumsuchenden Männern gern etwas von dem toten Mann erzählt hätte. Aber aus dem verschlossenen Zimmer drang noch immer die Mahnung" ["Those are enemies, he had proven to her again and again, you must fight them with clever, dignified means. Even silence is an effective weapon. The woman caught herself wanting to talk about the dead man with these investigators. But the warning still reached her from the locked room"].

²⁵⁸ The woman's equal distrust of the state and the militants results from the fact that the representatives of both groups treat her as a pawn; neither properly takes account of her personal suffering. When the woman is phoned by a RAF member, his commanding tone and his words recall those of the police: "Du wirst von uns hören, sagte die Stimme noch. / Sie werden von uns hören, hatten vierundzwanzig Stunden vorher die Zivilen gesagt" (Demski 45) ["You'll hear from us, the voice said. / You'll hear from us, the undercover policemen had said twenty-four hours earlier"]. In a later passage, a RAF militant briefly expresses his commiseration, only to insist immediately on the primacy of the revolutionary project: "Tut uns natürlich leid um ihn, sagte sie, aber damit rechnen wir für uns jeden Tag. Wenn Lücken entstehen, muß es weitergehen" (Demski 162) ["Of course we're sorry for him, she said, but we have to expect death every day. When there's a gap, things have to go on"].

²⁵⁹ "Because the man had not been serious. He despised systems that made their representatives look sour-faced." Demski 25.

daß sie zu denen nicht böse sein darf, die eine machen wollen!"²⁶⁰

His project was that of using the state's own (legal) weapons against it: "[...] die Schneide des Systems stumpf zu machen, indem er sich ihrer bediente."²⁶¹ Like the woman, he was always an outsider in the sense of identifying neither with the state nor with its enemies and victims. Apart from militants, his defendants included members of the working class (gang members and prostitutes) – while sympathetic to them and interested in their problems, they also remained alien to him, as they do to the woman.²⁶²

The woman's attitude to the RAF (often referred to only as "the group") vacillates between admiration and scepticism, from enthusiastic statements such as "Sie wußten alles. Sie riskierten alles. Sie hatten tödlichste Einsamkeit auf sich genommen"²⁶³ to the angry "Diese verdammten Politadligen, denken, sie sind was Besseres! Denken, sie haben den großen Durchblick!"²⁶⁴ As transpires in the course of the novel, the woman's dominant

²⁶⁰ "I'm not staging a revolution! I'm just trying to convince the state that it mustn't treat those who do badly." Demski 128.

²⁶¹ "To blunt the blade of the state by using it himself." Demski 47. Cf. also Demski 127, where the man says: "Jetzt bringen wir sie zum Tanzen mit ihrer eigenen Musik!" ["Now we'll make them dance to their own tune!"]. The woman remembers a similar pronouncement on page 143: "Ich habe ihnen ihre eigene Sprache gestohlen. [...] Ich kann ihr Chinesisch sprechen und euch damit vertreten!" ["I've stolen their language. I can speak their Chinese and represent you with it"]. "You" refers to the militants.

²⁶² Cf. Demski 57: "Die Ausgebeuteten waren ihr zu weit entfernt, sie hatte nie wirklich einen gesehen" ["The exploited were too far away; she had never really seen one"]. Cf. also Demski 59, 70, 78, 100.

²⁶³ "They knew everything. They risked everything. They had taken the deadliest solitude upon themselves." Demski 160.

²⁶⁴ "These damn political aristocrats! Think they're something special! Think they understand everything!" Demski 164.

attitude to the RAF was always that of scepticism, her enthusiasm never more than a temporary forgetting of problems she remained at least latently aware of: "Der Mann und die Frau waren schon früh, etwa im Jahr einundsiebzig, dahintergekommen, daß die Gruppe keinen Weltentwurf hatte."²⁶⁵

Demski's descriptions of RAF members are detailed and historically accurate.²⁶⁶ The same is true of her description of a generation that was first inspired by the moral forthrightness and apparent efficacy of the militant project – "Die Gruppe, das waren die, die etwas zum Leuchten bringen konnten, zum Brennen"²⁶⁷ – only to be disillusioned by increasingly self-referential and strategically senseless operations: "Aber wozu das dienen sollte, ging niemanden etwas an. Irgendwann wußte das edle Rudel es wohl selbst nicht mehr."²⁶⁸

When the woman meets militants face to face, these strategic doubts give way to fascination with the "beauty" of those she

²⁶⁵ "Early on, around '71, the man and the woman had realised that the group lacked an overarching theoretical model." Demski 232. During one of her encounters with the RAF, the woman voices a similar criticism: "[...] ihr dreht euch im Kreis. Es geschieht nichts" (Demski 229) ["You're moving in a circle. Nothing's happening"].

²⁶⁶ For descriptions of Andreas Baader and Ulrike Meinhof, cf. Demski 99, 200.

²⁶⁷ "The group, they were the ones who could make something glow, burn." Demski 82. Cf. also Demski 234 – "Sie waren die ersten, die wirklich strafen, nicht nur analysierten und Schuld zuwiesen [...]" ["They were the first who really punished, rather than merely analysing and identifying culprits"] – and Demski 142: "Also den Haß kann ich verstehen. Die Strategie dann schon nicht mehr" ["I can understand the hatred. But not the strategy"].

²⁶⁸ "But what all that was supposed to be good for was no one's business. Eventually the noble pack itself didn't know any longer." Demski 83. Cf. also Demski 129f. for comments on the increasingly self-referential nature of militancy.

perceives as "keusche Rebellen."²⁶⁹ One RAF member she meets fascinates her by his resolved manner: "Auch er, dachte die Frau plötzlich, ist sehr schön. Kein Stückchen Bosheit war in seinem dünnen, flaumbärtigen Gesicht, kein bißchen Machtgier, keine Hysterie. Nur eine große, von allem abgelöste Bestimmtheit."²⁷⁰

This passage shows that, for Demski, the appeal of the RAF is not political; the woman's fascination with the RAF members she meets is personal and existential. She is simply charmed by their ascetic beauty. Likewise, the woman's ultimate rejection of the RAF is formulated not in political, but in existential terms. It is the woman's experience of death and mourning that confronts her with the existential inadequacy of the RAF's activities. Politics aside, the clandestine and totally committed lifestyle of the RAF members is useless when it comes to overcoming personal crises such as that resulting from the death of a loved one. In fact, the RAF's ideology is characterised by disregard for the personal; in the eyes of the woman, for whom the personal is not only distinct from, but prior to the political, this discredits it. She rejects the RAF's ideology as one that has no concept of love and mourning, for the "disorderly" and unpredictable nature of emotional life: "Ihr Denken hatte keine Formen liebender Trauer entwickelt, in ihren politischen Gebäuden war kein Platz für einen Toten, auf ihren Wegen hätte die

²⁶⁹ "Chaste rebels." Demski 308.

²⁷⁰ "He too, the woman thought, is very beautiful. No arrogance in his slim, thinly bearded face, no lust for power, no hysteria. Just a great, entirely detached conviction." Demski 195. Cf. Demski 196 and 308 for similar passages.

Unordnung nur gestört.“²⁷¹ The leftist ideal of solidarity and the political work done in its name are inadequate because solidarity is something other than love, more abstract and less total in its concern for others; those motivated by the ethos of solidarity do not expose themselves as radically to the experience of death as those who love. In this sense, the ideology of left-wing groups such as the RAF is an escape from the fear of death: “Man kann ja unermüdlich sein in der Solidarität, in der Gruppenarbeit in infos und teach-ins und sit-ins und picket-lines und all dem, wenn da bloß keine Liebe droht. Was war denn die RAF? Eine Gesellschaft zur Vernichtung der eigenen Todesangst.“²⁷² The “chaste rebels” of the RAF would surely reject such thinking as counterrevolutionary, their revolutionary work being premised on an ascetism that consists essentially in sacrificing the emotional dimension of human interaction to the rigid logic of Marxist insurrectionary politics. To abandon this cold and impersonal thinking by opening oneself once more to the

²⁷¹ “Their thinking had developed no forms of affectionate mourning. There was no room in their political constructions for the deceased. Such disorder would only have been a nuisance on the paths they travelled.” Demski 28.

²⁷² “After all, you can be tireless in your solidarity, in your collective work at infos and teach-ins and sit-ins and picketlines and all that, as long as love doesn’t loom. What was the RAF? A society for destroying one’s fear of death.” Demski 102. Cf. also Demski 132: “Es fiel ihr jetzt wirklich auf, wie allein sie mitten unter den Genossen war. Bei dem blöden Marx wird überhaupt nicht gestorben, sagte sie. [...] Die Frau begriff langsam, daß nicht etwa die Erschossenen, die im Hungerstreik Gebliebenen die echten Toten waren, wie sie das vorher angenommen hatte. Der echte Tod, mit dem kein Marx und kein Lenin was anfangen konnte, war der im Bett. Da ließen sie einen dann allein mit ihrer ganzen Ideologie” [“Now she began to really understand how alone she was among the comrades. No one ever dies in anything that stupid Marx ever wrote, she said. The woman began to understand that the dead were not, as she had previously believed, those gunned down or deceased during a hunger strike. Real death, which no Marx and no Lenin could understand, was death in bed. That’s where they left you all alone with their ideology”].

sentimental disorder of the personal is, for the RAF members, a "step backward" into the "dirt" of an overly subjectivist, non-revolutionary mentality. Confronted with this attitude, and accepting its formal correctness and moral forthrightness, the woman nevertheless opts for her life "in the dirt." She loves it too dearly to be able to sacrifice it to the strictures of political reason:

Wenn man es einmal gemacht hat: So eine Entscheidung, da rauszugehen, das kann immer nur ein Schritt zurück sein, in den Dreck.

Da bin ich, im Dreck, dachte die Frau, in dem, was er Dreck nennt. Und er hat recht. Aber ich leb so gern, Dreck hin oder her.²⁷³

This existential rejection of the RAF, combined with a certain fascination with the radicality of its political analyses, leaves the woman isolated. The existential solitude she is thrown back upon is aggravated by her rejection of an ideology that speaks of justice and equality. By the end of the novel, the woman is convinced there can be for her neither togetherness or "solidarity," nor social justice: "[...] sie wußte [...] daß es keine Gerechtigkeit gab und auch keine Gleichheit. Nur Alleinsein."²⁷⁴ Yet it is precisely her refusal to flee from this bleak condition (more precisely: to escape her emotional suffering by attempting to erase all emotion in favour

²⁷³ "Once you've taken it: a decision like that, returning can only ever be a step back into the dirt. / That's where I am, the woman thought, in the dirt. And he's right. But I love life so much, dirt or no dirt." Demski 198.

²⁷⁴ "She knew there was no justice and no equality. Just solitude." Demski 178.

of an impersonal political ideology) that renders her heroic. The heroism valorised by Demski is not political but personal; like Heidenreich, she insists these two forms of heroism are incompatible, at least when political action is premised, like that of the RAF, on disregard for the individual.

Michael Zeller: Follens Erbe

Follens Erbe²⁷⁵ tells the story of a young academic, Buchwald²⁷⁶, whose interest in 19th century nationalist and student agitator Karl Follen earns him the accusation of sympathising with the left-wing militants of his own day. By the end of the novel, Buchwald sacrifices his interest in Follen for more uncontroversial research into the late Goethe, thereby ensuring the advancement of his career.

Zeller portrays an academic community transformed by the 1970s climate of fear. This fear is not only of political violence, but also of any "eccentric" interests likely to raise suspicions about support for political radicalism. Buchwald's adjustment to this transformed academic community spans the course of one year, and his abandonment of intellectual curiosity and integrity for the sake of conformity is metaphorically expressed by references to the

²⁷⁵ Michael Zeller, Follens Erbe. Eine deutsche Geschichte (Frankfurt: Oberon, 1986). Quotations are from the dtv edition.

²⁷⁶ The name Buchwald, like that of the university town in which Buchwald teaches, Winkeln, is ironic. "Buchwald" (roughly "a forest of books") suggests both the ivory tower of academia and a central symbol of German Romantic nationalism (the forest). "Winkeln" (from "Winkel," an angle or small corner) suggest a quiet, out-of-the-way town.

changing seasons: like the countryside in which he likes to go running, Buchwald moves from the exuberance of spring to the quiet of winter.

For as long as he immerses himself in the study of Follen's life and work, Buchwald cannot but detect parallels between the politically radical academic world of the early 19th century and that of his own day. Founder of a nationalist student group²⁷⁷ and accused of having inspired the 1819 assassination of August von Kotzebue, Follen strikes Buchwald as the historical prototype of the 1960s student protester. Buchwald discovers in Follen's pamphlets not only youthful enthusiasm and a desire for social justice, but also that refusal to compromise which he terms "the terror of good will," and which inevitably provokes the government's hostility:

Buchwald las diese hochgemuten Paragraphen nach hundertsechzig Jahren als die Utopie jugendlicher Enthusiasten, die sich, die Wirklichkeit verachtend, mit dem Schwung ihrer Phantasie ein radikal gerechtes Gesellschaftsmodell zusammenbastelten. Er witterte dabei den Terror des guten Willens, der "Unbedingt!" sagt, und konnte sich leicht in die Sorgen hineinversetzen, die das Dokument bei Hofe auslöste.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁷ "Die Unbedingten" (roughly "the Unequivocal") advocated national unity and condemned the government of their day as autocratic.

²⁷⁸ "After a hundred-and-sixty years, Buchwald read those lofty paragraphs as the utopia of youthful enthusiasts who, despising reality, had devised a radically just model of society by the exuberance of their imagination. He sensed the terror of that good will which says 'unequivocal!' [or: 'under all circumstances,' 'at every

Like the student protesters of the 1960s, many of the students agitated by Follen came to advocate and practise armed resistance to the government. Their legal organisations were dissolved following the assassination of August von Kotzebue by Karl Ludwig Sand, whereupon they formed what Buchwald refers to as "Kampfzellen"²⁷⁹: "Die Studenten piffen auf die öffentliche Organisationsform und gründeten im Untergrund Kampfzellen für die Einheit einer gesamtdeutschen Studentenschaft."²⁸⁰ Socially isolated and legally persecuted²⁸¹, Follen and his admirers became increasingly radicalised; shortly before leaving Europe for the United States, Follen called for the formation of a German "revolutionary army" modelled on the Italian Carbonari.²⁸²

Even before the effects of the "German autumn" begin to infringe directly on his career prospects, Buchwald is aware of the analogies between his present and the past of Follen. The study of Follen he plans to write is conceived of not only as a historical investigation, but also an attempt to uncover the intellectual and emotional undercurrents of the present:

cost'] and could easily imagine the consternation this document provoked at court." Zeller 20.

²⁷⁹ "Militant cells."

²⁸⁰ "The students didn't give a damn about public organisation and formed clandestine militant cells devoted to the unity of a nation-wide student body." Zeller 25.

²⁸¹ Cf. Zeller 29, where the exclusion of "radicals" from teaching positions is mentioned. Cf. also Zeller 54, concerning the Karlsbad laws, which restricted academic liberty and called for increased censorship. The analogies to the GFR, with its Notstandsgesetze (emergency laws) and Berufsverbote (restrictions on access to certain professions) are obvious.

²⁸² Cf. Zeller 60.

Er wollte die Wahrheit einer vergangenen Wirklichkeit aufbrechen, hoffte, auf eine Ader zu stoßen, die untergründig auch die Geschichte seines Denkens und Fühlens speiste und die seinen Pulsschlag heute noch, wie leise auch immer, verstärkte.²⁸³

As the political violence of the RAF begins to make the headlines, Buchwald comes to understand his academic work is politically charged. A contemporary poet he discusses in one of his seminars is suspected of sympathising with the Red Brigades, and Buchwald is pressured to reconsider his decision to invite her to read at university. The question he poses about Follen's revolutionary texts – to what extent are they complicit in the political violence of Karl Sand?²⁸⁴ – touches on his own situation, as an article he writes about the suspected Red Brigades sympathiser threatens to earn him political accusations.

Reading Follen's "Great Song," a revolutionary hymn calling for "heroic self-sacrifice," Buchwald muses on how differently this text would have been interpreted if it had been written after, instead of before the murder of Kotzebue:

Das Entscheidende war doch, ob man Follens "Großes Lied" vor der Tat des Karl Ludwig Sand las oder danach. Was davor

²⁸³ "He wanted to expose the truth of a past reality, hoped to strike a vein that subterraneously nourished the history of his own thoughts and emotions, continuing to amplify, no matter how weakly, his pulse." Zeller 40.

²⁸⁴ Cf. Zeller 26, where Buchwald asks: "Ab wann haften Worte für ihren Inhalt?" ["At what point do words stand in for their meaning?"].

unverbindlich und geschmäcklerisch vom Kritiker als schlechte Literatur zu werten war, das konnte jetzt unmittelbar als Aufforderung zum Mord verstanden werden und damit dem Strafgesetz verfallen: die Metapher als Wechselbalg.²⁸⁵

The poet's ambiguous metaphors are open to multiple interpretations, and in a climate of political unrest, they may easily be interpreted in such a way as to lead to his persecution. Buchwald does not say as much, but the same is true of his own academic work.

At first, these reflections remain relatively abstract. Yet as the kidnappings and assassinations perpetrated by the RAF multiply²⁸⁶, and as Buchwald's politically-minded students become increasingly restless²⁸⁷, the general problem of how politically charged writing relates to political violence becomes the specific problem of whether Buchwald's academic texts will lead to him being made a scapegoat. Buchwald begins by posing theoretical questions about the relations between the poetic and the political – "[...] wo grundsätzlich die Nahtlinie zwischen poetischer und politischer Aussage zu verlaufen

²⁸⁵ "The important thing was whether you read Follen's 'Great Song' before or after what Karl Ludwig Sand did. What the critic could unproblematically and snobbishly describe as bad literature before could now be understood as an incitement to murder, and hence become an object of penal law: metaphor as weathercock." Zeller 50.

²⁸⁶ Cf. Zeller 87, 199, 208.

²⁸⁷ Cf. Zeller 154. Cf. also Zeller 162, where one student laments the degree to which he is being made responsible (by the government, the media, and the university authorities) for the violence committed by others: "Wir werden doch mittlerweile selbst so angefeindet, als hätten wir die Schüsse abgegeben damals" ["We're already being attacked as if we ourselves had fired those shots"].

habe“²⁸⁸ – only to be confronted with the practical problem about how his answers to these theoretical questions will affect his academic career. The RAF’s political violence is “enragingly alien” to him in the sense that he could never have predicted and does not feel responsible for it.²⁸⁹ Its effect is precisely to make him reconsider the problem of intellectual responsibility, not abstractly, but concretely. Buchwald is forced to abandon the ivory tower of academia and placed in the midst of the GFR’s social and political conflicts. These conflicts create a situation in which mere contemplation and “reasoned arguments” are no longer aloof from the realities of physical violence and political repression.²⁹⁰ Buchwald finds himself increasingly terrified by the West German “Verdächtigungs-Klima [...] mit seinen herbstlichen Fallenstellern und Genickschuß-Spezialisten.”²⁹¹

²⁸⁸ “Where the dividing line between a poetic and a political statement ought principally to be drawn.” Zeller 185.

²⁸⁹ Cf. Zeller 210: “Denn was inzwischen vorgefallen war und was sich jetzt als wuterregende Fremdheit zwischen Buchwald und seinen Text schob: wie hätte er das im Sommer beim Schreiben voraussehen können?” [“Because what had happened in the meantime and what had, as something enragingly alien, inserted itself between Buchwald and his text: how could he have foreseen it during the summer, while he was writing?”].

²⁹⁰ Cf. Zeller 251: “An ein vernünftiges Argumentieren sei in dieser heißen Luft nicht mehr zu denken” [“Reasoned arguments had become unthinkable in this heated situation”].

²⁹¹ “Climate of suspicion with its falltime trappers and execution specialists.” Zeller 254. Buchwald cannot resist comparing this sociopolitical situation – the West German “Sympathisantenhatz” or “hunt for sympathisers” – with what he perceives as the clarity of Follen’s age: “[...] damals schickten sie den einzelnen aufs Schafott, und damit war das Ganze für alle anderen ausgestanden. Sie mußten nicht ständig das Gedanken-Schafottbeil in ihren Köpfen herauf und herunter rasen lassen, schnarrend in Gang gehalten vom eigenen Gewissens-Raunen” (Zeller 233) [“Back then they sent one person to the guillotine, and the issue was settled for everyone else. They didn’t need to constantly raise and lower the mental guillotine in their heads, noisily driven by the whispers of their own conscience”]. In fact, a statement by Follen quoted later in the novel refutes

A newspaper article accusing apparently "innocent" (that is, non-militant) writers of encouraging politically conscious youths to cross over into illegality – "So mancher junge Mensch wird über die Grenze zum Terrorismus geleitet von denen, die das Überschreiten solcher Grenzen für sich selbst nie in Erwägung ziehen würden"²⁹² – is the "final straw" that prompts Buchwald to reconsider his choice of research subject. He feels personally attacked, threatened for the nature of his academic work: "Das bist du! Du bist das! Ja, es gibt dich! Die wollen dich haben! Die sind hinter dir her! WANTED FOR TEACHING AND WRITING!"²⁹³ Upon reading the article, Buchwald enters a personal crisis, the outcome of which will be his decision, in the winter of 1977, to abandon his interest in political subjects for more harmless research into the work of the late Goethe.²⁹⁴

this view. Follen describes quite accurately what amounted to a "hunt for sympathisers" in his own time. Cf. Zeller 252ff: "Durch Papierdurchforschungen, durch Gewissens-Fragen zur Bildung eines noch nicht vorhandenen Thatbestandes ist es so weit gekommen, sagte Follen damals, daß jeder auf solche Weise verdächtig gewordene sich hüten muß, mit Andern irgendein für die Sache ersprießliches Verhältniß anzuknüpfen oder bey zu behalten, indem [...] leicht auch das unschuldigste Verhältniß denselben Verdacht zur Folge hat" ["By the close reading of documents, the asking of questions of conscience with the intent of creating a previously non-existent criminal situation, we have reached the point, Follen had said, where everyone who has in this way become suspicious must take care not to enter into or maintain any relationship with others that may serve the cause, for even the most innocent relationship may lead to such suspicion"].

²⁹² "Many a young person is driven to cross the line into terrorism by those who would never consider crossing that line themselves." Zeller 258.

²⁹³ "That's you! You! Yes, you exist! They want to get you! They're after you! WANTED FOR TEACHING AND WRITING!" Zeller 259.

²⁹⁴ Cf. Zeller 344, where, in the course of a conversation with his superiors, and with an eye to the advancement of his career, Buchwald dismisses his earlier research as a youthful aberration and speaks warmly of the "calm" and "measured" work of the mature Goethe: "Je länger er sich jedoch wieder einlässe in den Stoff, desto deutlicher sähe er, wie exotisch fremd ihm mittlerweile dieser jugendlich empfindsame Feuerkopf, dieser genialisch umgetriebenen Schwärmer geworden sei. Ja, er spüre in sich so etwas wie Langeweile, mehr noch: eine emotionale Sperre, wenn er auf die Phrasen dieses Freiheit-Pathos stoße [...] Es

Buchwald's foresaking of Follen for Goethe results in part from the recognition that, in the GFR of 1977, politically controversial writing is a dead end. Follen was able to escape persecution by emigrating to the United States.²⁹⁵ Buchwald, unwilling to relinquish a successful academic career in peaceful Winkeln, refuses to follow in his footsteps: "Nie sind die Fälle gleich, sie sind nur ähnlich. Die Differenz ist größer als die Übereinstimmung, und muß es bleiben, und immer geht sie zu Lasten der Gegenwart. Denn vor Buchwald lag kein Amerika mehr."²⁹⁶ It is while reading Goethe that Buchwald finds a remark sanctioning his decision: "Aufgeschnappt bei Goethen, Lehrjahre: Ich werde zurückkehren und in meinem Hause, in meinem Baumgarten, mitten unter den Meinigen sagen: hier und nirgends ist Amerika."²⁹⁷

Buchwald shrugs off his brief affair with dissidence with troubling ease; in fact, he insists what he is abandoning was something he never profoundly identified, but only playfully engaged with. Losing something he never truly "owned" leaves him feeling carefree: "Er fühlte sich vogelfrei wie ein Spieler am Morgen,

überrasche ihn selbst, wie stark ihn dagegen der alte Goethe anziehe – die Ruhe dort und Abgewogenheit [...]" ["The longer he concerned himself with the material, the more clearly he saw how exotically alien this youthfully sentimental hothead, this brilliantly restless Romantic [sc. the young Goethe] had become to him. Yes, he felt something like boredom, an emotional barrier, when confronted with the pronouncements of this pathos of liberty. He was surprised how strongly the mature Goethe attracted him – calm and measured"].

²⁹⁵ Cf. Zeller 62: "Follens letzte Zuflucht hieß Amerika" ["Follen's final place of refuge was America"].

²⁹⁶ "The cases are never equal, only similar. The difference is greater than the similarities, and it has to stay that way, to the detriment of the present. Because there was no America waiting for Buchwald." Zeller 267.

²⁹⁷ "Found this in Goethe, Lehrjahre: "I will return and, among my own people, in my house, my grove, I will say: America is here and nowhere." Zeller 351.

der in der Nacht zuvor ein Vermögen verloren hatte, das ihm gar nicht gehört.“²⁹⁸ The “ice age” of the GFR’s increasingly timid post-1977 legal left finds its corollary in the “cooling off” of Buchwald’s willingness to engage with politically controversial issues, a “meterological miracle” he is happy to accept: “Es war, als wäre über Nacht die nächste Eiszeit ausgebrochen. ‘So ist es recht!’ lachte Buchwald in sich hinein. ‘Dieses meteorologische Wunder hat seine vollkommene Richtigkeit.’”²⁹⁹ The “miracle” is a satisfying one for Buchwald because he has opted for career advancement and security over integrity. It is with this joyful farewell to the “spring” of political discontent that Follens Erbe closes:

Um das Glück dieser frühen Stunde und jede Minute davon ganz auszukosten, griff Buchwald nach der Mundharmonika und verabschiedete aus voller Brust den falschen Frühling des vergangenen Tags: “Aber dein Scheiden macht, daß mir das Herz lacht, Frühling ade!”³⁰⁰

The novel’s title suggests that Buchwald is the “inheritor” (“Erbe”) of Follen’s revolutionary legacy; he chooses, however, to renounce his inheritance as one that is far too problematic, irreconcilable with the placid comforts of a successful academic career. There is a

²⁹⁸ “He felt free as a gambler in the morning, one who, during the previous night, has lost a fortune he never owned.” Zeller 349.

²⁹⁹ “It was as if the ice age had begun overnight. ‘It’s alright,’ Buchwald told himself, laughing. ‘This meterological miracle is entirely acceptable.’” Zeller 352.

³⁰⁰ “In order to relish the joy of this morning hour, every minute of it, Buchwald reached for his harmonica and enthusiastically dismissed the false spring of the previous day: ‘But your departure makes my heart sing, farewell spring!’” Zeller 352.

point of contact, here, with Chotjewitz and Vesper: they all expose the effects of the GFR's climate of fear, which they trace to the state as much as to the "terrorists," on the work of writers and intellectuals. Zeller suggests that this climate prohibits its own investigation: Buchwald's research into the intersections of politics and aesthetics is abandoned for fear of political persecution. While Buchwald ends up welcoming the situation, this recalls the ending of Ein Held der inneren Sicherheit in that what the protagonist ends up endorsing is presented in such a way as to evoke concern in the mind of the reader.

Friedrich Christian Delius: Mogadischu Fensterplatz

Delius' second novel about the GFR's militant conflict is the only work examined in this study that attempts a detailed evocation of the experience of the hostage. In Mogadischu Fensterplatz³⁰¹, Sandra Boländer, one of the passengers of the Lufthansa airplane Landshut hijacked by Palestinian militants during the "German autumn," remembers her ordeal from take-off to liberation.

As the novel's title³⁰² suggests, the spectacular nature of the hijacking is a central theme. The hijacking of the Landshut was at least partly conceived of as a media event by Palestinians resolved

³⁰¹ Friedrich Christian Delius, Mogadischu Fensterplatz (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1987). Quotations are from Deutscher Herbst, the joint edition of Ein Held der Inneren Sicherheit, Mogadischu Fensterplatz, and Himmelfahrt eines Staatsfeindes (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1997). For a discussion of the function of Mogadischu Fensterplatz within the trilogy, cf. Delabar/Schütz 164f.

³⁰² "Fensterplatz" means "window seat."

to draw public attention to the conflict between their people and Israel. Although the hijacking was ultimately a failure in that none of the demands of the hijackers were met (in fact, the hijackers were all killed), the attempt to raise public attention was more than successful. As Boländer realises at the moment of her liberation, when she runs from the airplane and towards a cameraman, she has been reduced to an actor in a television event:

Auf der Flucht vor den Schüssen und Schreien, längst nicht in Sicherheit, rannte ich, da stolperte dieser Kerl schon mit und filmte das alles, ich lief in seinen Film hinein, ich war eine Darstellerin, ich lief direkt in eine Tagesschauszene [...]³⁰³

The events preceding Boländer's liberation have a theatrical quality. For example, the approach of the German security force GSG-9 (responsible for the storming of the Landshut) seems operatic, much as the preceding crash landing in the desert outside Mogadishu recalls an action film: "Immer wird uns etwas Neues geboten, eben eine Notlandung im Wüstensand, jetzt die Aufführung einer Soldaten-Oper mit großem Chor."³⁰⁴ Acutely aware of the seriousness of her situation, Boländer nonetheless feels there is something "absurd" about it: "Die militärischen Bewegungen draußen sahen inszeniert aus, absurd. Wieder hatte ich den

³⁰³ "On the run from the gunshots and screams, far from safe, I ran, when the guy stumbled along and filmed everything, I ran into his film, I was an actor, I ran directly into a scene from the evening news." Delius 430.

³⁰⁴ "We're constantly presented with new entertainments: just now a crash landing in the desert sands, next the performance of a soldier's opera with a large chorus." Delius 376.

Eindruck, eher im Theater zu sitzen als in einer realen Gefahr."³⁰⁵

The absurdity consists in the fact that a matter of life and death should have a theatrical aspect, that those whose life is at stake should come to feel they are not only metaphorically, but also quite literally part of a "drama."

Boländer's sense that her suffering is being degraded to a spectacle offends her. Unsurprisingly, she comes to feel threatened not only by the hijackers, but also by the reporters who, she suspects, are following her fate with an eye to producing a successful news story:

Die Journalisten, stellte ich mir vor, haben vielleicht unser Schreien und Stöhnen schon mit ihren Richtmikrofonen auf Band genommen, längst verkauft und gesendet, vielleicht haben sie inzwischen Kameras und Filme herangeschafft, die nicht nur durch die Dunkelheit hindurch infrarot, sondern auch durch Aluminium hindurch Bilder fressen und uns beobachten.³⁰⁶

The sense of threat emerges primarily from the language used in this passage; in particular, the word "fressen"³⁰⁷ suggests the interest of the reporters in Boländer's predicament is far from

³⁰⁵ "The military movements outside looked staged, absurd. Again I had the impression of sitting in a theatre rather than being faced with a real danger." Delius 375.

³⁰⁶ "The journalists, I thought, may already have recorded our screams and groans with long-distance microphones, may already have sold and circulated them, maybe they've already acquired cameras and films that watch us and eat through not just the darkness but aluminum as well." Delius 365.

³⁰⁷ "Devour."

benign. A similar effect is achieved when Delius likens the reporters to hunters and puns on the expression "to shoot film": "Vielleicht sind ganze Flugzeuge mit Kameralenten und Illustriertenjägern hinter uns hergeflogen, immer auf unseren Spuren, immer mit der entsicherten Kamera, immer unsere Maschine im Visier, immer schußbereit [...]"³⁰⁸

What is offensive about the treatment of the hijacking by reporters is the disregard for individuality that emerges from it. Boländer finds she is being instrumentalised not only by the hijackers, but also by those to whom her suffering is only an opportunity for career advancement, the reporters. The militants' disregard for individuality is indicated by their practice of referring to one another not by names, but by numbers. To Boländer, this is more than a safety measure: "Der Verzicht auf Namen bedeutete etwas, das mit den Regeln der Konspiration allein nicht zu erklären war."³⁰⁹ What the replacement of names by numbers suggests is an impersonal worldview in which individuality, and by implication, individual lives, count for nothing. Having become a pawn in the power game of those who think in this manner, Boländer suffers an erasure of her own individuality: "Ich hatte keine Aufgaben, keine Rechte, keine Stimme, ich konnte denken und wünschen, was ich

³⁰⁸ "Maybe entire airplanes full of cameramen and magazine hunters have followed us, forever on our trail, the camera always ready [literally "unlocked," like a gun] our airplane always in the crosshairs, always ready to shoot." Ibid.

³⁰⁹ "Namelessness meant something that couldn't be explained by the rules of conspiracy alone." Delius 241.

wollte, es war völlig unerheblich."³¹⁰ She is important only as a blackmailing device, an object of exchange; her individuality, her personal merits and faults, are entirely meaningless: "Mit ihrer Forderung hatten die Entführer uns zu bedeutenden Leuten gemacht und uns gleichzeitig versichert, es gehe nicht gegen uns persönlich."³¹¹ In the course of the hijacking, this erasure of the concept of individuality in the minds of the hijackers finds a visible corollary in the growing physical similarity of the hostages: "Ich fühlte, wie wir uns immer ähnlicher wurden, unsere Körper sich anglichen bis in ihre Risse und Falten hinein, bis der grauen Fleischfarbe unserer Gesichter."³¹²

This physical transformation of the hostages, the visible erasure of their individual qualities, is part of their dehumanisation. A student of biology, Boländer repeatedly describes her situation by animal metaphors; as she observes how she and the other passengers suffer from their inability to satisfy the most elementary physical functions (they are constrained to sit in their seats for days), she comes to think of this as a kind of mutation, a sneaking transformation of human beings into reptiles: "Sie treiben uns in eine Mutation hinein, machen uns zu Amphibien, bleckende,

³¹⁰ "I had no tasks, no rights, no voice, I could think and desire whatever I liked, it was entirely irrelevant." Delius 240.

³¹¹ "By their demands the kidnappers had turned us into important people while simultaneously assuring us that none of this was about us personally." Delius 287.

³¹² "I sensed we were becoming more and more alike, our bodies came to resemble one another down to their cavities and wrinkles, down to the grey flesh-colour of our faces." Delius 311.

häßliche, hornhäutige Tiere, nicht mehr auf dem Land zu Hause,
noch nicht im Wasser."³¹³

Like the erasure of individuality discussed above, this dehumanisation is both a physical and a psychological phenomenon. When Boländer likens her situation to that of rat subjected to behaviourist experiments³¹⁴, and later to the conditioning of Pavlovian dogs, she suggests the power of physical force to alter psychological structures and redefine wants and needs. This power is such as to render laughable any belief in the constancy of human sentiment; feelings count for nothing, Boländer suggests, because they can be manipulated, and because they are transformed or abandoned when survival requires it.

Bilde dir nichts ein auf deine Gefühle! Gefühle gibt es nicht,
denk an die Pawlowschen Hunde, Gefühle lügen. Nach jedem
Elektroschock ein gutes Stück Fleisch, und nach ein paar
Tagen wird der höchste Schmerz zum höchsten Glück, und
begeistert winselel du nach der nächsten Qual!³¹⁵

That this psychological transformation may lead to suffering being redefined as joy is vouchsafed by Boländer's experience. She finds

³¹³ "They're forcing us to mutate, turning us into amphibians, bleating, ugly, calloused animals, no longer at home on land, not yet at home in the water." Delius 331.

³¹⁴ Cf. Delius 240. Like the rat, which is filmed by a camera, Boländer feels she is an object of study, part of an experiment. This reinforces the sense that she is not valued for her individuality and her life, but only as a means to an end.

³¹⁵ "Don't think you're something special because of your feelings! There are no feelings, think of the Pavlovian dogs, feelings lie. A good piece of meat after each electric shock, and after a few days the greatest pain becomes the greatest joy, and you beg delightedly for more suffering!" Delius 391.

herself displaying the pitiful masochism of the Pavlovian dogs when, daydreaming about the possibility of one more sexual encounter before death, she can imagine no other sexual partner than one of her kidnappers (a man she has nicknamed Gerold): "Im Halbschlaf blinkte der Gedanke auf: noch einmal Nähe, noch einmal Lust, noch einmal den Körper bewegen nach eigenen Rhythmen, eigenen Wünschen! Mit wem? Ich konnte mir keinen andern als Gerold vorstellen."³¹⁶ Boländer observes with disgust the way in which her feelings change, allowing even an object of fear and hatred to become an object of affection. Like all other aspects of the hostage's dehumanisation, this inability to uphold a morally "appropriate" attitude towards the hijacker entails a loss of dignity; Boländer suggests as much when she remembers the biology lesson in which she was taught about the similarities between the hearts of human beings and pigs: "Welches Tierherz gleicht weitgehend dem Herz des Menschen, Fräulein Boländer? Das Schweineherz."³¹⁷

Another aspect of dehumanisation is the impoverishment of language. When, after days of being addressed like an animal – that is, by elementary commands, warnings, and encouragements – Boländer attempts to read a newspaper, she finds the syntax and grammar of the news reports too challenging:

³¹⁶ "A thought flashed up in my slumber: closeness one more time, lust, to move my body according to its own rhythms, its own desires one more time! With whom? I could imagine no one but Gerold." Delius 391f.

³¹⁷ "What animal heart most resembles the human heart, Miss Boländer? The heart of the pig." Delius 332.

Wieder ein Versuch, die Zeitung zu lesen. [...] Aber mehr und mehr hatte ich Schwierigkeiten mit den Sätzen, ich verstand den ordentlichen Bau der Sätze nicht mehr, die solide Grammatik mit Subjekt Prädikat Objekt und Punkt, diese komplizierten einschränkenden oder ausgreifenden Nebensätze. Ich war nur Befehlssätze gewohnt oder Seufzer und die Stakkatosätze mit den Warnungen und Ermunterungen.³¹⁸

This experience comes relatively late, at a point when Boländer feels her dehumanisation and loss of individuality are almost complete. Earlier, she reflects on how her ordeal is not unique in that others have lived through similar situations before her. She also reflects on the process of habituation, by which even the most extraordinary situations can come to seem normal:

Man gewöhnt sich an den Gedanken, daß alles schon mal da war, daß man alles schon mal überstanden hat, daß andere solche und schlimmere Situationen durchgestanden haben und daß das trotzdem nicht hilft und nie helfen wird. Man gewöhnt sich an den schleichenden Übergang zum Tod. Man gewöhnt

³¹⁸ "Another attempt to read the newspaper. But I was having greater and greater difficulties with the sentences, I didn't understand their ordered construction any more, the solid grammar with subject predicate object and period, these complicated limited or expanding subclauses. I was only used to commands or groans and the staccato sentences with their warnings and encouragements." Delius 399.

sich, sagte ich mir, an das Gewöhnen, man gewöhnt sich an alles.³¹⁹

If Boländer accepted these thoughts as true, her dehumanisation and loss of individuality would indeed be complete: she would have lost sight of the irreducible specificity of her situation, and hence of her individuality, and in having adapted to her situation would have become something more like an animal than a human being. In fact, the passage quoted concludes: "Aber ich gewöhnte mich an nichts, nicht einmal an mich selbst."³²⁰ This statement, which seems a declaration of failure, is in fact the expression of Boländer's triumphant humanity: by failing to adapt fully to her predicament, and by failing to accept the changes she observes in herself, she retains both the memory of her former, more "human" existence and the hope that she may one day continue it.

The reader does not learn much about the life Boländer leads after her liberation. The early pages of Mogadischu Fensterplatz narrate her inability to fill out a government form, a request for damages, to her own satisfaction. The devastating nature of her experiences prevents her from bending to the strictures of bureaucracy. One lasting change in Boländer appears, then, to be a new distrust of any attempt to grasp the lived experience of a

³¹⁹ "You get used to the thought that everything has happened before, that you've been through it all before, that others have been through the same and through worse situations and that that doesn't help and never will. You get used to the sneaking transition to death. You get used to getting used to things, I told myself, you get used to everything." Delius 388.

³²⁰ "But I got used to nothing, not even to myself." Ibid.

human being bureaucratically or, more generally, to apply overly schematic and impersonal ways of thinking to flesh-and-blood human beings. The hijackers who relinquish their names for numbers are as much exponents of such a "bureaucratic" mentality as the state which, Boländer suggests, is inclined to use the militant crisis to secure its own power. In this sense, the state and the militant collaborate, and the hostage is the victim not of either, but of both:

[...] jetzt hatten sich die Räuber und die Gendarmen gegen uns verbündet, sie arbeiteten alle zusammen, sie dachten alle nur an sich, und uns benutzten sie nur, damit sie ihre Rolle weiterspielen durften, damit sich ja nichts ändere in der Welt!³²¹

In a passage foreshadowing the ending of his later novel Himmelfahrt eines Staatsfeindes, Delius has Boländer dream about this complicity of insurrectionary and state terror:

[...] und ich sah diesen Zeitungshelden Baader, wie er mit dem Oberpolizisten tanzte, vorwärts seitwärts Schritt und Schritt, und beide machten sich Komplimente, riefen sich zu: Sie sind der einzige, der mich versteht!, und der andere antwortete mit den gleichen Worten, sie herzten und küßten sich, sie waren glücklich miteinander, und laut riefen sie: Ich

³²¹ "Now police and thieves had united against us, they all worked together, thought only of themselves, and they only used us in order to be able to continue playing their roles, so nothing would change in the world!" Delius 405.

liebe Sie! Ich liebe Sie!, dann polterten sie wie zwei Faune auf meinem Grab herum, umarmten sich, rissen die Hosen runter und ließen einander nicht los.³²²

The provocative grotesqueness of this passage reflects the radicality of the accusation contained in it: that the state which purports to be the "saviour" of the hostages is in fact treating them no differently than the militants, as pawns in a power game, and that in this sense, the state is complicit with "terrorism." While one presents itself as benign, the other as hostile, both in fact merit distrust and even contempt. This transpires at the end of Boländer's ordeal, when the state becomes a physical presence in the form of the GSG-9 trooper who helps her from the airplane; seeing him, she is torn between gratitude and rage, as if she would have preferred a different kind of "saviour": "[...] er sah nicht wie ein souveräner Retter aus, aber er war mein Retter, der Engel, das Schwein [...]"³²³

This paradox - the saviour is in fact an enemy, the angel a pig - is the last and most painful lesson learnt by Boländer.

Peter Jürgen Boock: Abgang

³²² "And I saw that newspaper hero Baader, dancing with the chief of police, forward, sideward, step by step, and they complimented one another, called out: You're the only one who understands me! And the other replied with the same words, they hugged and kissed each other, they were happy together, and called out: I love you! I love you!, then they thumped around on my grave like two fauns, pulled their pants down and didn't let go of each other." Delius 412.

³²³ "He didn't look like a cool-headed saviour, but he was my saviour, the angel, the pig." Delius 428.

Like Alberto Franceschini's La borsa del presidente (discussed below), Abgang³²⁴ is a novel about militancy whose author is himself a former militant.³²⁵ While clearly inspired by his actual experiences and riddled with detailed descriptions of the preparations for various militant operations, Abgang is a work of fiction and ought to be read as such.³²⁶

The novel traces the experiences of a young RAF member who returns from a Palestinian training camp in Beirut, helps organise bank robberies, the theft of explosives, and other illegal activities, and eventually dies during the attempted kidnapping of a US army general. While increasingly sceptical of the moral justification of militancy, the protagonist (who is also the narrator) fails to withdraw from the RAF and eventually dies for a cause he no longer believes in. From the outset, his situation is described as irreversible; after his experiences in Beirut, he feels unable ever to return to his previous life: "So ist das also. Zurück und doch nicht

³²⁴ Peter-Jürgen Boock, Abgang (Göttingen: Lamuv, 1988). Hoeps discusses this novel as an example of how militancy is presented as a promise of existential fulfilment which remains essentially apolitical, despite its rhetoric (Hoeps 165ff.). Cf. also Delabar/Schütz 174ff.

³²⁵ Born in 1951, Peter-Jürgen Boock was a member of the RAF from the mid-seventies until 1980. He contributed logistically to the Schleyer-kidnapping and was condemned to three life sentences and fifteen years in 1984. The sentence was reduced to one life sentence in 1986. Boock began writing while incarcerated in Stammheim's high security ward. Apart from Abgang, he has published poems, short stories, and a collection of short essays on solitary confinement, in which he writes: "Ich habe erst im Trakt begonnen, mich bewußt mit der Sprache und dem Schreiben auseinanderzusetzen. Es war ein Akt der Notwehr, um nicht irre zu werden an den Haftbedingungen" (Boock, Schwarzes Loch, op. cit. 110) ["I only started to concern myself consciously with language and writing in the high-security ward. It was an act of self-defense, to prevent my going insane due to prison conditions"].

³²⁶ During Boock's trial, the prosecution attempted to use the manuscript as evidence. The court rejected this request.

zurück. Nur eins ist sicher, nichts wird je wieder so sein, wie es war."³²⁷

While the scale and violence of the Palestinian liberation struggle clearly set it apart from the West German militant conflict, there are also continuities. In particular, the narrator feels that in both regions, the aims of the militants are becoming increasingly unclear. This is one of the main sources of his moral doubts about militancy: "In Beirut weiß oft keiner mehr, wer wann warum gegen wen kämpft. Und hier? Wir sind zwanzig Untergrundkämpfer in einem Land mit sechzig Millionen – gegen wen kämpfen wir?"³²⁸

The question of who exactly the RAF is fighting against is one for which answers are constantly offered. One such answer is given in a letter the narrator's RAF commando receives from the Stammheim prisoners: "Wir, das heißt die RAF, sind: der manifeste Gegensatz zur militärisch-propagandistischen Maschinerie der US-Imperialisten."³²⁹ Yet this answer seems too ready-made to the narrator. The RAF's analysis of its own political context strikes him as grossly simplistic – an uncritical lumping together of everything that helps sustain a Manichean, "us against them" ideology:

Im Grunde kannten unsere Analysen nur zwei Ebenen. Die Ebene des undurchschaubaren Spinnennetzes von

³²⁷ "So that's how it is. Back and yet not. Only one thing is certain: nothing will ever be the way it was." Boock 7.

³²⁸ "In Beirut it often happens no one knows whose fighting against whom when, where, and why. And here? We're twenty clandestine militants in a land of sixty million – who are we fighting against?" Boock 102.

³²⁹ "We, that is, the RAF, are the manifest opposite of the military and propagandistic apparatus of the US-imperialists." Boock 110.

wirtschaftlicher, politischer und militärischer Macht, von Geheimdiensten, multinationalen Konzernen und korrupter Administration. Auf der anderen Seite die Gruppen, die wir mit einem schlichten "WIR" vereinnahmten: die Befreiungsbewegungen der Dritten Welt, die chinesische Kulturrevolution, der Kampf der Schwarzen in den Ghettos der USA, die Studentenunruhen in den Hochburgen des Kapitals, die Nationalrevolutionäre von ETA und IRA – und eben wir, die RAF, die Entwicklung der Stadtguerrilla in der Metropole.³³⁰

Behind its willingness to associate itself, at least theoretically, with revolutionary movements from all over the world, and in particular with Third World liberation movements, lies the RAF's failure to find a popular base in the GFR: "Da wir die Massen im eigenen Land nie erreichen konnten und sie im Grunde herzlich verachteten, haben wir uns konsequent ein neues Revolutionssubjekt gesucht: die Elenden und Unterdrückten der Dritten Welt."³³¹ Rather than constituting a genuine revolutionary vanguard, one that responds to mass sentiment, the RAF vacillates between ignoring the absence of such sentiment and invoking its principled support for movements in

³³⁰ "Essentially our analysis knew only two levels. That of an inscrutable spider's web of economic, political, and military power, of intelligence services, multinational corporations, and corrupt administrators. On the other side, the groups we appropriated by a straightforward 'WE': the liberation movements of the Third World, the Chinese cultural revolution, the struggle of African Americans in the ghettos of the USA, student unrest in the centres of capital, the national revolutionaries of ETA and the IRA – and we, the RAF, the development of the urban guerrilla in the metropole." Boock 10.

³³¹ "Because we never reached and essentially despised the masses in our own country, we searched for a new revolutionary subject: the wretched and the oppressed of the Third World." Boock 10.

faraway countries. In reality, it is almost entirely detached from those it claims to represent.³³²

Given this isolation, it is unsurprising that the RAF's statements and operations should become increasingly self-referential. The RAF commando in Abgang is concerned primarily with liberating Baader, Ensslin, and the other Stammheim prisoners. Twice, it receives rabid letters from Stammheim that condemn its failure to achieve its goal. The tone of the letters is harsh and reprimanding, prompting angry reactions such as "Scheiße, das grenzt doch an Erpressung. Was wissen die denn von unseren Schwierigkeiten hier draußen!"³³³ Yet the RAF commando never questions the authority of Baader and his companions; every order is obeyed. Unable to critically examine past statements and experiences, it becomes a puppet of the Stammheim prisoners. Not only has it lost touch with the general population, but it reacts only to circumstances created by militancy itself. In the words of the Professor, a RAF sympathiser who eventually distances himself from the organisation: "Ihr produziert die Umstände selber, aus

³³² This also emerges from the narrator's discussion with the character Ina, whose Jewish parents were persecuted under the Third Reich. When the narrator invokes Nazi crimes as a justification for militancy, Ina tells him: "Beruft euch bitte nicht auf Menschen, die ihr nie gefragt und wahrscheinlich auch nie verstanden habt" (Boock 264) ["Please don't justify your actions by referring to people you've never asked and probably never understood"]. Ina and others cast further doubt on the narrator's arguments by pointing to continuities between left-wing and fascist violence. Cf. eg. Boock 263.

³³³ "Shit, that's almost blackmail. What do they know about our problems out here!" Boock 188.

denen ihr dann euer Handeln ableitet.“³³⁴ This renders the actions of the RAF predictable – “Wir sind so berechenbar wie das Klingeln des Weckers am Morgen“³³⁵ – and, as the plot of Abgang suggests, guarantees their ultimate failure. Constrained to stage ever more daring operations – “Die Isolation, in die ihr euch freiwillig begeben, wird euch dazu zwingen, immer spektakulärere Aktionen durchzuführen, um die Mauer des Schweigens zu durchbrechen“³³⁶ – the RAF will ultimately be vanquished by the state’s superior might.

While recognising these facts himself, and becoming increasingly sceptical of the ideological statements he continues to repeat – “[...] mir selbst kann ich nicht verschleiern, daß alle meine Bekenntnisse zum bewaffneten Kampf mit einem Fragezeichen versehen sind“³³⁷ – the narrator fails to extract himself from this inevitable move towards destruction, which the character Pelle describes by the metaphor of an invisible spider’s web: “[...] für

³³⁴ “You yourselves produce the conditions by which you then justify your actions.” Boock 120-121. The militant Pelle, who chooses to leave the RAF commando, echoes this criticism: “Wir stolpern von einer Sache in die nächste, setzen uns unter Druck und organisieren unsere Geschichten dann entlang der selbstfabrizierten Zwänge” (Boock 208) [“We stumble from one thing to the next, put ourselves under pressure and then organise our affairs in accordance with self-fabricated constraints”].

³³⁵ “We’re as predictable as the ringing of the alarm clock in the morning.” Boock 209.

³³⁶ “The isolation you freely chose for yourselves will force you to organise increasingly spectacular operations in order to break through the wall of silence.” Boock 121.

³³⁷ “I can no longer deny that all my statements endorsing armed struggle are now followed by question marks.” Boock 244. Cf. also Boock 264: “Wie soll es weitergehen, wenn ich jetzt schon vor dem Sprechen weiß, daß ich zu dem, was ich sage, nicht mehr stehen kann?” [“How can I go on when I know, even before I open my mouth, that I’m no longer convinced of anything I say?”].

einen Augenblick habe ich mich wie gefangen gefühlt, wie in einem Riesennetz, das du nicht siehst, von dem du aber weißt, daß es da ist."³³⁸ Unlike Pelle, the narrator finds no opportunity for building a life outside of militancy; his death in the novel's final botched kidnapping attempt is the logical consequence of this.

It is in the light of Pelle's metaphor of entrapment that the novel's title reveals its meaning. "Einen Abgang machen" is German slang for "walking away." The word recurs frequently in the RAF commando's strategic discussions, usually referring to escape routes.³³⁹ Given the "web" of the narrator's involvement with the RAF – its "strands" include romantic involvement with other militants, fear of arrest, and the general absence of any viable alternative to the militant lifestyle – he cannot "walk away" from militancy alone, but only from his existence in its entirety. Like the (otherwise very different) protagonist of Heidenreich's Abgang, Boock's narrator cannot escape his predicament except through his own annihilation.

Rainald Goetz: Kontrolliert

³³⁸ "For a moment I felt trapped, caught in an enormous web you can't see but know to be there." Boock 213.

³³⁹ Cf. eg. Boock 222.

Despite its subtitle "Geschichte"³⁴⁰, Rainald Goetz's Kontrolliert³⁴¹ is not so much a straightforward narrative as a series of three interior monologues in which a student of history and medicine attempts to order and "control" his chaotic thoughts. The narrator's "Ichnotnotnotizen"³⁴² are largely a reaction to the political events of 1977, which he follows on the radio and in the newspaper while attempting to write his dissertation. The student's ambition is to gain an "overview" of the tumultuous developments at the height of the West German militant crisis: "Man müsste sich mal eine Art Überblick verschaffen, was augenblicklich alles vor sich geht, ich glaube, ganz schön viel."³⁴³

The thematic heading under which Goetz's narrator subsumes his reflections is "the state": "Ursprünglich sollte hier der Staat verhandelt werden."³⁴⁴ Yet to write a satisfactory text about the state is an impossible project; the subject is so overwhelmingly complex and contradictory that it can never be comprehended by a single individual: "Der Staat ist ungeheuerlich, die

³⁴⁰ "Story" (also "history").

³⁴¹ Rainald Goetz, Kontrolliert (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1988). For a discussion of this novel in the context of earlier works by Goetz, in particular "Wir Kontrolle Welt," cf. Hoeps 293ff. For two unfavourable reviews, cf. Walter Delabar, "Goetz, Sie reden wirres Zeug: Rainald Goetz und sein Wahnsinns-Ritt in die Literaturszene", in: Juni 4 (1990) 68ff. and Friedrich Christian Delius, "Männerphantasien, Frauenhaß, Ichtümelei," in: Der Spiegel 39/1988, 216ff. For a general discussion of Goetz's work, cf. Hubert Winkels, "Krieg den Zeichen: Rainald Goetz und die Wiederkehr des Körpers", in: Hubert Winkels, Einschnitte: zur Literatur der 80er Jahre (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1991).

³⁴² "Self-emergency-emergency-notes." Goetz 151.

³⁴³ "One ought to get a kind of overview of what's going on at the moment. Lots of things, I think." Goetz 156.

³⁴⁴ "Originally this was going to be a discussion of the state." Goetz 15.

Ungeheuerlichkeit, die ein einer, wie ich hier, nicht fassen kann."³⁴⁵

This is related to the state's paradoxical nature. Goetz's narrator stresses repeatedly that the state is often murderous and horrible, and that he is nonetheless complicit in its mechanisms, not a neutral observer, but the recipient of its boons: "[...] den Staatsschulen verdanken wir vieles, ich zum Beispiel alles, Staatszeitungen, Staatsstrom, Staatsgeld, Staatslicht nachts in großen Städten, Staatsbibliotheken [...]."³⁴⁶

Riddled with contradictions, the state cannot be grasped by any single category; the state kills, and yet, as the events of 1977, and in particular the Schleyer kidnapping, show, it is also a victim, the "hostage" of militants:

[...] der Staat ist ein Mörder, ein Menschenvernichter, ein böser, ein Arbeitsknapphalter, die Machthaberfresse, der Staat ist Unrechtsstaat, Betrüger, Volksverächter, grundgesetzlich Lüge, Antidemokrat, der Staat ist Ausbeuter und Unterdrücker, das Kapital, und plötzlich ist der Staat Gefangener, ein einziger Gefangener der raf, der Staat ist nur noch Angst [...].³⁴⁷

³⁴⁵ "The state is monstrous, that monstrousness which one alone, like me, cannot comprehend." Goetz 15.

³⁴⁶ "We owe much to the state schools, I for example owe them everything, state newspapers, state electricity, state money, state light in the major cities at night, state libraries." Goetz 16.

³⁴⁷ "The state is a killer, a destroyer of men, it's evil, keeps employment down, the mug of the powerful, the state is one of injustice, it betrays, a despoiser of the people, constitutional mendacity, it's antidemocratic, the state is an exploiter and oppressor, capital, and then suddenly the state is a prisoner, a single prisoner of the raf, the state is nothing but fear." Goetz 16.

Goetz's text is largely structured around such paradoxes, around the rejection of its own most declamatory pronouncements. The narrator's identification with RAF member Jan-Carl Raspe is a case in point. Early on in the text, the narrator declares: "[...] ich bin Raspe. Ich saß im Raspe im Gefängnis, ich ging im Raspe in der Zelle auf und ab, ich las mit seinen Augen Bücher, ich war der Baaderhaß."³⁴⁸ A moment later, he corrects these statements by insisting on their absurdity: "Ich war nicht Raspe. Was denkt der Raspe, unvorstellbar. Ich bin nicht berechtigt, mir was auszudenken."³⁴⁹ Similarly, Hanns-Martin Schleyer first appears as "Schiller." Not much later, Goetz rejects this false name as a silly novelistic device and insists on referring to Schleyer by his real name, although he does alter the spelling slightly: "Was heißt Schiller, Schiller heißt natürlich Schleier."³⁵⁰ Rather than leading to straightforward conclusions, the narrator's text reveals what he perceives as the impossibility of arriving at stable truth: "Was eben noch eine Wahrheit war für einen, ist in einem so schnell verbraucht worden wie die Luft, die sich hungrige Alveolen aus dem Atem

³⁴⁸ "I'm Raspe. I sat in prison inside Raspe, I walked up and down the cell inside Raspe, I read books with his eyes, I was Baader-hatred." Goetz 16.

³⁴⁹ "I wasn't Raspe. What does Raspe think, unimaginable. I don't have the right to invent." Goetz 16.

³⁵⁰ "What does Schiller mean, Schiller means Schleier of course." Goetz 38. The misspelling ("Schleier" for "Schleyer") is suggestive: "Schleier" is German for "veil." The misspelling emphasises Schleyer's sociopolitical function: his individuality is only a "veil" that masks the anonymous violence of the state.

hellrot ins Blut gerissen haben, zu Gift verfallen, das es schleunigst raus zu schaffen gilt."³⁵¹

"I don't have the right to invent" is one of the few positions consistently maintained by the narrator. He insists emphatically that he has no interest in creating a work of fiction, but wants only to chronicle reality: "Ich bin hier weniger der Bauherr, mehr der Schreiber, der sich nur dem Material der Zeit in der Geschichte des von ihm erlebten unterwirft, aus der Erfahrung, daß das Leben klüger sich in wirklichkeit gelebt hat, als man als ein ich im nachhinein dann immer glaubt."³⁵² Later, the narrator declares: "Ausgedachte Bücher halte ich nicht aus."³⁵³ Yet, as Goetz's reference to Kontrolliert as a "story" suggests, even this ostensibly non-fiction text cannot do entirely without fictitious elements; there is no reason to assume that the narrator can be directly identified with the author, and that Goetz actually experienced everything he describes.

In his own life, Goetz's narrator is obsessed with doing what the state attempts to do with the political situation created by the RAF: exercise control. Witness his obsession with cleanliness, the

³⁵¹ "What was truth for someone a moment ago is used up as quickly as the air hungry alveoli have torn, bright red, from breath into blood, decomposed into a poison that must be removed as quickly as possible." Goetz 149.

³⁵² "I'm not so much the builder as the writer here, who merely subordinates himself to the material of the time of the history of what he's experienced, knowing that life has lived itself more smartly in reality than one inevitably thinks afterwards." Goetz 18.

³⁵³ "I can't stand invented books." Goetz 43. Even during his childhood, Goetz's narrator tells us, he preferred the newspaper to fairy tales: "Schon als Kind war mir die Zeitung lieber als jedes blöde Märchen" (Goetz 69) ["Even when I was small I preferred the newspaper to any stupid fairy tale"].

diet he imposes on himself (coffee, cigarettes, and protein drinks, later supplemented by chocolate ice cream), and his fascination with his digital clock and numbers in general. Time as it is recorded by the digital clock offers a promise of logic and structure that is not immediately evident in the chaotic "material" of the narrator's experience; whenever his musings become too chaotic, he calms himself by recording the time: "Jetzt ist es null Uhr siebzehn. Ich glaube, daß ich Ziffern liebe, weil sie reine Logik sind."³⁵⁴ Alone with time, the news, and his thoughts, the narrator strives to replicate such "pure logic" in himself. He does this in self-imposed isolation; other people would disturb his carefully preserved order: "Ich brauche Ordnung um mich rum und möglichst weite Ferne vom nächsten Nächsten in einer möglichst fernen Ferne, alles andere macht mich verrückt."³⁵⁵

The reason why the narrator's experiences and observations call for the imposition of a rigid logical structure was suggested above: they are inherently contradictory. Like the state of which the narrator is a grateful beneficiary even as he declares its loathsomeness, Schleyer is both pitiable and detestable. His photograph, released by his kidnappers, shows a "humiliated" and "weakened" man begging for mercy, but there is a "contradiction" in

³⁵⁴ "Now it's 00:17. I think I love figures because they're pure logic." Goetz 20-21.

³⁵⁵ "I need order around me and the greatest possible distance from the next near one in the most distant distance possible, everything else drives me crazy." Goetz 169.

this image, because his face is also marked by life-long "contempt for human beings":

In den Augen, tief erniedrigt und entkräftet, war ein Flehen, und im Widerspruch dazu war in dem Mund und um den Mund, dem Boten eines ganzen Lebens, von ein paar Tagen Haft im Volksgefängnis natürlich noch nicht korrigiert, aller Ekel und die ganze Menschenverachtung, die dem Lebemann das Leben, zweiundsechzig Jahre lang gelebt aufseiten und im Interesse der Herren dieser Welt, untilgbar eingeschrieben hat [...].³⁵⁶

Hence Schleyer is both victim and killer. The narrator explicitly recalls Schleyer's Nazi past - "Früher hat Schiller die Universität Innsbruck als Untersturmführer der Schutzstaffel von Judenstämmlingen und Miesmachern gereinigt [...]"³⁵⁷ - and declares that the German Federal Republic under chancellor Schmidt, in which Schleyer continues to exercise power, is not so much the democratic counterpart to the Third Reich as "der totalste Staat, den man als Deutscher je gesehen hat, Jahrgang vierundfünfzig."³⁵⁸

³⁵⁶ "There was a begging in the deeply humiliated and weakened eyes, and in total contradiction of that, there was in the mouth and around the mouth, the messenger of an entire life, not yet corrected of course by a few days in the people's prison, all the disgust and contempt for human beings that life, lived for sixty-two years on the side and in the interest of the lords of this world, has inscribed on the lover of life." Goetz 27.

³⁵⁷ "Untersturmführer of the SS, Schiller used to cleanse Innsbruck university of spoilsports and descendants of Jews." Goetz 36.

³⁵⁸ "The most total state you've ever seen, as a German born in '54." Goetz 42. Cf. also Goetz's reference to the chancellor's office as the "Führerbunker" (Goetz

1977, the year of the Schleyer-kidnapping, the Landhut-hijacking, and the deaths of the "first-generation" RAF members in Stammheim, fascinates the narrator because it promises, more than any other moment in his experience, profound insights into German history, the workings of the German state, and the possibility of living a life that is in some meaningful sense "revolutionary."

Secluded in his Paris apartment with his writing materials and the psychologically dangerous radio – "Natürlich macht das Radio sich keine rechte Vorstellung, was alle diese Worte in einem Hirn auslösen können"³⁵⁹ – the narrator muses that 1977, the year that saw the demise of the RAF's revolutionary project in its original form, is a historical turning point such as they occur only seldom: "Vielleicht steht auch die ganze Zeit im Augenblick, fast stündlich,

250). That the "Schmidtstaat" ["Schmidt-state"] is totalitarian or at least highly repressive is proven, according to Goetz, by its systematic use of torture in Stammheim (cf. Goetz 42) and by its anti-"terrorism" measures, many of which were illegal when they were first introduced, although they were subsequently "legalised" by a hasty rewriting of the law: "Zu diesem Zweck wird alles was legal ist oder nicht legal ist, umgehend legalisiert" (Goetz 254) ["For this purpose, everything that was legal or illegal is immediately legalised"]. For Goetz, the GFR is only formally democratic; "democracy" becomes a means by which to fortify totalitarian structures: "Der demokratische Staat organisiert die Diktatur der Demokratie im Fall des Staatsnotstands demokratisch um zur Staatsdiktatur" (Goetz 249) ["In the case of a state emergency, the democratic state democratically transforms the dictatorship of democracy into state dictatorship"]. Cf. also Goetz's comments on state propaganda, eg. in his hilarious parody of German radio news (Goetz 74), or the words he puts into the mouth of "Propagandaminister Bölling": "Und ich brauche mich nicht, will es aber dennoch erwähnen, zu berufen auf eine Umfrage des Altfaschisten Professor Altenallensbach, der mehr als siebzig Prozent unserer sogenannten Bürger im Einverständnis zeigt mit allem, worüber sie nicht informiert werden, wollen, können und müssen" (Goetz 252) ["And there's no need for me to refer to a survey by the old fascist, Professor Altenallensbach, although I would like to do it anyway, a survey which shows more than seventy percent of our citizens agree with everything they are not, don't want to be, cannot, and must not be informed of"].

³⁵⁹ "Of course the radio has no proper concept of what all these words can lead to in a brain." Goetz 25.

kommt mir jetzt schon vor, erscheinen neulich Belege, an einer gewissen Zeitschwelle."³⁶⁰ Later, this suspicion has become a certainty: "Nach siebenundsiebzig war nichts mehr wie vorher. Der Staat nicht, die Revolution nicht, die Rolle Deutschlands nicht, und nicht die Stellung des bewaffneten Kampfs im Klassenkrieg, alles war gebrochen."³⁶¹

Describing his compulsion to complete his dissertation as quickly as possible, the narrator speaks of an "Abschlusszwang"³⁶² which is also a feature of the political events of 1977. These events move at a rapid pace, as if driven by some unknown force – a Freudian death wish, perhaps – towards their catastrophic conclusion, and the individuals involved in them seem to be wholly unfree, their actions dictated by the logic of a situation they no longer control: "Die blödesten Sachen bringt man so zuende, nur um sie abgeschlossen los zu sein, vielleicht todesgetrieben, wer weiß, man weiß es eben nicht, weil man sich recht wenig kennt. Man folgt einfach Befehlen, die einem einen nächsten Schritt vorschreiben."³⁶³

The conclusion at which the events of 1977 arrive – the deaths of Schleyer, the Landshut hijackers, and the Stammheim

³⁶⁰ "Maybe at this moment the whole time – new evidence comes to light almost every hour, it seems to me now – is standing at a certain time-threshold." Goetz 22.

³⁶¹ "After seventy-seven, nothing was the same. Not the state, not the revolution, not the role of Germany, not the place of armed struggle in class war, everything was ruptured." Goetz 271.

³⁶² "Compulsion to conclude." Goetz 38.

³⁶³ "In this way you finish the most stupid things, just to be rid of them by having concluded them, maybe death-driven, who knows, the fact is one doesn't know, because one doesn't know oneself very well. One just follows orders that dictate the next step." Goetz 39.

prisoners – is for Goetz's narrator a necessary conclusion, the consequence of a largely inscrutable but undeniably real "Geschichtslogik." This "logic of history" recalls Hegel's world spirit in so far as its justification only becomes apparent in retrospect: "Der revolutionäre Mord geschieht, geschichtslogisch notwendig, das heißt nicht zu rechtfertigen vorher, doch im nachhinein gerechtfertigt vom Fortgang der Geschichte durch ihn durch."³⁶⁴

Such comments demonstrate that the narrator's reflections move well outside the bounds of conventional political discourse. In fact, his fascination with the RAF is not so much political as existential.³⁶⁵ It is driven by the "feeling" that revolution is imminent: "Die Revolution kommt, das war das Gefühl."³⁶⁶ Such feelings do not hold up to rational analysis: "Vielleicht kann man den Staat zerbrechen, dann wären alle Schweine weg, was man nicht denkt, weil es ausdrücklich gedacht ein Unsinn ist, aber das Gefühl fühlt sich ungefähr so an."³⁶⁷ In accordance with this

³⁶⁴ "Revolutionary murder occurs, necessary in terms of the logic of history, that is, unjustifiable before, but justifiable afterwards, by the continuation of history through it." Goetz 94.

³⁶⁵ This point is made by Hoeps (293ff.).

³⁶⁶ "The revolution is coming, that was the feeling." Goetz 40.

³⁶⁷ "Maybe one can crush the state, then all the pigs would be gone, which isn't something one thinks, because, explicitly thought, it's nonsense, but the feeling felt roughly that way." Goetz 41. That the narrator is less interested in political change than in existential fulfilment also becomes clear from the fact that he is willing to accept the failure of the revolution, simply because he finds the idea of dying for a cause satisfying; his own death takes precedence over the realisation of the cause: "Man würde kämpfen für das idealste Ideal, das maximale Glück der möglichst vielen, dem Volke dienen, wie die revolutionäre Kampfschrift heißt, dann würde man in diesem Kampf erschossen, doch hätte man das Leben so auf jeden Fall im Dienst des richtigen gelebt und wäre obendrein das ganze blöde Leben endlich los" (Goetz 41) ["One would fight for the most ideal ideal, the greatest possible happiness of the greatest possible number, serve the people, as the revolutionary text says, then one would be shot as part of this fight, but in

realisation, the narrator is sceptical of theory, and in particular of the theoretical texts published by the RAF; he seems to treasure them more as poetic than as literary works. In this sense, it is telling that while he remembers having dreamt, on occasion, of becoming militant himself, he was always distracted by "echte poetische Bücher"³⁶⁸ that interested him more than politics. He writes disparagingly about organised political work and views the activities of political groups as resulting from the self-delusion of would-be revolutionaries: "In echt ist die marxistische Gruppe für viele Studenten und noch mehr ehemalige Studenten ganz einfach das gemütliche Zuhause eines überschaubaren politischen Clubs [...]."³⁶⁹

Any attempt to grasp the activities of the RAF theoretically ignores what the narrator perceives as the primacy of "action": "Handeln folgt nicht theoretischer Begründung, sondern handelt für sich logisch einfach Schritt für Schritt nach einer jeweils neuen Augenblickslogik. Deshalb ist es Unsinn, vom Täter auch noch

any case one would have lived one's life as a servant of what is right, and besides one would finally be rid of the whole stupid life"]. ("Dem Volk dienen" ["To serve the people"] is the title both of an early RAF document and an essay by Mao.)

³⁶⁸ "Real poetic books." Goetz 100.

³⁶⁹ "In reality the Marxist group is, for many students and more former students, just the comfortable home of a small political club." Goetz 264. Cf. also Goetz 263: "Wenn also eine marxistische Gruppe keine Wirkung hat, dann will sie keine Wirkung haben. Radikales Denken soll streng getrennt bleiben von revolutionärer Radikalität im Leben, wo lustiges Konspirationsgehabe angesagt ist, Bierdimpfelei, Proletkult und Aktenköfferchen" ["So if a Marxist group achieves nothing, it wants to achieve nothing. Radical thought has to be distinguished from revolutionary radicality in life, where you want entertaining conspirative antics, beer-drinking, Proletkult and a briefcase"].

Theorien zu verlangen."³⁷⁰ The actions of the RAF members, he insists, are more "true" than any theoretical pronouncement. No theory, the narrator muses at one point, can justify murder, and yet to commit murder may still in some sense be right or at least "nicht falsch."³⁷¹ This radical divorce of theory and practice, and the rejection of theory in favour of the study of actual events, entails an epistemological limitation. Without theory, there is no hope of achieving a comprehensive understanding of the historical situation; the narrator can only "understand" those actions and events he can directly relate to: "Nur was man erlebt hat, sagt einem gesagt etwas verständliches."³⁷² This means that the narrator's attempt to comprehend the RAF and the events of the 1977 is not total, but selective; he is not seriously interested, for instance, in those statements by Baader he could never have made himself: "Macht kaputt, was euch kaputt macht, ist für jeden logisch zu verstehen und vernünftig, hingegen ist der Satz, die Knarre spricht, für mich

³⁷⁰ "Action doesn't obey theoretical justifications, but acts by itself, logically, step by step, according to an ever changing logic of moments. That's why it's silly to ask the one who acts [the perpetrator] for theories." Goetz 60. Cf. also the narrator's disparaging comments on Gudrun Ensslin's discovery of a "revolutionary morality" in Baader's often crude pronouncements: "Baader ist natürlich eine faszinierende Abscheulichkeit [...] mir nur zu gut verständlich [...] Aber um eine Moral der Erniedrigten und Beleidigten in so einem vorbildlich verkörpert zu sehen, dazu muß man, den Germanistikbrei im leeren Nichtkopf, rigid frigide Gudrun heissen" (Goetz 125) ["Of course Baader's a fascinating monstrosity, only too understandable to me, but to see in one like him the exemplary embodiment of a morality of the oppressed, you would have to be called Gudrun, rigidly frigid, a mess of university studies in your empty non-head"].

³⁷¹ "Not wrong." Goetz 102.

³⁷² "Nothing speaks to one comprehensibly except what one has experienced." Goetz 63.

ein Baaderschwachsinn und sonst nichts."³⁷³ The narrator's attempts to "understand" are limited by his own middle-class background, which prohibits him, for example, from identifying with the traditional revolutionary subject, the working class: "Gegen die wachsende Blödheit im Hirn muß man sich als Bürgerling denkend behaupten, dagegen kann man nichts tun, der Zutritt zum Leben, direkt paradiesisch proletarisch lockend, bleibt doch verriegelt."³⁷⁴

As far removed as he may be from the revolutionary subject, the narrator's view of the revolution and of its vehicle, the RAF, is ultimately an enthusiastic one. He praises the radicality of the RAF as a valid antidote to the oppression of "the people": "Um Schluss zu machen mit dem sozialdemokratischen Dreck und dem kleinkarierten opportunistischen Reformismus, baut sich die Rote Armee auf. Macht kaputt, was das Volk kaputt macht."³⁷⁵ It is only with hindsight that this revolutionary project can be understood as tragically flawed. The tragedy of the RAF was that it eventually

³⁷³ "'Break what's breaking you' is logically comprehensible and sensible to everyone; on the other hand, the statement 'The gun talks' is to me nothing but Baader-nonsense." Goetz 63. "Macht kaputt, was euch kaputt macht" ["Break what's breaking you"] is a song by the Berlin band Ton Stein Sterbe Scherben that enjoyed marked popularity among West German student protesters.

³⁷⁴ "As a bourgeois, you can only combat the brain's growing stupidity by thinking, there's nothing to be done about that, access to life – direct, Edenic, proletarian, tempting – remains blocked." Goetz 124. Cf. also Goetz 125: "[...] daß ich da, wo ich nicht herkomme, nicht hin kommen kann" ["that I can't get to where I don't come from"]. At one point, the narrator suggests this inability to resolve conflicts in ways that are not cerebral amounts to a kind of paralysis: "[...] reif für jede raf Parole jeder Staatsfeindschaft und gleichzeitig immun paralysiert zum Nichttatsmensch. Der Zorn redet in einem, meist nicht einmal aus einem raus, schießen tut er nicht" (Goetz 172f.) ["ripe for every slogan of state-opposition and simultaneously an immunised, paralysed non-active-man. Rage talks inside of one, rarely from one, it doesn't shoot"].

³⁷⁵ "In order to put an end to the social-democratic shit and pedantic, opportunist reformism, the Red Army forms itself. Breaks what's breaking the people." Goetz 247.

found itself in a situation it could no longer control, that its actions were determined, after the escalation of the conflict between it and the state, by the inherent logic of this conflict rather than by free choice: "So hat alles angefangen, richtig, konsequent. Sieben Jahre später jedoch ist es nicht Mai, sondern Herbst, und das enge Gesetz des Handelns diktiert jeden Schritt, nicht mehr der freie Entschluss zur Treue zu sich."³⁷⁶ Yet the original revolutionary impulse remains laudable and understandable: "Trotzdem geht auch diesen Weg korrekterweise jeder, der nicht mit einem Loch, wo Menschen Herzen haben, sondern als normaler auf die Welt geboren wird."³⁷⁷

The final section of Kontrolliert, "Im Namen des Volkes"³⁷⁸, attempts to spell out in greater detail why the RAF's revolutionary

³⁷⁶ "That's how everything started, the right way, consistently. But seven years later it's autumn, not May, and every step is dictated by the rigid law of action, not by the free decision of being true to oneself." Goetz 248. Goetz notes that, with hindsight, what seemed morally laudable at first comes to seem mistaken. Moral principles lose their credibility once they have led to dubious actions. By producing doubt and scepticism, historical experience threatens moral and political integrity: "Erfahrungen ruinieren die Urteilskraft, das Leben macht böseartig milde. Verständnis und Nachsicht korrumpieren den anfangs unbestechlichen Blick. Das erste Urteil stimmt, danach kommt Lüge, Betrug, Gerechtigkeit" (Goetz 247) ["Experiences ruin the faculty of judgement, life breeds sinister leniency. Empathy and comprehension corrupt the formerly incorruptible gaze. The first judgement is correct, then comes lying, betrayal, justice"].

³⁷⁷ "And yet everyone who is born normal and not with a hole for a heart follows this path, as he should." Goetz 125. Cf. also Goetz 248: "Und dennoch kriegt nicht das Schlaubergerl, das die Inkonsistenz lobt und schelmisch in alle Richtungen käferlt, recht von der Geschichte. Die Täter, die gehandelt haben, gleich wie falsch, sind die Herausforderung für jedes Leben, das sich richtig leben will" ["And yet history does not approve the know-it-all who praises inconsistency and crawls mischievously in every direction. No matter how wrong their actions, those who acted are the challenge for every life that wants to live itself the right way"]. Cf. also Goetz 246, where the narrator insists that the "enemy" was correctly identified by the RAF, and remains the same: "Der Feind ist immernoch der gleiche, oder wird etwa die werktätige Masse heute weniger für blöd verkauft, als gestern, ganz im Gegenteil" ["The enemy is still the same, or are they taking the piss out of the working masses any less these days, on the contrary"].

³⁷⁸ "In the name of the people."

project failed. The main reason is that the state was able to appropriate this project and use it for its own ends; by recognising the revolution as an "enemy," the state was able to integrate it into its own political strategy: "Der Staat erkennt die Revolution als Feindin an, die zu ihm gehört, und vernichtet sie so in sich hinein."³⁷⁹ The increasingly symbiotic relationship between the state and the "terrorists" is evident in the state's willingness itself to employ "terrorist" measures; this is suggested by Goetz's narrator when he describes the storming of the Landshut as "Sturm der deutschen Terroreinheit."³⁸⁰ The RAF underestimated the state's ruthlessness – a ruthlessness that also emerges from the decision to let Schleyer die (at one point, Schleyer's death is described as "ritual murder"³⁸¹).

Goetz's narrator accepts the conventional view that the Stammheim prisoners committed suicide; he interprets their suicide as resulting from a recognition of the revolutionary project's failure. The most striking evidence of this failure consists in the fact that the general population denied the RAF its support: "Das Volk hat sich nicht auf die Seite dieser Revolution gestellt."³⁸² This denial constituted a condemnation of Baader and his companions, a "death

³⁷⁹ "The state recognises the revolution as an enemy that belongs to it, thereby destroying it into itself." Goetz 277.

³⁸⁰ "Storming by the German terror unit." Goetz 277.

³⁸¹ Cf. Goetz 273.

³⁸² "The people have not sided with the revolution." Goetz 187.

sentence" they executed on themselves: "Die Revolution hat das Urteil des Volkes angenommen und an sich selbst vollstreckt."³⁸³

The question remains why "the people" pronounced this "death sentence" by echoing the state's condemnation of "terrorism." For Goetz's narrator, the primary cause lies with the media – specifically, with their concerted effort to prevent any form of solidarity with the militants, an effort that involved the deliberate suppression of information.³⁸⁴ This is the aspect of the "terrorist" conflict that most merits crucial attention: "Hier liegt der Ausgangspunkt der ganzen Überlegung."³⁸⁵ It necessitates an entirely new critique of power, formulated in a revised "vocabulary"

³⁸³ "The revolution has accepted the verdict of the people and applied it to itself." Goetz 280. Earlier, the narrator describes the Stammheim suicides as a strategic decision, albeit a profoundly flawed one: "Ihren Tod aber haben sie völlig falsch eingeschätzt, aus dem falschen Kalkül mit dem Kalkül der vermeintlich dümmen Gegenseite, aus der falschen Verachtung des Alltagswissen, das dem Staat selbstverständlich jederzeit jede Sauerei und jeden Mord zutraut, und aus der Arroganz gegenüber der menschlichen Banalität, daß für einen selbst der eigene Tod alles ist, aber für alle anderen, egal wer man ist, vernünftigerweise nahezu nichts, oder absolut nichts" (Goetz 256) ["But they completely misjudged their death, wrongly betting on the bet of the putatively more stupid opponent, out of their mistaken contempt for everyday knowledge, which naturally credits the state, any time, with any dirty trick and any murder, and out of their arrogance in the face of human banality, that one's own death is everything to oneself, but, no matter who one is, and as is only rational, next to nothing for the others, or absolutely nothing"].

³⁸⁴ Cf. the request of Bölling, the West German "propaganda minister": "[...] von aller Berichterstattung Abstand zu nehmen und bei allem Verständnis für die wachsende Unruhe und Sorge in der Öffentlichkeit vor allem keine Informationen zu veröffentlichen, die Kontakte mit den Revolutionären ermöglichen und verbessern würden" (Goetz 253) ["To distance oneself from any form of reporting and, with all due respect for the public's growing unrest and preoccupation, under no circumstances to publish information that might make possible and improve contact with the revolutionaries"].

³⁸⁵ "Here's the starting point for the whole reflection." Goetz 250f. Cf. also Goetz 251: "Die moralische Empörung hat der Presse gegolten, mehr als dem Staat, und an der Presse ist schliesslich die ganze Moral zerbrochen" ["Moral outrage was directed more at the press than at the state, and morale was broken by the press"].

that takes account of the media's previously unheard of willingness to act propagandistically beyond even the hopes of the government:

Aber die Selbstgleichschaltung der Presse, die tatsächlich besser funktioniert, als es sich Propagandaminister Bölling trotz aller Briefe an die sehr geehrten Herren Chefredakteure mit vorzüglicher Hochachtung selber hätte träumen lassen, räumt wirklich auf mit aller im traditionellen Vokabular nicht falschen, aber eben doch zu fertigen Kritik der Macht.³⁸⁶

Rather than abandon all hope of a successful revolution, the narrator formulates a program for ensuring the next revolutionary movement will at least not fail for the same reasons as the RAF. This program turns on the necessity of a media culture that does more than uncritically replicate the government's position, thereby making itself a device for manipulating the population: "Die Medien müssen mehr sein, als Agenten der Macht der herrschenden Klasse, mehr, als Instrumente zur Manipulation angeblich manipulierbarer Massen."³⁸⁷ Now that the naive conception of the media as liberal and democratic has been revealed to be an "illusion" – now that the "traditional middle class critique of the state," which was premised on this view of the media, has succumbed to "ruin" – such concepts as "the people" need to be subjected to new scrutiny: "Dieser Ruin

³⁸⁶ "But the conformity of the press, which actually works better than propaganda minister Bölling could have dreamed, despite all his letters to the dear editor, yours sincerely, really finishes off that critique of power which, couched in traditional vocabulary, is not wrong, but in any case too complete." Goetz 250.

³⁸⁷ "The media must be more than agents of the power of the ruling class, more than instruments for manipulating putatively manipulable masses." Goetz 251.

eröffnet plötzlich alle Fragen wirklich, neu. Wer ist das Volk.

Herrscht das Volk, wie. Muß noch wer erschossen werden."³⁸⁸

Kontrolliert comes full circle with the narrator's recognition that the central question to which such an analysis must be devoted is that of the state and how it exercises its power: "Warum funktioniert der Staat."³⁸⁹

Eva Zeller: Heidelberger Novelle

Eva Zeller's 1988 novella³⁹⁰ is inspired by the RAF's 1981 attempt on the life of US general Kroesen. In telling the story of Regine, a teenage girl living with her aunt and uncle in Heidelberg, the novella presents itself first as the straightforward account of a generational conflict; when Regine disappears after an assassination attempt, it transpires that her interest in German history and her political arguments with her aunt and uncle were not the innocent symptoms of a coming-of-age crisis, but indications of her involvement with militants.

For the longest time, the radicality of Regine's political attitude³⁹¹ is not properly perceived by those around her. This

³⁸⁸ "This ruin suddenly poses all questions properly, anew. Who are the people. Do the people rule, how. Does someone else need to be shot." Ibid.

³⁸⁹ "Why does the state work." Ibid.

³⁹⁰ Eva Zeller, Heidelberger Novelle (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1988). For a discussion of how Zeller adheres strictly to the formal features of the traditional German novella (eg. by basing her story on actual historical events and setting up an antagonistic relation between her characters), cf. Hoeps 190ff.

³⁹¹ Cf. eg. her comment on an attempted assassination of the pope. Regine identifies the killer as an "Instrument der Gerechtigkeit" (Zeller 48) ["instrument of justice"].

failure to "see" what is happening is expressed ironically in descriptions of Regine's efforts to prepare for a Latin exam: Zeller describes in detail how Regine memorises the various Latin verbs corresponding to the German "sehen"³⁹²; one of these verbs – "Experierar quid faciendam cit: ich will sehen, was zu tun ist"³⁹³ – subtly indicates that what Regine's aunt and uncle fail to take note of is not a purely passive or contemplative activity, but her attempt to arrive at a practical response to problems of social and political injustice.³⁹⁴

The disparity between Regine's political views and those of her aunt and uncle emerges most clearly from the family's discussions on history, a subject Regine intends to study at university (or so

³⁹² "To see."

³⁹³ "Experierar quid faciendam cit: I want to see what can be done." Zeller 9. Another verb Regine memorises is quaerare ("to search"); the related verbs investigare ("to investigate") and mortem expetere ("to plan an attempt on someone's life") similarly foreshadow the assassination attempt and the ensuing police investigation. Cf. Zeller 23f., 27. The box in which Regine keeps her Latin notes is jokingly referred to by her uncle as "Pandora's box." This image of enclosed evil corresponds to the fact that Regine's murderous plans remain hidden for the longest time – "enclosed" in the innocent antics of an apparently normal teenage girl. Crucially, the "evil" contained in Pandora's box according to Greek legend is that of hope. In Zeller's novella, this hope becomes the expression of the older generation's refusal to emerge from the cocoon of banal everydayness and face the reality of its direct encounter with left-wing militancy. Cf. Zeller 80: "Noch während sie [sc. the policemen] sich verabschieden, klingelt, wie von Geisterhänden beschworen, das Telefon, und Thea bekommt es fertig, den Hörer abzunehmen, einen Augenblick lang die linke Hand auf die Sprechmuschel zu legen und zu sagen, das sei vielleicht Regine, da könnten die Herren vom Bundeskriminalamt doch gleich selber mit ihr sprechen. / Es ist dann aber nur der Schornsteinfeger, der sich für morgen ansagt" ["Even as the policemen say goodbye, the telephone rings, as if prompted by ghostly forces, and Thea manages to lift the receiver, places her hand on it for a moment to say it might be Regine, maybe the gentlemen from the police would like to speak directly to her. But it's only the chimney cleaner announcing he'll stop by tomorrow."]

³⁹⁴ Cf. Zeller 60: "Regine hat man längst aus den Augen verloren" ["Regine has long since been lost sight of"].

she claims).³⁹⁵ The uncle refuses to take history seriously, dismissing it as a "farce" and "something ghostly."³⁹⁶ Regine rejects this view of history as something that cannot be grasped in rational terms and is only ever experienced passively. While insisting human beings are not merely the objects, but also the agents of historical change, she immediately qualifies this claim by suggesting some might choose to ignore their historical responsibility: "Geschichte ist herstellbar, Geschichte wird gemacht, freilich nicht von Leuten, die sich Kuhglocken und Serviettenständer zum Einstand schenken lassen und dafür noch danke sagen [...]."³⁹⁷ The disparaging references to kitsch household items imply an accusation; in so far as Regine's aunt and uncle are markedly fond of such objects, she is identifying them as prime examples of historical irresponsibility.

The uncle's view of history results from his sense that it has become impossible to distinguish clearly between good and evil. That the distinction was clear in the past is suggested by his description of a church destroyed in 1945; this church featured inspiring representations of an ongoing struggle between the forces of light and darkness: "[...] da kämpften Eidechsen und Kröten

³⁹⁵ Cf. Zeller 8: "[...] sie wolle [...] unbedingt Geschichte studieren, um diesen ganzen Wahnsinn besser durchschauen zu können [...]" ["She wanted to study history at all costs, in order better to understand all this madness"].

³⁹⁶ Cf. Zeller 19: "Was anderes ist Geschichte als Farce, ein Spuk?" ["What is history but a farce, something ghostly?"]. "Spuk" literally means "haunting"; the notion that the past "haunts" the present is relevant in so far as Regine's sympathy for militancy is at least partly a result of her outrage over Germany's Nazi past (see below).

³⁹⁷ "History can be made, naturally not by people who accept cowbells and napkin rings as gifts and even say thank you." Zeller 19f.

miteinander, Licht und Finsternis nämlich."³⁹⁸ The destruction of the church by Allied bombs metaphorically represents the uncle's loss of faith in straightforward moral (and, by implication, political) dichotomies – a traumatic and "tragic" experience: "Noch öfter als ihre strotzende, schiefrunde Schönheit ist Regine die Zerstörung dieser Kirche geschildert worden mit Worten, mit denen man eine schicksalsschwere antike Tragödie erzählt."³⁹⁹ The younger generation, at least as represented by Regine, is by no means bereft of such dichotomous thinking, although it seems confused and puzzling to the uncle: "Der Onkel ist außerstande [...] mit der Häkelnadel ihrer [sc. Regine's] verdrehten Logik herauszufinden, wer in diesem Welttheater Täter und wer Opfer ist, wer Ausbeuter und wer Ausgebeuteter, wer gut, wer böse."⁴⁰⁰

The uncle's attitude towards history exists in a sociopolitical context characterised by the reduction of history to spectacle. This

³⁹⁸ "Lizards and frogs, that is, light and darkness, struggled against one another." Zeller 26.

³⁹⁹ "More often than those of its impressive, skewed beauty, Regine has heard descriptions of the church's destruction, rendered in the language of a fateful ancient tragedy." Zeller 26f. Cf. Zeller 30 for an analogous description of physical destruction. The uncle tells the story of a bridge destroyed by German troops to stall the advance of the Allied forces: "Kurz vor Kriegsende glaubte man, die Brücke noch sprengen zu müssen, um den Feind aufzuhalten. Später dann hat man Stein für Stein aus dem Neckar geborgen und getreulich wieder aufgebaut, was unzerstörbar sein soll" (Zeller 30) ["Shortly before the end of the war they felt it necessary to destroy the bridge in order to stop the enemy. Later they retrieved each stone from the river Neckar and faithfully reconstructed what was meant to be indestructible"]. This metaphor of Germany's postwar reconstruction both locates responsibility for the catastrophe of 1945 (described as an act of self-destruction) in Germany itself, and suggests that many of the former (social and political?) structures were uncritically restored, in accordance with an ahistorical sense of permanence.

⁴⁰⁰ "The uncle is incapable of using Regine's skewed logic to unravel who is the culprit and who the victim, who the exploiter and who the exploited, where good and evil are located on this world stage." Zeller 49f.

emerges clearly from Zeller's description of Heidelberg, which suggests an appropriation of history by those whose commercial interests prohibit a critical examination of Nazi crimes and merely treat the legacy of the past as material for tourist entertainment.

Regine explicitly and angrily addresses this process of denial:

So wird aus Geschichte Spektakel gemacht. Und Geschäft.

Klar. Habt ihr eigentlich gewusst, meine Herrschaften, was vor Jahren in Flammenschrift über dem Neckar zu lesen war.

Dreimal dürft ihr raten. Heil Hitler Heil Hitler war da zu lesen.⁴⁰¹

Regine's aunt Thea is complicit in this erasure of the past. Her love of Heidelberg is one that insists on the historical remoteness of the 1930s and 1940s in order to conveniently forget what happened.⁴⁰² In her comfortably banal lifestyle, her "Gemütlichkeit,"⁴⁰³ Thea becomes "eine Marionette der Konvention."⁴⁰⁴ Her stroll through Heidelberg's shopping district – an example of complacent consumerism to Regine⁴⁰⁵ – is

⁴⁰¹ "That's how history is transformed into spectacle. And business. Sure. Did you know, gentlemen, what was written in flaming letters above the river Neckar years ago. Three guesses. Heil Hitler Heil Hitler is what it said." Zeller 33.

⁴⁰² Cf. Zeller 36: "Tante Thea [...] schätzt sich glücklich, in einer so überschaubaren, durchwohnten Stadt wie Heidelberg leben zu dürfen, einer unzerstörten obendrein. Krieg? Bomben? Flucht? Heidelberg hat seine grausigsten Zerstörungen schon lange hinter sich" ["Aunt Thea considers herself lucky to live in as small and densely populated a city as Heidelberg, one left intact by the war. War? Bombs? Exile? Heidelberg had long since left its most terrible destructions behind"].

⁴⁰³ "Comfort." Zeller 37.

⁴⁰⁴ "A puppet of convention." Zeller 10.

⁴⁰⁵ Cf. Zeller 51: "Für Regine ist hier der Ort einer schläfrig satten Konsumgesellschaft" ["For Regine this is the place of a sleepy and sated consumer society"]. Cf. also Zeller 53: "Was Tante Thea in der Hauptstraße Flair

overshadowed only once by an indication of widespread stupidity and hidden sordidness – when Thea catches sight of a sculpted monkey holding a mirror. The inscription on the time-worn sculpture accuses Heidelberg's inhabitants of facing in the monkey an image of themselves:

Was thustu

mich angaffen

Hastu nich gesehen

den alten Affen

zu Heidelberg

sieh dich hin und her

da findestu wol

meinesgleichen mehr⁴⁰⁶

For Thea, this is simply "nonsense."⁴⁰⁷ Her refusal to face up to the monkey's message is presented as a fearful escape from the truth. Later in the novella, Zeller mentions the discovery of a prehistoric skull in the woods where the militant attack occurs. The skull recalls the monkey sculpture and serves as a similar symbol of humanity's closeness to the animal kingdom; it also signifies what Zeller

nennt, nennt Regine also Konsum" ["What Thea calls the flair of the main street is called consumerism by Regine"].

⁴⁰⁶ „What are you / staring at / Haven't you seen / the old monkey / in Heidelberg / Take a look around / you'll surely find / others like me." Zeller 42f.

⁴⁰⁷ Cf. Zeller 43: "So ein Quatsch. [...] Ekelhaft. Thea hat sich für das Schöne im Leben entschieden. Das lässt sie sich nicht nehmen" ["What nonsense. Disgusting. Thea has opted for what is beautiful in life. She won't let anyone take that away from her"].

perceives as the unenlightened, intolerant, and primitive character of militant violence:

In den Wäldern fand sich ein Menschenrest mit Weisheitszahn, schon nicht mehr Affe zu nennen, denn er trug bereits archaische Züge. Und in den Wäldern fand sich das Basislager der Attentäter. Nicht alles, was Menschenantlitz trägt, respektiert, was Menschenantlitz trägt.⁴⁰⁸

Hence the militant attack confirms the message of the monkey sculpture: ignorance and primitive violence continue to thrive under the placid veneer of Heidelberg's tourist attractions. Repeating, at the end of her novella, the first line of the monkey sculpture's inscription, Zeller identifies the supposedly peaceful and enlightened citizens of Heidelberg as "neanderthals of the future": "Was thustu mich angaffen. Wir haben es herrlich weit gebracht, wir Neanderthaler der Zukunft."⁴⁰⁹ This condemnation clearly includes Regine: while Zeller is hardly sympathetic to Thea's wilful ignorance, she insists that the dichotomy of good and evil that underlies militant activities is an illusion: "Jeder wähnt sich im

⁴⁰⁸ "In the woods human remains were found, among them a wisdom tooth, no longer qualifying for description as a monkey, for they already displayed archaic features. And the base of the assassins was in the woods. Not everything with a human face respects other human beings." Zeller 75. Zeller's ironic reference to the "wisdom tooth" reinforces her point that the putatively enlightened late 20th Century continues to be characterised by "archaic" violence.

⁴⁰⁹ "What are you staring at. We've come a long way: neanderthals of the future." Ibid.

Recht. Den schlichten Raster von Gut und Böse hat es nie gegeben."⁴¹⁰

Christian Geissler: kamalatta

Christian Geissler's 1988 novel⁴¹¹ is characterised by open support for the RAF and left-wing militancy in general, as well as by a Manichean world view that posits the revolutionaries of all nations on one side and the agents and lackeys of (North American) imperialism on the other. The main narrative strand chronicles the enmity between West German journalist Rupert Koch, alias Proff,

⁴¹⁰ "Everyone thinks they're right. The simple dichotomy of good and evil never existed." Zeller 75.

⁴¹¹ Christian Geissler, kamalatta (Berlin: Rotbuch, 1988). This novel is the third in a trilogy (after Wird Zeit, daß wir leben, 1976, and Das Brot mit der Feile, 1986) dealing with various forms of German communist militancy. Geissler's support for the RAF is implicit in the first two parts of the trilogy; it becomes explicit not only in kamalatta, but also in his two volumes of poetry, Im Vorfeld einer Schußverletzung (Berlin: Rotbuch, 1980) and spiel auf ungeheuer (Berlin: Rotbuch, 1983). For further statements evidencing Geissler's (eventually more critical) attitude to the RAF, cf. his 1992 collection of texts Prozeß im Bruch (Hamburg: Edition Nautilus, 1992), in particular the 1990 text "dissonanzen der klärung" (Prozeß im Bruch 52ff.). In the author's note preceding the text of kamalatta, Geissler expresses thanks to imprisoned RAF members with whom he corresponded. His support for the RAF manifests itself in the very orthography of kamalatta, which is written almost entirely in lower case letters, like the later RAF declarations. The effect is particularly striking in German, which normally requires not only proper names and the first word of a sentence, but all nouns to be capitalised. For a comprehensive discussion of kamalatta that includes a comparison to Peter Weiss, cf. Sven Kramer, Die Subversion der Literatur (Stuttgart: Metzler/Poeschel, 1996). Cf. also Delabar/Schütz 170ff. (on Geissler's notion of resistance and his Manichean worldview). Other (often surprisingly sympathetic) reviews of kamalatta include: Michael Wildenhain, "Linke Kämpfe in einer recht dürftigen Zeit," in: der literat 31/1989, 116ff.; Uwe Wittstock, "Der Terror und seine Dichter. Politisch Motivierte Gewalt in der neuen deutschen Literatur: Bodo Morshäuser, Rainald Goetz, Christian Geissler", in: Die Neue Rundschau 101/1990 65ff.; Thomas Rothschild, "Motiv Gefangenschaft: Christian Geisslers Roman kamalatta", in: Frankfurter Rundschau, 3 December, 1988; Hannes Kraus' review in the Deutsche Volkszeitung 45, 7 October 1988 16ff.; and Klaus Jünschke, "Begreifen, daß Krieg ist, und sich entscheiden", in: Der Spiegel 12/1989 234ff.

and an American Special Forces officer known as the White Eye.⁴¹²

Proff is a close friend of a number of Hamburg communists, some of whom are RAF members.

Paid to report on the Olympics in Mexico City in 1968, Proff witnesses the brutal intervention of Special Forces troops against a peaceful left-wing demonstration, joins in the fighting, and is deported to a US-military base in Guatemala, where he is physically and psychologically tortured at the hands of the White Eye. Perhaps implausibly, Proff is released from the military base and allowed to return to Europe. A psychological wreck, he speaks to no one about his experiences; in fact, for years, he does not speak at all.⁴¹³

Eventually, he learns about a former SS base in Bad Tölz, Bavaria, where the White Eye now directs a center for the training of an international counterinsurgency force.⁴¹⁴ Paid by German national

⁴¹² Cf. Geissler 23. While the symbolism of the eye remains opaque, whiteness is a recurring trope in Geissler's text, consistently associated with imperialism and the destruction perpetrated by it: "weiß ist vernichtung" (Geissler 68) ["white is destruction"]. A colour historically associated with the counterrevolution (the Russian White Army), the white of the imperialists is contrasted with the red of Geissler's protagonists: "es gibt keinen frieden mit dem pack, noch nie, die töten doch nur, wenn sie frieden meinen, oder du frisst aus der hand, aber aus ihrer weißen, deine rote binden sie fest" (Geissler 112) ["there can be no peace with the scum, never, they only kill when they speak of peace, or you eat from their hand, but from their white one, they tie up your red one"]. White is also the colour of the mental and emotional blankness German prison officials seek to create in the RAF members they place in solitary confinement; speaking of one such prisoner, Geissler evokes the notion of "empty time" lived through in the sensory deprivation of an isolated prison cell: "er kam ins tickende weiß" (Geissler 100) ["he was placed in ticking whiteness"]. When the character Blues is arrested, she notices the whiteness of the police van's window; later, in her prison cell, she cuts herself in order to disrupt the whiteness of her surroundings (Geissler 524ff.).

⁴¹³ Significantly, Proff regains his faculty of speech on the day of Baader's liberation.

⁴¹⁴ Geissler constantly stresses the continuities between the SS and the Special Forces. What unites them is their common enemy, communism: "im gleichen

television to produce a documentary on the goings-on in Tölz, Proff travels to the training camp and interviews various Special Forces troops, including the White Eye himself (who, hoping to lure Proff into a trap, pretends not to recognise him). Proff and his militant friends organise a successful attack on the military base in Bad Tölz. Shortly thereafter, Proff commits suicide.

A number of chapters in Geissler's novel describe the ordeal of solitary confinement. One of the most striking descriptions is preceded by that of Proff's cramped office:

bei proff gings über landkartenwände auf reisen, in alle karten waren eingeklebt nachrichten oder bilder von kämpfen [...] und nah am tisch, immer dabei, nach sonstwohin schon verschleppt, lenin und stalin und mao tse tung, büchner, jean paul und melville und conrad, und hikmet und führmann, weiss und celan. und die texte: raf.⁴¹⁵

haus damals europas ss und heute die special forces, beides elitekampfbund gegen rot" (Geissler 25) ["in the same house, ss then and the special forces today, both elite fighters against red"]. For Proff and his friends, fascism is not a closed chapter in the book of history, not a "horror show from the past" or "demonic disruption," but the basis for an ongoing capitalist and counterrevolutionary project: "denn hier war faschismus nie gruseltheater von früher, kein dämonistischer zwischenfall, sondern ist [...] von gestern das fundament für morgen, aus vorher weit bis weit künftig hin das kontinuum der profitinteressen" (Geissler 329) ["because here fascism was never a horror show from the past, no demonic disruption, it's the basis from yesterday for tomorrow, from far in the past until far in the future, the continuum of profit interests"]. Cf. also Geissler 131, 397. For a discussion of actual ties between the SS and the Special Forces (Green Berets), cf. Christopher Simpson, Blowback: America's Recruitment of Nazis and its Effects on the Cold War (New York: Collier Books, 1988) 139ff. and 213ff.

⁴¹⁵ "in proff's place you travelled across map walls, news or images of struggle were attached to each map, and close to the table, always accompanying him, dragged who knows where, lenin and stalin and mao tse tung, büchner, jean paul and melville and conrad, and hikmet and führmann, weiss and celan. and the texts: raf." Geissler 53.

This description sets up a contrast with the blankness of the prison cell described next. Proff's maps, clippings, and books constitute an environment consciously shaped by the person inhabiting it (a communist, globetrotter, and avid reader). In his room, Proff is constantly confronted with objects that express his interests, hopes, and concerns. The room presents a certain view of the world, one shaped by a particular (revolutionary) outlook. The imprisoned RAF member Jojo, described a few pages later, is prevented from surrounding himself with such visual and tactile expressions of everything he cares for: "seit sieben jahren ließ man die texte und photographien von kämpfenden leuten an ihn nicht und niemand in trakten heran."⁴¹⁶

One of the main functions of imprisonment is isolation: "sie wollen uns alle, jeden, allein."⁴¹⁷ The isolation of militants in prison is part of a larger counterrevolutionary project: the elimination of solidarity among all members of the left. To reduce the struggle of an activist or militant to a purely personal issue, a matter of "private pain" is to ensure his defeat, because anti-imperialist struggle can only be collective: "der kampf aus privatem schmerz [...] das kann dich [...] am ende nur niedermachen [...] oder du kommst im schmerz [...] auf den kern des kampfes, der nie privat

⁴¹⁶ "for seven years they didn't allow him or anyone in the high security wards to see the texts and photographs of fighters." Geissler 54. Cf. also Geissler 101.

⁴¹⁷ "they want us all, each of us, alone." Geissler 48.

deiner, nur kollektiv unser kampf ist."⁴¹⁸ To prevent solidarity by depriving individuals of a larger social and political context for their struggle is to spread a "plague" that serves the interests of the right, because it necessarily destroys the organisational potential of the left: "die vereinzelnung ist die pest, die sie wollen."⁴¹⁹

Collectivity is therefore a central ideal for Geissler's protagonists; its necessity arises from their view of themselves as agents of class struggle. For them, to live in a world dominated by US imperialism without actively participating in some form of resistance is to be metaphorically dead; they are convinced "daß man im imperialismus nicht leben kann, ohne gegen ihn krieg zu führen."⁴²⁰ If, as Geissler suggests⁴²¹, there is no peace, because

⁴¹⁸ "the struggle out of private pain can only wear you out. unless pain leads you to the heart of the struggle, which can never be yours privately, but only ours collectively." Geissler 293.

⁴¹⁹ "our reduction to isolated individuals is the plague they want." Geissler 113.

⁴²⁰ "that one can't live under imperialism without waging war against it." Geissler 453. The struggle of Geissler's left-wing activists and militants against the agents of imperialism is presented as a struggle of the living against the dead: "es wird killen trainiert [...] die toten lernen den tod. wir leben" (Geissler 15) ["killers are being trained. the dead learn death. we're alive"]. This contrast between the living and the dead is constantly reiterated: "unser land [sc. Germany] ist in der hand von toten. wir leben" (ibid.) ["our country is in the hands of the dead. we're alive"]. The concept of resistance is always implicit in that of being "alive"; only those who struggle are authentically human rather than mere "shadows": "wir sind nur das, was wir gegen sie tun. oder niedergeschlagen im schatten ihrer kontur nicht mal mehr schatten. verkauft" (Geissler 13) ["we're only what action we take against them. or, struck down in the shadow of their outline, not even shadows. sold"]. Another recurring trope is that of the desert: the present, that of capitalism and imperialism, is for Geissler a "desert" that needs to be crossed before life and joy can truly begin: "einmal werden wir singen: das war die wüste" (Geissler 15) ["one day we'll sing: that was the desert"]. ("Ein Lied in der Wüste" ["A Song in the Desert"] is the title of the first poem in Paul Celan's 1952 collection *Mohn und Gedächtnis*, which, like all of Celan's poetry, articulates the experience of a Holocaust survivor.) For those protagonists who are militant, such as those who are members of the RAF, the dichotomy of the living and the dead entails total subordination to the revolutionary project: "meine geschichte ist raf, sagte larry, der rest ist müll" (Geissler 379) ["my story is raf, larry said, the rest is trash"]. One of the unintentional ironies of Geissler's text is that the self-

capitalism and imperialism are both real, and are by definition forms of war, if talk of a world without violent conflict is deceitful – “das lügen von einer welt ohne krieg, deren funktionieren nur noch geht aus ununterbrochener gewaltanwendung gegenüber der weltmenschenmehrheit”⁴²² – then nonviolence ceases to be a viable option. Those who preach it do so from a position of privilege, ignoring that the relatively peaceful existence they are able to lead in First World nations is only made possible by the violent oppression and exploitation of the Third World.

Those who see through this illusion of peacefulness, recognising their privileges for what they are, as Geissler’s protagonists do, must necessarily feel shame.⁴²³ This is related to another central theme of kamalatta: that of whether it is possible to lead a morally good life in a world characterised by oppression and exploitation. Adorno famously said: “Es gibt kein richtiges Leben im

sacrifice of many of his protagonists, and in particular their insistence that their personal histories are worthless, because to dwell excessively on personal affairs is counterrevolutionary – “unsre vorgeschichten raufwühlen ist counter” (ibid.) [“dragging up our prior histories is counterrevolutionary”] – renders them strikingly similar to their enemies; describing the rearing of child soldiers in a Special Forces camp for torture and military training, Geissler points out that one of the first steps in transforming Guatemalan war orphans into counterrevolutionary killers is to erase their sense of their own past: “war jedem sein eigener name verboten, auch eines jeden geschichte vorm mord, die heimat, es galt nur die zahl und der fluch und das ziel, wir werden killer sein” (Geissler 375) [“each had been deprived of his own name, and of his story before the murder, of his home, nothing counted but the number and the curse and the aim, we will be killers”].

⁴²¹ Cf. the critique of the peace movement offered by the character Nina (Geissler 402).

⁴²² “the lies about a world without war, which functions only through uninterrupted use of force against the majority of human beings in the world.” Geissler 480.

⁴²³ Proff articulates this sense of shame during a conversation in which he seeks to explain to Jojo’s parents the reasons for his militancy. Cf. Geissler 97.

falschen,” and Geissler clearly agrees with him.⁴²⁴ If there is no good life in the world as Geissler sees it, some life choices are nonetheless more appropriate than others. The best life is that of those who combat oppression – and this, for Geissler, entails militancy.

Geissler’s novel is invaluable to the student of left-wing militancy because it takes a position very close to, if not identical with, that of the RAF members, and articulates it poetically. Where other texts examine militancy “from the outside,” occasionally sympathetic but ultimately critical, Geissler’s identification with the militants is near-total. Whether or not the reader is convinced by Geissler’s case for militancy, he has at his disposal, in kamalatta, a formulation of the militant position such as will never be found in the ideological texts of the RAF and related organisations – one that utilises the devices of literature. Notwithstanding Geissler’s at times overly Manichean portrayal of a very real conflict and the vast scope of his subject - which lead, at times, to weak characterisation and a somewhat muddled plot - his literary abilities are considerable; the language of kamalatta is truly poetic, at once richly associative, emotionally powerful, and lucid. Geissler’s achievement is to voice

⁴²⁴ “There is no right life in the wrong life.” Theodor W. Adorno, Minima Moralia (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1951) 59. Adorno’s dictum is echoed repeatedly in Geissler’s text: at times almost verbatim – “kein richtiges leben sei möglich im falschen, kein gutes im bösen” [“no right life is possible in the wrong life, no good life in the evil life”] – at times slightly altered, as the more harsh and colloquial “im fratzenleben gibt es kein schönes leben” [“in the life of grimaces there is no beautiful life”] or the tentative “aber es gibt ja vielleicht kein gesundes leben im kranken” [“but maybe there is no healthy life in the sick life”] (Geissler 314, 60, 78).

the position of those who, in his view, are almost always voiceless. As one of his militants says, those complicit in the mechanisms of capitalism and imperialism have an interest in maintaining this voicelessness: "es kommt ihnen drauf an, daß wir verstummen. sie hassen sprache. sie haben keine."⁴²⁵ By articulating an experience that many would prefer never to see articulated, Geissler's novel explicitly constitutes itself as a political act.⁴²⁶

Judith Kuckart: Wahl der Waffen

The protagonist of Wahl der Waffen⁴²⁷ is a German-born journalist, Katia, resident in Paris. When, in 1982, she learns of the death of

⁴²⁵ "they want us to fall silent. they hate language. they have none." Geissler 416.

⁴²⁶ In a passage easily overlooked but worthy of close reading (Geissler 142), Geissler offers a vision of that "new war" of which militancy is one aspect (the other being the state-sponsored, but clandestine counterinsurgency measures of the USA). This passage evokes one of the classic literary explorations of Western imperialism, Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness. During his visit to the Special Forces camp in Tölz, Proff and the White Eye, talking with the mutual respect and apparent gregariousness of mortal enemies patiently awaiting the most satisfying opportunity for their fight to the death, discuss how, given the nuclear stalemate between the world's superpowers, the struggle between revolutionaries and counterrevolutionaries has necessarily become more secretive. The clandestine operations of militant and US counterinsurgency forces have replaced traditional (open) warfare. The very nature of the conversation between Proff and the White Eye, in which their enmity is not obvious, illustrates this. Both Proff and the White Eye operate deceptively, Proff under the guise of the investigative journalist, the White Eye as the representative of a nation that claims to represent freedom and democracy rather than imperialist exploitation. Proff has infiltrated the headquarters of his enemy much as, in Conrad's story, Marlowe's boat navigates its way upriver, towards the murderous and insane Kurtz, under cover of darkness. The savagery of the White Eye's killing camps is hidden, unknown to the public, like Conrad's natives, who remain invisible in the jungle; the shabby boat that moves against the river current moves alone through hostile territory, like Proff or any clandestine militant; and the entire scene is veiled by a mist of secrecy and deception. It is this "new war" that Geissler explores and seeks to render visible in his novel, not as a neutral observer, but in an unabashedly "partisan" manner.

⁴²⁷ Judith Kuckart, Wahl der Waffen (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1990). Hoeps compares this novel to Goetz's Kontrolliert, both being examples of left-wing militancy as viewed by those born "after the fact." He points out it is the only novel, apart from Zahl's Die Glücklichen, that features members not only of the RAF, but also of the 2 June Movement. Cf. Hoeps 311ff.

her former babysitter and childhood idol Jette, Katia travels back to Germany to interview Jette's former acquaintances. Jette, a member of the 2 June Movement, has become the victim of a government crackdown on "terrorists" in Lebanon. Katia attempts to reconstruct Jette's transition from adolescent rebellion to political radicalism through interviews, the jotting down of personal memories, and imagined dialogues. Journalistic research and poetic writing become attempts to disclose the "traces" left by Jette in the ideological "desert" of Germany's "leaden years."⁴²⁸

In no way does Katia's research into Jette's life take the form of a typical journalistic enquiry. Katia relies on her imagination to answer those existential questions in the face of which conventionally "objective" research fails. At one point, she goes as far as suggesting the Jette she writes about is one "invented" posthumously: "Dies ist die Geschichte einer Frau, die schreibt, und die einer Frau, die fast erfunden, nachträglich."⁴²⁹ Yet the fictitious elements (such as the imagined dialogues) Katia introduces into her account of Jette's life are not introduced gratuitously, but only in so far as they promote the disclosure of (existential) truth: "[Sie]

⁴²⁸ Cf. Kuckart 89: "Katia sucht die Wüste nach Spuren ab" ["Katia searches the desert for traces"]. Here, the desert metaphor suggests the austerity and inhumanity of the militant lifestyle; the life of the writer presents itself as an alternative to this lifestyle, such that *Wahl der Waffen's* analysis of militancy is fundamentally premised on the distinction between a (politically) active and a contemplative lifestyle. The premise of *Wahl der Waffen* – one woman, a writer, investigates the fate of another, a militant – recalls Margarethe Von Trotta's film *Die bleierne Zeit* (discussed in Chapter V).

⁴²⁹ "This is the story of woman who writes, and of a woman almost invented, afterwards." Kuckart 10.

montiert Erfundenes ein, das der Wahrheitsfindung dient."⁴³⁰ When Katia uses her imagination in writing about Jette, she does so "responsibly" in the sense that she is not out to distort reality, but to understand it more completely.

Katia's writing also relinquishes the standards of journalistic objectivity in the sense that it takes into account her emotionally charged attitude to Jette, in particular the "jealousy" she feels towards someone whose life choices were more radical than her own: "Zwischen Erinnern und Erfinden die Kreise um eine mögliche Jette enger schlagend, wird sie neidisch."⁴³¹ Katia's writing becomes an attempt to retrace in the imagination those steps (towards militancy) that Jette took in actuality, to reconstruct intellectually a "path" that Katia feels she could never follow herself: "Schreiben heißt, den Weg gehen, der einem verwehrt."⁴³²

Why precisely did Katia not choose for herself the radical lifestyle that Jette chose? Kuckart suggests one reason consists in

⁴³⁰ "She inserts inventions that serve the disclosure of truth." Kuckart 35. Cf. also Katia's comment on Jette's former boyfriend Neumann, whom she is interviewing: "Sie hat Lust zu drohen, daß das, was man ihr nicht erzählt, daß sie sich das ausdenken wird" (Kuckart 79) ["She feels like threatening to invent what she isn't told"].

⁴³¹ "Encircling a possible Jette between memory and invention, she becomes jealous." Kuckart 29.

⁴³² "To write is to walk the path one has been denied." Kuckart 50. Katia's interest in Jette indicates that even if she could never herself have opted for militancy, she understands and is fascinated by the motives for that choice. In this sense, Katia's writing about Jette is also an act of self-exploration, an enquiry into her own unrealised possibilities: "An Jettes Person entlang sich erzählen lassen, was sie vermied und doch in sich trug?" (Kuckart 162) ["To be told along the edges of Jette's person what she avoided and yet carried inside herself?"]. The question mark at the end of this sentence indicates Katia's uncertainty about whether she could have lived Jette's life; it is precisely this uncertainty that sustains Katia's curiosity about her dead friend.

the generational difference between Katia and Jette. As one of Jette's former schoolteachers says in an interview with Katia, the older Jette opted for a life that was a specific "option" of her time, namely self-realisation through radical politics: "Sie hat das Angebot der Zeit angenommen [...] sich selbst finden über den politischen Weg."⁴³³ The implication is that this option was no longer available for younger generations, in particular for that of Katia. Given the actions of Jette's generation and the escalation of the militant conflict they entailed, political radicalism such as it was practised by the 2 June Movement and the RAF has become defunct, incompatible with a transformed present: "So wie es war, wird es nie mehr sein können."⁴³⁴ As will be shown, the political radicalism of Jette has not become defunct or anachronistic for practical reasons (these might include increased government repression); rather, it has discredited itself by speaking of politics when what was really at stake were existential issues.

The context in which political radicalism is presented by Kuckart is always an existential one. Jette's decision to become militant is presented as continuous with an entirely apolitical teenage rebelliousness, lived out in the form of sexual adventures and an interest in existentialism. The discourse by which Jette justifies her militancy is premised on a notion of action that is not

⁴³³ "She accepted the offer of the times. To find oneself on the political path." Kuckart 33.

⁴³⁴ "It will never be the way it was again." Kuckart 12.

the traditional (and entirely political) Marxist notion of praxis. It is an existential concept of action: action as a means to personal self-fulfilment. When Jette accuses her schoolteacher Kindermann of being boastful and arrogant due to an existential deficit – “Kindermann ist ein Angeber, denkt Jette. Er gibt an, was ihm fehlt”⁴³⁵ – she identifies this deficit as the failure to live out, rather than only discuss ideas about the good life. While the moral principle implicit in this condemnation – one ought to “live what one preaches” – may be applied to politics, it is not itself political.

Jette’s valourisation of action is a central theme of Wahl der Waffen. As Katia learns from Jette, there are issues that cannot be resolved verbally, but only through action: “Es gibt Dinge, die nicht gesagt werden können, weil sie nicht zur Ordnung des Sagens gehören. Sie können nur getan werden, weil sie nur dann als Aussage existieren.”⁴³⁶ Yet if the radicality of Jette is a lived, rather than a purely verbal one, there is also a sense in which it is a renunciation of living: from the outset, Jette knows she is exposing herself to the risk of a premature death. Punning on the German word for “life expectancy,” Katia suggests this may be a price worth paying. She suggests that perhaps what one ought to “expect” from life is self-realisation, rather than duration: “Lebenserwartung ist

⁴³⁵ “Kindermann is show-off. He shows off what he lacks.” Kuckart 20.

⁴³⁶ “There are things that cannot be said because they don’t belong to the order of saying. They can only be done, because it’s only then they exist as statements.” Kuckart 25.

das, was man vom Leben erwartet."⁴³⁷ Taken far enough, this attitude - an existential "hunger for life" that effectively shortens the road to death⁴³⁸ - can become a way not just of accepting, but of courting one's premature demise. It is an attitude that precedes and determines political decisions.

When Katia analyses militancy in political rather than existential terms, she condemns it. While acknowledging the validity of the militant's argument that his violence takes the specific form of counterviolence (that is, that militancy does not introduce violence into the world, but operates in a context in which violence is always already a reality), and hence acknowledging that to refrain from militancy may be to tacitly support the violence of others⁴³⁹, she also insists this argument leads to the militant becoming something very like her enemy, the oppressive and warmongering state: "[...] wer sich wie der Gegner verhärtet, die Farbe des Eises annimmt, um nicht zu erfrieren, der verliert mit jedem Sieg."⁴⁴⁰ In this sense, to conduct an "armed struggle" against a government that practises militarism and imperialism is to teach it a lesson it is already deeply familiar with: "Bewaffneter Kampf, es denen zeigen,

⁴³⁷ "Life expectancy is what one expects from life." Kuckart 84.

⁴³⁸ Cf. Kuckart 109: "Das Leben ist ein Hungern nach Leben zum Tode" ["Life is a hunger for life unto death"].

⁴³⁹ Cf. Kuckart 47: "Bleiwüsten; es gibt nicht die Wahl zwischen Unschuld und Gewalt, sondern nur zwischen verschiedenen Formen der Gewalt" ["Leadens deserts; there can be no choice between innocence and violence, only between different forms of violence"].

⁴⁴⁰ "Those who harden like the enemy, assume the colour of ice in order not to freeze, lose with every victory." Kuckart 50.

die es eh schon wissen?"⁴⁴¹ This paradox – the leftist militant who wants to abolish political violence finds herself perpetuating it – leads Katia to conclude that the 2 June Movement and similar organisations erred not so much in their analysis of the political situation as in their attempt to change that situation; they drew "Falsche Schlüsse aus richtigen Voraussetzungen."⁴⁴² Worse, the failure of these organisations to alter political power relations led to a depolitization of their operations; increasingly fascinated by the existential aspects of the clandestine, militant lifestyle, they soon abandoned political analysis in favour of the excitement of living like characters in a detective novel: "Raus aus der Politik, rein in den Krimi."⁴⁴³ Katia suggests the "urban guerrilla" was not so much a political project as an attempt to escape the boredom of conventional life: "Stadtguerrilla ist vor allem der Kampf gegen die Langeweile."⁴⁴⁴

Hence Kuckart's analysis of militancy always returns to existential categories; even putatively political arguments turn out to be premised on them. In one of Katia's imagined dialogues with Jette, Katia asks: "Warum sterben wir?"⁴⁴⁵ Jette replies: "Nicht warum. Wofür."⁴⁴⁶ In the final analysis, Jette's answer is no more

⁴⁴¹ "Armed struggle, to teach those a lesson who know already?" Kuckart 91.

⁴⁴² "Wrong conclusions from the right premises." Kuckart 151.

⁴⁴³ "Enough of politics, time for the crime story." Kuckart 92.

⁴⁴⁴ "The urban guerrilla is mainly a struggle against boredom." Kuckart 93. This sentence is almost identical to one from Peter-Jürgen Boock's *Abgang* (Göttingen: Lamuv, 1988). Cf. Boock 134.

⁴⁴⁵ "Why do we die?" Kuckart 154.

⁴⁴⁶ "Not why. What for." Ibid.

political than Katia's question; even the apparently political choice to die for the revolutionary cause is motivated existentially: by a desire for self-realisation that is itself not political, and whose relation to political issues is contingent rather than necessary, the product of a time in which "armed struggle" happens to be the preferred "option" for those who want to live intensely. This explains why Kuckart speaks so frequently of Jette's romantic affairs: she is not so much juxtaposing the personal and the political as speaking a discourse in which politics has been reduced to a purely personal issue. In a description of Jette's relationship to her boyfriend Jacob, the "languages" of "love" and "struggle" are described as "similar": "Jette erfährt, die Stirn gegen Jacobs Schulter gepreßt, wie ähnlich die Sprache der Liebe und die des Kampfes sind."⁴⁴⁷ In fact, the distinction between these two "languages" is only superficial; they are both premised on the existential question of how self-realisation is to be achieved. Likewise, the question (posed at one point by Katia) of whether to opt for the contemplative life of the writer or the active one of the militant is misleading.⁴⁴⁸ The "weapons" of the writer and the militant are not identical, but the problem which Katia resolves by opting for the former, while Katia chooses the latter, is the same – the problem of how to achieve existential

⁴⁴⁷ "Her brow pressed against Jacob's shoulder, Jette discovers how similar the languages of love and struggle are." Kuckart 38.

⁴⁴⁸ Cf. Kuckart 159: "Soll man nach einem kurzen Leben sterben oder für die Ewigkeit dichten?" ["Should one die after a short life or write everlasting poetry?"].

fulfilment, rather than the problem of how to bring about political change.

Friedrich Christian Delius: Himmelfahrt eines Staatsfeindes

More than any of his previous novels (and indeed, more than any of the texts discussed in this section), Delius's Himmelfahrt eines Staatsfeindes⁴⁴⁹ examines how "terrorism" may serve the interests of the existing sociopolitical order.⁴⁵⁰ Taking as its motto a statement by West German police chief Herold about Baader ("Ich habe ihn geliebt"⁴⁵¹), this novel portrays a society in which the mechanisms of recuperation are so potent as to neutralise and instrumentalise even the most radical forms of political resistance. Making use of multiple narrators, and written in a highly satirical style⁴⁵², Himmelfahrt describes how the death of "terrorist"

⁴⁴⁹ Friedrich Christian Delius, Himmelfahrt eines Staatsfeindes (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1992). Quotations are from Deutscher Herbst. Thomas Hoeps reads this novel as an examination of the mediatic "fiction-machine" that has increasingly appropriated the subject of militancy. Cf. Hoeps 284ff. For a more unsympathetic reading, cf. Reinhard Mohr, "Mythen im Spiegelkabinett. Der Dritte Teil der RAF-Trilogie von FC Delius: 'Himmelfahrt eines Staatsfeindes'", in: Freitag, 2 October, 1992. For a rebuttal of Mohr's argument, cf. Delabar/Schütz 165ff.

⁴⁵⁰ Cf. Delius 583: "Beide [sc. Terroristen und Ordnungskräfte] brauchen einander – als Feinde –, damit sie nicht auseinanderfallen" ["Both the terrorists and the forces of order need one another – as enemies – in order not to fall apart"].

⁴⁵¹ "I loved him." Qtd. in Delius 435.

⁴⁵² For Delius, what he perceives as the absurdity of the "terrorist" conflict can only be examined satirically. Cf. Delius 460, where Serratta says: "Das Land mit der größten Polizeidichte der Welt, die freiwilligen Hilfspolizisten nicht gerechnet, ist mit nichts anderem beschäftigt wie mit der Jagd auf die kleinste Armee der Welt. Ich wäre froh, wenn ich mal einen Deutschen träfe, der diese Komik bemerkt!" ["The land with the greatest density of police officers, not counting the willing deputies, is wholly concerned with hunting the smallest army in the world. I would be glad to meet a German who notices this absurdity!"]. The RAF's use of code names taken from Moby Dick is also seen by Delius as highly comedic. As Nagel says: "In jedem Fall bewundere man unseren Humor: daß wir im Knast uns zu Romanfiguren machten [...]" (Delius 465) ["In any case one ought to admire

mastermind Sigurd Nagel (Baader) prompts flamboyant public celebration⁴⁵³ in Wiesbaden, the city where the German Bundeskriminalamt, the police institution headed by Herold and responsible for tracking militants, is based.⁴⁵⁴ The state's indebtedness to Nagel is thinly masked under statements of reconciliation that are really expressions of gratitude.⁴⁵⁵

The chapters of Himmelfahrt can be divided into four main categories: those narrated by the dead Nagel, in which he observes his own funeral and comments on what has been written about him; those chronicling the daily routine of his adversary Schäfer (Herold); those in which the Italian reporter Serratta poses questions about the controversial death of Falcke (Meinhof)⁴⁵⁶; and those that reproduce, without punctuation, the tape recordings of former militant Conni, in which she attempts to clarify her attitude towards her own past.

our sense of humour: that we made ourselves characters in a novel while imprisoned"].

⁴⁵³ Cf. in particular Delius 648ff., where one of the highlights of the Wiesbaden celebration is described: a fairground booth ("KABINETT DES TERRORS" ["CABINET OF TERROR"]) in which political conflict is degraded to a form of vaudeville entertainment.

⁴⁵⁴ Cf. Delius 457: "Die Entscheidung fiel logischerweise für die Stadt, die diesen Toten beschäftigungspolitisch am meisten zu verdanken hat, also die mit dem größten Kriminalamt" ["Logically, the decision fell in favour of that city which owes the greatest debt to the deceased in terms of the politics of employment, that is, in favour of the city with the largest police department"].

⁴⁵⁵ Cf. Delius 438: "Im Tod hört alle Feindschaft auf" ["All enmity ends with death"]. This phrase recurs throughout the early pages of Himmelfahrt.

⁴⁵⁶ Cf. in particular Delius 483ff. The questions asked by Serratta seem to have been inspired by those journalist Stefan Aust mailed to the Stuttgart ministry of the interior in the course of his investigations into the Stammheim deaths. Aust's questions are reprinted in Der Baader Meinhof Komplex (590ff.).

Nagel's death elevates him into a transcendent realm where the laws of time and space do not apply – "ein freches, helles Glück [...], das die Zeit aufhob, mich allem überlegen machte, Wände und Horizonte wie mit Laserstrahlen aufschnitt"⁴⁵⁷ - transforming him from protagonist in the "terrorist" conflict to the godlike, omniscient narrator of its aftermath. Nagel uses his new condition to satisfy what he describes as his voracious appetite for images⁴⁵⁸; this and the frequent references to eyes and cameras show that Delius has not abandoned but radicalised the conviction already expressed in Ein Held der inneren Sicherheit and Mogadischu Fensterplatz: that the militant conflict has to be understood as a kind of spectacle, and specifically, as a media spectacle.⁴⁵⁹ It is a media spectacle in which the state has a vested interest, and which it seeks to control. That it may do so more or less clumsily is the import of those sections of Delius's novel in which the journalist Serratta points to the many inconsistencies in the "official" version of one militant's death.

The only live militant in Himmelfahrt is Conni: she has forsaken the militant project, lives in hiding and will, by the end of the novel, be arrested. Recapitulating her experiences in an extended monologue, Conni laments the extent to which the "second-generation" RAF members obeyed orders from the

⁴⁵⁷ "A frivolous, light-hearted joy that eliminated time, made me superior to everything, cut through walls and horizons as if with laser rays." Delius 437.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁹ This is the context in which the phrase read by Serrata in a tourist brochure needs to be interpreted: "to see and be seen is the motto for many people" (Delius 442, English in original).

Stammheim prisoners, reducing themselves to puppets controlled by Baader and his companions: "Immer erpreßt von der Führung das auf jeden Fall war ein Fehler [...]".⁴⁶⁰ She also points out the increasing depolitization of the RAF, a result of the power imbalance between the militants and the state:

Im Grunde wenn ich das jetzt überlege waren wir doch schon längst nicht mehr die Kämpfer sondern die Verfolgten die ganze Stadtguerrilla eine Organisation des dauernden Versteckens und Fliehens immer weg immer weiter weg von der Politik von uns selber von unsern Ängsten die Gruppe eine einzige Fluchthilfeorganisation⁴⁶¹

These insights, which have prompted Conni to abandon the militant project, leave her isolated. Having first sacrificed critical thought to the requirements of that project as understood by the RAF, she is now left with a pressing need slowly and painfully to reconstruct her entire world view. The form of her reflections (a monologue) emphasises this isolation. At one point Conni describes herself as having been reduced to nothing but her own voice, a voice that speaks breathlessly in an attempt to understand itself: "Was kann ich denn noch was hab ich denn noch meine Stimme nur noch die

⁴⁶⁰ "Always blackmailed by the leaders that was certainly a mistake." Delius 500.

⁴⁶¹ "Basically when I think about it now we had long since ceased being the fighters had become the persecuted the entire urban guerrilla nothing but the organisation of an ongoing hiding and escaping further and further away from politics from ourselves our fears the group nothing but a refugee organisation." Delius 503.

Stimme [...]".⁴⁶² If the silencing of critical thought was a requirement of RAF membership, it comes as no surprise that Conni's abandonment of that group should first lead to a torrent of speech, and that this speech should claim "no" as one of its most important words: "Ich weiß nur ich will nichts mehr zu tun haben mit einer Gruppe in der das Wort nein gar nicht mehr vorkommt [...]".⁴⁶³

Himmelfahrt ends with a grotesque image of the secret complicity between state and "terrorist." Alone in his office, increasingly depressed now that the opponent who gave his life meaning is dead, Schäfer is visited by the ghost of Nagel, and receives from it an extended kiss: "[...] erst im Kuß finden sie zur Attacke, als wüßten sie, daß es ihre letzte sei, sie ersticken den Impuls, miteinander zu kämpfen, sie umarmen, sie berühren sich nicht, nur die Lippen schmecken die Lippen des andern [...]".⁴⁶⁴

In Delius's view, the Nazi culture of spectacle has been succeeded in West Germany by a media culture that is no less dependant on a Manichean world view, and in which hero worship is replaced by a fascination with demonised political enemies: "Das lauschende, lesende und von schwarzweißen zu farbigen Bildschirmen konvertierende Volk hatte seine neuen Helden in der

⁴⁶² "What do I have now what do I have my voice nothing but the voice." Delius 590f.

⁴⁶³ "I only know I don't want to have anything to do with a group in which the word no doesn't even exist any longer." Delius 636.

⁴⁶⁴ "Only by kissing do they succeed in attacking one another, as if they knew it to be the last attack, they suppress the impulse to fight, they embrace, they don't touch, only the lips of each taste those of the other." Delius 716.

Gestalt von – Feinden.⁴⁶⁵ Delius suggests it is the oppressively petit-bourgeois nature of this society that spawned the RAF in the first place.⁴⁶⁶ Although Nagel and his companions have been vanquished, the social source of “terror” remains. Hence, Delius predicts, there will be further “terrorism,” albeit of a less ideological and more violent kind: “Andere werden anders kommen und immer jünger werden und sich gegen die gepanzerte Ordnung stellen nicht mehr mit langen Erklärungen auf dem Papier, sondern mit kurzer Gewalt [...]”.⁴⁶⁷ Delius insists this new and increasingly unpredictable “terrorism” will make many nostalgic for the RAF: “[...] und manche werden sagen: ja, beim Nagel und seiner Bande, da wußte man wenigstens noch, woran man war-“. ⁴⁶⁸ This effort to understand left-wing militancy not as something extraneous to West German society – an enemy attacking from some mysterious elsewhere – but in terms of the continuities between the two places Delius in the vicinity of writers such as Vesper and Heidenreich, who interpret West German “terrorism” and the state’s response to it in

⁴⁶⁵ “The listening and reading people, switching from black-and-white to colour television, had found its new heroes in the form of – enemies.” Delius 534. Delius constantly points to the commodification of the militant conflict – to the media culture’s tendency to market that conflict in the form of easily consumed media products: “aus jedem Massaker ein Buch, ein Feature, ein Film” (Delius 565) [“a book, a feature, a film out of every massacre”]. One factor in this development is capitalism’s relentless drive for profit. The motto for the commodification of militancy is provided by an ABBA song: “Money money money” (Delius 570).

⁴⁶⁶ Cf. Delius 690, where the student protest of the 1960s and the militancy of the 1970s are characterised as an “Aufstand gegen das Reihenhause” [“revolt against the suburban home”].

⁴⁶⁷ “Others will come and behave differently and become younger and younger, and they’ll take a stand against fortified order, no longer with lengthy declarations on paper, but with abrupt violence.” Delius 692.

⁴⁶⁸ “And many will say: yes, with Nagel and his gang, at least you knew where you were at.” Ibid.

the light of both the Nazi past and a continuing culture of inhumanity.

For obvious reasons, efforts to interpret militancy by reference to the Nazi state are the domain of German rather than of Italian authors. This tendency is particularly pronounced in the work of Eva Zeller, Hannelies Taschau, and Gert Heidenreich; it also informs Peter-Paul Zahl's novel Die Glücklichen and Guntram Vesper's essay Nördlich der Liebe und südlich des Hasses. For Vesper, the "hunt for sympathisers" recalls the book burnings of the 1930s. Taschau and Zahl point to the fascist character of the technology of surveillance (in their references to Inpol and the PIOS computer). What often emerges from these (implicit or explicit) comparisons is a critique of a "technocratic" thinking that places values of efficiency higher than humanist and democratic values such as the pursuit of happiness, the sanctity of the private sphere, and freedom of association. This critique of technocracy is a central component of an ideology that informs the work of many writers discussed above.

Anti-technocratic ideology identifies the unchecked sensationalism of an advanced media culture, the capitalist ethos of self-advancement, and a proliferating, increasingly opaque bureaucracy as some of its most prominent *bêtes noires*. The analysis of militancy offered in Mogadischu Fensterplatz is framed within a discourse that seeks to demonstrate the dehumanising

character of media culture, its tendency to reduce human suffering to spectacle. A central premise of Ein Held der inneren Sicherheit is that values of self-advancement and efficiency have a similarly dehumanising effect. Chotjewitz critiques the secrecy governing the "hunt against sympathisers" by offering nightmarish portraits of a bureaucracy that foresakes all transparency, and whose interests have been divorced from those of the citizens it ostensibly protects. Taschau, Böll, and Vesper evoke the climate of fear that results from a technology of surveillance that finds its justification in "terrorism." Taschau laments that, as a result of this climate of fear, the individual is stripped of his autonomy and security, much as Böll and Vesper demonstrate how such a climate infringes on the sanctity of the private sphere and creates an increasingly inhuman society. By and large, the writers who formulate this critique are far from endorsing militancy or sympathising with it; they assert that the state is responding to militancy in a dangerously irresponsible way, and that it needs to be reminded of its own founding values, particularly that of human dignity. If such values, formulated in the GFR's constitution, are neglected, the GFR will increasingly resemble its totalitarian antecedent. Often, this argument is presented alongside a comparison of the GFR with other, ostensibly more liberal European nations; hence the motif of travel in, for example, the novels of Heidenreich and Taschau.

Only two writers (Degenhardt and Zahl) critique the emerging police state and the technocratic thinking underlying it on the basis of values that are not those of the democratic constitution, but those of Marxism; in both cases, this goes hand in hand with the valourisation of a real or imagined working class and also allows for a critique of militant ideology. The RAF is portrayed as a middle-class organisation that lacks even the semblance of a popular base. Debray's foco theory is explicitly critiqued in Zahl's novel; the import of this critique is that, pace Debray, Marcuse, and other theorists, revolutionary activity must await the formation of a mass movement and cannot successfully precede it.

Zahl is also one of a number of German writers who reflect upon their own status as writers. He does so by reference to the period when literary culture first emerged in Germany; witness his citation of Grimmelshausen and the overall structure of his novel, taken from the Baroque Schelmenroman. The literature of the Baroque period predates the rise of the German middle-class, and Zahl is particularly interested in its status as a literature that is truly popular or not yet strongly allied with the interests of society's most privileged members. For other writers who reflect on their status as writers, such as Chotjewitz, Kuckart, Goetz, and Taschau, writing is an intrinsically middle-class activity. Unlike Zahl, they do not critique militancy from the point of view of a (real or imagined) working class, but from that of the middle class. This becomes

particularly evident in Goetz's Kontrolliert, in which the narrator openly declares himself a stranger to the world of the working class, and reflects upon his middle-class privileges. Unlike Zahl, writers such as Goetz analyse militancy from the perspective of the intellegentsia; Kuckart's narrator is a journalist, Chotjewitz's a lawyer. This helps to explain the foregrounding, in the texts of these writers, of questions of legality, historiography, and social planning. In this respect, Die Herren des Morgengrauens is particularly interesting; comparatively abstract questions about the administration of justice are juxtaposed with meditations on the writer's work. In the texts of Chotjewitz, Goetz, and others, the aspects of militancy that receive the greatest attention are those which bear most directly on the life of middle-class citizens. The same is true in the work of Michael Zeller and Horst Bienek.

In some cases, this dominance of a middle-class perspective on the militant conflict results in class issues being ellided almost entirely. This occurs in the work of Demski and Heidenreich, both of whom treat political conflict as a backdrop to personal crises. In the work of these writers, political concerns are secondary to existential ones. In both cases, this existentialist thrust goes hand in hand with pessimism and fatalism; Heidenreich's Bode commits suicide, and Demski's narrator concludes that there is "no justice, only solitude."

As will be seen below, this existentialist approach – a defining feature of which is a marked emphasis on subjective, rather than

collective experience - is far more widespread in Italian fiction.

What is almost entirely absent from Italian fiction is a concern with issues of legality and theory, and that critique of the state response to militancy whose roots lie in a distrust of technocratic thinking and bureaucracy. This anti-technocratic ideology of German writers derives directly from their anti-fascism; behind their distrust of the rhetoric of efficiency is their recollection of the all-too-efficient inhumanity of Auschwitz. In this sense, the ideological stance of the German writers is historically determined. Emerging from a different historical situation, Italian anti-fascism never led to a similar anti-technocratic worldview.

What is largely absent from the German texts, on the other hand, is a concern with issues of domesticity and sexuality. The feminist stance of at least two Italian writers (Natalia Ginzburg and Dacia Maraini) leads to them foregrounding these issues, often to the point where they come close to displacing the theme of militancy. The militant conflict becomes an illustration of patriarchy and of the alienation suffered by women in their sexual and domestic activities. Another Italian writer, Ferdinando Camon, brings a quasi-theological discourse to his analysis – again something which distinguishes his work from German texts. Other discourses that inform the work of Italian writers include that of psychoanalysis and a pseudo-Nietzschean rhetoric of decadence.

Natalia Ginzburg: Caro Michele

Caro Michele⁴⁶⁹ chronicles a period of slightly less than a year in the family of a middle-class Italian family. The mother, Adriana, writes to her son Michele, urging him to visit his dying father. Michele, involved with a militant student group, refuses to visit even after his father dies. By the end of the novel, Michele himself dies a violent death in England. Meanwhile, the character Mara gives birth to a child of which Michele may or may not be the father, and begins and ends an affair with Fabio, a man referred to, because of his prominent nose, as "the pelican." The story unfolds mainly across the letters written by the characters to one another. After Michele's death, his friends and relations share their recollections of him in an attempt to console one another. A meditation on loss, estrangement and the disintegration of a family, Caro Michele is also a novel on left-wing militancy in so far as all these themes are examined against the backdrop of one militant's choices. Michele might be said to constitute the "absent centre" of the novel: he (and the theme of left-wing militancy) are central in that the analysis of every other theme crucially depend on his portrayal; he is also absent in the sense that he appears only in the form of other people's recollections of him. In the domestic world Ginzburg describes, militancy is incomprehensible and unspeakable; it can never be addressed directly, only by complicated circumlocutions.

⁴⁶⁹ Natalia Ginzburg, Caro Michele (Milan: Mondadori, 1973).

Like a cancer, militancy is both proper to that world and alien to it. The ways in which it is proper to the world of (middle-class) domesticity might be said to be the main subject of Ginzburg's analysis. She suggests militancy is only one more symptom of a larger alienation. In this sense, Ginzburg's analysis is framed (like those of Heidenreich, Demski, and others) not in political, but in existential terms.

Ginzburg uses the format of the epistolary novel to emphasise the degree to which her characters are alienated from one another. The temporary and spatial distances travelled by each letter reflect the existential distance between the characters, each of whom inhabits his or her own discrete universe, removed from that of the others almost to the point of solipsism. It is precisely the gesture of (written) communication that emphasises the incommunicability of, for example, Michele's refusal to attend his father's funeral. The letter he receives from his mother after informing her of his refusal begins with repeated assertions of her inability to understand him: "Non so cosa ti abbia impedito di venire giú quando è morto tuo padre. Non riesco a immaginare niente che possa impedire a una persona di ritornare quando c'è una disgrazia. Non capisco."⁴⁷⁰ Similarly, Mara comes to think of Fabio, the man she was once prepared to marry, as always having existed at an insuperable

⁴⁷⁰ "I don't know what stopped you from coming down when your father died. I'm unable to imagine anything that could prevent a person from returning when there's been a tragedy. I don't understand." Ginzburg 39.

remove from her: "Se ne stava l'a perso nelle sue malinconie e io ho capito che nelle sue malinconie non ci sarei entrata mai perché lì non c'era posto per me. Questo 'mai' mi sembrava spaventoso. Allora me ne sono andata."⁴⁷¹

Given this concern with temporal and spatial separation, it is appropriate that Michele should ask for a copy of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, one of the fundamental claims of which is that time and space are not properties of things in themselves, but categories imposed on the world by the mind. Just as reason, as conceived of by Kant, is unable to understand things as they are in themselves, independent of its own structures of perception, Ginzburg's characters are unable to comprehend the workings of each other's minds. They begin to understand each other only through guesswork, and frequently their guesses prove incorrect. Ginzburg portrays human interaction as a complicated game of recognition and misunderstanding, made possible by the subtle or not so subtle differences between description, fantasy, and reality.

The difficulty of communication is not a purely existential problem; it is also related to the rift in life practice and outlook between people of different generations and social backgrounds. Typically, and in accordance with the notions of discreteness and separation discussed, one character's dismissal of another as

⁴⁷¹ "He was there lost in his melancholy and I understood I'd never enter into that melancholy because there was no room for me there. This 'never' frightened me. So I left." Ginzburg 112.

foreign or incomprehensible attaches itself to things external, such as physical appearance or name. After her first meeting with Mara, Angelica writes to Michele about the strangeness of Mara's name: "Caro Michele, ho visto la ragazza di via dei Prefetti. Mara. Che nome da fumetto. Era meglio Maria. Con una 'i' in piú tutto poteva essere diverso."⁴⁷² Later in the same letter, the motif of the cartoon serves as a gloss for the self-perception and aspirations of Michele's English friend Ray:

ora Ray soggiorna nel tuo scantinato. Sonia gli porta da mangiare e giornali a fumetti da leggere, perché lui vuole imparare come si fanno i fumetti. Ha un amico che fa i fumetti e gli promesso di farlo incontrare con il direttore di uno di quei giornali. Perciò sta provando e riprovando a disegnare donne con seni immensi e con occhi immensi.⁴⁷³

Ray's cartoons are characterised by grotesque exaggeration (again, of physical features). In this they resemble the late paintings of Michele's father, of which Adriana notes: "[...] sono enormi, e io a dirti il vero li trovo orribili."⁴⁷⁴ By implication, the shift from realistic representation (as exemplified by the early paintings of Michele's father) to grotesque exaggeration is symptomatic of a change in the

⁴⁷² "Dear Michele, I saw the girl from via dei Prefetti. Mara. What a cartoonish name. Maria would have been better. With an extra 'i' everything could have been different." Ginzburg 58.

⁴⁷³ "Now Ray lives in your room. Sonia brings him food and cartoons to read, because he wants to learn how to draw cartoons. He has a friend who is a cartoonist and has promised to introduce him to the editor of one of those magazines. So he tries and retries to draw women with huge breasts and huge eyes." Ginzburg 59.

⁴⁷⁴ "They're enormous, and to tell the truth, I find them horrible." Ginzburg 41.

times, from a tranquil and naturalistic world view to one in which the world appears violently distorted. This distorted world, a departure from middle-class placidity like the violent life practice of Michele and his friends, is incomprehensible and frightening to Adriana and other members of the older generation. And here as elsewhere, the only way to become cognizant of another's mentality is through its visual expression (paintings and cartoons).⁴⁷⁵

Ginzburg insists that where mutual understanding does occur, its precondition is an acceptance of the other person's essential alterity. What finally allows for such understanding are not the verbal exchanges documented by the characters' letters, but an experience of personal solitude which allows, through analogy, for a tentative grasp of other people's solitude:

Ognuno di noi è sbandato e balordo in una zona di sé e qualche volta fortemente attratto dal vagabondare e dal respirare niente altro che la propria solitudine, e allora in questa zona ognuno di noi può trasferirsi per capirti.⁴⁷⁶

The notion of a world in which each person knows of the other only what can be inferred from external features, and in which analogy and guesswork are the only possibilities for an approximate

⁴⁷⁵ Despite Michele's alienation from his mother, there is, in Ginzburg's novel, some continuity between the world views of people appertaining to different generations. In particular, Michele's father often seems close to the younger generation in thought and sentiment. This is suggested not only by the similarity between his late paintings and Ray's cartoons, but also by the communist song ("Oi Carmela") he is fond of singing.

⁴⁷⁶ "Each of us is alone in a region of himself and sometimes strongly drawn towards vagabonding and breathing nothing but his own solitude, and each of us can place himself in this region to understand you." Ginzburg 137.

understanding of an alien interiority is formally expressed not only in the novel's epistolary structure, but also in the sections of third person narration that occur occasionally between the letters. These sections further emphasise the alienation of the characters and the degree to which they are constrained to perceive each other as objects.⁴⁷⁷

Ginzburg's narrative does in fact return obsessively to describing not the characters themselves, but objects associated with them. It is through their possessions that Michele and his friends seem to assert their existence, become real to others. Such is the case, for example, with the kimono left by Mara at Fabio's apartment after their breakup.⁴⁷⁸ Similarly, Michele is presented to the reader not so much through his actions (he never appears in person) or through his few short letters, as through his sparse possessions. In fact, mourning for the deceased Michele seems frequently to reduce itself to a hunt for the objects left by him. It is only in accumulating and cataloguing the objects left by Michele that the other characters can hope to preserve his memory.

⁴⁷⁷ Cf. Paolo Puppa, "Caro Michele, ovvero l'epistolario dal nulla", in: Natalia Ginzburg. La narratrice e i suoi testi (Rome: La Nuova Italia Scientifica, 1986). Puppa writes about Ginzburg's characters: "Their author always presents them from the outside, leaves them in the third person throughout the novel. Occasionally, she describes them by zoomorphic metaphors, sparrows or spiders, pelicans or amoebas, animal names. Their contagious idleness seems to coinvolvement the gaze and the pen of the writer, who expresses their exhaustion in paratactic, disjointed language. The visual motifs appear flat; they are mainly garments, costumes, a pair of slippers, a sweater, a day-old meal."

⁴⁷⁸ Cf. Ginzburg 114.

In what turns out to be her last letter to Michele, Adriana recalls the last time she saw him. Like so many others, this final encounter centers around an object, a Sardinian carpet.⁴⁷⁹ The memory of the arguments that occurred that day becomes for Adriana a memory of lost happiness, and she suggests that arguing is for the introverted and single-minded members of her family a way of expressing love, and hence a source of joy as well as of annoyance. She also notes that what is lost in the obsession with objects whose meaninglessness no one seriously questions, and in the refusal or inability to express affection other than through squabbling, is the opportunity for genuine and meaningful communication. When she says that she and Michele lost a "precious moment" by failing to "talk about important things," she is speaking as much for Ginzburg's other characters as for herself and her son.⁴⁸⁰

L'altro giorno mi sono ricordata di una volta che sei venuto qui e appena venuto ti sei messo a frugare in tutti gli armadi alla ricerca di un tappeto sardo, che volevi appendere al muro nel tuo scantinato. Doveva essere l'ultima volta che ti ho visto. Io ero in questa casa da pochi giorni. Era novembre. Gironzolavi nelle stanze e frugavi in tutti gli armadi, che erano appena stati messi a posto, e io ti andavo dietro lamentandomi perché portavi sempre via i miei oggetti. Quel tappeto sardo devi

⁴⁷⁹ Ginzburg 125.

⁴⁸⁰ Cf. Ginzburg 126.

averlo poi trovato e preso perché qui non c'è. Non c'era nemmeno nello scantinato. A me comunque di quel tappeto non me ne importa niente, e non me ne importava niente allora. Lo ricordo perché è forse legato all'ultima volta che io ti ho visto. Ricordo che provavo, nell'arrabbiarmi e nel protestare con te, una grande allegria. Sapevo che le mie proteste avrebbero suscitato in te allegria e noia mescolate. Penso ora che quello era un giorno felice. Ma purtroppo è raro riconoscere i momenti felici mentre li stiamo vivendo. Noi li riconosciamo, di solito, solo a distanza di tempo. La felicità era per me protestare e per te frugare nei miei armadi. Ma devo anche dire che abbiamo perduto quel giorno un tempo prezioso. Avremmo potuto metterci seduti e interrogarci vicendevolmente su cose essenziali.⁴⁸¹

The image (not described but implied) of the carpet in the closet recalls another, also of enclosure: that of the gun hidden by Michele in the stove his mother has given him. Like the carpet, this

⁴⁸¹ "The other day I remembered how you came here once and started going through all the closets looking for a Sardinian carpet you wanted to hang on the wall in your room. It must have been the last time I saw you. I had just moved into this house. It was November. You went through the rooms and searched through all the closets, which had only just been tidied up, and I followed you complaining about how you were always taking away my things. You must have found and taken that carpet because it's not here. It wasn't even in your room. Anyway, that carpet means nothing to me, and it meant nothing to me then. I remember it because it may be linked to the last time I saw you. I remember that getting angry and arguing with you I felt very happy. I knew my arguing would provoke in you both joy and annoyance. I now think that was a happy day. But unfortunately we rarely recognise happy moments when we're living them. Normally we only recognise them after time has passed. My happiness was arguing with you, yours looking through the closets. But I also have to say we lost a precious moment that day. We could have sat down and talked about important things." Ginzburg 125f.

gun has vanished by the time of Michele's death; he has asked a friend to dispose of it for fear of the police gaining insight into the activities of his militant political group. If the gun is a symbol of the militant's armed struggle, his uncompromisingly violent attack on the institutions of the capitalist state, the stove that hides it is one of middle-class homeliness in general, and of Adriana's motherly love in particular. Through the image of the gun in the stove, Ginzburg acknowledges the middle-class background of many 1970s militants, and suggests the radicality of their rejection of that background – a radicality that prohibits communication not only with the institutions, but also with the individuals (close family members, in this case) who have been left behind.

Dacia Maraini: Donna in guerra

Donna in guerra⁴⁸² tells the story of the schoolteacher Giovanna's gradual estrangement from her husband Giacinto, a mechanic, in

⁴⁸² Dacia Maraini, Donna in guerra (Milan: Rizzoli, 1998). Dacia Maraini is a feminist writer and filmmaker. Her films include a feature film (L'amore coniugale, 1970), an experimental film (Mio padre amore mio, 1976), and documentaries (among them Aborto: parlano le donne, 1976). For a general discussion of Maraini's feminist poetics, cf. Virginia A. Pichiatti, Relational Spaces: Daughterhood, Motherhood and Sisterhood in Dacia Maraini's Writings and Films (Madison, New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2002). Cf. also Rodica Diaconescu-Blumenfeld and Ada Testaferri (eds.), The Pleasure of Writing: Critical Essays on Dacia Maraini (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2000), in particular the essays by Elisabetta Properzi Nelsen ("Écriture Feminine and Maraini's Early Narratives", pp. 77ff.), Virginia Pichiatti ("Symbolic Mediation and Female Community", pp. 103ff.), Giovanna Bellesia ("Variations on a Theme: Violence Against Women in the Writings of Dacia Maraini", pp. 121ff.), and Rodica Diaconescu-Blumenfeld ("Body as Will: Incarnate Voice in Dacia Maraini", pp. 195ff.). Cf. also the interview with Maraini in: Monica Gemelli and Felice Piemontese, L'invenzione della realtà: conversazioni su letteratura e altro (Naples: A. Guida, 1994) 91ff.

the course of a vacation near Napoli and its aftermath. Where Ginzburg chose the format of the epistolary novel to narrate the estrangement of her protagonist Michele from his family and friends, Maraini chooses to chart the changing attitudes of Giovanna towards herself and the people around her by means of Giovanna's diary. The disintegration of Giovanna's marriage is the story of her emancipation from outdated notions of femininity and a social order founded on violent oppression. As Giovanna is introduced first to the rural underprivileged of southern Italy, then to various female subcultures and the militant left-wing organisation of the communist Vittorio, Donna in guerra constitutes itself as a feminist's highly original appropriation of the Bildungsroman, the story of one woman's discovery of her own oppression and struggle for liberation. This struggle is presented as being, in some ways, analogous to that of the left-wing militant; simultaneously, the ideology of left-wing militancy is exposed as sharing the misogynist prejudices of conventional society. Militancy is portrayed as an ambiguous phenomenon: by its revolutionary program, it seems to offer hope for liberation from the repressive structures of patriarchy; tragically, however, that program is formulated by people who unthinkingly replicate many of those structures.

At least one of Giovanna's diary entries openly alludes to Ginzburg's Caro Michele. Describing how she and two female villagers ransack the corpse of an American woman who lived as a

hermit in a remote hut, Giovanna quotes a letter from this woman's son, Michel:

Cara mamma, oggi è nato George, gli abbiamo dato il tuo nome per ricordo di te, lo so che a te non te ne importa niente, ma è un modo di sentirti vicina, Stella sta bene, il cane è morto schiacciato da una macchina proprio nello stesso giorno che è nato George, così sono triste e allegro nello stesso tempo, tu sai che Puffy stava con me da sette anni e ci volevamo bene. Il mio lavoro va avanti, faccio dei quadri sempre più grandi e struggenti, ma nessuno ne vuole sapere, a volte mi chiedo se non ho sbagliato tutto, molti baci da tuo figlio Michel.⁴⁸³

The name of the woman's son, the juxtaposition of birth and death, the casual reference to Puffy's unsavoury death, the motif of the oversized painting and the figure of the failed artist all point to Caro Michele. The character of the allusions ranges from tongue-in-cheek to open satire. While thematically positioning herself, through her interest in the figure of the unfulfilled woman, in the vicinity of Ginzburg, Maraini is also concerned to take the analyses of Caro Michele further. Not only is the theme of violence, political and

⁴⁸³ "Dear mom, today George was born, we gave him your name in memory of you, I know it means nothing to you, but it's a way of feeling close to you, Stella is well, the dog was run over by a car just the day George was born, so I'm sad and happy at the same time, you know Puffy was with me for seven years and we loved each other. The work is going well, my paintings are getting bigger and more overwhelming, but no one wants to know about them, sometimes I wonder whether I haven't done everything wrong, many kisses, your son Michel." Maraini 79.

otherwise, more developed in Maraini's novel than in Ginzburg's, but she also looks more closely at sexual issues. Giovanna's unfulfilled sexuality is the first indication of her oppression at the hands not only of Giacinto, but of a patriarchal and misogynist social order.

Giovanna's sexual encounters with Giacinto are consistently unsatisfying, geared only to his pleasure. It is only when she is unfaithful to him with the younger Orio that she experiences a fully satisfying sexual encounter. Unlike Giacinto, Orio is patient and attentive. His passive, unhurried style of love-making offers a marked contrast to the frenetic and selfish passion of Giacinto. When told about her experience with Orio, Giacinto forgives Giovanna for her unfaithfulness, but refuses to modify his treatment of her. Giovanna continues to make love to him, but she does so increasingly unwillingly, becoming more and more aware of the one-sided nature of their sexual relations. Giovanna's lethargy, the slowness of her emancipation, allows her marriage to continue as before. It is a marriage founded on the notion of male supremacy. The tenderness Giovanna receives from Giacinto is only the reward for willing acceptance of her own oppression: "Ho fatto l'amore a occhi chiusi in uno stato di ebbrezza artificiale. Giacinto era felice, mi baciava gli occhi, la bocca, la gola, i capelli, con furiosa

tenerezza. Mi ripagava della mia sottomissione."⁴⁸⁴ Resigning herself to oppression and ending the relationship are the only options available to Giovanna, since Giacinto refuses to accept that a fully satisfying sex life can be reconciled with the institution of marriage. He urges Giovanna to abandon her desire for regular sexual gratification and reconcile herself to their marriage as it is: "Il sesso è sempre un pasticcio, va bene solo ogni tanto, per caso, e non si sa perché, comunque c'entra poco col matrimonio."⁴⁸⁵

Before she describes her sexual encounters with Giacinto, Giovanna offers the reader other indications of her oppression. Throughout the first half of the novel, she obsessively chronicles the household chores around which her day is organised. In the domestic as well in the sexual sphere, she is a servant to her husband; her submission is taken for granted, perceived as the only appropriate form of behaviour. Giacinto refuses to participate in what he views as an exclusively feminine set of activities:

-Che vuoi da mangiare?

Non mi ha risposto. [...]

Mi sono vestita. Ho pulito la casa. Ho messo a posto il baule, tirando fuori la roba per la pesca: tute di gomma, fucili,

⁴⁸⁴ "I made love with my eyes closed, in a state of artificial rapture. Giacinto was happy, he kissed my eyes, my mouth, my throat, my hair, with furious tenderness. He rewarded me for my submission." Maraini 237.

⁴⁸⁵ "Sex is always a mess, it only works out every now and again, by accident, and no one knows why, anyway it's not much to do with marriage." Maraini 104.

arpioni, coltelli, maschere, boccagli, pinne, e una griglia per cuocere il pesce.

Quando ho finito erano le dodici. Avevo ancora da prepara i peperoni ripieni. Dovevo pulire l'insalata.⁴⁸⁶

The marriage of Giacinto and Giovanna survives for as long as she accepts his superiority. Until the encounters that change her world view to the point of compelling her to leave her husband, she has internalised the mechanisms of oppression: "Quello che dice Giacinto lo faccio mio. Non mi è mai venuto in mente di contraddirlo. Penso che è migliore di me, che ha ragione, che lo amo, che quello che dice ha valore per tutti e due."⁴⁸⁷

When Giovanna and Giacinto are invited to dine at home with a local family, she perceives in the male-dominated household the mirror of her own treatment at the hands of her husband. Asking Laura, the daughter of the host family, about her school and her aspirations, she learns that she might as well talk directly to the father, who has decided on the future of Laura for her. While he expects academic excellence from her, he refuses to view education as an end in itself; to him, a girl's future can only consist in matrimony.

-Che classe fai?

⁴⁸⁶ "What would you like to eat? / He didn't answer. / I got dressed. I cleaned the house. / When I finished it was twelve. I still had to prepare the stuffed peppers. I had to wash the salad." Maraini 3.

⁴⁸⁷ "I accept what Giacinto says. It's never crossed my mind to contradict him. I think he's better than me, that he's right, that I love him, that what he says is true for both of us." Maraini 90.

-Quinta ginnasio.

-Sei brava?

-E la prima della classe, - interviene il padre con orgoglio.

-Farai l'università?

-Per carità!

È sempre il padre che risponde versandosi dell'altro vino con gesto cauto, circospetto.

-È già fidanzata, che c'entra l'università!⁴⁸⁸

Giovanna's diary, a female voice, becomes the record of another woman's enforced silence. Constrained by her upbringing not to voice misgivings about the choices her father has made for her, Laura keeps silent at the dinner table, concerning herself only with the food on her fork: "Laura apre la bocca per parlare, ma poi ci ripense e riprende a mangiare stringendo la forchetta fra le dita grasse e pallide."⁴⁸⁹

In the course of the evening, the violence by which the father and his sons assert their authority becomes increasingly evident. The father urges his sons to tell stories of violent sexual conquest. The mother feebly protests this turn of the conversation, and is angrily rebuked. While the father and his sons become increasingly light-hearted, the mother displays her discomfort. This is acceptable

⁴⁸⁸ "What class are you in? / -Fifth grade of high school. / -Are you good? / -She's the best of her class, the father proudly interrupts. / -Will you go to university? / -Please! / It's always the father who replies, pouring himself wine carefully, suspiciously. / -She's already engaged, what's university got to do with it!" Maraini 32.

⁴⁸⁹ "Laura opens her mouth to speak, then reconsiders and continues eating, clutching the fork between her fat, pale fingers." Ibid.

to the men around her as long as she does not openly voice her misgivings. She lacks the authority to judge the violent and criminal behaviour of the men whose servant she is: "La sola che dimostri chiaramente il suo dissenso è la madre, ma si capisce che la sua opinione conta poco o niente. Ormai si aspettano che porti via i piatti sporchi."⁴⁹⁰

Shortly before she records what is perhaps the most outrageous story told that evening, the son Gigi's molestation of an English tourist, Giovanna, perhaps unconsciously, hints at a connection between the violence of a patriarchal household and political oppression. A brief reference to the Greek military coup of 1967 serves not so much to position the plot in a specific historical context as to hint that military violence and totalitarianism may be extensions of that brand of male violence that is exhibited in Toto's household.

La voce dello speaker viene tagliata di netto mentre pronuncia le parole 'colonelli greci'. Il padre ora si rivolge al figlio più grande, con voce allegra, invitante:

-Diglielo tu Gigi cosa gli facesti a quella inglese di diciotto anni.⁴⁹¹

⁴⁹⁰ "The only one to clearly show her dissent is the mother, but it's obvious her opinion counts for little or nothing. They're waiting for her to clear the table." Maraini 36.

⁴⁹¹ "The voice of the speaker is interrupted while it pronounces the words 'greek colonels.' The oldest son is addressed by the father in a joyful, inviting voice: / - Tell them, Gigi, what you did to that eighteen-year-old English girl." Maraini 32.

In the course of the novel, the relation between domestic and political oppression becomes the object of extended analysis. The militant Vittorio begins to engage Giacinto in discussions on the Italian Communist Party and its betrayal of the working class cause. At first, Giovanna barely participates in these discussions, fully occupied as she is with household chores. Maraini humorously reveals how the (at times revolutionary) political discourse of Giacinto and Vittorio coexists with unquestioned sexist gender roles:

Sono dovuta andare in cucina a friggere i calamari. Ho lasciato la porta aperta, ma sentivo solo dei brandelli dei loro discorsi. Parlavano del partito comunista.

-Fa acqua da tutte le parti porco cazzo ... e poi insomma invece di cambiare il mondo vogliono solo aggiustarlo in po', solo un po' ... le riforme del cazzo sí, ma anche la proprietà privata, capisci ... la gestione collettiva sí, ma anche la direzione centralizzata ... mettersi d'accordo coi cattolici, per fare una merdosa repubblica borghese che accontenti i ricchi e anche i poveri, gli sfruttati e gli sfruttatori ... Giovanna il vino ... si sono venduti pure le mutande ... non gliene frega un cazzo ... del popolo, dico, ... della massa, allora, il vino lo porti sí o no?⁴⁹²

⁴⁹² "I had to go into the kitchen to fry the shrimps. I left the door open, but I only heard some of what they said. They were talking about the Communist Party. / - It's gaining ground everywhere, fucking hell ... and in the end instead of changing the world they just want to correct it a little, just a little ... fucking reforms yes, but private property too, you see ... collectivisation yes, but centralisation too ... getting along with the Catholics to make a shitty bourgeois republic that satisfies

It is the character of Suna who first makes Giovanna aware of the sexism inherent in Vittorio's discourse. She is perhaps the only character in the novel who succeeds in arguing with the rabid political agitator, and her remarks consistently point to the patriarchal violence of his words:

-Violenza sociale, del cazzo, capisci, [...] la rapina, il furto, di stato, è chiaro, sempre di stato, con tanto di bollo e controbollo del cazzo.

-Anche la tua è violenza però, mi stai aggredendo con un tono paternalistico che mi dà il vomito.⁴⁹³

As Giovanna becomes involved with Vittorio's movement, she fails to learn the lesson Suna is intent on teaching her. Giovanna accepts the submissive role reserved for her by Vittorio. When he orders her to take care of various menial chores such as distributing leaflets, she feels this work is below her, but does not protest. Obedience to male orders, the "sweetness of saying yes," has become second nature to her.

Volevo dire di no. Ma mi sono lasciata andare alla dolcezza di dire sí, di farsi attenti, umili, di eseguire con remissività un incarico, per ricevere poi l'approvazione di chi è piú sicuro e

the rich and the poor, the exploited and the exploiters ... Giovanna the wine ... they've sold out completely ... they don't give a fuck ... about the people, I mean ... the masses, look, are you bringing that wine or what?" Maraini 105.

⁴⁹³ "Fucking social violence, you see, kidnapping, robbery, all by the state of course, always the state, with plenty of fucking bureaucracy. / -Yours is violence too though, your talking to me in a paternalistic tone that makes me sick." Maraini 72.

piú abile. Era quello che si aspettavano da me, era naturale, era il mio compito di donna.⁴⁹⁴

A later discussion between Vittorio and another member of the movement further emphasises the sexism of the would-be revolutionaries. The claims advanced range from "una donna è abituata a una certa passività, è la sua natura"⁴⁹⁵ to "le donne hanno un fondo masochista e gli uomini un fondo sadico."⁴⁹⁶ Suna is the only one to protest these statements. When she is later arrested and questioned, she learns the same sexism prevails among the police: "Mi hanno fatto un sacco di domande idiote e offensive tipo: chi era il tuo amante? cosa facevate lí dentro? con chi andavi a letto? eccetera. Per loro una donna fa politica solo per seguire l'uomo con cui va a letto."⁴⁹⁷ The apolitical nature of women is posited in such a way that even when a woman clearly is making radical political choices, these are interpreted in sentimental and sexual terms. Giovanna will encounter the same attitude at her workplace, where she will be told that "nelle donne la spinta ideologica ha sempre radici uterine."⁴⁹⁸

⁴⁹⁴ "I wanted to say no. But I yielded to the sweetness of saying yes, of being obedient, humble, of carrying out an order so as to win the approval of who is more confident and capable. It was expected of me, it was natural, it was my role as a woman." Ibid.

⁴⁹⁵ "Women are used to a certain passivity, it's their nature." Maraini 118.

⁴⁹⁶ "Women are fundamentally masochist and men fundamentally sadist." Ibid.

⁴⁹⁷ "They asked me a bunch of stupid and insulting questions like: Who was your lover? What did you do in there? Who did you go to bed with? And so on. To them the only reasons a woman would get involved with politics is to follow the man she goes to bed with." Maraini 228.

⁴⁹⁸ "In women ideological drive is always based in the uterus." Maraini 233f.

If female emancipation is hardly an aim of Vittorio's movement, Giovanna's emancipation nevertheless benefits from her encounter with the young militancy. In part this is because Vittorio speeds her estrangement from Giacinto by demolishing the latter's political ideals. Much as Giovanna comes to doubt the desirability of her carefully reglemented lifestyle, Vittorio dismisses the program of the Italian Communist Party, of which Giacinto is a member, as "rhetorical shit" destined, like Giovanna's marriage, to collapse:

-Non posso e poi non vedo proprio perché dovrei iscrivermi al vostro movimento del cazzo se sono già iscritto al PCI; io credo nelle cose pesanti, solide, sicure.

-Le cose pesanti solide sicure finisce però che praticamente non si muovono più: sprofondano, come il palazzo di giustizia di Roma, per eccesso di mole.

-Il palazzo di giustizia sprofonda perché è fatto male, una cazzata retorica, senza basi, che cazzo c'entra questo paragone del cazzo?

-Chi ti dice che il PCI non è tutta retorica, come il palazzo di giustizia e cala, cala, sprofonda precipitosamente nella merda?⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹⁹ "I can't join your shitty movement and I don't see why I should. I'm already a member of the Italian Communist Party. I believe in solid, secure things. / -In the end solid and secure things stop moving. They sink, like the court in Rome. / -The court is sinking because it's badly built, groundless rhetorical bullshit, what the fuck does that comparison have to do with anything? / -What makes you so sure the Italian Communist Party isn't all rhetoric, just like the court, and that it's falling, falling, collapsing into the shit?" Maraini 113f.

Vittorio's rejection of the PCI and other left-wing parties is founded on his rejection of compromise, of a politics of adjustment and mere reform, as opposed to revolution. While invoking the rhetoric of revolution, these parties smother all opportunities for genuine social transformation in bureaucratic manoeuvres:

[...] il partito sedicente proletario chiede ai senza casa di mettersi in lista, così come chiede ai malati di mettersi in lista, agli studenti di mettersi in lista, ai sottoproletari di mettersi in lista. Fra trent'anni forse avete anche voi un boccone di pane, ecco l'idea, chiaro no? volete la rivoluzione compagni? mettetevi in lista!⁵⁰⁰

When one member of Vittorio's group opposes its move into clandestinity by pointing to the fact that political opposition is legal under Italy's constitution, Vittorio points out that the type of opposition he has in mind is not: "Sì legale, quando tocchi la proprietà però vedi come saltano tutti!"⁵⁰¹ Much as Vittorio's desire to radically transform the social order leads to an uncompromising rejection of the parameters of parliamentary democracy, so Giovanna, after various failed attempts to influence her husband's attitudes, will decide that the only viable option for her is to abandon Giacinto altogether. Her choice is as uncompromising in the

⁵⁰⁰ "The proletarian party asks the homeless to sign their name on a list, the way it asks the sick to sign their name on a list, the way it asks the students and the Lumpenproletariat to do the same. In thirty years you might get a bit of bread, that's the idea, right? You want revolution, comrades? Sign here!" Maraini 133.

⁵⁰¹ "Sure it's legal, but when it comes to property you see how they jump!" Maraini 166.

personal sphere as Vittorio's is in the political. Much as some of Vittorio's would-be followers cannot envision political opposition outside the historically and culturally sanctioned domain of electoral politics, so Giovanna comes to learn that Giacinto is unable to abandon a view of women that a male-dominated society has imparted on him. In his view, for Giovanna to abandon her former docile behaviour is for her to "go against nature." This becomes clear in a conversation about Suna:

-La giudico per quello che è: una troia.

-Ma perché?

-Perché non è naturale; mi rompe i coglioni.

-Che vuol dire naturale?

-Che segue la natura.

-Cioè?

-Per una donna la natura è una cosa dolce, femminile; quella non fa che parlare a vanvera e dire cazzate e rompere l'anima alla gente.

-Io sono naturale?

-Tu sí, fin'ora sí, ma ora proprio ora ti metti contro natura.⁵⁰²

Giovanna is slow to decide that the putatively "natural" behaviour Giacinto desires is not one she wants to continue

⁵⁰² "I judge her for what she is: a whore. / -But why? / -Because she's not natural: she breaks my balls. / -What does natural mean? / -Following nature. / -Meaning? / -For a woman, nature is something sweet, feminine; all she does is ramble and talk shit and get on people's nerves. / -Am I natural? / -You are, until now, but right now you're going against nature." Maraini 141.

engaging in. The slowness of her emancipation is a consequence of lethargy and habit. Because she has always acted in the way expected from her, the first step in her emancipation consists not so much in the construction of a new life practice as in the rejection of the old, familiar one. This is difficult, she notes, because "È piú facile fare le cose che non farle."⁵⁰³

One of the experiences that does most to speed Giovanna's self-transformation is her presence at the interrogation of a kidnapped prison director at the hands of Vittorio. Confronted with Vittorio's stubborn, self-assured manner, the initially reticent prison director begins to confess first minor then major misdeeds, until he exposes the full extent of his moral corruption and criminal inclinations in an uninterrupted monologue that continues for several pages. The interrogation of the prison director begins, innocently enough, with the question of what he did to arrive at his position of authority.

-Come hai fatto a diventare direttore?

-Non lo so, giuro che non lo so, forse perché non ho mai dato noia a nessuno, e ho sempre riverito i potenti, se è questo che volete, dico quello che volete.

-Come hai fatto a diventare direttore?

⁵⁰³ "It's easier doing things than not doing them." Maraini 201.

-Sono iscritto al partito di maggioranza, è questo che vi preme? va bene? è logico, è una cosa logica, mica mi spavento a dirlo.

-Come hai fatto a diventare direttore?

-Sì insomma i giudici del concorso erano del mio partito.

-Come hai fatto a diventare direttore?

-È una questione di favori, naturalmente [...].⁵⁰⁴

One of the abuses of power confessed by the prison director towards the end of the interrogation is sexual in nature:

Il silenzio continuava. L'uomo muoveva la testa bendata cercando di vedere attraverso la stoffa, ma non ci riusciva. Il sospetto lo rendeva inquieto. Non si fidava di noi. Pensava che lo volessimo uccidere. Rabbriviva ad ogni scatto dell'accendino di Giampiero. La camicia gli si era infradiciata di sudore.

-Sì ho abusato del mio potere per farmi fare ... hm ... beh ... una cosa con la bocca dalla moglie di un detenuto, in cambio di un permesso.⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰⁴ "How did you become director? / -I don't know, I swear I don't know, maybe because I never bothered anyone, and I always respected the powerful, if that's what you want to hear, I'll say what you want to hear. / -How did you become director? / -I'm a member of the majority party, is that what gets you? Happy now? It's logical, completely logical, I'm not afraid of saying so. / -How did you become director? / -Yes alright the judges were party members. / -How did you become director? / -It was a question of political favours, of course." Maraini 205.

⁵⁰⁵ "The silence continued. The man moved his blindfolded head, trying unsuccessfully to see through the cloth. Suspicion made him uneasy. He didn't trust us. He thought we wanted to kill him. He jerked every time Giampiero used his lighter. His shirt was soaked with sweat. / -Yes I've abused my power to ... hm ... well ... something with the mouth by the wife of an inmate, in return for a permit." Maraini 209.

The director's confession reveals that government institutions are not free of the male violence Giovanna has learned about in the course of the novel. She discovers that women's sexuality is instrumentalised by power-hungry authorities – another point of contact between her emancipation and Vittorio's revolutionary project.

Although Giovanna discontinues her involvement with the militant activities of Vittorio's group, she interprets her self-transformation in terms of the prison director's interrogation. Towards the end of the novel, when she is deciding to finally live without Giacinto, she dreams of stabbing the director and then discovering that he is her father:

Ho sognato di pugnalarlo il direttore del carcere. Lo colpivo dieci volte con dieci colpi rapidi, precisi. Poi pulivo il coltello sulla camicia da notte di Suna. Lo pulivo molto accuratamente. E intanto piangevo perché sapevo che il direttore non era altro che mio padre il contadino, la faccia tagliata dalla benda rossa, le labbra porcine bagnate di sudore, la testa priva di capelli, le mani come le mie, corte, nodose, levigate. Gli tiravo via la benda e lo baciavo sugli occhi spalancati con amore, disperata.⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰⁶ "I dreamt I was stabbing the prison director. I stabbed him ten times with ten rapid, precise blows. Then I cleaned the knife on Suna's nightshirt. I cleaned it very carefully. And in the meantime I cried because I knew the director was none but my father the peasant, his face divided by the red cloth, his piglike lips wet with sweat, the head without hair, the hands like mine, short, knotted. I removed the cloth and kissed him lovingly on his wide-open eyes, desperate." Maraini 215.

In this dream, the political violence of the militants becomes the paradigm for an attack on the values and institutions of a repressive society – a repression that can be understood in sexual and domestic as well as in economic and political terms. Giovanna's situation is as paradoxical as the militant's conviction that a social order founded on a violence he condemns can only be overthrown by further violence. Like Giacinto, the father, that first figure of male authority and one of the earliest teachers of society's rules of propriety, is for Giovanna both an object of affection and an enemy who must, at least emotionally, be destroyed.

Ferdinando Camon: Occidente

Published three years before the Moro-kidnapping, Occidente⁵⁰⁷ paints a vivid and highly topical portrait of the struggle between fascist and communist militants in an unspecified Italian city during the mid-1970s.⁵⁰⁸ The novel narrates the activities of two would-be revolutionaries: Franco, a member of the fascist organisation Gruppo d'Ordine and Miro, a militant of the left-wing organisation

⁵⁰⁷ Ferdinando Camon, Occidente (Milan: Garzanti, 1975). Quotations are from the 1977 reprint. For Camon's interviews with Alberto Moravia, Vasco Pratolini, Pier Paolo Pasolini, and Italo Calvino, cf. Ferdinando Camon, Il mestiere di scrittore (Milan: Garzanti, 1973).

⁵⁰⁸ The novel's topicality emerges particularly strongly from references to such events as the Bologna massacre (282ff.). In the author's note (315ff.), Camon lists some of the sources of his analysis of militancy. These include conversations with members of Lotta Continua.

Potere Rivoluzionario.⁵⁰⁹ Franco spends the early chapters of the novel investigating possible locations for a new headquarters of his organisation, then attends a meeting in which the principles of that organisation are outlined. His visit to a psychoanalyst places his fascist militancy in the context of his psychological troubles; Franco's hatred of progressive politics is presented as an outgrowth of an (initially unacknowledged) fear of death. The novel closes with Franco preparing to detonate a bomb in a crowded part of town. Meanwhile, Miro has been helping to organise the operations of his own organisation; these include street fights and the plastering of the city with flyers.

Franco and Miro have much in common. Both are nervous and overwrought, in the midst of personal crises resulting from their rejection of contemporary society and the absence of compelling moral codes by which to structure their lives. (As will be shown below, the ideologies to which Franco and Miro subscribe are presented by Camon as surrogates for a more traditional, essentially Christian worldview; radical political ideology fills the void left by a defunct religious order.) Both Franco and Miro are solitary individuals, alienated from those around them, and most importantly, they both come from middle-class backgrounds. Camon places particular emphasis on this latter trait because he

⁵⁰⁹ The names of these two fictional organisations (which translate as "The Group of Order" and "Revolutionary Power") recall those of two actual ones: the fascist Ordine Nuovo and the communist Potere Operaio.

essentially views militancy as the expression of middle-class decadence.⁵¹⁰ The middle class he describes is characterised by "boredom" and "cynicism"; it has replaced replaced "morality" with "fashion," and its members exist in a state of "living death."⁵¹¹ While some of their contemporaries attempt to escape their spiritual emptiness by celebrating extravagant parties, Franco and Miro opt for militancy.

Camon spends considerably more time describing Franco and his fellow fascists than he spends describing Miro and the left. One aspect of Camon's portrait of the militant right is relevant here, namely Franco's hatred of the left, which reveals itself to be a more general fear of change, behind which lies the fear of death. At one point, Franco confesses to a psychoanalyst that it seems to him "absurd" that history should continue after his death. He speaks of

⁵¹⁰ The early chapters of *Occidente* describe the extravagant parties of middle-class youths and refer repeatedly to the spiritual bankruptcy of Christianity. By placing militancy in this context, Camon suggests it is only the symptom of a more far-reaching spiritual crisis; his analysis of 20th Century Western culture as decadent has markedly Spenglerian overtones. Cf. Camon Camon 84, where the novel's central theme is explicitly identified as "decadenza dell'Occidente" ["the decadence of the West"]. Cf. also Camon 131: "L'ordine morale non è più garantito da nessuno. Ogni dogma è soggetto a riserve" ["The moral order is no longer guaranteed by anyone. Every dogma is subject to qualification"]. (This opinion is voiced by one of Camon's characters, the leader of a fascist organisation, but many statements made by the narrator are in a similar vein.) The decadence of Camon's protagonists manifests itself not only in their political radicalism, but also physically: both Franco and Miro suffer from nervous disorders. Camon suggests the differences between them are only superficial. They may subscribe to different ideologies, but both these ideologies are only the expression of Western decadence. This dawns on the fascist Franco when he says: "Sono un uomo qualsiasi" (Camon 186) ["I'm a man like any other"]. The realisation comes to him after his visit to a psychoanalyst; referring to the psychoanalyst's office, Franco says: "Qui si sono seduti comunisti e missini, preti e operai, fascisti ed ebrei" (ibid.) ["Communists and right-wingers, priests and workers, fascists and Jews have sat here"].

⁵¹¹ Cf. Camon 22 - "La moda che è la regola morale del nostro tempo [...]" ["Fashion, which is the moral law of our day..."] - and Camon 28, 30, 31.

how he is perturbed by the notion that people should buy a newspaper printed the day after he has died:

Che i giornali abbiano la data del giorno successivo a quello della mia morte. Che tutto ciò che ci sarà scritto, sarà sempre ignoto a me. I giornali, da quel giorno, e per tutti i giorni dell'avvenire, parleranno di infinite aventure, sempre diverse... e non di me. [...] Oppure, che inventino una nuova macchina... anch  questo mi   intollerabile... fisicamente...⁵¹²

Hence Franco's reactionary politics, his desire to prevent human progress, is the product not of political analysis, but of egoism and a fear of death. Franco is terrified of progressive and revolutionary agendas because only the halting of social and political progress or a return to the past can help him accept his own mortality.⁵¹³

At one point, this attitude is formulated by Franco in religious terms: "Bisogna che nulla cambi, di ci  che noi crediamo immutabile... come l'Atto di dolore... o le parole di Cristo al ladro crocefisso con lui..."⁵¹⁴ In fact, the concept of Christianity as a moribund religion is at the heart of Camon's analysis of militancy.

Both the religious rhetoric of the fascists and the violent and

⁵¹² "That newspapers should feature the date of the day after my death. That I will never know anything written in them. From that day on, and for the entire future, the newspapers will talk of infinite, ever-different adventures... and not about me. Or that a new machine should be invented... This too is unbearable to me... physically unbearable..." Camon 179.

⁵¹³ Cf. Camon 179: "Ma so che, se invece di inventare qualcosa di futuro io sapessi che gli uomini torneranno indietro... verso il passato, o resteranno fermi, ecco, questo mi aiuterebbe ad accettare di morire" ["But I know that if, instead of inventing something new, men were to go back in history, or to stand still, this would help me accept my death"].

⁵¹⁴ "What is needed is that nothing we think of as immutable should change... like the Passion... or the words of Christ to the thief crucified with him..." Camon 180.

ideological language of the communists are presented as attempts to satisfy a need for spiritual stability no longer met by traditional religious institutions.⁵¹⁵ In the case of the fascists, a skewed religiousity provides the justification for political violence and rigidly hierarchical forms of organisation.⁵¹⁶ While putatively atheist, the communists too need a "Christ" – an unimpeachable figure of authority, obedience to which transcends the limits of pragmatic political thought and assumes a "devotional" character.⁵¹⁷

The praxis of Miro and his comrades is conceived of by them not in political, but in theological terms. These are supplemented by

⁵¹⁵ The fascist organisation of which Franco is a member circulates a document listing "i dieci comandamenti del militante" (Camon 154). These "ten commandments" are followed by a prayer. The Gruppo d'Ordine's analysis of the Soviet system of government is also couched in religious rhetoric. Cf. Camon 140: "[...] nella nuova civiltà sovietica è riconoscibile quella che l'Apocalisse chiamava la 'bestia senza volto', cioè composta da una moltitudine innumerabile" ["In the new Soviet civilisation one can recognise what the Apocalypse terms 'the faceless beast,' that is, it is made up of an unquantifiable multitude"].

⁵¹⁶ The hierarchically organised Gruppo d'Ordine envisions an equally hierarchical social order and insists that in such a social order, the authority of those at the top of the hierarchy must be spiritual: "[...] il vero potere sul popolo può venire solo dall'alto, e può venire legittimato solo attraverso la sanzione di un'autorità spirituale [...]" (Camon 138) ["True power over the people can only come from above, and it only be legitimated by a spiritual authority"]. Cf. also Camon 137, where Western "decadence" is described as a religious mystery and related to the loss of spiritually sanctioned hierarchies: "La decadenza, come lo stato, è un mistero: il mistero non ha spiegazione, ma viene decifrato attraverso dei simboli. Quando la religione cattolica spiega la caduta degli angeli col ricorso a una maligna libera volontà, non dice nulla di diverso: allude alla decadenza come rottura della gerarchia, come autodistruzione spirituale, come caos morale" (Camon 137) ["Decadence, like the state, is a mystery: the mystery has no explanation, but it can be deciphered through symbols. When the Catholic religion explains the fall of the angels in terms of a malignant free will, it says just this: it alludes to decadence as the subversion of hierarchy, spiritual self-destruction, moral chaos"]. The political solution to "moral chaos" is conceived of by the fascists in terms of a Platonic dictatorship, "lo Stato di Platone, lo Stato-Idea" (ibid.) ["Plato's state, the Idea-State"]. Earlier in the novel, these notions of hierarchy are elaborated on by a "poeta-filosofo" ["poet-philosopher"] who does not appear again. Cf. Camon 32ff.

⁵¹⁷ Cf. Camon 62: "Bisogna assolutamente avere un Cristo per poter commettere simili azioni" ["One must have a Christ in order to be able to do such things"]. This passage relates the revolutionary violence of Lenin and Mao to the violence of the crusades.

existential considerations. Behind militant praxis lies the need to assert one's own existence by "leaving a trace": "La sorpresa sta qui: che in tutti c'è il bisogno esistenziale di lasciare una traccia, di manifestare un potere: e il potere si manifesta facendo, non pensando."⁵¹⁸ Guided by such considerations, the praxis of Camon's communists is really a corruption of the traditional Marxist notion of praxis; it is a "praxis" that is not motivated politically, and it is progressive or revolutionary only in name. This emerges most clearly from its entirely destructive nature, and from the fact that the destruction it perpetrates is gratuitous.⁵¹⁹

The fascists openly flaunt their lack of a political program. As one of their ideologues proclaims: "Non ha importanza il programma. [...] Trovarsi d'accordo per distruggere è l'unico modo per restare insieme. Il programma ci divide, non sappiamo ancora chi siamo [...]."⁵²⁰ Fascist militancy is organised violence, but it is also "blind" violence in the sense that it subordinates all notions of right and wrong to a vague concept of "unity," thereby assuming a

⁵¹⁸ "This is what is surprising: that everyone feels the existential need to leave a trace, to establish power: and power is established not by thinking, but by doing." Camon 190.

⁵¹⁹ Cf. Camon's comparison of left-wing militancy to apolitical crime in the United States: "Negli Stati Uniti, gruppi di giovani si riuniscono a caso, di sera, nel quartiere, e vanno in giro per fare qualcosa: sfasciano le cabine telefoniche, rovesciano gli autobus in periferia, e, ogni tanto, ammazzano qualche sconosciuto: così tornano a letto e dormono tranquilli, perché così sentono di essere qualcuno" (ibid.) ["In the United States, groups of young people meet by chance, in the evening, in their neighbourhoods, and go about just to do something: they wreck phone booths, topple buses in the suburbs and, every once in a while, they kill some stranger: that way they can go home and sleep peacefully, because they feel they have become someone"].

⁵²⁰ "The program doesn't matter. To remain in agreement in order to destroy is the only way of staying together. The program divides us; we don't yet know who we are." Camon 145.

recklessly gratuitous character: "I militanti marceranno uniti anche su una strada errata, poiché la strada peggiore è la disunione."⁵²¹ Like that of Potere Rivoluzionario, the political agenda of the Gruppo d'Ordine reduces itself to the destruction of existing society.

While they are essentially aspects of the same phenomenon (the decadence of the middle class and of Western culture in general) the reactionary and revolutionary militants pit themselves against one another. Their political programs are in fact only putatively political. Nevertheless, it is in political terms that they establish their antagonistic relationship. Without placing themselves on opposite ends of the political spectrum, they would be constrained to acknowledge the degree to which they are in fact identical.

This farcical political struggle manifests itself not only in physical violence (street fights and assassinations), but also as a struggle for the control of public opinion – a struggle over information and its dissemination. The antagonistic interaction between the fascists and the communists frequently takes the form of a conflict between information and counterinformation. In the "catechism" that outlines the rules of behaviour for members of the Gruppo d'Ordine, central importance is given to a mode of psychological warfare that relies on weakening the enemy's resolve by exposing him to one's ideology. The catechism advocates

⁵²¹ "The militants will march in unity even on the wrong path, because the path of disunity is worse." Camon 150.

distributing fascist texts to members of the militant left: "Si deve dare materiale anche al nemico?" / "Si. Perché leggendo esso dubiterà, e il nemico che dubita sarà sconfitto."⁵²²

Similarly, a central aspect of the Red Brigades operations mentioned in one of the final chapters of Occidente is the representation of these operations in the media. The Red Brigades face the problem that as long as their operations are reported only by regular newspapers, they seem "unreal," qualitatively identical to cinematic fiction: "Ma questi interventi apparivano, dai giornali, irreali, fantasiosi, roba da film: esci dal cinema e non è vero nulla."⁵²³ And as long as the representation of the Red Brigades is left to the state they combat, the state will use its monopoly on public opinion to determine what is "true" and what is not: "Perché in ogni Stato lo Stato, anche se indegno di fiducia, è garante della verità e della menzogna [...]."⁵²⁴ From this arises the importance, for the Red Brigades, of engaging in a project of counterinformation. One part of this project consists in circulating documents written by "political prisoners": "Ma ecco [...] le prove della verità: le Brigate Rosse difondevano ciò che i rapiti avevano

⁵²² "Should material be given to the enemy also?" / "Yes. Because the enemy who reads it will doubt, and as an enemy who doubts he will be defeated." Camon 148. That this rulebook should be referred to as a "catechism" not only recalls Bakunin's Revolutionary Catechism, thereby further conflating left and right, but also fits well with the fascist's general fondness, in Camon's novel, for religious vocabulary.

⁵²³ "But reported in the newspapers, these operations seemed unreal, fantastic, something out of a film: when you walk out of the cinema nothing you saw is real any longer." Camon 283.

⁵²⁴ "Because in every state, the state, even if distrusted, is the guarantor of what is true and what is a lie." Ibid.

lasciato nelle prigioni del popolo, diari, fumetti, disegni, poesie, lettere alla moglie, pensieri della sera."⁵²⁵ These documents provide a contrast to what is reported in the media, thereby helping to break the state's monopoly on public opinion. Similarly, the left-wing militants of Potere Rivoluzionario spend much of their time plastering the city with flyers. These are then torn down, only to return – a clear example of that struggle between information and counterinformation Camon describes as a "guerriglia di parole."⁵²⁶

Whatever the efficacy of such propaganda operations, they remain hollow in the sense that they are underpinned by no clear political agenda. Despite the reference to revolution in the name of their organisation, Camon's left-wing militants do not hope to create a new sociopolitical order. In their entirely destructive operations, the "victory" of a successful revolution is postponed to an unspecified time in the future:

Ciò di cui la guerriglia urbana [...] ha bisogno non è la vittoria [...] I tempi in cui si consuma la nostra vita non sono mature per questo evento: la borghesia non ce la fa più, il proletariato non ce la fa ancora. Noi viviamo quest'epoca di crisi, e non siamo destinati a vederne la soluzione, anzi neanche ad averne un presentimento.⁵²⁷

⁵²⁵ "But now the proof: the Red Brigades circulated what the hostages had left in the people's prisons: diaries, cartoons, drawings, poems, letters to their wives, thoughts jotted down in the evening." Ibid.

⁵²⁶ "Verbal guerrilla war." Camon 226.

⁵²⁷ "What the urban guerrilla needs is not victory. This event will not occur in our lifetimes: the middle class is finished, the working class isn't ready yet. We live in

Given this outlook, "revolution" becomes a mere catchword. In fact, the 1970s are, for Camon, not a genuinely revolutionary era. It is precisely the violence of the putatively revolutionary organisations that confirms their non-progressive character. Rather than altering the structures of authority, the militants confirm them:

Perché l'attentato e la strage sono i chiodi che impediscono alla storia di scivolare: non sono le leve della rivoluzione, che sbloccano il mondo. Le grandi rivoluzioni sono povere di attentati. Le grandi restaurazioni ne sono piene.⁵²⁸

For Camon, the militants are no better than the society they rise up against; they are only one more symptom of its decadence.

Violence is the link that unites the generation of student protesters and militants with that of their fathers. The violence of the militants is a continuation of earlier violence, not a revolt against it. For Camon, only a non-violent revolution could provide for a genuine break with the past: "I figli uccidevano, e dunque gettavano ciò solo che li separava dai padri: l'innocenza. Erano come loro, le generazioni separate dall'accusa, dal dubbio e dal sospetto si ricomponevano."⁵²⁹

this time of crisis, and we're not destined to see its resolution, not even to have a presentiment of it." Camon 263.

⁵²⁸ "Because assassinations and massacres are the nails that prevent history from slipping: they are not the lever of the revolution that unhinges the world. Great revolutions involve few assassinations. Periods of great restoration are full of them." Camon 305f.

⁵²⁹ "The sons killed, and in doing so cast away the only thing that separated them from their fathers: innocence. They were the same; generations separated by accusals, doubt, and supicion reconnected." Camon 305. Camon points to one trait of "terrorism" that distinguishes it from many other forms of political

This analysis stands and falls with the truth of the proposition that the movements described by Camon are not genuinely political - that their apparent political differences merely mask the same state of cultural decline and existential dissatisfaction. It is only by portraying left-wing militants as not genuinely interested in the construction of a new sociopolitical order, and by analysing the entire militant conflict not in political terms, but in those of a pseudo-theological Spenglerian *Kulturkritik*, that Camon is able to obfuscate the actual differences between left and right.

violence: "terrorism" is indiscriminate. It does not target a clearly defined political enemy, but strikes randomly. Cf. Camon 308: "Noi viviamo in un'epoca in cui il giornale vale più di chi lo compra, la notizia vale più delle vittime che racconta: pur di occupare spazio in quel giornale, pur di dare occasione a quella notizia, ci sono in ogni città d'Europa gruppi disposti a uccidere a caso: più è casuale, più il delitto è efficace. Non serve più che il re, il presidente, il ministro si sentano insicuri: occorre che si senta insicuro l'uomo qualunque, la donna in casa, l'insegnante a scuola, il viaggiatore in treno, il vecchio sulla soglia, la folla in piazza, il pubblico al cinema" ["We live in an age in which the newspaper is worth more than the one who buys it, the headline is worth more than the victims it reports: in addition to taking up space in that newspaper, in addition to providing the occasion for that headline, there are in every European city groups prepared to kill indiscriminately: the more casual the crime, the more effective it is. It's no longer enough for the king, the president, the minister to feel unsafe: what is required is that the common man, the housewife, the schoolteacher, the train traveller, the old man on the porch, the crowd in the square, the cinema audience feels unsafe"].

Humble Killers: Literary and Cinematic Representations of the German and
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by

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Nanni Balestrini: La violenza illustrata

Each of the ten chapters of Balestrini's experimental novel La violenza illustrata⁵³⁰ describes an episode of violence.⁵³¹ The chapters are divided into brief sections assembled largely from quotations. Often a chapter returns repeatedly to the same details of the episode described; as Balestrini quotes from various publications, the interpretation of these details shifts. In this manner, Balestrini reveals how the media shape public opinion, at

⁵³⁰ Nanni Balestrini, La violenza illustrata (Turin: Einaudi, 1976). Nanni Balestrini was a co-founder of the extraparlimentary group Potere Operaio. Like other members of the group, he faced trial in 1979. Balestrini was accused of murder and membership in an armed insurrectionary organisation (banda armata). The charges were later dropped. The political conflicts in Italy from the 1960s onwards are a major theme not only of Balestrini's novels, but also of his poetry. Cf. in particular Blackout (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1980) and Le avventure complete della Signorina Richmond (Venaria: Testo & Immagine, 1999). Blackout includes a description of Balestrini's trial and incarceration. The memoir of critic and novelist Renzo Paris, Cattivi sogetti (Rome: Editori riuniti, 1988), contains a portrait of Balestrini (51ff.). For Balestrini's role in Italy's literary "neo-avantgarde" (the Gruppo 63, whose other members included Umberto Eco and Alberto Arbasino), cf. Peter O. Chotjewitz's essay "Nanni Balestrini und die 'Neo-Avantgarde der 60er Jahre'", in: Nanni Balestrini, Alles auf einmal (Berlin: Literarisches Colloquium Berlin, 1991) 108ff. Cf. also Il romanzo sperimentale (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1966). This volume reproduces a seminar of the Gruppo 63 held in Palermo from 1 to 6 September, 1965. During the seminar, Balestrini advocates abandoning all conceptions of the novel based on its relation to reality and insists the novel should be "a purely verbal mechanism" (133). For a qualification of this position, cf. the interview with Balestrini in Gemeili/Piemontese 11ff. In this interview, Balestrini speaks of his attempt to organise prose by formal principles derived from poetry, and discusses his theory of a fiction that is "epic" in the sense that it articulates collective, rather than personal experience.

⁵³¹ Not every episode of violence is directly related to Italian militancy. The protagonist of Chapter 1, "Deposizione della madre di William Calley al processo per la strage di Song My" ["Deposition of the Mother of William Calley at the Trial Concerning the Song My Massacre"], is Lieutenant William Calley, responsible for the deaths of at least 347 civilians – primarily old men, women, and children – in the Vietnamese village Song My, near My Lai, on 16 March, 1968. The chapter is essentially the description of the Calley family's comfortable middle-class home and appears to have been inspired by Seymour M. Hersh's 1970 book My Lai 4: A Report on the Massacre and its Aftermath (New York: Random House, 1970). Chapter 3, "Un nuovo modo di fare la produzione / nell'acido solforico mettiamoci il padrone" ["A new form of production / Let's put the boss in the sulphuric acid vat"], describes various workplace accidents, including one in a chemical plant which results in the hospitalisation of twelve workers.

times through misinformation. The biased reporting of physical violence itself becomes an act of (interpretative) violence. Violence is done both to facts and to the reader who is denied access to important information or urged to adopt a politically slanted perspective on it.

Two chapters of La violenza illustrata bear directly on the issue of Italian left-wing militancy: Chapter 7 describes the release of a man kidnapped by a clandestine left-wing organisation in Milan, and Chapter 9 describes the shooting of a female militant by the police. Although Balestrini does not use their names, it is obvious the protagonists of these chapters are based on Mario Sossi and Mara Cagol, respectively. Three other chapters are also relevant to this study: Chapter 2 describes a student demonstration that turns into a street fight; Chapter 8 humorously juxtaposes a strike at the Fiat Mirafiori factory with the wedding ceremony of a middle-class couple; and Chapter 10, the only one not based on actual events, offers a vision of successful socialist revolution in an Italian city.

Most striking about Chapter 7 is its circular structure, its insistence on returning constantly to the same, apparently trivial details. Focusing on Sossi's release, that is, on one of the briefer and perhaps best understood episodes of the kidnapping, Balestrini shows how even these details are worthy of closer scrutiny. Each is called into question, from the Milan-Genoa train ticket Sossi is given

by the kidnappers to the impression he makes on his friend and doctor, Caruso. The chapter assumes the character of an investigation as Balestrini recounts the same event over and over, introducing new information that supplements or contradicts what the reader already knows. Ultimately, the chapter conveys an impression of circularity not only because Balestrini continually returns to events he has already narrated, but also because the contradictory accounts he offers in fact prohibit a coherent, linear narrative. The frustration the reader feels is that of someone trying to reconstruct the truth of an event on the basis of unreliable sources.⁵³²

The varying accounts of Sossi's release are not always contradictory. Sometimes one merely fleshes out what has been said in another. For example, we are told initially that when Sossi searched his pocket, he found in it a Milan-Genoa train ticket: "Poi ha fatto l'itinerario di ciò che aveva in tasca. Un biglietto di prima classe Milano-Genova."⁵³³ Five pages later, we learn that in addition to the ticket, Sossi also had money in his pocket: "In tasca aveva ancora i soldi che teneva con sé il giorno in cui era stato rapito."⁵³⁴

⁵³² Balestrini appropriates a technique of the French *nouveau roman*, which was a subject of discussion in the Gruppo 63's debates on the experimental novel. Unlike French writers such as Robbe-Grillet, however, Balestrini uses the "unreliable" or self-contradictory narrative in order to expose not so much the mendacity of all speech acts, but in particular of those which are obviously political.

⁵³³ "Then he checked the contents of his pocket. A first-class ticket, Milan-Genoa." Balestrini 1976 86.

⁵³⁴ "In his pocket, he still had the money from the day he was kidnapped." Balestrini 1976 91.

Another three pages later, we are told Sossi's pocket contained a pair of sunglasses as well, given to him by his kidnappers: "In tasca mi avevano anche messo un paio di occhiali da sole."⁵³⁵ Although there is no logical contradiction between these statements, the reader is left feeling sceptical. Balestrini may be writing about details that appear to be of little or no importance; nevertheless he disconcerts the reader by drawing attention to the selectivity of news reporting. The reader discovers the extent to which he is at the mercy of the reporter, and cannot help wondering about the criteria on which the reporter bases his selection of facts.

Another way the accounts of Sossi's release differ is in the degree of certainty they attribute to facts. Once, Sossi is sure his kidnappers drove him in a truck: "Mi sono svegliato sul fondo di un furgoncino. Non era un'auto non c'erano i sedili posteriori."⁵³⁶ Another time, he is not sure at all, and admits as much: "Mi fecero uscire dalla stanzetta e tenendomi per le braccia mi accompagnarono a un automezzo ha raccontato. Non posso dire se era una vettura o un furgoncino piccolo."⁵³⁷ Here too, the reader is left feeling sceptical. An event whose certainty has only just been insisted on is suddenly presented as uncertain; thereby, every

⁵³⁵ "They had also put a pair of sunglasses in my pocket." Balestrini 1976 94.

⁵³⁶ "I woke up in the back of a van. It wasn't a car there were no back seats."

Ibid.

⁵³⁷ "They made me leave the room and holding me by the arms they led to me a vehicle he said. I can't say whether it was a car or a van." Balestrini 1976 96.

subsequent claim about the certainty or uncertainty of an event is rendered doubtful.

When there are outright contradictions between the varying accounts, they are typically over details of political significance. Sossi's health is one such detail. If Sossi was released in good health, this casts doubt on claims about the total indifference of the Red Brigades to their hostages; if he was released in poor health, those claims (and the larger critique of the left of which they are a part) are reinforced. To complicate the issue, Sossi's doctor furnishes statements to support both interpretations. At one point, Doctor Caruso claims: "Non era in buone condizione fisiche. Si vedeva. Anzi direi che era in pessime condizioni."⁵³⁸ A page later, Caruso says something very different: "Aveva la barba lunga ma il suo aspetto mi è sembrato buono. Anche lui mi ha confermato di star bene ha aggiunto soltanto di avere perso cinque chili."⁵³⁹ Only one of the two versions is reported: "Il medico ha poi dichiarato che gli è apparso in buone condizioni aveva solo la barba leggermente lunga a pizzico."⁵⁴⁰ The switch from the first to the third person – from Caruso's original testimony to a report of that testimony – draws attention to the mediated nature of the report: Caruso is not speaking directly to the reader; rather, an invisible third person –

⁵³⁸ "He wasn't in good physical condition. You could tell. In fact I would say he was in very bad condition." Balestrini 1976 92.

⁵³⁹ "He was unshaven but he seemed fine. In fact he confirmed he felt fine he only added that he had lost five kilos." Balestrini 1976 93.

⁵⁴⁰ "The doctor then confirmed he was fine it was just his beard was a bit long and straggly." Balestrini 1976 90.

the reporter – has inserted himself between the two, and is, perhaps, distorting the truth of the original account, or selectively using elements of that account to fabricate his own “truth.”

Some of Caruso’s statements are replies to questions.

Balestrini leaves it unclear whether Caruso is being interviewed or interrogated; in any case, there is an attempt to establish a definite narrative on the basis of Caruso’s confused and uncertain statements. This attempt is violent in its disregard for the emotional upheaval and disorientedness of Caruso, who ends up making definite statements more out of deference to his questioner than out of conviction: “E dove l’hanno lasciato glielo ha detto. Mi pare che mi abbia detto a Milano perchè sa nell’emozione a un certo momento non sono sicuro di quello che mi ha detto comunque mi pare che mi abbia detto mi hanno lasciato a Milano.”⁵⁴¹

Sossi claims that before being released, he caught a glimpse of one of his kidnappers rushing away: “Per qualche secondo sono rimasto intontito poi mi sono voltato e ho visto una figura d’uomo forse un giovane. Camminava rapidamente verso un furgone o un’auto che è ripartita subito.”⁵⁴² Again Sossi’s memory is confused; he does not remember whether the kidnapper was rushing towards a car or a truck. In a sentence that combines two mutually

⁵⁴¹ “And where did they leave him did he tell you. I think he said Milan because you know in the heat of the moment I’m not sure what he told me anyway I think he said Milan.” Balestrini 1976 98.

⁵⁴² “For a moment I felt dazed then I turned around and saw a man maybe a youngster. He was walking quickly towards a van or a car which drove off immediately.” Balestrini 1976 93.

exclusive claims about the reliability of Sossi's memory, Balestrini stresses how some reporters have an interest in discrediting his claims, while others want to insist on their veracity: "È ancora capace di rendersi conto di quello che sta accadendo la sua memoria è confusa."⁵⁴³ Besides casting doubt on the objectivity of the media – or even on the possibility of objective reporting – the differing accounts quoted by Balestrini create a sense of metaphorical disorientedness that reflect Sossi's actual disorientedness following his release. At one point, Sossi suggests he was drugged. (His uncertainty as to whether he was transported in a car or a truck might also be explained by his claim that band aids were placed over his eyes.) Jumps in time further reinforce this impression of disorientedness. One section ends with Sossi on a train, pretending to sleep ("Ho cercato un posto tranquillo e ho fatto finta di dormire"⁵⁴⁴); the next begins with him waking up in a truck ("Mi sono svegliato sul fondo di un furgoncino"⁵⁴⁵) – an event that preceded the train journey. Balestrini suggests an analogy between the experience of the reader and that of Sossi: both are in a state of profound uncertainty, trying to establish a truth that is obscured by contradictory impressions, always open to revision, and which perhaps cannot be determined at all without guesswork.⁵⁴⁶

⁵⁴³ "He's still aware of what's happening his memories are confused." Balestrini 1976 96.

⁵⁴⁴ "I looked for a quiet place I pretended to sleep." Balestrini 1976 94.

⁵⁴⁵ "I woke up in the back of a van." Ibid.

⁵⁴⁶ The entire chapter might be said to be based on Balestrini's clever use of surprises. Hence its resemblance to detective narratives, which are also

Chapter 9, which is based on Mara Cagol's death and takes its title ("Che mille braccia si protendano per raccogliere il suo fucile"⁵⁴⁷) from the Red Brigades statement issued in memory of her, is also not so much a finished "story" as a montage of documents on the basis of which that story needs first to be reconstructed. The style of Chapter 9 vacillates between that of a police report and that of a news story. The chapter begins with the description of a nameless corpse – "Un cadavere senza nome il corpo è quello di una donna tra i 35 e i 40 anni con capelli e mèches rossicce vestita con un golfino beige jeans sbiaditi e sandali rossi a tacco di corda alto"⁵⁴⁸ – and ends with the identification of that corpse: "La terrorista uccisa nel conflitto a fuoco di ieri alla cascina ha finalmente un nome."⁵⁴⁹ Cagol's name is never actually mentioned in the text. She is, however, "identified" first as "a young woman belonging to the organisation of the kidnappers"⁵⁵⁰, and then as a "dead terrorist." In other words, her "identification" is not

structured as ongoing investigations in which apparent certainties are constantly called into question. (For Caruso, the greatest surprise is not any particular discovery about Sossi's release, but the release itself. Cf. the telephone conversation between him and Sossi on p. 92: "Mi ha telefonato. Pronto sei tu. Sono io. Chi. Ma sono io non mi riconosci" ["He called me. Hello is it you. It's me. Who. But it's me don't you recognise me"]). Unrecognised not only by people in the park where he is released, but even by his closest friend, Sossi is like a man returned from the dead. In the light of this, the attention devoted to his physical health assumes a symbolic character.)

⁵⁴⁷ "May a hundred arms reach out to pick up her gun."

⁵⁴⁸ "A nameless corpse the body is that of a young woman aged 35 to 40 with reddish hair dressed in a beige sweater and red sandals." Balestrini 1976 111.

⁵⁴⁹ "The terrorist killed in the shootout at the farm yesterday finally has a name." Balestrini 1976 113.

⁵⁵⁰ Cf. Balestrini 1976 112: "Sul terreno dello scontro a fuoco una cruenta battaglia durata più di mezz'ora è rimasta uccisa una giovane donna appartenente alla formazione dei rapitori" ["On the battleground a harsh battle that continued for more than half an hour a young woman belonging to the organisation of the kidnappers was killed"].

an attempt to take account of her as an individual, but rather the erasure of her individuality in the category of "enemy of the state." By taking its title from the words of those who had declared war on that state, and for whom Cagol was an individual⁵⁵¹, the chapter calls this "identification" into question; the effect of the title is like that of placing the entire chapter in quotation marks. It urges the reader to consider the police and newspaper statements on Cagol's death critically, and to develop an alternative interpretation of the events.

This chapter points to a fundamental tension in Balestrini's text: himself obviously sympathetic to the workers, protesters, and militants that populate La violenza illustrata, Balestrini describes them in the words of those hostile to them. Without commenting directly on the descriptions he quotes, his assembly of them effectively undermines the positions advanced in them. This is even more apparent in Chapter 2, which describes a leftist demonstration in Milan and the resulting street fights in the tone of a television or radio report. Minor textual "errors" subvert the pro-state agenda of the reporters. For example, after a passing reference to "piedi di porco"⁵⁵², the police, normally referred to as "forze dell'ordine"⁵⁵³ become "porci dell'ordine"⁵⁵⁴.

⁵⁵¹ The Red Brigades statement in question was penned by Renato Curcio's, Cagol's husband.

⁵⁵² "Pigs' feet."

⁵⁵³ "Forces of order." Balestrini 1976 26.

⁵⁵⁴ "Order pigs." Ibid. A similar "slip" occurs in Chapter 4, which describes the death of a billionaire (Onassis). In the last sentence (Balestrini 1976 59), "signor

The demonstrators are initially described as an "urban guerrilla," indicating that, for once, the demonstration is being described by a sympathetic leftist.⁵⁵⁵ Soon after, however, the tone of the description changes, and the demonstrators become "terrorists"⁵⁵⁶ and "estremisti ogni giorno più esperti nella tecnica della guerriglia urbana della violenza e del terrore."⁵⁵⁷ The difference in terminology indicates opposed political agendas, as well as the reporter's power to impose a value judgement through his choice of words.

In fact, the description of the demonstrators as "terrorists" is subverted in a manner that recalls the transformation of the police into "order pigs." Toward the end of Chapter 2, there is a description of a child "terrorised" by a police smokescreen unintentionally created in a children's store.⁵⁵⁸ Here, the police, not the demonstrators, turn out to be ruthless terrorists – as they do when firing lacrimogenics into a crowd of pedestrians who in fact

o" ["Mister O"] suddenly becomes "il bandito" ["the bandit"]. This provides the transition to the following chapter, which describes a bank robbery. The title of that chapter is Brecht's famous question "Che cos'è una rapina in banca / di fronte alla fondazione della banca stessa?" ["What is a bank robbery / Compared to the creation of the bank itself?"], which suggests that the activities of banks – and, by implication, of all those who play a central role in sustaining capitalism, and profit most from it – may not only be just as criminal as those of bank robbers, but in fact more so. Cf. Balestrini 1976 62.

⁵⁵⁵ Cf. eg. Balestrini 1976 16: "I dimostranti hanno portato la guerriglia per le vie del centro storico di Milano" ["The demonstrators took the guerrilla to the streets of Milan's historic centre"].

⁵⁵⁶ Cf. Balestrini 1976 21: "In più di un'occasione agenti e carabinieri sono stati costretti a ritirarsi davanti all'incalzare dei terroristi e alla loro tattica" ["In several cases the policemen were constrained to retreat in the face of the terrorists and their tactic"].

⁵⁵⁷ "Extremists daily more versed in the technique of urban guerrilla warfare of violence and of terror." Balestrini 1976 23.

⁵⁵⁸ Cf. Balestrini 1976 27.

have nothing to do with the demonstration, dealing a mortal blow to a sixty-year-old pensioner in the process.⁵⁵⁹ One page after this event is described, there is a change of narrator. The new narrator – obviously a reporter leaning to the right – seems to know nothing of the pensioner's death, and the phrase only just used to describe it – "il più grave incidente della giornata"⁵⁶⁰ – is now applied to the damage done to the offices of the conservative newspaper *Corriere della Sera*.

This technique of juxtaposition and contrast is employed most consistently in Chapter 8, which takes another leftist slogan as its title: "Alla violenza reazionaria delle istituzioni borghesi rispondiamo con la violenza rivoluzionaria."⁵⁶¹ Much as this title contrasts reaction and revolution, violence and counterviolence, the chapter itself is structured around the contrast, often exploited for comic effect, between a strike at Fiat's Mirafiori factory and the marriage of middle-class couple. Like a composer interweaving point and counterpoint, Balestrini shifts constantly and without warning from the description of the strike to that of the marriage:

È cominciato all'inizio della settimana gli operai sono resi conto che bisognava trovare forme di lotta che mostrassero la propria forza è cominciato con l'articolazione che ha diviso i cortei e le officine ognuno faceva un giretto e poi basta. Un

⁵⁵⁹ Cf. Balestrini 1976 28.

⁵⁶⁰ "The most serious event of the day." Balestrini 1976 29.

⁵⁶¹ "To the reactionary violence of middle-class institutions we respond with revolutionary violence."

giorno di settembre sotto un'aria che sapeva di mucche e di vino due italiani di nome Maria e Giovanni si sposarono in una chiesa romanica già piena di aria fredda con pezzi di affreschi alti sui muri di mattoni.⁵⁶²

Not only are two themes (related to two radically disparate forms of life, two irreconcilable world views) juxtaposed; there is also a juxtaposition of two kinds of language: one the harsh, matter-of-fact language of militancy, the other the sentimental language of romance. One speaks of struggle; the other paints a picture of harmony and features such classic tropes of reactionary ideology as the church, and in it individuals are identified not by class, but by nationality (Maria and Giovanni are "two Italians"). One evokes industrial society (the factory), the other the past (Catholicism, a church decorated with frescos). There is also the conceptual contrast between the reported rift in the labour movement and the notion of the bond implicit in marriage.

⁵⁶² "It began at the beginning of the week the workers realised they had to find forms of struggles that demonstrated their power it began with the break between the demonstrators and the offices everyone walked around a bit and that was it. One day in September while the air smelled of cows and wine two Italians named Maria and Giovanni got married in a church filled with fresh air with pieces of frescoes on the walls." Balestrini 1976 99. Cf. a similar contrast on p. 100: "[...] si baciavano molto nelle sere di primavera accanto a piccole sorgenti in una cava di tufo nascoste tra ciuffi di capelvenere che sgocciolavano e sapevano odore di umidità e di terra. Poi è saltato il cancello si è spalancato e c'è stato un pò di sbandamento perchè non si sapeva dove andara parte dei delegati e gli operai volevano portare le meccaniche in officina perchè c'era una linea che tirava" ["They kissed a lot in the night next to little springs and in a quarry hidden behind tufts of flowers that smelled of moisture and earth. Then the gate opened and there was some confusion because no one knew where to go some of the delegates and workers wanted to go to the office"].

That the writer must commit to one of these two world views, being always already caught up in the struggle between them, is the import of La violenza illustrata's final chapter, "Scrittura e distruzione scrittura e liberazione."⁵⁶³ This chapter returns to many earlier themes, often quoting directly from elsewhere in the text. It opens with a passage evocative of physical and psychological suffering (a quotation from Ulrike Meinhof's description of solitary confinement⁵⁶⁴), goes on to quote a number of left-wing theorists, including Walter Benjamin, and ends with the description of a successful socialist insurrection into which is inserted – surprisingly but fittingly – the description of an orgasm. Accompanied by actual insurrection in the streets, the potentially subversive activity of the writer brings about the transition from (state-administered) oppression to joyful liberation.

The quotations from previous sections of La violenza illustrata are assembled in such a way as to create the strongest possible contrast between opposing world views, qualitatively divergent situations, and in some cases, fact and opinion. The words of William Calley's mother – "Io so con precisione che il mio vero posto è a casa con i miei ragazzi e il mio compito è di salvaguardare il loro amore e la loro innocenza e di conservare la pace e la bellezza in

⁵⁶³ "Writing and destruction writing and liberation."

⁵⁶⁴ Balestrini 1976 123.

questo angolo di paradiso in cui viviamo"⁵⁶⁵ – directly follow a news story on a bomb massacre: "Alle 10,15 è esplosa la bomba della strage chi è stato colpito direttamente dallo scoppio sono state le persone che stavano nella piazza dalla parte opposta al palco del comizio il bilancio della strage è drammatico 6 morti e 94 feriti."⁵⁶⁶ One effect of this juxtaposition is to recall that the mother speaking of love and innocence is not any mother, but that of William Calley, responsible for one of the worst massacres in recent military history. Another is to recall that even when it is successfully established, middle-class comfort exists in the context of a society torn by violent struggle.

Some quotations from earlier chapters are statements of opinion; others are statement of fact. Often a statement of opinion is shown to be misinformed or misleading by being juxtaposed with a statement of fact that flatly contradicts it, as when a Frenchman's observation that "everything is quiet in Italy" immediately precedes the description of a violent street fight in Rome:

Un giorno Giovanni e un collega francese che si preoccupava delle sorti dell'Italia disse tout se tient en Italie sì ma per quanto tempo per sempre così dicendo Giovanni era sera in un ristorante di piazza Santa Maria in Trastevere a Roma tra

⁵⁶⁵ "I know very well my place is in the home with my boys and my job is to protect their love and their innocence and to preserve peace and beauty in this nook of paradise in which we live." Balestrini 1976 124.

⁵⁶⁶ "At 10:15 the bomb exploded who was struck directly it was the people in the square across from the rally the death toll is dramatic 6 dead and 94 injured." Ibid.

luci lampi e scintilli di oro. Si è sentito un urlo levarsi dalla piazza i primi sassi si sono incrociati con i primi candelotti lacrimogeni le due parti sono entrate in contatto con una furia paurosa in un mulinare di calci di moschetto e di manganelli con il sinistro accompagnamento degli scoppi dei candelotti lacrimogeni e di quelli soffocati delle bottiglie incendiarie.⁵⁶⁷

The first statement is from Chapter 8, the second from Chapter 2. The next sentence is taken from Chapter 1: "Solo ora posso capire pienamente e talvolta con amarezza che cosa significhi vivere la sporca guerra come adesso la gente chiama quella che prima era soltanto la nostra guerra."⁵⁶⁸ The war referred to in this third statement is that in Vietnam. In its entirety, the section presents images of two kinds of war, preceded by the smug and self-assured claim that all is well.

By reintroducing the theme of Vietnam, which is also that of the first chapter, Balestrini also places the Italian "civil war" in the larger context of US imperialism. Appropriately, the vision of a successful Italian revolution presented towards the end of Chapter

⁵⁶⁷ "One day Giovanni and a French colleague concerned about Italy said tout se tient en Italie yes but for how long forever said Giovanni it was evening in a restaurant on piazza Santa Maria in Trastevere Rome between lights and lightning and sparkling gold. There was a scream from the square the first stones met with the first lacrimogenic projectiles the two parties met with frightening rage in a whirlwind of rifles and nightsticks to the sinister accompaniment of the exploding lacrimogenic projectiles and burning bottles." Balestrini 1976 125.

⁵⁶⁸ "It's only now I can understand fully, and sometimes sadly, what it means to live the dirty war, which is what people now call what used to just be our war." Ibid.

10⁵⁶⁹ features a reference to the escape of the US ambassador.⁵⁷⁰

In addition to this contrast between international and domestic issues, Balestrini creates one between the political and the personal. By inserting the description of an orgasm into that of the triumphant revolution, Balestrini recalls both Wilhelm Reich's fusion of sexual theory with revolutionary politics and Daniel Cohn-Bendit's dictum "c'est pour toi que tu fais la révolution." Just as state oppression is experienced physically in the Meinhof quotation that opens the chapter, the overthrow of the state is associated with personal physical gratification:

Una sensazione calda di sudore in tutto il corpo come un
bagno caldo di piacere mi sento molto rilassata e nello stesso
tempo molto ardente è una sensazione molto intensa una
tensione fisica che si fa sempre più forte e sempre più
vibrante. Sono decine di migliaia impossibile contarli
sparpagliati e combattivi come erano corsi soli dalle fabbriche

⁵⁶⁹ Cf. Balestrini 129ff.: "Scene di entusiasmo si svolgono per le strade dove i liberatori vengono abbracciati dai cittadini commossi e felici le bandiere del governo rivoluzionario provvisorio sventolano da tutti gli edifici pubblici compreso il palazzo presidenziale e alle finestre di migliaia di abitazioni. In un'ora e mezzo il centro della città è completamente occupato dagli operai è impossibile contarli [...]" ["Enthusiastic scenes take place on the streets where the liberators are embraced by the happy and emotional citizens the flags of the provisional revolutionary government are flown from all public buildings including the presidential palace and from the windows of thousands of houses. Within one and a half hours the city centre is completely taken over by the workers it's impossible to count them"].

⁵⁷⁰ Cf. Balestrini 129: "L'ambasciatore con la bandiera a stelle e strisce sotto il braccio è stato visto arrampicarsi frettolosamente a bordo di un elicottero americano giunto appositamente per portare in salvo quanto restava del corpo diplomatico degli Stati Uniti" ["The ambassador with the stars-and-stripes flag under his arm was seen hastily climbing into a helicopter flown in to save what was left of the United States diplomatic corps"]. The episode is obviously based on the escape of the US diplomatic corps from Saigon in 1975.

venuti con i pullman dalla provincia ancora in tuta nessun
 lavoratore è rimasto in fabbrica. Una sensazione ampia e
 completa io la desidero e sono pronta per essa tutto il mio
 corpo reagisce è teso spettando che il piacere continui che lo
 fa fremere e pulsare e sento che coinvolge il mio corpo fino al
 suo centro come una nota molto acuta.⁵⁷¹

Building on this juxtaposition of the political with the personal, and on that of the relatively abstract notion of "revolution" with the concreteness of physical pleasure, the final sentence of La violenza illustrata introduces one last contrast: that between violence and love. With the triumph of the revolution, the violence that has, until now, been the book's subject gives way to a sensation of extreme pleasure that "fills" the nameless narrator with "love." By ending his text with this word, Balestrini concludes his catalogue of violence and counterviolence with a positive image, stressing that what is most valuable about the political left is not its analysis of oppression and its resoluteness in combating it, but its ability to look beyond oppression and formulate a positive ideal. This ideal is derived from a conception of man not as the discardable instrument of a violent

⁵⁷¹ "A warm sensation of sweat all over my body like a warm bath of pleasure I feel very relaxed and at the same time very passionate it's a very intense sensation a physical tension that becomes stronger and more vibrant. There are tens of thousands impossible to count them scattered and combative they came running from the factories they came from the countryside in small trucks still wearing their worksuits not a single worker has stayed in the factory. A vast and complete sensation I want it and I'm ready for it my whole body responds it's tense hoping the pleasure that makes it shiver and pulse will continue and I feel it involve my entire body right to the centre like a very high note." Balestrini 1976 130ff.

and exploitative political order, but as a project; beginning with man's irreducibly material and social character, it champions his right to exist in a society that guarantees the greatest possible happiness for the greatest possible number:

Una sensazione di vertigine di perdere me stessa come se non esistessi come corpo ma solo come sensazione come se ogni nervo del mio corpo diventasse vivo e cominciasse a pensare la sensazione di un nodo rigido che scoppia e fluttua improvvisamente e io apprezzo molto questa sensazione e sono piena di amore.⁵⁷²

Leonardo Sciascia: L'affaire Moro

First published in 1978 and fraught with literary references

(Pasolini, Borges, Pirandello, Tolstoy, Poe, Shakespeare, and Calderón all feature), L'affaire Moro⁵⁷³ offers a "literary"

interpretation of the political catastrophe that was the kidnapping of Aldo Moro – literary not only in the sense that Sciascia carefully examines the linguistic peculiarities of various texts (Moro's letters and the various statements issued by the Red Brigades), but also in that he treats the events themselves as if they were a literary work,

⁵⁷² "A sensation of dizziness of losing myself as if I no longer existed as a body but only as a sensation as if every nerve of my body were coming alive and beginning to think the sensation of a rigid knot that comes loose fluctuating spontaneously and I very much cherish this sensation I'm filled with love." Balestrini 1976 131.

⁵⁷³ Leonardo Sciascia, L'affaire Moro (Milan: Adelphi, 1978). For a discussion of Sciascia's status as one of postwar Italy's leading intellectuals and political commentators, cf. Liborio Adamo, Leonardo Sciascia tra impegno e letteratura (Enna: Papiro, 1992).

searching out allusions, similes, and hidden meanings. Sciascia dedicates a significant portion of his essay to illustrating the "literariness" of the Moro kidnapping – "L'impressione che tutto nell'affaire Moro accada, per così dire, in letteratura."⁵⁷⁴ He refers to a Borges story in which a verbatim "re-writing" of Don Quixote is given an interpretation radically different from that of the original Cervantes text, simply because the two were produced at different times, and argues that a written report on the events of 16 March, 1978 (the day Moro was kidnapped), would likewise suscite two radically different interpretations, depending on whether it was written before or after Moro's death. Only in the second case could the report be thought to reveal not just the facts of the kidnapping, but the more complex and troubling story of how the Italian government chose to sacrifice one of its members: "Al dramma del rapimento si è come sostituito [...] il dramma che l'assenza dell'onorevole Moro dal Parlamento, dalla vita politica, è più produttore [...] della sua presenza."⁵⁷⁵

Like the second Don Quixote imagined by Borges, the story of Moro belongs, for Sciascia, both to the present and to the past; it is "timeless" both in the sense of being eternally relevant and of existing in "una sfera di intoccabile perfezione letteraria."⁵⁷⁶ In part,

⁵⁷⁴ "The impression that everything in the Moro affair happened, so to speak, in literature." Sciascia 29.

⁵⁷⁵ "The drama of the kidnapping has been replaced by the drama of how the absence of the honourable Moro from parliament and from political life is more productive than his presence." Sciascia 27.

⁵⁷⁶ "A sphere of untouchable literary perfection." Ibid.

the story seems literary because of its formal perfection: "Tanta perfezione può essere dell'immaginazione, della fantasia, non della realtà."⁵⁷⁷ More important than the story's formal beauty, however, is the fact that it calls for an interpretation – or perhaps several. In this way, too, the story of Moro resembles the second Don Quixote: it requires a new reading. In fact, it is this reading (or re-reading), not the writing of the tragic events of via Fani, that concerns Sciascia; he speaks of Moro's "storia già opera letteraria [...] che qui soltanto si tenta di interpretare."⁵⁷⁸ That existing interpretations of the "affair" are insufficient, that a new reading is required, is also the import of another Borges quotation, with which Sciascia ends his essay - a quotation about the need to re-examine a detective story that has so far only been misinterpreted: "Il lettore, inquieto, rivede i capitoli sospetti e scopre un'altra soluzione, la vera."⁵⁷⁹

It has been left to Sciascia, a man of letters, to reveal the truth behind an event that has so far only been misunderstood; perhaps this is why that truth assumes a literary quality: "Lasciata [...] alla letteratura la verità, la verità sembra generata dalla letteratura."⁵⁸⁰ Yet it is not simply by default, to compensate for the negligence or incompetence of others, that Sciascia turns to the

⁵⁷⁷ "Such perfection can belong to the imagination, to fantasy, not to reality." Sciascia 29.

⁵⁷⁸ "A story that is already a literary work and which it can only be a question of interpreting." Sciascia 117.

⁵⁷⁹ "The reader, disturbed, reconsiders the problematic chapters and discovers a different solution, the true one." Sciascia 147.

⁵⁸⁰ "Left to literature, truth seems as if it had been created by literature." Sciascia 29.

Moro kidnapping and its aftermath – the story itself calls for a man with literary abilities; it is “textual” in the sense of needing to be interpreted by someone with an acute awareness of language and the ways in which language signifies or fails to signify. The dilemma Moro found himself in after his kidnapping was at least partly linguistic, Sciascia insists; having cultivated, throughout his political career, an “empty” language whose function was not so much to convey as to obscure meaning, Moro was suddenly in the position of being left with nothing but this language in order to plead for his life: “Un contrappasso diretto: ha dovute tentare di dire col linguaggio del nondire, di farsi capire adoperando gli stessi strumenti che aveva adottato e sperimentato per non farsi capire. Doveva comunicare usando il linguaggio dell’incommunicabilità.”⁵⁸¹ Until his kidnapping, the discourse of Moro was one that sought to hide rather than to express its political content – a political discourse premised on the need to depolitize its audience. Sciascia follows Pasolini in interpreting the existence of such a political discourse as the symptom of a national crisis – “del correre verso il vuoto di quel potere democristiano che era stato, fino a dieci anni prima, ‘la pura e semplice continuazione del regime

⁵⁸¹ “An immediate obstacle: he had to try and speak in the language of non-speech, to make himself understood using the very devices he had adopted and perfected for the purpose of not being understood. He had to communicate using the language of incommunicability.” Sciascia 17.

fascista."⁵⁸² In this way, the linguistic dilemma of Moro becomes emblematic of the nation's historic guilt and the problematic political condition that emerges from the failure properly to confront this guilt. The rule of Moro's Christian Democrat party was "empty" because it failed to reflect properly on the legacy of fascism and failed to enact a clear break with that legacy - a voluntary blindness that was certainly among the reasons for the contempt with which the party was viewed by both militant and non-militant members of the Italian left.

In addition to its interest in language, Sciascia's "textual interpretation" of the Moro affair is characterised by an attempt to reconstruct the intellectual and emotional interiority of the affair's protagonists - an attempt that takes as its paradigm a notion of detective work articulated by Edgar Allan Poe:

Il cavaliere Charles Auguste Dupin, l'investigatore di Poe, poneva a precetto di ogni investigazione la capacità di identificarsi, di immedesimarsi. Precetto assolutamente valido, anche al di fuori di quel genere letterario denominato "poliziesco", nella pratica [...].⁵⁸³

Understanding the Moro affair, Sciascia argues, requires an awareness of the ideas and motives of both Moro and his

⁵⁸² "Of the rush towards the emptiness of that Christian Democrat rule which had been, until ten years earlier, 'purely and simply the continuation of the fascist regime.'" Sciascia 16, quoting Pasolini.

⁵⁸³ "The gentleman Charles Auguste Dupin, Poe's detective, postulated as the precept of any investigation the ability to identify, to put oneself in another's place. A precept of absolute practical value, even outside the literary genre of the detective story." Sciascia 43.

kidnappers: "Nell'affaire Moro si presentava la necessità di un duplice processo di immedesimazione: con le Brigate Rosse [...] e con Moro."⁵⁸⁴ In developing such an awareness, Sciascia faces divergent representations of those he is trying to "identify with." He will argue that some of these representations are false, and that they are not "innocent misunderstandings," but deliberate misconstruals – which will lead him to analyse a third, unnamed interlocutor: the Italian government that refused to negotiate with the Red Brigades and thereby sealed Moro's fate.

Sciascia's analysis of the Red Brigades begins with reflections on what he calls their "prison ethic," a code of behaviour that reminds him, in the precepts it established with regard to the treatment of political enemies, of Michel Foucault's theory of the modern penal system: "un'etica che appunto si potrebbe dire carceraria, maturata sulla lettura [...] dei testi di Foucault."⁵⁸⁵ The harshness with which the Red Brigades condemn their enemies is tempered by a peculiar desire to analyse, rather than simply to destroy them – witness the protracted and meticulously documented "interrogations" that were a crucial component of the kidnappings. What results is an approach indebted as much to Stalinist ruthlessness as to the sublimated violence of the modern penal system: "[...] gli uomini delle Brigate rosse hanno però

⁵⁸⁴ "In the Moro affair there resulted the necessity of a dual process of identification: with the Red Brigades and with Moro." Ibid.

⁵⁸⁵ "An ethic that could be termed penal, developed on the basis of a reading of Foucault's texts." Sciascia 18.

respirato la polemica del 'sorvegliare e punire' e introdotta questa esile vena libertaria nella loro pietrificata ideologia."⁵⁸⁶

Sciascia argues that, in their concern with the proper wielding of political and military power, the Red Brigades recall the mafia: "come la mafia si fonda ed è parte di una certa gestione del potere, di un modo di gestire il potere, così le Brigate rosse."⁵⁸⁷ One consequence of this view is that despite their ideological endorsement of socialist internationalism and their strategic, if temporary association with foreign organisations, the Red Brigades are a typically Italian phenomenon: "Sono una cosa nostra, quali che siano gli addentellati che possono avere con sette rivoluzionarie or servizi segreti di altri paesi."⁵⁸⁸ Recalling his earlier remarks on the "literariness" of the Moro affair as that of a text written twice, always already familiar like the second Don Quixote of Borges, Sciascia explains the apparent indifference with which the Italian public responded to the events of 1978 in terms of the extent to

⁵⁸⁶ "The Red Brigades have absorbed the polemic of Discipline and punish and introduced this libertarian vein into their petrified ideology." Ibid. Like the penal institutions described by Foucault, the "people's prison" of the Red Brigades is not a place where the condemned are simply tortured or killed, but where they can be studied: "Una prigione che non operasse la distruzione della 'identità politica e personale' del detenuto" (Sciascia 23) ["a prison that does not enact the destruction of the 'personal and political identity' of the prisoner"]. Sciascia acutely points out what is indeed one of the main characteristics of left-wing militant operations: the violence they inflict is never thought by the militants to be justified in itself, but always with regard to the educational and emancipatory benefits believed to come with it.

⁵⁸⁷ "Like the mafia, the Red Brigades are both founded on and are part of a certain manner of handling power." Sciascia 137.

⁵⁸⁸ "They're 'our business', whatever the links they may have with the revolutionary groups or intelligence services of other countries." Sciascia 136. (The expression "cosa nostra" ["our business"] refers to the mafia.)

which they seemed to “echo” earlier clashes between the government and illegal organisations:

Da ciò quella che può apparire indifferenza: ed è invece la distaccata attenzione dello spettatore a una pièce che già conosce, che rivede in replica, che segue senza la tensione del come va a finire ed è soltanto intento a cogliere la diversità di qualche dettaglio nelle scene e nell’umore degli attori.⁵⁸⁹

If the Red Brigades can only re-enact a drama that is long since familiar, it follows that they are not, properly speaking, a revolutionary movement. This is indeed the position that Sciascia takes. Despite their rhetoric of violent transformation, the Red Brigades are, to him, only a pawn in a larger power game determined by what he sees as the classic Italian approach to politics: the principle, voiced famously in Lampedusa’s Il gattopardo, that change should be accepted only in so far as it helps to maintain the status quo. The Red Brigades have succeeded in subtly altering certain power relations – yet the outcome of these alterations is not revolution, but the fortification of the existing system of governance:

La loro ragion d’essere, la loro funzione, il loro “servizio” stanno esclusivamente nello spostare dei rapporti di forza: e

⁵⁸⁹ “This explains what might seem like indifference, and what is really the detached attention of the spectator watching a piece he already knows, which he is rewatching as a replica, which he observes without the tension of wondering how it will end and with an interest only in how some scenic detail and the manner of the actors have changed.” Sciascia 137.

delle forze che già ci sono. E di spostarli non di molto, bisogna aggiungere. Di spostarli nel senso di quel "cambiar tutto per non cambiar nulla" che il principe di Lampedusa assume come costante della storia siciliana e che si può oggi assumere come costante della storia italiana. Operazione di pure potere, dunque: che si può soltanto svolgere in quell'area interpartitica in cui, al riparo dai venti ideologici, il potere ormai vive.⁵⁹⁰

Given the extent to which left-wing militancy has served to legitimate repressive government action, this view is not entirely implausible. In fact, Sciascia's accusation goes further – not only did the Red Brigades fail to bring about a revolution, but they never truly desired to do so. From the very outset, they were lost in an ideological "aestheticism" that caused them to court tragedy and disaster – not simply in the form of lives sacrificed for the revolution, but of the revolution itself being sacrificed to an ideal of heroic defeat: "l'essenza e il destino delle Brigate rosse stiano

⁵⁹⁰ "The reason for their existence, their function, their 'service' consists exclusively in the shifting of power relations: relations between powers that already exist. It should be added that the shifts are not great. They occur in the spirit of that principle of 'changing everything in order to change nothing' which Lampedusa's prince sees as the constant factor in Sicilian history and which one can today posit as the constant factor in Italian history. An operation that is purely a question of power, then: and which can only be played out in that realm of the political parties, where, sheltered from the winds of ideology, power dwells." Sciascia 138.

davvero [...] nella sfera di un estetismo in cui il morire per la rivoluzione è diventato un morire con la rivoluzione."⁵⁹¹

Sciascia's most damning remarks are reserved not for the would-be revolutionaries, but for the Italian government, which he comes to condemn in the course of his attempt to understand or "identify with" Moro. Sciascia's analysis of Moro's motives and ideals leads him to reject a widespread description of the Christian Democrat as "il grande statista."⁵⁹² This description, used by the government to distinguish sharply between Moro before and after his kidnapping, served the political agenda of those who were willing to sacrifice his life. Sciascia points out that when Moro was described as a great statesman, this was typically followed by the remark that he was now "only a man" – "Era stato un 'grande statista'; e ora altro non era che un uomo."⁵⁹³ Adding to this the (false and unjustified) claim that the Red Brigades subjected their prisoners to torture and drugs, it was easy to arrive at the conclusion that the letters Moro was writing from the "people's prison" were not so much the statements of a political leader as the rantings of a less than lucid mind. If the "great statesman" Moro no longer existed, those still in power were free to make their decisions alone.

⁵⁹¹ "The essence and destiny of the Red Brigades are located in the sphere of an aestheticism where dying for the revolution has become dying with the revolution." Sciascia 141.

⁵⁹² "The great statesman." Sciascia 31.

⁵⁹³ "He had been a 'great statesman'; and now he was only a man." Sciascia 32.

Le Brigate rosse lo avevano distrutto: al posto del 'grande statista' c'era un uomo che forse subiva sevizie fisiche, forse veniva drogato e sicuramente viveva nell'incubo di una costante minaccia di morte in cui smarriva quel 'senso dello Stato' che altamente aveva dimostrato di avere in più che trent'anni di attività politica.⁵⁹⁴

Sciascia immediately condemns this view of Moro as a man transformed as a "Grande e spiccata menzogna."⁵⁹⁵ Not only had Moro not changed, but he had in fact never been a "great statesman." Rather, Sciascia argues, Moro ought to be described, both before and after his kidnapping, as a "great manipulator."

Moro non era stato, fino al 16 marzo, un 'grande statista'. Era stato, e continuò ad esserlo anche nella 'prigione del popolo', un grande politicante: vigile, accorto, calcolatore; apparentemente duttile ma della pazienza che si accompagna alla tenacia; e con una visione delle forze, e cioè delle debolezze, che muovono la vita italiana, tra le più vaste e sicure che uomo politico abbia avuto.⁵⁹⁶

⁵⁹⁴ "The Red Brigades had destroyed him: where there had been the "great statesman", there was now a man who perhaps suffered physical torture, perhaps was being drugged, and surely lived in the nightmare of a constant threat of death that erased that "sense of state" he had so amply demonstrated in more than thirty years of political activity." Ibid.

⁵⁹⁵ "Great and striking lie." Ibid.

⁵⁹⁶ "Moro had not been, up until the 16 March, a 'great statesman'. He had been, and continued to be, even in the 'people's prison', a great manipulator: watchful, attentive, calculating; apparently flexible but characterised by the kind of patience that comes with tenacity; and with a vision of the strengths, and hence of the weaknesses, that move Italian life, as vast and reliable as any a man of politics ever had." Sciascia 34.

By insisting on this distinction between “great statesman” and “great manipulator”, Sciascia takes the view that Moro’s skills as a politician were not the result of his concern for “the state” but of his understanding of “Italian life.”⁵⁹⁷ Hence it is no aberration, but rather perfectly consistent for Moro to argue that saving the life of one innocent man is more important than upholding the authority of a political system or the particular party that dominates it. Yet it was precisely the dominant party, Moro’s own Christian Democrats, that had the greatest interest in disseminating the lie of the great statesman transformed, and hence in distancing itself from him and everything he wrote from the “people’s prison”:

[...] una insospettata e immane fiamma statolatrica sembra essersi attaccata alla Democrazia Cristiana e possederla. Moro, che continua a pensare come pensava, ne è ormai un corpo estraneo: una specie di doloroso calcolo biliare da estrarre – con l’ardore statolatrico come anestetico – da un organismo che, quasi toccato dal miracolo, ha acquistato il movimento e l’uso del “senso dello Stato”. Certo, è scomodo si sappia che Moro ha sempre pensato così; che non sono state le Brigate rosse, con sevizie e droghe, a convertirlo alla liceità dello scambio di prigionieri tra uno Stato di diritto e una banda eversiva. Ma c’è rimedio: e nemmeno occorre tanto affaticarsi per applicarlo. I giornali indipendenti e di partito, i settimanali

⁵⁹⁷ Later, Sciascia will suggest the concept of the family was more central to Moro’s thinking than that of the state.

illustrati, la radio, la televisione: sono quasi tutti lì, in riga a difendere lo Stato, a proclamare la metamorfosi di Moro, la sua morte civile.⁵⁹⁸

The "civil death" of Moro serves the state and the ruling party by legitimating that refusal to negotiate with the Red Brigades which led to Moro's actual death, but also to an image of the state as fundamentally unassailable: "[...] di fronte a Moro lo Stato italiano si leva forte e solenne."⁵⁹⁹ This ruthlessness of the Christian Democrats, a willingness to sacrifice human life in order to promote the power of the state, is for Sciascia no less "Stalinist" than the ideology of the Red Brigades. In this sense, the Moro affair becomes for him the tragedy not only of one man, but of a government that failed to distinguish itself morally from its enemy – it becomes the story of a clash between two Stalinisms:

Sono di fronte due stalinismi [...] sono di fronte le due metà di una stessa cosa [...] Lo stalinismo consapevole, apertamente violento e spietato delle Brigate rosse che uccide senza processo i servitori del SIM e con processo i dirigenti; e lo

⁵⁹⁸ "An unexpected and enormous statist flame seems to have attached itself to the Christian Democrats, and to possess them. Moro, who continued to think the way he had always thought, is now foreign to them: a kind of painful kidney stone that needs to be removed – with statist ardour as an anaesthetic – from an organism which, almost as if by miracle, has acquired the use of 'the reason of state.' Certainly, it is unpleasant knowing that Moro has always thought this way; that it was not the Red Brigades who converted him, by torture and drugs, to the legitimacy of an exchange of prisoners between a state and a subversive gang. But there's a solution: and it doesn't take much effort to implement it. The newspapers, both party-owned and independent, the weekly magazines, the radio, television: almost everyone has gotten in line to defend the state and proclaim the transformation of Moro, his civil death." Sciascia 63f.

⁵⁹⁹ "Beside Moro the Italian state rises strong and solemn." Sciascia 65.

stalinismo subdolo e sottile che sulle persone e sui fatti opera come sui palinsesti: raschiando quel che prima vi si leggeva e riscrivendone per come al momento serve.⁶⁰⁰

It is here that Sciascia's "re-reading" of the Moro affair departs most markedly from the first reading offered in the media. By attacking that first reading, Sciascia's re-reading establishes its own necessity. The image of the palimpsest recalls those earlier literary tropes by which Sciascia established the "literariness" of his subject matter; it also shows that this "literariness" is not simply a matter of the "formal beauty" of Moro's story, but of its scandalous misinterpretation - of the irresponsible and deceptive power politics of that political party with which Moro had been associated for more than thirty years, and from whose membership lists he asked, in one of his final letters, to be permanently removed.

Dacia Maraini: Lettere a Marina

Bianca, the protagonist and narrator of Dacia Maraini's epistolary novel Lettere a Marina⁶⁰¹, is a writer who has retreated to a seaside town in southern Italy in order to complete the novel she has been

⁶⁰⁰ "Two Stalinisms confront each other, the two halves of the same thing. The knowing, openly violent and ruthless Stalinism of the Red Brigades, which kills the servants of the SIM without trial and its leaders with trial; and the insidious, subtle Stalinism which operates with persons and facts as on a palimpsest, erasing what could just now be read and replacing it with whatever is useful at the moment." Sciascia 66f.

⁶⁰¹ Dacia Maraini, Lettere a Marina (Milan: Bompiani, 1981). Cf. the critical texts cited in the discussion of Donna in guerra, in particular Virginia Pichiotti's "Symbolic Mediation and Female Community", which contains a discussion of the theme of friendship in Lettere a Marina.

working on for two years. In her letters to her former lover Marina, Bianca records dreams, childhood memories, and sexual experiences. What results is an exploration of femininity and female sexuality as they are experienced in the context of parental and amorous relationships. At one point, Bianca's settled and largely solitary lifestyle is disrupted by the arrival of Massimo, the militant brother of her friend Fiammetta, who is fleeing the police following a bank robbery. Massimo spends several days in Bianca's apartment.

Maraini's portrayal of militancy cannot be understood without some awareness of the context in which that portrayal is presented. Prior to the arrival of Massimo, Bianca is at work explaining to Marina "tutte le cose che non hai mai voluto sapere"⁶⁰² in order to transcend her previous existence as "una donna senza storia."⁶⁰³ This confession is also a process of self-discovery; at one point, Bianca tells Marina: "Nello sforzo di farmi conoscere da te ritrovo cose lontane che credevo morte per sempre."⁶⁰⁴ And it is an act of writing. As Bianca decides at the outset: "Non ti telefonerò. Ti manderò queste lettere e poi basta."⁶⁰⁵ In the eyes of the people Bianca meets, her decision to think and write about herself is

⁶⁰² "All the things you never wanted to know." Maraini 5.

⁶⁰³ "A woman without a history." Ibid. Cf. also Maraini 55: "[...] ti parlo di me perché tu hai amato una statua senza passato" ["I'm telling you about myself because you loved a statue without a past"].

⁶⁰⁴ "Struggling to make you know me, I discover distant things I had thought dead forever." Maraini 60.

⁶⁰⁵ "I won't call you on the telephone. I'll send you these letters and that will be the end of it." Maraini 5.

already transgressive of socially accepted gender norms.⁶⁰⁶ Her writing is a form of disclosure, motivated by a desire to know and be known, and necessarily subverts the principles underlying her upbringing.⁶⁰⁷

The point of departure for this disclosure is Bianca's first sexual encounter with Marina, which is really Bianca's first encounter with herself, the beginning of her self-discovery. Recalling the moment when she first undressed Marina, Bianca writes: "Ecco l'ultima resistenza è caduta e mi trovo davanti cosa? me stessa."⁶⁰⁸ Bianca is not discovering herself as an individual that defines itself autonomously, beyond the context of gender roles and family relations, but as a woman, who is always already inserted into this context. Hence her remark that what confronts her in the darkness of Marina's vulva is her own mother: "Mia madre mi guarda dall'interno di quel buio dissacrato."⁶⁰⁹ The childhood memories that Bianca will go on to analyse also arise from there:

Il tuo sesso improvvisamente non era più quel frutto marino
quel muscolo che respira dentro una cavità ombrosa ma
qualcosa d'altro un ingombro di macerie le rovine di una mia
casa d'infanzia [...] un vestito a foglie rotonde lilla che

⁶⁰⁶ While Bianca's feminist friend Chantal condemns writing as an irremediably male act, Massimo is dismissive of Bianca as a woman with intellectual inclinations. Cf. Maraini 39, 142.

⁶⁰⁷ Cf. Maraini 55, where Bianca recalls the "parole proibite" ["forbidden words"] that could only be whispered at school.

⁶⁰⁸ "Now the last boundary has been crossed and I find myself across from what? Myself." Maraini 32.

⁶⁰⁹ "My mother looks at me from within that desecrated darkness." Ibid.

mettevo quando avevo tre anni un rubinetto che gocciola nel
dormiveglia e non so che altro un turbinio di cose perdute e
rimosse che tornavano dandomi l'affanno.⁶¹⁰

The "rimossa lontanissima tentazione di incesto"⁶¹¹ associated with this sexual act emphasises the extent to which it constitutes a transcendence of social mores. One effect of this transcendence is to dismantle the persona behind which Bianca has lived – a persona fully compatible with sexual convention. Bianca describes the process as one of annulation and fragmentation: "[...] mi sentivo [...] annullata esplosa e persa in mille frammenti."⁶¹² It necessitates the re-examination of her identity, a reorganisation of her sense of self. This reorganisation is accomplished through the act of writing; the epistolary and anecdotal structure of Bianca's text indicates the recomposition of an exploded identity that is its genesis.⁶¹³

In Bianca's memories, observations, and reflections, men frequently appear as predatory, dominant, and possessive. This is true, for example, of her own stillborn son, of whom she says: "Voleva prendermi dall'interno bermi e poi uccidermi."⁶¹⁴ It is also

⁶¹⁰ "Your sex was suddenly no longer that maritime creature that muscle that breathes in a shadowy cavity but something else a pile of debris the ruins of a house I lived in as a child a dress adorned with round purple leaves that I wore when I was three a tap that drips during my slumber and I don't know what else a whirlwind of objects lost and misplaced whose return upset me." Maraini 33.

⁶¹¹ "Remote temptation of incest." Maraini 34.

⁶¹² "I felt annulled exploded and lost in a thousand fragments." Ibid.

⁶¹³ Bianca's dreams of burning houses symbolise the destruction of her prior identity or persona. Cf. eg. Maraini 124. Cf. also Maraini 69, where Bianca cites a poem by Emily Dickinson in which the house functions as a symbol of the self.

⁶¹⁴ "He wanted to take me from inside drink me and then kill me." Maraini 17.

true of the sons of her neighbour, who are "Grossi robusti vivaci"⁶¹⁵ at the expense of their mother with her "denti bucati e neri."⁶¹⁶ The two young men Bianca meets by the seaside similarly represent a masculinity that thrives on the oppression and exploitation of women: "[...] si mangiano oscenamente i corpi dolci delle loro mamme delle loro sorelle delle loro mogli e figli innamorate."⁶¹⁷

Massimo is another such man. He arrives unannounced and then refuses to leave, taking Bianca's hospitality for granted from the very beginning:

È andato dritto in cucina si è preparato un caffè mentre io mi lavavo e mi vestivo. Cosa vuole questo bellimbusto da me? scommetto che vorrà dei soldi oppure ospitalità. Infatti era proprio questo che voleva una casa dove nascondersi perché lo stanno cercando il suo bagaglio sta da un compagno in città che però non può ospitarlo perciò...

Non ha neanche pensato che potessi dirgli di no.⁶¹⁸

He proceeds to lecture Bianca on politics: "L'utopia è il sogno feroce del capitalismo di organizzare una propria infinita autodinamica [...]"

⁶¹⁵ "Big robust lively." Maraini 43.

⁶¹⁶ "Black teeth with cavities." Ibid.

⁶¹⁷ "Obscenely they eat the sweet bodies of their mothers their sisters their wives and enamoured daughters." Maraini 72. An earlier passage suggests women complicit in this exploitation contribute to the continuation and proliferation of political violence, notably in the case of the "mamma americana che sfoga le sue frustrazioni sui figli maschi mandandoli in Vietnam a uccidere 'voluttuosamente' dei poveri senz'atetto" (Maraini 69) ["American mom who vents her frustration on her sons, sending them to Vietnam to kill the miserable homeless voluptuously"].
⁶¹⁸ "He went straight to the kitchen made himself some coffee while I washed and got dressed. What does this fop want from me? I'll bet he wants money or a place to sleep. In fact that's just what he wanted a house to hide in because they're looking for him his luggage is at a comrade's place in town but he can't put him up so... / It never even occurred to him I might say no." Maraini 136.

il socialismo dei cosiddetti paesi socialisti è semplicemente una forma di ipercapitalismo gestito da una classe di burocrati col collo di tacchino..."⁶¹⁹ Crucially, his rhetoric of violence leads without transition to an implied but clear sexual proposition: "Solo il fucile può darti la vita oggi. [...] l'amore vuole furto e crimine l'amore nuovo per l'uomo nuovo chiede la spada bruciante della violenza per un ritorno al desiderio alla vera liberazione comunista... hai un amante?"⁶²⁰

The selfishness with which Massimo intrudes on Bianca and profits from her domestic virtues is justified by him in terms of the myth of the guerrillero, as when he tells her about the rugged life led by Che Guevara in Bolivia and Che's need for food and comfort.⁶²¹ The effects of his actions on her life are somewhat more mundane. He disrupts the development of her friendship with Basilia, her neighbour, who is convinced Massimo is Bianca's lover and no longer stops by the apartment. He also puts an end to Bianca's nascent sexual relationship with a local waiter, Damiano, who has seen Massimo in Bianco's window and becomes jealous. That both Basilia and Damiano misinterpret the nature of Massimo's relationship to Bianca indicates how far removed

⁶¹⁹ "Utopia is capitalism's fierce dream of organising its infinite continuation. The socialism of the so-called socialist countries is simply a form of hypercapitalism run by a class of turkey-necked bureaucrats." Maraini 137.

⁶²⁰ "Only the gun can give you life these days. Love demands robbery and crime the new love for the new man demands the burning sword of violence for a return to desire to true communist liberation... Do you have a lover?" Maraini 138. In a later passage (Maraini 143), Massimo switches from reflecting on clandestinity and prison to ask Bianca what she will cook for dinner.

⁶²¹ Maraini 140.

militancy is from their lives. Yet Massimo also depends for his safety on their mistake; that is, he depends on the facade of normality that surrounds Bianca. At the same time, he exploits the situation by attempting to actually become Bianca's lover. As he confesses to her, he has failed in the past to live up to the dictum that "un buon rivoluzionario non si lascia impelagare in stupide storie d'amore."⁶²²

Massimo's attitude is that his status as "revolutionary" bestows on him the right to treat women selfishly and irresponsibly. The commitment he associates with revolution finds its corollary in a total absence of commitment when it comes to relations with women. At one point he tells Bianca: "[...] le mie certezze rivoluzionarie mi piace stemperarle nelle incertezze amorose..."⁶²³ Massimo distinguishes constantly between "politics" and "love," as when he says about another woman: "[...] in politica ci siamo intesi in amore no."⁶²⁴ He creates the impression that if he had to choose between one or the other, he would choose politics (which to him is equivalent to "war"): "[...] la guerra è la guerra e io sono in guerra."⁶²⁵ Yet the truth is that he does not choose; rather, his putative commitment to politics becomes the justification for his careless attitude towards women. The dichotomy of "politics" and "love," which juxtaposes a world of responsibilities and

⁶²² "A good revolutionary doesn't let himself get involved in stupid love stories." Maraini 141.

⁶²³ "I like to dilute my revolutionary certainties with the uncertainties of love." Maraini 145.

⁶²⁴ "Politically we got along; in love, no." Ibid.

⁶²⁵ "War is war and I'm at war." Maraini 146.

commitments with another of uncertainties and gratuitous pleasure, functions as an alibi to justify a larger irresponsibility: that of a sexual morality neither uncommon nor new, much less revolutionary. The "new man" hardly differs from the old.

While staying with Bianca, Massimo assumes the false name "Giorgio." Yet in her letters to Marina, Bianca consistently refers to him as "Massimo Giorgio." In doing so, she draws attention to the dichotomy of Massimo the putative revolutionary and Giorgio the ordinary civilian, while simultaneously exposing its fraudulent character. The falseness of one name is recalled through its juxtaposition with the other. Massimo's attempt to conceal his identity makes an exception for Bianca, with whom he speaks freely; yet she is the one who exposes him morally. The police could only discover that Giorgio the ordinary civilian is in fact Massimo the militant; what Bianca discovers is something more profound, namely that Massimo the militant is only Massimo the irresponsible male.

Ferdinando Camon: Storia di Sirio

Like Occidente, published nine years earlier, Storia di Sirio⁶²⁶ analyses militancy in existential terms. Unlike Occidente, it does not focus on militancy as the paradigmatic example of a crisis of Western culture, but as one stage in the protagonist Sirio's process

⁶²⁶ Ferdinando Camon, Storia di Sirio (Milan: Garzanti, 1984).

of self-discovery. The novel is divided into four sections: "La carriera" describes Sirio's upper middle-class background and the vision of technological and economic progress to which Sirio's father, a wealthy Italian industrialist, subscribes; "La rivoluzione" describes Sirio's break with his family and his involvement with the militant student and labour movements; "Il primo amore" is a reflection on the existential fulfilment promised by love; the final section, "Autocoscienza," describes how Sirio and other youths who have passed through the experiences of student protest and militancy come to view personal fulfilment in psychological and spiritual terms.⁶²⁷

By placing militancy in this context, Camon once again subordinates political to cultural issues, and in particular to the way these cultural issues (the loss of credible moral standards, the absence of a fulfilling life practice) manifest themselves in the life of one individual. The subtitle of Camon's novel is "A Parable for the New Generation." This indicates clearly enough that he seeks to transcend political problems and address the wider question of what the good life might consist in for those coming of age in the Italy of the 1960s and 1970s.

While the section of Storia di Sirio chronicling Sirio's participation in militant operations is the only one directly relevant

⁶²⁷ Sirio's biography bears some resemblance to that of a founding member of the Red Brigades, Giorgio Semeria, who was the son of a Sit Siemens executive and a student of sociology.

to the subject of this study, this section is better understood after a few brief comments on those that precede and follow it.

"La carriera" describes the world against which Sirio revolts when he becomes a militant. The symbols of this world are the modern city and, more importantly, the factory. (The city is only "un prolungamento [...] della Grande Fabbrica."⁶²⁸) These symbols suggest industry, capitalism, and the notion of progress – typically understood as the maximisation of profit – that underlies both. For Sirio's family, progress means expansion and, specifically, the acquisition of property. Studying a map on which those parts of the city owned by the family are illuminated by electric lights, Sirio and his father feel their project of capitalist accumulation is the realisation of a God-given right: "Ecco perché tutte le sere il padre e Sirio aspettano che si accendano le luci sulla città: perché hanno quasi l'impressione che Dio stesso illumini la mappa delle loro proprietà."⁶²⁹ This passage suggests that the ideology of progress, which has supplanted an earlier, theological world-view, fulfills the same function as that earlier view: it gives a purpose to the life of the individual.⁶³⁰ The purpose is no longer spiritual salvation, but capitalist expansion: "[...] il senso della sua vita è prender possesso di tutto questo, aumentarlo, e trasmetterlo a sua volta al figlio che

⁶²⁸ "An extension of the Great Factory." Camon 12.

⁶²⁹ "This is why every night the father and Sirio wait for the lights of the city to come on: because they almost have the impression that God himself illumines the map of their property." Ibid.

⁶³⁰ Camon says as much on page 34: "La fabbrica ha oggi il ruolo che aveva nel Medioevo la chiesa [...]" ["Today the factory has the same function as the church in the Middle Ages"].

un giorno avrà.”⁶³¹ In a larger social context, the ideology of progress is that of a radical transformation which, founded on the utilitarian belief that happiness can be maximised for the masses just as profit can be for the capitalist, destroys all institutions inherited from the past – “everything that ever was”: “[...] perchè tutta la storia è stata segnata dallo star male, e cancellando lo star male dalla terra noi correggiamo tutto ciò che è sempre stato.”⁶³² By definition, progress is movement – here, it is that movement of which Marx and Engels said it causes all that is solid to melt into air. To arrest this movement is to fail: “Non poteva rinunciare e fermarsi senza fallire, così come un corpo non può smettere di crescere senza cominciare a morire.”⁶³³

Paradoxically, and as if to acknowledge its own inhumanity (the havoc it wreaks on individuals who, far from being able to accept constant transformation, seek a sense of stability in their lives), this ideology also promises those who live by it a sense of belonging. Those who work in the factory can look forward to having a “place” in capitalist society.⁶³⁴ Camon plays on the

⁶³¹ “The meaning of his life is to take possession of all this, to augment it and to pass it on in turn to the son he will have.” Ibid.

⁶³² “Because all of history has been characterised by being unhappy, and by eradicating unhappiness we correct everything that ever was.” Camon 35.

⁶³³ “He couldn’t resign himself and stand still without failing, the way a body can’t stop growing without dying.” Camon 25.

⁶³⁴ Cf. Camon 16: “Ma già così com’era la fabbrica gli sembrava felice, e Sirio sapeva che lo scopo della vita di molti suoi coetanei era di poter entrare in fabbrica: avere un posto” [“But even as it was the factory seemed a happy place, and Sirio knew that for many people his age the purpose of life was to enter the factory: to have a place”]. Cf. also Camon 18: “Da tanti anni ormai la felicità coincide con l’esserre in città, e il diritto alla felicità `e il diritto alla città. Le vite degli uomini si dividono in due grandi specie: quelle che si svolgono in città e

ambiguity of the Italian word for place: "posto" also means "position of employment." It is in terms of this ambiguity that Sirio's estrangement from his family (his decision to become a militant) is best understood. When Sirio realises that the family chauffeur, Cino, is different from him⁶³⁵, this difference consists not only in the fact that, as Camon says, only Sirio is free to "want."⁶³⁶ Rather, Sirio enjoys the privilege of having a "place" in the sense of feeling "rooted" without having to work for a wage, whereas Cino can achieve the same sense of belonging only by selling his labour in the factory.

Sirio's militancy is partly motivated by his insight into this injustice. It is also a revolt against his father and an attempt to claim what he perceives to be absent in the life of prosperity his father offers him: a chance to establish an identity for himself outside his family and his class, and possibilities of self-realisation that are not formulated in terms of ownership.⁶³⁷ The self-

pensano continuamente a se stesse, e quelle che si svolgono fuori e pensano continuamente alla città. La fabbrica è il mezzo e il luogo per soddisfare ambedue questi diritti: il diritto alla felicità e il diritto alla città. Perciò si pu' o anche dire che il diritto che gli uomini aspirano a soddisfare per dare un senso all propria vita è il diritto a un posto" ["For many years now happiness means being in the city, and the right to happiness is the right to being in the city. The lives of men are of two kinds: those that take place in the city and think continually of themselves, and those that take place outside and think continually of the city. The factory is the means and the place for satisfying both these rights: the right to happiness and the right to the city. Hence one can also say that the right people aspire to satisfy in order to give meaning to their lives is the right to a place"].

⁶³⁵ Cf. Camon 21: "[...] lui era nato diverso dall'autista. Lui, Sirio, era libero di volere; l'altro, no" ["He had been born different from the driver. He, Sirio, was free to want: the other was not"].

⁶³⁶ By the freedom to want Camon seems to intend the freedom to realise one's desires.

⁶³⁷ Cf. Camon 43ff., where Sirio becomes a spokesman of his generation, addressing that of his father: "[...] voi avete colmato i vuoti della vostra vita, e

realisation Sirio strives for is described as a kind of "ownership of the self." Not only is this "ownership" radically different from ownership of capital and commodities, but one excludes the other. This is what Sirio and Cino discover when they abandon their families together: "Usciti di casa, lasciate le loro famiglie borghesi, rinunciato al denaro e alla carriera, i due ragazzi si scoprono improvvisamente padroni della città, di se stessi e della vita."⁶³⁸

When Sirio and Cino become involved in the labour movement, Sirio is able to help striking workers shut down his father's factory. They then witness the decline of left-wing opposition into gratuitous violence; Sirio becomes estranged from Cino and other left-wing friends before he can meet any actual "terrorists" (or even become one himself). He comes to think of his romantic involvement with the young Carla as a more satisfying form of "revolution."⁶³⁹ Later, when this love affair ends, his

avete fatto di noi una nostra reincarnazione. Noi non siamo noi: siamo i vostri figli, e vi apparteniamo. Tutto ciò che esiste voi mirate a possederlo, e il senso della vostra vita sta nel possesso. La vita che ci avete dato, in sostanza ce l'avete tolta" ["You have filled the emptiness of your life, and have made of us a reincarnation of yourselves. We are not ourselves: we are your sons, and we belong to you. You desire to own everything that exists, and the meaning of your life consists in ownership. The life you have given us – essentially, you've taken it from us"].

⁶³⁸ "Having left their homes and their middle-class families, having renounced money and their careers, the two youths unexpectedly found themselves the masters of the city, of themselves and their lives." Camon 50.

⁶³⁹ "Revolution" is understood by Camon in the most general sense; it means little more than "radical transformation," and need not be political. Cf. his characterisation of first love: "[...] per grandissima parte dell'umanità di tutte le razze [...] è le'esperienza più alta e la più radicale trasformazione, cioè rivoluzione, di tutta la vita. Spesso l'unica, perché sufficiente" (Camon 101) ["For a great part of humanity, regardless of race, it is the highest experience and the most radical transformation, that is, revolution, in life. Often the only one, because it is sufficient"]. Cf. also Camon 114, where Sirio muses on how the world could be improved if lovers shared the same first name: "Il mondo

discussions with other disillusioned adolescents, in which they engage in what amounts to an informal, collective psychoanalysis⁶⁴⁰, give meaning to his life.⁶⁴¹ Shunning social and political struggle, Sirio and his friends resign themselves to a project of personal self-improvement that situates the concept of revolution not outside, but inside the self: "[...] non c'è mai nessuna rivoluzione se non è anzitutto una rivoluzione interiore."⁶⁴²

perderebbe di colpo metà dei nomi di persona, due miliardi e mezzo. Per l'umanità, conoscersi diventerebbe il doppio più semplice. Questo si chiama rivoluzione" ["The world would instantly lose half its first names, two-and-a-half billion. For humanity, getting to know others would become twice as easy. This is called revolution"]. The parabolic simplicity of Camon's narrative declines into painful naivete in this and similar passages.

⁶⁴⁰ Camon describes it by the term "autocoscienza," which translates as "self-knowledge."

⁶⁴¹ Cf. Camon 149ff.: "[...] lì, in quel gruppo, con quei compagni, lui avevo intravisto un nuovo compito, un nuovo senso della vita, molto diverso da quello che aveva guidato i suoi primi anni in famiglia, a da quello per cui aveva fatto le lotte contro la fabbrica, e da quello che stava alla base del suo amore per la Carla. Il primo era egoistico, il secondo distruttivo, il terzo privato. Questo senso della vita poteva forse esprimersi così: bisogna rifare noi stessi; il più grande contributo che possiamo dare alla liberazione degli altri è la liberazione di noi stessi; abbiamo ridiscusso tutto, tranne noi stessi; ridiscutiamo noi stessi. Fare la rivoluzione è facile; il difficile è essere rivoluzionari" ["There, in that group, with those comrades, he had discovered a new task, a new meaning of life, very different from that of his first years with his family, and from that for which he had struggled against the factory, and from that on which his love for Carla was premised. The first was selfish, the second destructive, the third private. This new meaning of life could perhaps be expressed thus: we have to remake ourselves; the greatest contribution we can make to the liberation of others is the liberation of ourselves; we've questioned everything, except ourselves; let's question ourselves. It's easy to make the revolution; let's be revolutionary"].

⁶⁴² "There is never a revolution unless it is an internal revolution." Camon 150. What is disappointing about this view is not that it emphasises the need for self-transformation and self-improvement, not that it rightly criticises any "revolution" that ignores this need by concerning itself only with "outward" (social and political rather than personal) struggle, but that it separates one from the other. In effect, Camon's protagonists sacrifice social and political struggle to self-improvement. Their actions (or rather, their refusal to act) are no less "private" than Sirio's romantic affair. Camon ignores that the Marxist tradition has always emphasised personal transformation; texts such as Mao's essay "On Liberalism" bear this out (as do many of the tenets of the cultural revolution). The ideal relation between social and political work and personal transformation was formulated by Brecht in the "Badener Lehrstück": "Ändernd die Welt, verändert euch!" ["Changing the world, change yourselves!"]. Cf. Bertolt Brecht, *Das Badener Lehrstück vom*

This is not the place to offer an extended critique of this somewhat depressing conclusion. It will be more interesting to examine the reasons for Sirio's rejection of the militant project, and those by which Camon's narrator explains, in extended discursive passages that disrupt the flow of the narrative, the failure of communist revolution in postwar Italy.

Most of these reasons are based on an analogy that recurs throughout Camon's work: that between radical political movements and religion. Camon compares European communism to the reformation, identifying in both an "impossible" project of "purification" that sought to transform a decadent and moribund society, but ended by resembling what it set out to abolish:

I movimenti rivoluzionari giovanili che nascono in tutta l'Europa occidentale sono come le crociate nel Medioevo: rappresentano la purificazione di una epoca. Ma come le crociate furono una purificazione impossibile, e han finito anzi per costituire il momento di massima contraddizione della pratica cristiana con i principi cristiani, e quindi un peccato mortale di massa – delitti, stragi, torture, conquiste, affari -, così le rivoluzioni giovanili odierne rappresentano la crisi della

Einverständnis, in: Gesammelte Werke 2: Stuecke 2 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1967) 587ff.

rivoluzione comunista nel mondo, la sua impossibilità, la sua inutilità.⁶⁴³

The "contradiction" between the principles and the practice of communism becomes apparent, for Camon, in left-wing militancy's endorsement of violence. Never distinguishing between violence and counterviolence, Camon cannot but dismiss the left's willingness to achieve its goals by force of arms as irreconcilable with its humanist ideals. He sees in the Marxism of the postwar militant left the betrayal of an ideal. Acknowledging that the theoretical criticism of capitalism offered by postwar Italy's "neo-Marxist" militants was sound, just as the Protestant critique of Catholicism was sound⁶⁴⁴, Camon goes on to argue that both movements led to decline rather than renewal. In particular, the militant left's activities caused

⁶⁴³ "The young revolutionary movements taking shape in all of western Europe are like the crusades of the Middle Ages: they represent the purification of an era. But just as the crusades were an impossible purification that ended up constituting the moment of the greatest contradiction between the practice and the principles of Christianity, a mortal sin of the masses – crimes, massacres, tortures, invasions, enrichment –, the young revolutionary movements represent the crisis of the global communist revolution, its impossibility and uselessness." Camon 74. In a note at the end of his novel, Camon points out the comparison between Marxism and Christianity was made before him by Alberto Moravia, in Moravia's essay "La Speranza ossia Cristianesimo e Comunismo." Cf. Camon 151. Moravia's essay has been reprinted in *Impegno controverso* (Milan: Bompiani, 1980). Camon and Moravia discuss the essay in an interview reprinted in: Alberto Moravia, *Io e il mio tempo* (Milan: Garzanti, 1998) 88ff. Cf. also the discussion on the middle-class, "Cos'è la borghesia" (42ff.).

⁶⁴⁴ Cf. Camon 77: "[...] sul piano del diritto i movimenti neomarxisti non avevano solo torto, e in alcune accuse che essi hanno rivolto alle società capitaliste e ai comunismi reali e ufficiali è dato oggi vedere semplicemente una verità storica, come era una verità storica, ieri, buona parte delle accuse che i neocristiani scagliavano contro la religione ufficiale e le sue massime gerarchie [...]" ["With regard to rights the neo-Marxist movements were not entirely wrong, and much of what they accused capitalist and official communist societies of now simply appears as historical truth, just as a large part of the accusations the neo-Christians leveled against official religion and its hierarchies were historical truths"].

ideological rifts among those Italians sympathetic to communism, and alienated the working class.

Tuttavia l'opera dei neocristiani, positiva nel senso della religiosità, era negativo nel senso della religione, perché non la rafforzava, ma serviva soltanto a metterla in crisi. E così l'opera delle rivoluzioni giovanili, positiva nel senso della critica del marxismo, è negativa nel senso della politica, perchè disgrega il settore operaio, vi apre un fronte interno, lo indebolisce e lo paralizza.⁶⁴⁵

One of the final chapters of Storia di Sirio sees Cino in prison, sharing a cell with militants. The encounter is disappointing to Cino, causing him to see just how far removed these putative "revolutionaries" are from the working class they claim to represent. They come mostly from middle-class backgrounds, and they are not so much genuine political radicals as bored and irresponsible thrill-seekers.⁶⁴⁶ In the last passage of the novel in which militants make an appearance, they are a source of disillusionment; Cino comes to see them not as the revolutionary vanguard they proclaimed

⁶⁴⁵ "Nonetheless the work of the neo-Christians, positive with regard to religiousity, was negative with regard to religion, because it didn't strengthen it, but merely helped provoke its crisis. In the same way, the work of the youthful revolutions, positive with regard to its critique of Marxism, is negative with regard to politics, because it splits the working class, creates a division within it, weakens and paralyses it." Ibid.

⁶⁴⁶ Cf. Camon 129ff: "Tre su cinque avevano fatto studi universitari, una aveva viaggiato parecchio, era stato in America per mesi, l'a era rimasto senza soldi ed era stato aiutato dall'ambasciata, e raccontava queste esperienze come una bravata. Che avevano a che fare, costoro, con quello che si chiamava proletariato?" ["Three out of five had studied at university, one had travelled a lot, he'd spent months in America, he ran out of money there and was helped out by the embassy, and he recounted these experiences like adventures. What did these people have to do with what was called the proletariat?"].

themselves to be, but as veritable “enemies” of the working class:

“All’università non avevano fatti esami, all’estero si divertivano a nostre spese: rispetto al proletariato, non apparterranno, per caso, alla classe nemica?”⁶⁴⁷

Nanni Balestrini: Gli invisibili

Gli invisibili narrates the decline and defeat of postwar Italy’s radical left.⁶⁴⁸ Its subject is the extreme violence – legal and illegal, physical and discursive – with which the Movimento was crushed by the state.⁶⁴⁹ The novel begins with the trial of its narrator, a leftist youth who has participated in demonstrations, the occupation of a

⁶⁴⁷ “They didn’t sit their exams at university, they entertained themselves abroad at our expense: with regard to the proletariat, did they not, perhaps, belong to the enemy class?” Ibid.

⁶⁴⁸ Nanni Balestrini, Gli invisibili (Milan: Bompiani, 1987). Quotations are from La Grande Rivolta, the 1999 joint edition of Vogliamo tutto, Gli invisibili, and L’editore (Milan: Bompiani, 1999). This joint edition includes critical essays on all three novels. Rossana Rossanda’s essay (Balestrini 1999 345ff.) interprets Gli invisibili as a Bildungsroman narrating the “cruel sentimental education” of an Italian leftist. Giuliano Gramigna pays close attention to the novel’s carefully crafted structure, and relates it to what Balestrini describes as his own “numerological obsession” (Balestrini 1999 347ff.). Lidia De Federicis discusses the function of the body in the novel – she speaks of the “materiality of the suffering, naked, beaten, broken, prone, dead body” (Balestrini 1999 349ff.). She also discusses the peculiar names of Balestrini’s characters, which are typically those of plants and animals, and offer rare glimpses of the natural world in the novel’s otherwise sterile, man-made settings (ibid.). Enrico Fenzi also comments on Gli invisibili in the final chapter of his memoir (Fenzi 214ff.). Fenzi argues that Balestrini is concerned to downplay the importance of militancy by treating it as an unfortunate aberration from the ideals and the praxis of the legal extraparlimentary left (the Movimento); on Fenzi’s reading, Balestrini is concerned to show that the emphasis of the state and the media on “terrorism” has distracted (and rendered “invisible”) the Movimento. This reading is problematic. As will be demonstrated, Balestrini does indeed believe the image of the “terrorist” has served to demonise the entire extraparlimentary left, but he does not see militancy as something wholly alien to the Movimento, and many of those whom he argues have been rendered “invisible” in Italy’s high security prisons are militants rather than members of the legal and non-clandestine left.

⁶⁴⁹ The term “Movimento” is used by Balestrini (and other Italian writers) to encompass leftist dissidents from both proletarian and middle-class backgrounds, some of whom chose to form organisations subsequently branded “terrorist.”

school, and the founding of a pirate radio station, and who was put on trial and condemned when arms were discovered in an apartment rented under his name.⁶⁵⁰ After chronicling various experiences that occur both before and after the trial, the novel returns, in its final chapters, to the courthouse. This circular structure reinforces a sense of entrapment and oppression also evoked by recurring images such as chains, handcuffs, and barred windows, and by the fact that many of the novel's central episodes take place in confined spaces such as prison cells and police cars.⁶⁵¹

While much of the novel chronicles the activities of the radical left as experienced by one of its members, the courthouse episodes indicate how the left is seen by the general public, in particular by the media and the state that has resolved to crush it. The journalists in the courthouse are represented as spineless opportunists, "circus contortionists" who move either "to the left" or "to the right" - guided, Balestrini suggests, not so much by moral or political principle as by the exigencies of showmanship: "i fotografi

⁶⁵⁰ Cf. Balestrini 1999 150 and Chapters 15 and 17 in their entirety for descriptions of the narrator's arrest and questioning. Shortly after his arrest, the narrator's house is searched, and he is humiliated in front of his confused and anxious parents. As part of the house search, the policemen take the narrator's personal archive. This becomes emblematic of the disappearance, during the 1980s, of the Movimento's literary and journalistic output. Balestrini indicates the extent of this loss when he mentions how many members of the left destroyed their personal archives for fear of arrest. Cf. Balestrini 1999 152.

⁶⁵¹ The prevalence of such settings is mentioned by De Federicis. It is tempting to relate it to the fact that the left-wing groups whose persecution and destruction Balestrini chronicles conceive of themselves as a "movement." As discussed below, physical confinement (and hence the restriction of physical movement) is one of the devices employed by the state to demoralise and segregate the members of these groups.

in basso si piegano sulle ginocchia spostano di scatto il tronco a destra e a sinistra come contorsionisti del circo".⁶⁵²

The bias of the court emerges clearly from the fresco decorating the courthouse. This fresco represents a Manichean battle between the "forces of good" (on the right) and those of "evil" (on the left). While the former are "angeliche trasparenti armoniose azzurre e leggere"⁶⁵³, the latter take the shape of "strani esseri contorti mostruosi aggrovigliati soprattutto di colore verde e viola"⁶⁵⁴. That the courthouse wall should also be decorated by an allegorical representation of blindfolded justice and the statement "la legge è uguale per tutti"⁶⁵⁵ is only one example among many of Balestrini's sense of irony. The same sense of irony is evident in his use of the phrase "il presidente dichiara aperto il dibattimento"⁶⁵⁶ at the end of a passage emphasising the purely formal character of the trial; the court has already decided on its verdict, and far from

⁶⁵² "The photographers below kneels move swiftly to the right and the left like circus contortionists." Balestrini 1999 94. That the journalists serve the interests of the right more than those of the left is made clear by Balestrini in the course of the novel. For example, the death of a left-wing protester at the hands of the police is not covered by the media, which choose instead to circulate images of "terroristi dentre i gabbioni schierati col pugno alzato e le facce minacciose" (Balestrini 1999 103) ["terrorists in cages with raised fists and threatening faces"]. (During trials for "terrorism"-related crimes, the accused were typically placed in cages.)

⁶⁵³ "Angelical transparent harmonious azure and light." Balestrini 1999 94.

⁶⁵⁴ "Strange beings contorted monstrous gnarled mainly of green and violet colour." Ibid.

⁶⁵⁵ "The law is equal for all." Ibid. The crude Manichean symbolism of the fresco also characterises the final speech of the magistrate in a later chapter narrating the events of the trial. Cf. Balestrini 1999 250: "punire fino in fondo il braccio incolto di queste menti perverse monito alla parte sana dei giovani di questo paese finirà nella spazzatura della storia a quelli che verranno dopo di noi schiacciare questo drago mostruoso" ["punish without mercy the rude arm of these perverted minds dustbin of history crush this monstrous dragon"].

⁶⁵⁶ "The magistrate opens the debate." Balestrini 1999 95.

"declaring open" any debate, the judge and the prosecutors do their level best to eliminate all conditions for balanced discussion.

When he resumes his description of the trial more than forty chapters later, Balestrini continues to emphasise the extreme injustice of the proceedings. He describes the confrontation between the representatives of the legal system and the accused as the clash of two radically opposed worldviews. Between these worldviews, there can be no mediation, because neither acknowledges the validity of the other. This is what the narrator learns when he is questioned:

ho fatto sì con la testa per dire che volevo rispondere e subito il presidente senza neanche guardarmi mi chiede se mi ritengo colpevole o innocente e allora io dovevo cominciare a parlare visto che avevo fatto sì con la testa ho fatto un grande sforzo la bocca secca che mi bruciava e senza guardare nessuno guardavo solo il legno del bancone dritto davanti ai miei occhi ho detto che prima di rispondere bisognava prima intendersi sul significato di queste parole perchè non era detto che per me e per loro queste parole colpevole o innocente avevano lo stesso significato e allora bisognava prima chiarire capire stavo dicendo più o meno una cosa del genere e ho sentito un urlo del pubblico ministero che mi interrompeva dicendo che

dovevo rispondere alla domanda e non fare inutili giochi di parole⁶⁵⁷

The problem of the left is presented here as the problem of a movement so radical in its departure from accepted norms that it finds itself unable to articulate its position. The narrator's dry mouth becomes a metaphor for the silencing of an entire section of society. The words by which the narrator and his comrades might explain themselves are excluded from acceptable discourse, or have been defined in the manner that best serves the interests of the authorities. The discourse has been framed in such a way as to exclude certain truths a priori.

In the passage just quoted, the lack of eye contact between the narrator and his interrogator further emphasises this absence of communication. The failure of the narrator and the judge to "see eye to eye" is such as to render each entirely alien to each other. It is almost as if neither could even take note of the other's words without first abandoning everything he believes in. "Bisognava prima intendersi", the narrator says: "one needed first to agree" or, literally, "understand one another." This condition is never met. The

⁶⁵⁷ "I nodded my head to say yes I wanted to reply and right away the magistrate without even looking at me asks whether I think of myself as guilty or not so I had to start talking seeing as I'd nodded my head I made a great effort my mouth dry and burning and without looking at anyone I only looked at the wooden bench in front of me I said that before replying one needed first to agree on the meaning of these words because it wasn't clear these words guilty or innocent meant to them what they meant to me and so it was first a question of clarifying it was something like that I was saying and I heard a shout from the magistrate who interrupted me to say I should answer his question and not play useless word games." Balestrini 1999 248.

court holds a monopoly on meaning in the sense that it has the power to determine what can be said and taken seriously. For it, the narrator's reply is not a reply at all, but mere "word play." The narrator's attempt to point out the need for common definitions is dismissed because it calls the dominant discourse into question. This act of silencing is an example of what might be termed discursive violence.⁶⁵⁸

The narrator suffers many other forms of violence in the course of *Gli invisibili*. The novel's most horrific episodes take place in prison. Chapter 5 describes the stabbing of a prisoner by inmates, Chapter 6 a prison riot. The novel's central episode is the occupation, by prisoners, of the prison in which the narrator is held.⁶⁵⁹ At first, the occupation proceeds with a minimum of

⁶⁵⁸ Cf. also Balestrini 1999 249, where the power of the dominant discourse to silence those who call it into question and the violence of this act are even more strikingly illustrated: "a questo punto sento la voce del mio avvocato dietro di me che dice vorrei se il presidente me lo consente ma il presidente non consente anzi s'infuria e grida all'avvocato che lui adesso non consente niente che l'avvocato attenda il suo momento l'avvocato tenta di insistere ancora e dice io credo di avere il diritto quale diritto grida il presidente il diritto lo stabilisco io qui dentro sono io che dirigo questo dibattito" ["At this point I hear my lawyer's voice behind me saying I would like if the magistrate will allow me but the magistrate won't allow him in fact he gets angry and shouts at the lawyer that he's not allowing anything now that the lawyer should wait his turn the lawyer tries to insist and says I believe I have the right what right shouts the magistrate I'm the one who decides what's right here I'm the one in charge of this debate"]. Ultimately the court is engaged in the attempt to deny that the left has any ideas or ideals at all; it strives to represent the members of the left as pathological cases for whom any excuse to engage in violence will do: "non c'è cultura in questa storia non ci sono idee in queste farneticazioni senza punti né virgole c'è solo predicazione dell'ignoranza e della violenza del rifiuto totale della negazione pura" (Balestrini 1999 250) ["There's no culture in this story no ideas in these unorganised babblings only the preaching of ignorance and violence total revolt pure negation"].

⁶⁵⁹ This episode is based on the actual revolt in Trani prison (1980), described by Curcio and Moretti (Curcio 182ff., Moretti 205). A number of other episodes in the novel are based on actual events. For example, the story of Gelso, who commits suicide after being released from prison, is based on the case of Alberto

bloodshed; it is then gruesomely put down by the police in what is described as an "intervento di massacro".⁶⁶⁰ Yet the most fundamental form of prison violence is not that of blows and bullets; it consists in the radical denial of one of the most basic demands advanced by the Movimento: that to freely shape one's environment in accordance with one's needs and desires as a human being, creating spaces to accommodate a variety of outlooks and modes of life. When the narrator and his comrades occupy or "squat" public spaces they champion the cause of all groups who are marginalised by the capitalist state precisely in the sense of not being granted the physical space for self-expression.⁶⁶¹ In prison, this condition of

Buonoconto, a NAP militant who was condemned to an eight-and-a-half year prison sentence, released early due to his poor health, and subsequently committed suicide. Cf. Balestrini 1999 259ff., Progetto Memoria 1994 328ff., and Moretti 164. Like Gelso, Buonoconto suffered severe depression following his solitary confinement and physical abuse in prison. Again like Gelso, he furnished his room to make it resemble a prison cell after his release, and subsequently hanged himself. Buonoconto was arrested in 1975 for possession of false documents and an illegal handgun, and committed suicide in 1980.

⁶⁶⁰ "An intervention in the form of a massacre." Balestrini 1999 228. This characterisation is fully in accordance with the descriptions of the crackdown in Chapter 16. Cf. Balestrini 1999 148ff. Cf. also the brutal beatings described in Chapters 19 and 22, in particular p. 171. The episode of the prison occupation is foreshadowed by an earlier episode describing the occupation of a school. Balestrini sets up a number of parallels between the two, and switches from the description of the one to that of the other. Note, for example, how Chapter 11, describing the occupation of the school, ends with the suggestion of imminent police violence, a motif taken up at the outset of Chapter 12, which describes the prison occupation.

⁶⁶¹ Cf. eg. Balestrini's description of the school occupation: "subito nel giro di pochissimi giorni c'è stato un grande afflusso di persone tutta la gente sparsa del movimento ha cominciato a affluire lì è arrivato di tutto operai studenti disoccupati donne freak vecchi compagni dei gruppi extraparlamentari anarchici era un luogo diverso dalla classica sede dei gruppi quella era una sede di movimento e dato che era grande offriva molti spazi per tutte le differenze" (Balestrini 1999 183) ["Right away within just a few days many people showed up all kinds of people from the Movimento congregated all sorts of people workers students unemployed people women freaks old comrades from the anarchist extraparlimentary groups the place was different from your regular organisational headquarters it was the Movimento headquarters and since it was

marginalisation is dramatically amplified through the rigid regimentation of both time and space – through an architecture designed to isolate individuals and strip them of their humanity.⁶⁶² The narrator experiences the effects of this architecture when he measures the subjectively endless time of his incarceration by pacing his empty cell. He learns the prison building is an oppressive environment that isolates prisoners from one another while simultaneously forcing them to co-exist on limited space.⁶⁶³ Its remote location also isolates the prison population in its entirety from that society many of them set out to transform and reclaim for themselves.⁶⁶⁴

Balestrini devotes considerable attention to the ordeal of solitary confinement.⁶⁶⁵ His narrator describes what is perhaps its most important consequence: the destruction of the prisoner's

large there were many spaces to accomodate all kinds of variety"]. Cf. also Balestrini 1999 96ff. and 117ff.

⁶⁶² In a passage that recalls Foucault (Balestrini 1999 110), Balestrini devotes considerable extent to the details of prison architecture. The coercive function of architecture was already a theme in *Vogliamo tutto*, the inside cover of which features a map of the Fiat Mirafiori factory where much of the action takes place – an environment suggestive of the larger dehumanisation of the proletariat under capitalism.

⁶⁶³ Cf. Balestrini 1999 260: "[...] sei dentro una gigantesca scatola di sardine schiacciate compresse sei dentro una scatola chiusa ermeticamente saldata cosa c'è fuori da questa scatola chiusa ermeticamente saldata cosa c'è fuori da questa scatola chi c'è fuori di qui cosa fanno cosa stanno facendo adesso perchè continueranno a fare delle cose a fare tutte le cose che fanno senza di me dove sono io quale sono io qual'è la mia faccia adesso che mi è rimasta solo la mia faccia qui compressa piatta schiacciata" ["You're inside an enormous tin of squashed sardines you're inside a hermetically sealed box what's outside this hermetically sealed box what's outside it who's outside what are they doing now because they go on doing things without me where am I who am I what's my face now that all I have is my face squashed flat"].

⁶⁶⁴ Cf. Balestrini 1999 261: "[...] il carcere era in mezzo alla campagna isolato sperduto in una grande distesa vuota sconfinata dove intorno non c'era nessuno che ci poteva sentire" ["The prison was in the countryside isolated lost in a vast empty expanse with no one around who could have heard us"].

⁶⁶⁵ Cf. Chapter 27, in particular p. 186.

critical faculties. When he is taken to the prison's television room after having been in solitary confinement, the narrator finds himself driven by an imbecilic hunger for light and sound. He becomes a television addict. Attempting to rise above this state by refusing to watch television, he only feels the effects of isolation and sensory deprivation all the more.⁶⁶⁶

The isolation of the imprisoned militants – both from one another and from society – is presented by Balestrini as part of a government strategy designed to break the profound sense of solidarity characterising the Movimento.⁶⁶⁷ The design of the high security prison in which the narrator is detained is only the physical manifestation of this strategy of division; it is the counterrevolutionary response to militancy become material reality.

⁶⁶⁶ Cf. Balestrini 1999 207: "ma quello che più di tutto mi aveva colpito in quei primi giorni in questo mondo del carcere che stavo scoprendo è stata la televisione se non il telegiornale io ero anni che non vedevo il telegiornale mentre lì ho cominciato a subire la televisione perché si tratta proprio di subirla di bersela tutta ventiquattro ore su ventiquattro e all'inizio la subisci e basta senza nessun criterio di scelta te la vedi tutta indiscriminatamente perché ti dà l'illusione di sentire di meno il tempo di distrarti però dopo un po' di tempo ti ritrovi conciato come un cretino ti ritrovi rincoglimento completamente e se poi spegni la televisione credi di stare peggio perché non sai più come fare a fare per fare passare il tempo" ["But what struck me most during those first days in the prison world I was discovering was television or the television news it had been years since I'd watched the television news there I suffered it because it really was a question of suffering it of taking it all in around the clock and to begin with you suffer it like that without any element of choice you watch everything indiscriminately because it gives you the illusion of not feeling the passage of time as much of distracting you but after a bit of time you turn into a complete idiot and if you turn off the television then you feel worse because you no longer know what to do in order to pass the time"]. Cf. also Balestrini 1999 194.

⁶⁶⁷ Cf. Balestrini 1999 238: "allora il ministero della giustizia ha elaborato il suo piano di risoluzione del problema che come tutti i piani di risoluzione dei problemi quando si tratta di lotte unitarie e omogenee la soluzione del problema è sempre una sola la separazione dei detenuti la rottura di questa unità e di questa omogeneità" ["So the ministry of justice developed its solution to the problem which like every other solution when the problem is one of unified and homogeneous struggle is the separation of the prisoners the destruction of this unity and homogeneity"].

If groups like the Red Brigades sought to “disarticulate” the state, the state replies by “disarticulating” the movement from which they arose.⁶⁶⁸ Ultimately, the penal system is exposed as a central component in a strategy of state terror. One of the first lessons the narrator learns about prison is that it is an environment designed to create a condition of “constant fear” in the detainees: “cominciavo a intuire che quello era un altro mondo con altre regole e altre logiche che dovevo imparare il più in fretta possibile perchè lì dentro insieme all'aria di merdi di piscio di vomito annusavi anche un'aria di paura costante”.⁶⁶⁹

At one point, the reader is led to believe that prison is a dehumanising environment not only for the detainees, but also for the prison guards, because it forces both to live in constant fear. That the prison guard is no less dehumanised than the prisoner is suggested by a passage in which a guard attempts to endear himself to the narrator – out of fear for his own life, as it turns out. The guard strives to render himself and his colleagues human by presenting another guard, who has been murdered, as an individual in his own right rather than a mere instrument of the state. He

⁶⁶⁸ Cf. Balestrini 1999 238, where the distribution of political detainee across two floors of the prison building is discussed: “[...] la loro intenzione era quella di rompere ancora una volta il circuito della comunicazione interna mettendo la gente su due piani perchè mettere la gente su due piani voleva dire provocare la rottura del flusso di comunicazione che ormai avevamo conquistato [...]” [“Their intention was that of disrupting communication inside the prison by putting people on two floors because putting people on two floors meant breaking the system of communication we’d established”].

⁶⁶⁹ “I began to understand this was another world with other rules another logic which I had to learn as quickly as possible because in addition to inhaling the smell of shit piss and vomit you also inhaled an air of constant fear.” Balestrini 1999 192.

wants the narrator to think of the murdered guard as “una brava persona” and refers to the family of the deceased, deflecting attention from the man’s professional to his private persona.

il capoposto intanto si mette a raccontarmi che il maresciallo ammazzato era una brava persona che aveva figli e famiglia che quello che dicevano nel volantino quelli che l'hanno ammazzato non era vero per niente dice che quello non aveva nessuna squadra di picchiatori che non aveva mai picchiato o fatto picchiare nessuno che era una brava persona umana eccetera e continua a spiegarmi che loro sono tutti brave persone che è un errore prendersela con loro perchè bisogna capire che loro fanno quel mestiere solo per campare perchè devono dare da mangiare alla loro famiglia⁶⁷⁰

The use of “eccetera” already suggests the view the narrator will go on to formulate: that the words of the prison guard are mere rhetoric:

si capiva che non erano idee sue che erano idee che aveva preso parlando con dei compagni erano gli argomenti rozzi della propaganda di base le frasi fatte e tutto questo

⁶⁷⁰ “Meanwhile the guard begins telling me the officer who was killed was a good person who had sons and a family and that what those who killed him wrote in their flyer wasn’t true at all he says that man never had a squad of strongarms that he had never beaten anyone or arranged for anyone to be beaten that he was a good person a human being and so on and he goes on to explain that they’re all good people because it’s a mistake getting angry with them because you have to understand they only do their job to get by because they have to feed their families.” Ibid. The description of policemen as fellow proletarians that follows recalls Pasolini’s condemnation of the student movement (cf. Chapter I of this study). Like Pasolini, the prison guard argues the policemen are victims rather than figures of authority, that they are as dispossessed as those whose interests the Movimento champions.

diventava le sue giustificazioni ma il punto era il motivo perchè mi faceva tutto questo discorso questo era il punto e evidentemente me lo faceva perchè aveva paura di fare la fine di quel suo collega che era stato ammazzato⁶⁷¹

Rather than lead to solidarity between the narrator and the prison guard, the story of the guard's murdered colleague reveals the extent to which prison is characterised by a climate of fear. The conversation between the narrator and the guard also accentuates one aspect of this climate of fear: the profound distrust that governs all human interaction in prison. The guard sets out to win the narrator's trust and achieves the opposite. Behind his failed attempt, it turns out, lies nothing but his own distrust of the narrator.

Balestrini is able to reveal these mechanisms of fear and distrust and the role they play in prison life because he chooses to tell his story from the point of view of a prisoner. The violence – physical and otherwise – that Balestrini describes is seen through the eyes of one against whom it is directed. The question then arises of why the narrator is victimised in this way. Why does he become a prisoner, an object of state repression? In simple terms, the answer to this question is that the narrator belongs to the left-

⁶⁷¹ "You could tell these weren't his ideas but ideas he'd picked up talking to the comrades these were the shoddy arguments about mass propaganda the ready-made phrases and all this became his justification but the point was why was he telling me these things that was the point and clearly he was doing it because he was afraid of ending up like that other one who'd been killed." Balestrini 1999 192.

wing movement that grew from the student unrest and new forms of proletarian struggle of 1960s Italy, and which called into question the capitalist model of socioeconomic organisation. In the flashbacks that disrupt the prison narrative, Balestrini goes to great lengths to make the reader understand this movement: it causes, its motives, the life practice it created and propagated.

The occupation of the school, whose purpose is to organise a student assembly in which to discuss the way the school is run, is perhaps Balestrini's paradigm of the Movimento at work. The occupation comes about relatively spontaneously, and its demands are radically subversive of the existing structures of authority. In organising their assembly, the students do not ask for permission; they reject the bureaucratic and organisational rules already in place, and with them all submission to a system of authority that deprives them of their need for self-fulfilment, self-expression, and self-organisation: "l'assemblea si prende e non si chiede [...] e anche tutto il resto di cui abbiamo bisogno".⁶⁷² This rejection of authority is also a rejection of property relations. For the students, the school is not the property of those who have legal ownership of (and profit from) it; it is the property of those who need its facilities – the students themselves: "noi dobbiamo fare tutti subito

⁶⁷² "The assembly is something that's taken not asked for like everything else we need." Balestrini 1999 96.

l'assemblea [...] perchè la scuola è nostra [...]".⁶⁷³ The students do not ask for control of the school; they announce that it is already theirs. In Marxist terms, they recognise only use value, rejecting exchange value. That this is an intuitive approach, not the result of theoretical considerations, emerges from the anarchistic nature of their visits to the cinema, for which they refuse to pay, and from the department store theft they engage in, which occasionally leads to vandalism.⁶⁷⁴ The intuition does not come out of the blue; it is brought about by the increasingly difficulty of living under capitalism. It is when the most basic commodities become unaffordable that the members of the Movimento decide no longer to pay: "su su i prezzi vanno su prendiamoci la roba e non paghiamo più".⁶⁷⁵ From such impulses arises the model of a more democratic form of social organisation – one organised in less hierarchical ways, in which authority is not exercised destructively, and in which the dispossessed reclaim what they are denied under existing property relations:

esercitare la nostra creatività distruttiva contro la società dello spettacolo sabotare le macchine e la merce che sabotano la nostra vita promuovere scioperi generali selvaggi a tempo interminato riunirsi sempre in assemblea in tutte le fabbriche

⁶⁷³ "We all have to have this assembly immediately because the school is ours." Balestrini 1999 97.

⁶⁷⁴ Cf. Balestrini 1999 183ff.

⁶⁷⁵ "Up up prices are going up let's take what we need and not pay." Balestrini 1999 188.

della separazione eleggere delegati sempre revocabili dalla base collegare costantemente tutti i luoghi di lotta non trascurare tutti i mezzi tecnici utili alla comunicazione liberata dare un valore d'uso diretto a tutto ciò che ha un valore di scambio occupare in permanenza le fabbriche e gli edifici pubblici organizzare l'autodifesa dei territori conquistati e avanti musica⁶⁷⁶

The Movimento is radically assertive and aware of the need for organised struggle; it is also playful, as much driven by joy and "musica" as by resentment.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, it meets with resistance in the form of the state's organised violence. Assembling youth groups are attacked by the police, subjected to the classic measures of riot control: tear gas and nightsticks. The groups retain their playfulness initially. Faced with the possibility of responding to the violence of the police with their own, they reject that option. No one even seriously considers using the nightstick and the gun that fall into the hands of two protesters; the nightstick is retained a kind of *curiosum*, and the gun is simply thrown away:

⁶⁷⁶ "Exercise our destructive creativity against the society of the spectacle sabotage the machines and the commodities that sabotage our life promote unannounced and indefinite general strikes assemble in the factories of separation elect representatives who can always be voted down again permanently link all the areas of struggle without neglecting the technical means useful to free communication give a direct use value to everything that now has exchange value permanently occupy the factories and public buildings devise ways of defending the conquered territories let's go music." Balestrini 1999 184. Cf. also Balestrini 1999 211 for a similar statement of the Movimento's aims.

Gelso come al solito gli sono caduti gli occhiali e qualcuno nella confusione glieli ha schiacciati e non ci vede quasi più Verbena ha respirato un sacco di gas ha la nausea e sta per vomitare arriva Ortica alza la falda del suo impermeabile e ci fa vedere un manganello nero e lungo quasi quasi ci portavamo anche qualcos'altro dice vero Cocco Cocco ha trovato per terra un fucile si erano persi anche un fucile dovevate veder Cocco che correva come uno struzzo con il fucile in mano ridevano tutti e applaudivano ma poi l'abbiamo buttato via che ce ne facevamo di un fucile⁶⁷⁷

Even at this early stage of the conflict, there are strong indications that the principle of nonviolence will be abandoned. Balestrini describes a demonstration and street fight that follow the shooting of a seventeen-year-old comrade by members of a fascist organisation; one of the slogans at the demonstrations already speaks of revenge: "parte un slogan compagno ucciso sarai vendicato tutti insieme un boato il corteo parte".⁶⁷⁸ That the violence of the movement will be directed not only at other legal and semi-legal groups (the fascists), but at the representatives of

⁶⁷⁷ "As usual Gelso dropped his glasses and someone stepped on them in the general confusion and he almost couldn't see at all Verbena inhaled a lot of tear gas she feels ill and is about to throw up Ortica arrives raises her raincoat and shows us a long black nightstick we almost brought something else she says right Cocco Cocco has found a gun on the ground they even lost one of their guns you should have seen Cocco running like an ostrich with gun in hand everyone laughed but then we threw it away what were we going to do with a gun." Balestrini 1999 100.

⁶⁷⁸ "Someone shouts a slogan murdered comrade you'll be avenged all together we start to march." Ibid.

the state, can be intuited from the perceived continuity between right-wing militants and the police. The fascists and the state are perceived as being on the same side of the conflict, not least because the police defend the headquarters of fascist groups: "nella traversale c'è uno sbarramento auto jeep jeepponi cellulari della polizia e dei carabinieri che proteggono la sede dei fascisti".⁶⁷⁹

Nonviolence is abandoned by the Movimento when state violence and repression become increasingly intolerable. Balestrini describes the violent death of a left-wing protester at the hands of the police:

c'è un gruppo di compagni fermi a semicerchio alcuni piangono non è per i lacrimogeni alcuni singhiozzano una ragazza grida qualcosa che non capisco poi più in l'a vedo il corpo insanguinato per terra vedo la lunga scia di sangue scuro e più in là vedo la massa rossiccia del cervello che la ruota del jeeppone gli ha schizzato fuori dalla testa schiacciata⁶⁸⁰

That the Movimento feels compelled to take matters into its own hands is at least partly a consequence of the contempt and

⁶⁷⁹ "In the sidestreet there's a roadblock cars jeeps police units protecting the fascist headquarters." Balestrini 1999 101.

⁶⁸⁰ "There's a small group of comrades standing in a semicircle some are crying not because of the lacrimogenics some are sobbing a girl shouts something I don't understand then a little further on I see the bloodied body on the ground the long dark trail of blood and a bit further on from there I see the reddish mass of the brain the truck wheel squeezed from his squashed head." Balestrini 1999 102. This episode is based on the death of Giovanni Zibecchi on 17 April, 1975. Cf. Zavoli 139, 208. (A photograph of a policeman standing above Zibecchi's crushed brain already featured in Balestrini's 1980 publication *Blackout*.)

disregard it encounters from mainstream society. The media consistently refuse to report such events as the death of the left-wing protester. Instead, they show images of dead policemen. In the language of war reporters, they paint a picture of the Movimento as a gang of ruthless, inhuman "terrorists."⁶⁸¹

The transition from protest to militancy occurs in the context of the Movimento's isolation from a population unable to understand it. The object both of police violence and the media's ongoing campaign of disinformation and defamation, the Movimento becomes increasingly marginalised and self-referential. It is in this situation that some of its members begin opting for armed struggle:

le manifestazioni e le feste di piazza erano finite da un pezzo il movimento era come un enorme fantasma assente ripiegato su se stesso rintanato nei suoi ghetti la scena adesso era occupata dallo stillicidio di azioni armate clandestine rivendicate da decine di sigle di organizzazioni combattenti che si facevano concorrenza⁶⁸²

The armed groups are not so much an expression of the strength of the Movimento as of its decline; they are driven more by competition than by solidarity, and rather than acting as the armed vanguard of a mass insurrection, they are the reaction to a state

⁶⁸¹ Cf. Balestrini 1999 103.

⁶⁸² "The demonstrations and street parties had been over for a while now the Movimento was like an enormous ghost folded in on itself secluded in its ghettos the scene now was one of clandestine armed operations conducted by dozens of armed groups that competed with one another." Balestrini 1999 104.

repression that can only go unchecked because indifference and hostility have been instilled in the general population. These armed groups form precisely when the "life" of the Movimento is "over," presenting themselves as a last and desperate option for those who refuse to give up its struggle: "la vita del movimento era finita ma per i compagni non era finita non è che potevano mettersi da parte e dire aspettiamo stiamo a vedere perchè la repressione tutti erano coinvolti non si facevano troppe distinzioni".⁶⁸³

The question of armed struggle is debated in what turns out to be the last meeting of the narrator and his comrades. One comrade, Ortica, raises the issue by pointing out the existence of armed clandestine groups, about which he feels ambiguous at best: "[...] c'è una componente che pratica azioni d'avanguardia con l'uso delle armi nell'illusione che di per s'e determinino la crescita di tutto il movimento [...]".⁶⁸⁴ Ortica stresses that the left does not reject violent struggle a priori. His statement contains the usual justification of revolutionary violence as necessary counterviolence. He stresses that revolutionary violence has to exceed state violence:

ora noi non siamo contrari di principio a queste pratiche
perchè sappiamo tutti benissimo che non si può affermare di

⁶⁸³ "The life of the Movimento was over but not for the comrades they couldn't just step aside and say let's wait it out because there was state repression everyone was affected they weren't too fussy." Balestrini 1999 104.

⁶⁸⁴ "There are those who conduct armed operations under the illusion that these will lead to the expansion of the Movimento." Balestrini 1999 216.

essere coerentemente rivoluzionari senza porsi il problema dell'esercizio della forza della necessità di costruire un contropotere pari e anzi più violento a quello che quotidianamente viene esercitato dallo stato⁶⁸⁵

He rejects the praxis of the Red Brigades and similar groups on strategic rather than ethical grounds, raising the question of whether that praxis may not be more detrimental than helpful to the revolutionary cause. He suspects the clandestine militant organisations may be too detached from the larger left-wing movement, leading to its fragmentation rather than its empowerment: "[...] la nostra critica a questi compagni è sul fatto che questa costruzione e esercizio del contropotere deve vivere tutta all'interno del movimento"⁶⁸⁶. The question is whether the masses and the rest of the Movimento will follow in the footsteps of the clandestine groups: "si tratta allora di discutere se riteniamo possibile un ulteriore salto in avanti di massa di tutto il movimento"⁶⁸⁷.

Cotogno rejects such debate on the grounds that it amounts to splitting hairs. He describes the sociopolitical situation as one that does not allow for scruples or hesitation:

⁶⁸⁵ "Now it's not that we're principally opposed to such operations because we all know very well you can't coherently claim to be revolutionary without posing yourself the question of force of the necessity of creating a counterpower as violent as that of the state in fact more violent." Ibid.

⁶⁸⁶ "Our critique of these comrades is based on the fact that this counterpower has to be based entirely inside the Movimento." Ibid.

⁶⁸⁷ "What we need to discuss then is whether we can conceive of a final leap forward involving the entire Movimento." Ibid.

c'è chi adesso non vuole vedere che adesso siamo oggettivamente in una situazione di guerra non volere vedere questo è puro opportunismo di chi non vuole assumersi e fine in fondo le sue responsabilità di rivoluzionario per cui chi non vuole vedere che adesso siamo oggettivamente in una situazione di guerra va combattuto e emarginato⁶⁸⁸

The repetitiveness of this statement points to Cotogno's insecurity. Not convinced of the soundness of his argument, he chooses to cover up his own doubt and dismiss any attempt at careful deliberation by speaking in extreme language and invoking a situation of maximum danger (a situation of war). His final words foreshadow where such behaviour will lead: to the very rift within the left about which Ortica is concerned. This rift is evident in Cotogno's view that those in the Movimento who refuse to endorse the most extreme measures need to be "combated and ostracised." In fact, it is with an incident suggestive of how the Movimento turns on itself that the debate ends - Scilla produces a gun and points it at Nocciola: "[...] Scilla velocissimo ha impugnato la pistola a tamburo e gliel'ha puntata contro ti faccio un buco nella testa [...]"⁶⁸⁹

⁶⁸⁸ "There are those who refuse to accept that we are now objectively in a situation of war to refuse to accept this is pure opportunism the opportunism of those who don't want to shoulder completely their responsibilities as revolutionaries this means that whoever refuses to accept that we are objectively in a situation of war needs to be combated and ostracised." Balestrini 1999 217.

⁶⁸⁹ "Scilla has raised the gun rapidly I'll put a hole in your head." Ibid.

The narrator, Ortica, Nocciola, and China dismiss clandestine militancy. They see it as an abandonment of everything the Movimento has achieved so far, its transformation from a mass movement to a band of outsiders: "[...] noi sostenevamo che era una follia decidere in nome del movimento il salto nella clandestinità cancellare d'un colpo tutto quello che si era fatto fino a lì mollare un movimento di lotta di migliaia di persona per fare la guerra in 20 o 30".⁶⁹⁰ No less importantly, the rhetoric of war remains too closely related to the kind of thinking the Movimento is supposed to combat and supplant. It suggests that rather than abolish existing power structures, the Movimento should position itself more favourably within them – "conquer power as it is." The rhetoric of war and the related rhetoric of "winning or losing" obfuscate an original ideal of the Movimento: to create a society in which relations of force become obsolete and solidarity replaces competition: "[...] tu pensi tu sei convinto che l'obiettivo sia la conquista del potere così come'è e quindi per te adesso tutto il problema diventa solo quello di vincere o di perdere [...]".⁶⁹¹

Ortica begins his sentence twice. The first time, he accuses Cotogno of "thinking" something he holds to be untrue. Then he corrects himself and accuses Cotogno of "being convinced" of

⁶⁹⁰ "We argued it was crazy to opt for clandestinity in the name of the Movimento erasing all at once everything that had been achieved abandoning a combative movement of thousands of people to fight a war as 20 or 30 people." Ibid.

⁶⁹¹ "You think you're convinced the aim is to conquer power as it is and so for you the problem becomes that of winning or losing." Balestrini 1999 217.

something untrue. In doing so, he points out Cotogno's fear of subjecting his views to closer scrutiny - his need for the (presumed) certainty of dogma. Cotogno is, in fact, afraid to think - to examine carefully his own dogmatic positions.

Cotogno is accused by Ortica of playing into the hands of the enemy by accepting its notions of hierarchy and authority: "la guerra che dici tu che pensi tu è la guerra che vogliono loro e non ha niente a che fare ma proprio niente con tutto quello che noi abbiamo fatto e con tutto quello che abbiamo pensato noi fino a adesso".⁶⁹²

Pentitismo is presented as another example of the Movimento turning on itself.⁶⁹³ It further dismantles whatever solidarity remains in the Italian left. With the murder of collaborators in prison, the ruthless violence of the militants turns on itself.⁶⁹⁴ The narrator is left disgusted by the story of the Movimento, now that it has taken this final turn towards senseless violence: "[...] ma che cazzo di storia di merda stavo vedendo che storia di merda che sto raccontando".⁶⁹⁵ The situation at the time of pentitismo is one in which every sense of purpose is lost, a "situation of general

⁶⁹² "The war you're talking about war as you see it is the war they want and it's got nothing to do with everything we've thought and done until now nothing at all." Ibid. On this view, the militant groups in fact do a disservice to the Movimento, by speeding its criminalisation. Cf. also Balestrini 1999 218, 225.

⁶⁹³ Cf. Balestrini 240, 247.

⁶⁹⁴ Cf. the gruesome story of the repentant collaborator who becomes complicit in his own murder (Balestrini 1999 242ff.). The story is based on that of Giorgio Soldati. Cf. Chapter I of this study.

⁶⁹⁵ "What kind of shitty story was I watching unfold what kind of shitty story am I telling." Balestrini 1999 242.

madness" that marks the final defeat of everything the Movimento stood for:

[...] mi sembrava che ormai tutto era impazzito che tutto era veramente impazzito tutto ormai era diventato possibile come che il tuo compagno di cella magari il tuo migliore amico di colpo improvvisamente un giorno scoppia risali dall'aria e lui non c'è più allora capisci che si è messo in isolamento dove poi chiama un magistrato e se la canta e si canta anche te e così è saltata tra di noi la solidarietà che era stata la nostra grande forza l'unica cosa che ci era rimasta⁶⁹⁶

With the loss of solidarity, nothing is left of the Movimento's original aims and ideals. (The last word of Balestrini's novel is in fact "niente."⁶⁹⁷) This nothingness results largely from the Movimento's loss of a social context. Locked away in prison, communicating with the outside world only through the mail and through brief visits of friends, the narrator realises that "outside" everything has changed: what was once conceivable – a just and successful revolution – has become inconceivable. The ruling class that seemed for a moment to lose its grasp on power has once more become smug and comfortable; its fear has given way to self-satisfaction. The radical

⁶⁹⁶ "It seemed to me everything was crazy absolutely everything nothing was impossible your cellmate your best friend breaks down one day you go to the prison yard and he's not there you realise he's in solitary confinement where he calls a magistrate and talks he talks about you too that's how solidarity disappeared among us our great strength the last thing we had." Balestrini 1999 258.

⁶⁹⁷ "Nothing." Balestrini 1999 261.

social transformation that seemed imminent now appears an illusion:

[...] dovevamo renderci conto di come le cose erano cambiate fuori adesso e che non ci immaginavamo come le cose erano diventate diverse fuori come tutto fuori era cambiato l'aria l'atmosfera il clima i discorsi la gente non dovevamo pensare che le cose erano rimaste come prima adesso la grande paura era passata i padroni erano di nuovi sicuri di sè erano tornati a sfoggiare i loro soldi le loro Rolls Royce per le strade le loro pellicce i loro gioielli alla Scala e adesso tutta la gente e anche tanti di quei compagni pensavano solo a lavorare a fare i soldi a dimenticare tutto quello che era successo prima quando si credeva che tutto forse stava per cambiare⁶⁹⁸

Outside prison, the clamour of imminent revolution has given way to silence. The "hundred thousand" who called for revolution have disappeared, and what remains is the solitude of a "cemetery":
 "[...] dove siete quando eravamo mille diecimila centomila non è possibile che fuori non c'è più nessuno non è possibile che non sento più niente che non sento più una voce un rumore un respiro

⁶⁹⁸ "We had to understand how things had changed outside and we could hardly imagine how much they'd changed everything was different the atmosphere the discussions the people we couldn't allow ourselves to think things were still the way they'd been the great fear was gone the bosses felt safe again they'd gone back to showing off their money their Rolls Royces their fur coats and jewels at the opera and now many people the comrades too thought only of working of making money and forgetting everything that had happened before when it had seemed that maybe everything would change." Balestrini 1999 260.

non è possibile che fuori c'è solo un immenso cimitero [...]"⁶⁹⁹ The image of the cemetery evokes the narrator's sense of having been deserted as well as the Movimento's metaphorical "loss of life"; it is also the symbol of "the greatest silence".⁷⁰⁰

Ultimately, then, the defeat of the left consists in the erasure of its ideals and ideas from the society it sought to change. As the novel's title suggests, the left has become "invisible." This is also suggested by the closing image, which describes the narrator and his prison inmates holding torches out the windows of their cells in a symbolic gesture of solidarity and dissent that is as desperate as it is futile. The torches are sure to provide a beautiful sight, the narrator muses, but hardly anyone is there to see it.⁷⁰¹

⁶⁹⁹ "Where are you there were ten thousand a hundred thousand of us it's not possible there's no one left outside it's not possible I can't hear a thing not a voice or a sound or someone breathing it's not possible there should be nothing outside but an immense cemetery." Ibid.

⁷⁰⁰ Cf. Balestrini 1999 260: "[...] un cimitero il luogo del massimo silenzio [...]" ["A cemetery the most silent of places"]. A similarly poignant image of defeat is that of the pirate radio station set up by the narrator and his comrades and later abandoned. The narrator discusses the radio station during one of Ortica's visits to prison. Cf. Balestrini 247.

⁷⁰¹ Cf. Balestrini 1999 261: "doveva essere un bello spettacolo da fuori tutti quei fuochi tremolanti sul muro nero del carcere in mezzo a quella distesa sconfinata ma gli unici che potevano vedere la fiaccolata erano i pochi automobilisti che sfrecciavano piccoli lontanissimi sul nastro nero dell'autostrada a qualche chilometro dal carcere o forse un aeroplano che passa su in alto ma quelli volano altissimi lassù nel cielo nero silenzioso e non vedono niente" ["It had to be a beautiful sight from out there all those torches flickering against the black wall of the prison on that empty expanse but no one could see it except a few drivers on the black highway a few kilometres away or maybe an airplane high above but they fly high up in the black and silent sky they don't see a thing"]. Balestrini's 1994 novel *I furiosi* (Milan: Bompiani, 1994), which narrates the experiences of a group of football hooligans, contains a passage in which the political violence of the 1960s and 1970s is contrasted with that of football hooliganism. The displacement of political violence by hooliganism is a shift from purposive to purposeless violence, Balestrini suggests: "[...] è più una droga quella dello stadio di quella che era la violenza politica perché quella dello stadio non ha nessun obiettivo è fine a se stessa [...] è la pura violenza [...]" (Balestrini 1994 86) ["Compared to political violence that of the stadium is more of a drug because it's

Nanni Balestrini: L'editore

The publisher referred to in the title of Balestrini's 1989 novel⁷⁰² is Giangiacomo Feltrinelli. The novel is divided into twelve chapters or "scenes," of which five are set in 1989 and narrate the efforts of a group of friends to write a film script chronicling the aftermath of Feltrinelli's death in 1972. The authors fictionalise their own recollections of that year and create characters more or less closely based on themselves. The remaining chapters are parts of the script itself. Four of them are assembled from newspaper articles that appeared after Feltrinelli's death. This distinction between cinematic fiction, personal experience, and "truth" as it is recorded in the media indicates the novel's concern with questions of historical accuracy. Like La violenza illustrata and Gli invisibili, L'editore explores the ways in which historical truth is distorted or erased.

The novel opens with a detailed description of Feltrinelli's autopsy. This autopsy, the declared purpose of which is to establish the truth about the circumstances of Feltrinelli's death, is presented as an act of concealment that merely disguises itself as one of

got no aim it's an end in itself [...] it's pure violence"]. The reference to drugs also recalls Balestrini's account, in Gli invisibili, of how heroin sped the decline of the Movimento.

⁷⁰² Nanni Balestrini, L'editore (Milan: Bompiani, 1989). Quotations are from La Grande Rivolta. The critics quoted in this edition focus mostly on the structure of L'editore, in particular on Balestrini's use of montage. Felice Piemontese discusses the "disparate, decontextualised and rearranged languages" much as Aldo Nove speaks of the juxtaposition of "the most disparate codes" (Piemontese and Nove qtd. in Balestrini 1999 354, 355). Remo Ceserani also contests the view that Balestrini's novel is postmodern rather than modern (Ceserani qtd. in Balestrini 1999 352), while Giuliano Gramigna devotes special attention to the "game of exchange" evident in its switches from 1972 to 1989 and back.

disclosure. While it corresponds to one journalist's call for "una inchiesta [...] che elimini ogni margine di dubbio"⁷⁰³, the autopsy also illustrates why the desire for an end to doubt is disturbing: because such a desire is not in itself one for truth. Balestrini's description of the autopsy creates a sense of extreme rigour; he suggests this sense of rigour may have the effect of discouraging scepticism. The autopsy becomes a ritual that legitimates the "truth" subsequently circulated by the media. The white sheet with which Feltrinelli's corpse is covered is likened by Balestrini to a sheet of paper "su cui si può scrivere adesso quello che si vuole [...]".⁷⁰⁴ As later chapters demonstrate, it is not always clear that what is written is true.⁷⁰⁵ Rather, one of Balestrini's protagonists may be right to assert that "[...] questa morte ha coinciso subito con una cancellazione e una mistificazione di questo personaggio [...]".⁷⁰⁶

⁷⁰³ "An investigation that eliminates every margin of doubt." Balestrini 1999 291.

⁷⁰⁴ "On which one now can write whatever one wants." Balestrini 1999 270.

⁷⁰⁵ Much of what is asserted as fact in the newspaper articles Balestrini inserts into his text is called into question during the discussions held by his protagonists. Typically, the article asserting a certain "fact" is presented immediately after the discussion in which that "fact" is rendered doubtful. For example, the article in Chapter 5 states that Feltrinelli was on the run from the police at the time of his death; during the discussion in Chapter 4, this is decried as a lie. The article in Chapter 7 speaks of Feltrinelli's ideas of guerrilla warfare having been inspired by the guerrilla movements of South America; the discussion in Chapter 6 ends with the indication that those ideas were derived from a forgotten PCI manual. Similarly, the reader is encouraged to read sceptically the extended rants against Feltrinelli in Chapter 7; Chapter 6 ends with the suggestion that many of the articles written about him were "schifozze" (Balestrini 1999 298) ["disgusting"].

⁷⁰⁶ "This death immediately coincided with an erasure and a mystification of this person." Balestrini 1999 307.

Like the painstakingly detailed description of the autopsy in Chapter 1, the abundance of factual information in the news report that makes up Chapter 3 fails to dispel the suspicion that what is underway is an act of concealment rather than of disclosure. The media reports on the death of Feltrinelli are strikingly similar: "[...] gli articoli sono quasi uguali [...]".⁷⁰⁷ Their homogeneity suggests the truths they present serve no other function than to distract from other, perhaps more problematic truths. It is not so much a question of facts (and it would be wrong to read *L'editore* as an argument for the view that Feltrinelli was murdered) as of their interpretation. For Balestrini's protagonists, the death of Feltrinelli is symptomatic of a larger transformation of Italian society; for the mass media, it is simply the expression of Feltrinelli's personal folly – an item more at home in a gossip column than in a history book.

One of Balestrini's protagonists argues that Feltrinelli's death is one of two events without which the history of postwar Italy, and in particular of Italian militancy, cannot be understood. The other is the death of Moro: "ci sono i due grandi momenti di passaggio i due spartiacque che sono la morte dell'editore e poi il rapimento Moro [...]".⁷⁰⁸ The death of Feltrinelli illustrated the necessity of breaking with traditional models of militancy, such as that of the partisans, as well as with traditional notions of the working class, rendered

⁷⁰⁷ "The articles are almost identical." Balestrini 1999 272.

⁷⁰⁸ "There are two great moments of transition two watersheds the death of the publisher and the Moro kidnapping." Balestrini 1999 306.

obsolete by the new system of production: "[...] ha prodotto una nuova coscienza [...] attraverso una rottura con tradizioni rivoluzionarie ormai consumate come quelle partigiana e quella della vecchia classe operaia mentre si apre un altro ciclo storico pazzesco che è la modificazione profonda del lavoro [...]".⁷⁰⁹ The Moro kidnapping marks the point at which the new system of production successfully transformed Italian society: "l'altro momento di passaggio è il rapimento Moro che è la fine brutale di questo processo il processo ormai ha vinto si è imposto ha trasformato la società ha trasformato la gente il modo di vivere di pensare di amare i desideri e i comportamenti [...]".⁷¹⁰

By equating the importance of Feltrinelli's death with that of the Moro kidnapping, and by interpreting both as expressions of a larger sociopolitical transformation, Balestrini's protagonists depart markedly from traditional accounts of these two events. Balestrini shows the mass media and the parliamentary left had a stake in misinterpreting Feltrinelli's death by downplaying his importance and the extent to which his life choices were the expression not only of his own idiosyncrasies, but of a potentially revolutionary situation. Those members of the left who rejected militancy - "[...]

⁷⁰⁹ "It created a new consciousness by means of the break with obsolete revolutionary traditions such as that of the partisans and that of the old working class while a new and insane historical cycle began the profound transformation of labour." Ibid.

⁷¹⁰ "The other moment of transition is the Moro kidnapping which is the brutal termination of this process the process has won imposed itself transformed society transformed people their way of life of thinking of loving their desires their behaviour." Balestrini 1999 307.

voi che ammirate tanto il Che finché è lontano però appena si avvicina un po' date fuori di matto"⁷¹¹ – feared the embarrassment of being associated, through Feltrinelli, with clandestine, illegal, and violent measures:

[...] i democratici progressisti non potevano ammettere che l'editore era morto durante un'azione clandestina non potevano ammettere che aveva un organizzazione clandestina non potevano ammettere che lui stesso era nella clandestinità perché queste per definizione sono per voi cose che fanno i fascisti i servizi segreti gli agenti della Cia non sono cose che possono fare i compagni⁷¹²

These "progressive democrats" and all other members of the left were constrained by Feltrinelli's death to re-examine questions of clandestinity, illegality, and violence. On these and other issues, there was no longer any room for ambiguity or false compromises: "[...] una serie di posizioni che non erano ben chiarite ma che potevano coesistere ora non possono più coesistere nella'ambiguità [...]".⁷¹³ The radical left was forced to finally choose from the strategies available to it. Through his own ties both to the partisans

⁷¹¹ "You who admire Che so much as long as he's far away but as soon as he comes a bit closer you throw a fit." Balestrini 1999 286.

⁷¹² "The progressive democrats couldn't admit the publisher had died during a clandestine operation they couldn't admit he headed a clandestine organisation they couldn't admit he was himself clandestine because for you these things are by definition done by the fascists the intelligence service CIA agents they're not things that comrades could ever do." Balestrini 1999 286.

⁷¹³ "A number of positions that hadn't been very clearly spelt out but had been able to co-exist could now no longer co-exist in their ambiguity." Balestrini 1999 293.

and the Red Brigades, Feltrinelli embodied the variety of those strategies: "[...] lui è la somma di tutte le contraddizioni dove il vecchio e il nuovo non si risolvono ma si sommano si scontrano si accavallano si mescolano [...]".⁷¹⁴ Yet what had been able to co-exist in him could no longer be reconciled after March of 1972. Those members of the left who rejected violence broke with those who didn't. Those radicalised by Feltrinelli's death began to reorganise their lives in accordance with the principle of the unity of theory and praxis:

[...] questa necessità che è diventata chiara per tutti in quel periodo di questo passaggio dalla teoria alla prassi come sperimentazione nel quotidiano e che da lì poi non era più possibile la doppia funzione per esempio conciliare di lavorare in un giornale borghese e stare nel movimento [...]⁷¹⁵

What is more, Feltrinelli's death was of international importance. Balestrini makes this point by citing international news items from March of 1972: the George Jackson case, IRA attacks in Belfast, the conflicts in the Middle East, an attempt to overthrow the regime of the Greek colonels, the increasingly unstable Allende presidency, and so on. The effect of these news items, which are inserted into an ongoing report on Feltrinelli's death, is to

⁷¹⁴ "He's the sum of all contradictions where the old and the new are not reconciled but come together clash and blend." Balestrini 1999 308.

⁷¹⁵ "This necessity that everyone became aware of at the time of making the transition from theory to practice an experiment in changing one's daily life and from that point on it was no longer possible to have a dual function to work for example for a middle-class newspaper while simultaneously being a member of the Movimento." Balestrini 1999 329.

demonstrate that questions of insurrectionary violence had become pressing all over the world. The notion that Feltrinelli's choice of clandestinity can be explained and dismissed solely in terms of his psychology – by labeling him a lunatic – is thoroughly discredited.

The newspaper articles cited in Chapter 7 all adopt such a strategy of reducing Feltrinelli to a textbook case of “*istinti autopunitivi labilità di carattere frustrazioni profonde*”⁷¹⁶ (much as Moro's sanity would be constantly called into question six years later). They are prime examples of what one of Balestrini's protagonists calls the “*processo per mezzo stampa questo tipo di processo che diventerà una pratica corrente per tutti gli anni 70 grandi processi pubblici sommari in cui si emettono subito a caldo a tamburo battente e in una sola volta incriminazioni giudizi e sentenze*”.⁷¹⁷ In the light of the reductive “judgements” issued and endlessly repeated by the media, Feltrinelli's funeral becomes a metaphor for the laying to rest of everything that indicates the sociopolitical importance of his life and death. By contrast, the discussions of Balestrini's protagonists constitute an attempt to

⁷¹⁶ “Self-deprecatory instincts character faults profound frustration.” Balestrini 1999 299.

⁷¹⁷ “Trial by press the type of trial that will become standard practice throughout the 70s large summary public trials in which accusations judgements and sentences are issued immediately in the heat of the moment and all at once.” Balestrini 1999 316. Balestrini suggests such “trials by press” have completely distorted the truth about the 1970s in Italy: “quello che è rimasto nella memoria di quasi tutta la gente di quel periodo degli anni 70 è che è stato un periodo cupo e sanguinoso mentre come tutti ci ricordiamo è stato un periodo sì duro e teso ma soprattutto di vitalità e di gioia e di intelligenza e di passione” (ibid.) [“What almost everyone remembers about that time the 70s is that it was a grim and bloody time when as we remember it was a time that was yes hard and tense but most of all one of vitality and joy and intelligence and passion”].

keep alive the memory of what the media have erased from the historical record. Crucially, they choose to do so through a work of art.

The relevance of this fact is best appreciated by considering an aspect of L'editore that has received comparatively scant attention: Balestrini's use of quotations from Malcolm Lowry's 1947 novel Under the Volcano⁷¹⁸ (the Italian edition of which was published by Feltrinelli). The quotations (not identified as such) are inserted into the text in what seems at first to be a random fashion. Felice Piemontese has suggested Geoffrey Firmin, the protagonist of Under the Volcano, functions as a literary alter ego for Feltrinelli.⁷¹⁹ Both die prematurely and somewhat absurdly after squandering their former prestige. The quotation inserted towards the end of the autopsy chapter describes the death of Firmin, thereby reinforcing the sense of a parallel between him and Feltrinelli. Yet Firmin's alcoholism and his inability to communicate properly with his ex-wife Yvonne are more reminiscent of one of the four script writers than of Feltrinelli. Like Firmin, this script writer is inclined to drink excessively, and he is unable to resolve the conflicts that plague his relationship to his partner. Several quotations from Lowry are used by Balestrini to emphasise the predicament of the script writer; the

⁷¹⁸ Malcolm Lowry, Under The Volcano (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962). Lowry's novel chronicles the final hours of Geoffrey Firmin, British ex-consul in Mexico. Firmin is visited by his ex-wife Yvonne, drowns his sorrows in liquor, and is eventually murdered by a band of thugs.

⁷¹⁹ Piemontese qtd. in Balestrini 1999 354.

context of these quotations suggests the script writer is reading Under The Volcano while working on the film, and paying special attention to passages in which he can easily identify with Firmin.⁷²⁰

Yet to simply set up a system of correspondences between the protagonists and events of Under The Volcano and those of L'editore is to misunderstand the function of the quotations. Their importance lies not so much in what they signify as in their manner of signification – that is, in their character as art. This emerges most clearly from the description of Firmin's death that appears surprisingly during Balestrini's description of Feltrinelli's autopsy. The effect of the quotation is to defamiliarise the meticulous description of Feltrinelli's corpse and call into question the autopsy's claim to being a truly exhaustive examination. What it excludes a priori is subjective experience. This is provided by the passage from Lowry, which is not a description of Feltrinelli's death, and therefore can only approximate his final thoughts and emotions, but which offers the possibility of transcending the mute materiality of Feltrinelli's corpse. As art, it breaches the apparent rift between the subjective and the universal; that is, it expresses something universal without thereby disregarding subjective experience.

Balestrini's use of quotations from Lowry's novel constitutes an attempt to complete the picture which both the autopsy report and the newspaper articles cited in later chapters must necessarily

⁷²⁰ Cf. Balestrini 1999 304, 320, 321.

leave incomplete. If Balestrini's protagonists succeed in sublimating the fruits of their research and their personal recollections of 1972 into a film that is also a work of art, that film will become a vehicle for the kind of truth contained in Lowry's novel. By the end of L'editore, the film has not been completed; until it has been, the lyrical prose of Lowry must serve as a surrogate.

Nerino Rossi: La voce nel pozzo

Rossi's 1990 novel⁷²¹ examines militancy in the larger context of Italian left-wing resistance. Its middle-aged protagonist Aristide is a former partisan, now a professor of law at Rome university and a member of Italy's ruling Christian Democrat party. The novel opens with Aristide returning to his hometown of Castenaso, where he meets his mother and his former comrades Ivo and Giovanna. The latter is concerned about her son Luca, who has joined the Red Brigades and disappeared without a trace. Giovanna asks Aristide to track Luca down. He does so successfully, but Luca refuses to renounce militancy and soon disappears again. Giovanna's attempt to buy back her son by handing her savings over to the Red Brigades also fails. The novel ends with the kidnapping of the Italian president. Luca is not heard from again. Aristide resigns from the

⁷²¹ Nerino Rossi, La voce nel pozzo (Venice: Marsilio, 1990). Rossi's 1993 memoirs contain a discussion of the Moro kidnapping that reiterate the views expressed in this novel. Cf. Nerino Rossi, Quando c'erano le lucertole: usi, costumi e miracoli di due generazioni d'italiani (Rome: Newton Compton, 1993) 123f.

president's party and decides to spend the rest of his life in Castenaso.⁷²²

In his dealings with Luca, Aristide expresses concern over what he perceives as a dangerous and illusionary faith in the political utility of violence. Aristide's rejection of violence relates to his painful memory of how he killed a German soldier at close range, during the final days of the Second World War. A second, more uplifting memory – of how his father saved a former fascist from being lynched – helps explain Aristide's conviction that political conflicts ought to be resolved through acts of moral pardon rather than militarily. Like the fetishisation of arms, the rhetoric of enmity is to him a curse that affects generation after generation of Italians: "Non c'è generazione che si salvi, si disse: prima o poi le tocca in sorte di conoscere un nemico."⁷²³

Other characters voice similar attitudes. Aristide's mother, kept in the dark for some time about his dealings with Luca, voices her suspicion that whatever is keeping her son up at night cannot be qualitatively different from what she herself experienced during the war: "I dolori sono sempre gli stessi, un figlio, un marito, una

⁷²² The fate of the kidnapped president remains undecided at the end of the novel. The episode is obviously based on the kidnapping Aldo Moro, much as Rossi's reference to a bomb exploding at Bologna central station (Rossi 75) recalls the actual bomb of 2 August 1980 (cf. Zavoli 417ff.). Yet *La voce nel pozzo* liberally rearranges the historical events on which it is based. The Moro kidnapping preceded the Bologna bomb; in Rossi's novel, the order of the two events is reversed and the time between them shortened. Also, in *La voce nel pozzo*, the Red Brigades are involved in the planting of the bomb. The actual Bologna bomb was the work of fascists, probably with the collaboration of Italian government members.

⁷²³ "No generation is spared, he thought: sooner or later they meet, in some way, with an enemy." Rossi 34.

guerra, e prima o poi toccano a tutti."⁷²⁴ This emphasis on recurring suffering suggests a common humanity and possibility for solidarity that runs counter to the rhetoric of enmity. Rossi suggests Aristide's mother is sensitive to the destructive potential of such rhetoric by virtue of being a woman. When Giovanna hears the news of the president having been kidnapped following her failed attempt to buy out Luca, she muses that women, and in particular mothers, are more sensitive to the tragic aspect of violent conflict: "Poi, mentre si allontanava, pensò che ci sarà pure una ragione per cui, davanti a una tragedia, sono le donne che si guardano fra di loro. Ma certo, si disse, siamo noi che mettiamo al mondo."⁷²⁵

At one point, Aristide is trailed by the police, having aroused their suspicion through his contacts with individuals involved in militancy. Wondering whether his observants are armed, he muses: "Fatalmente, ancora e sempre armi."⁷²⁶ His friend Paolo condemns militancy for its faith in violence. He says of the young militants: "La strada che hanno imboccato era sbagliata fin dall'inizio. Il potere non si conquista più con le armi."⁷²⁷ To Aristide, the president embodies the ideal of a political strategy founded not on might and

⁷²⁴ "Suffering is always the same, a son, a husband, a war, and sooner or later everyone has to endure it." Rossi 88.

⁷²⁵ "Then, as she moved away, she thought there had to be a reason why women looked at each other in the face of tragedy. Of course, she told herself, we're the ones who give birth." Rossi 165.

⁷²⁶ "Tragically, arms still and for all time." Rossi 129.

⁷²⁷ "The path they've chosen was wrong from the start. Power is no longer seized by force of arms." Rossi 116. Aristide says as much to Luca: "Ti dirò che avreste potuto perfino vincere se non aveste sparato" (Rossi 51) ["I'm telling you you could have won if you hadn't shot"]. The assumption that the Red Brigades were deluded young men underlies many such statements. In fact, a number of Moro's kidnappers were approaching middle age.

the rhetoric of enmity, but on an attempt to understand and negotiate with one's opponent. When the president is targeted by the Red Brigades, he laments their failure to appreciate the value of such a strategy: "Se c'era un uomo che non doveva essere toccato, questo era lui. Nessuno più di lui cercava di capire che cosa stava portando questi giovani alle loro illusioni, nessuno più di lui si interrogava sulle loro ragioni."⁷²⁸

The failure to overcome what Aristide perceives as an illusionary faith in the progressive character of violence is expressed in the novel's central metaphor, that of a voice echoing inside a well. Early in the novel, Aristide recalls his childhood game of shouting into the local well: "Una risata, un abbozzo di canto, un urlo, e la eco trasmetteva tutto questo ingigantito al resto del mondo."⁷²⁹ Rossi suggests the tragedy of militancy consists in its mindless "echoing" of the military rhetoric of the partisans. In the sense that he is himself a former partisan, what Aristide "hears" in Luca is the echo of his own voice. Aristide's choice to engage in legal, parliamentary politics is also related to the motif of the echo; having changed his convictions, he still hopes to "make his voice heard" metaphorically, much as he literally amplified it by shouting into the well. Hence the narrator says of Aristide: "Quel gioco della

⁷²⁸ "If there was a man who ought to have been spared, it was him. No one tried more than him to understand what prompted the illusions of these young people, no one thought more about their reasons." Rossi 168.

⁷²⁹ "A laugh, the beginning of a song, a scream, and the echo transmitted all this, amplified, to the world." Rossi 12.

voce nel pozzo non l'aveva scordato. Anzi, in un certo senso, aveva continuato a farlo a lungo nella vita."⁷³⁰ When Aristide resigns from politics altogether, he does so out of an awareness that he and others have failed to drown out the echoes of past violence. The more recent calls for nonviolent change have failed to take effect. In this sense, Aristide feels his generation has failed. As Luca's choice of militancy demonstrates, it has not caused Italian society to renounce violence: "Tutta la sua storia, come quella della sua generazione, stava ubbidendo semplicemente alle leggi di sempre."⁷³¹ The concept of politics as armed struggle has prevailed, and the ideal of a nonviolent society has not been achieved. The historical continuity of violence remains unbroken. Far from being revolutionary, the violence of the Red Brigades is all too familiar: "Nulla dunque che la terra non avesse già visto."⁷³²

La voce nel pozzo ends with a final call for compassion as an alternative to antagonism and violence. This time, however, it is the government that is accused of failing to overcome the rhetoric of enmity. As Aristide's friend Ivo explains, the government's handling of the presidential kidnapping is based on the principle that the state must be defended at all costs: "[...] qual è il ragionamento di

⁷³⁰ "He hadn't forgotten that game of the voice in the well. In fact, in a sense, he'd continued to play it throughout his life." Ibid.

⁷³¹ "His story, like that of his generation, was simply obeying the laws of every epoch." Rossi 178.

⁷³² "Nothing, then, the earth had not seen before." Ibid.

quelli che comandano e decidono? [...] È lo Stato che va difeso."⁷³³

What is forgotten in this dichotomy of state and militant, according to Ivo, is that "[...] tutti noi siamo lo Stato."⁷³⁴ And if the state is not abstract or removed from the general population, but rather identical with the people, then it ought to act compassionately, because it is compassion the people need: "Ma se è vero che lo Stato è tutta la gente, la domanda che dobbiamo fare è questa: di che cosa la gente oggi ha più bisogno? Ma ha bisogno che torni la compassione!"⁷³⁵

This is undoubtedly a somewhat confused position. In its attempt to subsume under a single term groups whose relationship is undeniably antagonistic, the rhetoric of "la gente" reduces itself to wishful thinking. To simply conflate "the people" and "the state," and to include in the resulting category even those who have declared war on the state, amounts to the sophistic attempt to make a very real conflict disappear simply by redefining its terms. Accurately speaking, the terms are not so much redefined as rendered vacuous. The exaggerated emphasis on the similarities between partisan resistance and militancy - which fails to identify as their common denominator anything less vague than "violence" - already announces this facile treatment of Italy's sociopolitical

⁷³³ "What do those who command and decide think? The state must be defended." Rossi 188.

⁷³⁴ "We're all the state." Rossi 189.

⁷³⁵ "But if it's true the state is everyone, the question we have to ask is this: What do people need most today? What they need is the return of compassion!" Ibid.

reality. Rather than accurately representing the situation of its time – which is characterised by a profound rift, rather than by unity – Rossi's novel reduces itself to a pleasant but meaningless fiction.

Adriano Sofri: L'ombra di Moro

A former member of Lotta Continua, Adriano Sofri was accused, in 1988, of complicity in the murder of Luigi Calabresi and incarcerated. Despite the obvious fraudulency of the charge, and despite an international campaign for his liberation whose participants include Jacques Derrida and Umberto Eco, he remains in prison today. L'ombra di Moro⁷³⁶ was published following the discovery, in October of 1990, of a number of letters penned by Moro during the weeks before his death.⁷³⁷ In a series of aphorisms whose linguistic acumen and literary references recall Sciascia, Sofri meditates on Moro's condition as "prisoner" and the ways in which that condition has been interpreted.⁷³⁸

⁷³⁶ Adriano Sofri, L'ombra di Moro (Palermo: Selerio, 1991). Other works by Sofri include Il nodo e il chiodo: libro per la mano sinistra (Palermo: Selerio, 1995) and Altri hotel: il mondo visto da dentro 1997-2002 (Milan: Mondadori, 2002). Cf. also Carlo Ginzburg, Il giudice e lo storico: considerazioni in margine al processo Sofri (Turin: Einaudi, 1991).

⁷³⁷ The letters were discovered by accident, along with several guns and 60 million lire, in the wall of an apartment in via Monte Nevoso, Milan. Known as a Red Brigades hideout, the apartment had already been searched in 1978, without the letters being found.

⁷³⁸ Sofri refers repeatedly to L'affaire Moro. Cf. eg. Sofri 26, 39, 48, 52, 56, 146, 164. At one point, Sofri applies a phrase from Sciascia's novel Il giorno della civetta (Milan: Adelphi, 1993) to Moro: "È morto nel cuore degli amici!" (Sciascia qtd. in Sofri 57) ["He has perished in the hearts of his friends"]. Like Sciascia, Sofri refers to or quotes from a number of canonical writers. They include Tolstoy (Sofri 25, 53), Foscolo (Sofri 55), Montale (Sofri 15), Shakespeare (Sofri 73, 103), Morante (Sofri 79ff.), Sophocles (Sofri 96ff.), Dostoevsky (Sofri 82), Michelet (Sofri 99), Pasolini (Sofri 126, 148ff.), Manzoni (Sofri 146), and Hölderlin (Sofri 152).

Sofri's own status as "political prisoner" informs his reading of Moro's letters. This is especially evident in his comments on the comparison made, by Enzo Bettiza, between Gramsci and Moro. Sofri paraphrases Bettiza's view - "[...] in Gramsci il partito comunista abbandona e rinnega il suo fondatore [...], in Moro il compromesso storico abbandona il suo artefice"⁷³⁹ – and goes on to reflect on the imprisoned Gramsci's probable state of mind. He suggests that, unlike Moro, Gramsci abandoned all hope of liberation from the very beginning: "Si impose con uno sforzo estremo la pazienza di un naufrago senza ritorno."⁷⁴⁰ Yet Sofri is concerned not to so much to discredit Bettiza's view as to explore more fully what Gramsci and Moro had in common: the experience of incarceration. Sofri quotes Gramsci – "Non dimenticare che io sono in galera"⁷⁴¹ – and draws attention to a similar statement by Moro: "Voi dimenticate, o fingete di dimenticare, dove mi trovo: così anche Moro."⁷⁴² Then he provides a vivid description of prison that is clearly more informed by first-hand knowledge than by historical research:

I prigionieri rassicurano i loro cari, ma sentono terribilmente la loro distanza. L'impossibilità di capire davvero la vita in cui la penna e il calamaio sono concessi e revocati, le domandine, le

⁷³⁹ "In Gramsci, the communist party abandons and renounces its founder; in Moro, the historic compromise abandons its creator." Sofri 49.

⁷⁴⁰ "He adopted, by a tremendous effort, the patience of a man shipwrecked without hope of return." Sofri 50.

⁷⁴¹ "Don't forget I'm in prison." Gramsci qtd. in Sofri 51.

⁷⁴² "You forget, or pretend to forget, where I am: thus said Moro too." Sofri 51.

perquisizioni notturne, il il supplizio dei libri conquistati e perduti, lo slogan improvviso che lacera le notti: "Voglio morire".⁷⁴³

Although never explicitly referred to, Sofri's own status as prisoner is undeniably the subtext not only of these remarks, but of his entire analysis of the Moro kidnapping. It provides him with a unique "key" to the interpretation of Moro's letters. To be sure, the analogy between Moro and Sofri is as imperfect as that between Moro and Gramsci; unlike Moro, Sofri is not faced with the prospect of being murdered.⁷⁴⁴ Yet Gramsci, Moro, and Sofri all share one important trait beyond the fact that they are prisoners: they are all imprisoned writers. *L'ombra di Moro* is a text in which one prisoner strives to understand, through writing, what another wrote before him. One of the aspects of Moro's letters Sofri is particularly interested in is the way in which Moro's style expresses his situation. Sofri eloquently describes the effect of incarceration on the prisoner's language. He argues that prison is always present in that language, which cannot but call attention to the status of the writer as prisoner: "La parola più frequentemente pronunciata in galera è: galera. È come se il

⁷⁴³ "Prisoners reassure their loved ones, but suffer terribly from not being with them. The impossibility of truly understanding the life in which pen and inkwell are granted and then taken away, the little requests, the nightly searches, the torment of books won and then lost, the slogan that tears suddenly through the night: 'I want to die.'" Sofri 50.

⁷⁴⁴ Sofri suggests this prospect of death may be the central factor in determining the character of Moro's letters. He suggests they can be read as the document of a personal transformation in the face of death, and compares them to Tolstoy's *Death of Ivan Ilyich* (Sofri 25).

linguaggio, i modi di dire, si premurassero di avvertire alla minima distrazione che qui la vita è cinata, è l'ombra della vita."⁷⁴⁵

The prisoner thinks – and writes – differently from the man outside prison; not because his material circumstances are different, or because he is depressed by the monotony of his condition, but because he knows everything he writes will be read in the light of the fact that he is a prisoner. Sofri examines the impersonal tone of Moro's letters and shows how this stylistic feature results from Moro's desire to have his arguments seriously considered. Moro knows that if he allows himself the slightest lamentation, or expresses too clearly his desire to survive, his letters will be dismissed as those of a man unable to think objectively.

Vorrebbe, forse, Moro, dire l'oltraggio e la pena della propria condizione, ma deve guardarsene: censurarsi per non essere censurato dai propri carcerieri, certo, ma anche, forse altrettanto, per non esporsi all'interdizione degli amici e dei colleghi in autorità. Perfino l'appello cento volte ripetuto alle ragioni di protezione della famiglia è per Moro un argomento obiettivo, la dimostrazione che il suo giudizio non è velato e usurpato dal panico o dall'egoistico istinto di sopravvivenza.⁷⁴⁶

⁷⁴⁵ "The word used most frequently in prison is: prison. It's as if language, figures of speech, exploit the slightest distraction to point out that life here is reduced, that it's only the shadow of life." Ibid.

⁷⁴⁶ "Moro would like, perhaps, to speak of the outrage and pain of his condition, but he has to be careful. He has to censor himself, yes, in order not to be censored by his kidnappers, but also, and perhaps more so, in order not to be

In so far as it was successful, this "sforzo di obiettività e di distanza"⁷⁴⁷ came as a shock to the readers of Moro's letters. The decision having been made early on that a dead Moro was more useful to the state than a live one, the last thing wanted or expected were letters that were lucid rather than confused, that analysed the situation and suggested solutions rather than insisting all was lost. Instead of a Moro who wrote as if he were already dead, the government faced the embarrassment of a Moro who wanted to live and showed that this goal could, with a minimum of willingness, be achieved:

Quelli si aspettavano una voce dell'oltretomba, e ricevettero la richiesta di soccorso di un uomo in trappola; si figuravano il silenzio di un martire o i gemiti di una vittima, e si trovavano fra le mani un'asciutta prospettazioni di condizioni, rischi e decisioni da assumere.⁷⁴⁸

If the government made itself guilty of Moro's death by its categorical refusal to negotiate with his kidnappers, then the precise moment at which it "killed" him was perhaps the one when it decided to discredit his letters as those of a mind less than lucid.

This is Sofri's view. He argues that Moro's words had become for

disqualified by his friends and colleagues in power. The appeal, repeated a hundred times, concerning the reasons for protecting his family, is to Moro an objective argument, a demonstration that his judgement is not impaired or dominated by panic or a selfish survival instinct." Sofri 47.

⁷⁴⁷ "Effort at objectivity and critical distance." Sofri 48.

⁷⁴⁸ "They expected a voice from beyond the grave, and they received an appeal for help from a trapped man; they counted on the silence of a martyr or the lamentations of a victim, and received a dry account of the situation, of risks and decisions to be taken." Sofri 44.

him the only hope of survival; when those words, once taken so seriously, suddenly began to be ignored, his fate was sealed. The outrageous and widely publicised claim that Moro was “no longer himself” amounted to his liquidation:

Non ci sono, di Moro, ora letteralmente, che parole: e i suoi, quelli che alle sue parole hanno fatto ricorso ogni volta che erano minacciati, come si va dall’avvocato quando arriva un mandato di comparizione, sconfessano la sua voce. Di Moro non c’è altro che quelle parole; e si replica che quelle parole non sono sue, e che Moro è un altro. Dunque Moro è silenzio, assenza, ricordo – è morto.⁷⁴⁹

Moro’s death, then, is something larger than his physical elimination on 9 May, 1978. Its shadow (to use one of Sofri’s central metaphors) extends backward in time. It is impossible to speak in good faith about Moro’s life without also speaking about his death. The attempt to separate the two is made in Italo Pietra’s biography of Moro, and condemned as a failure by Sofri. He speaks of “[...] questa doppiezza delle parole, che vogliono descrivere serenamente la vita e non possono fare a meno di essere lette nella controluce della morte”⁷⁵⁰ and demonstrates how even the most banal and

⁷⁴⁹ “There’s nothing left of Moro – this is now literally true – but words; and his companions, the ones who had recourse to his words every time they felt threatened, the way one calls one’s lawyer upon receiving a court summons, disavow his voice. All that is left of Moro is words; and the reply is that those words aren’t his, and that Moro is someone else. Hence Moro is silence, absence, memory – he’s dead.” Sofri 105.

⁷⁵⁰ “This doubleness of words that want to peacefully recount Moro’s life and cannot but be read in the light of his death.” Sofri 99.

apparently innocent details about Moro inevitably evoke the circumstances of his death: "Si legge del Moro mai senza cravatta, sempre in un doppiopetto scuro, del Moro che 'non si lascia mai andare': e si rivedono quelle foto in maniche di camicia."⁷⁵¹

If Moro's words were a disappointment to the government that preferred him dead, they were no more satisfying to his kidnappers. Sofri discusses at some length the supposed revelations of Moro to his kidnappers and argues that in fact there were none. His position coincides with that of Sciascia, who spoke of the mutual failure of Moro and the Red Brigades to understand one another, and in particular of the disappointment that Moro's answers left his questioners with. Sofri illustrates the point by recalling that the Red Brigades never made public the results of the questioning:

Sciascia aveva già mostrato come Moro avesse frustrato le ambiziose aspettative dei suoi interroganti. Avevano esordito annunciando: "Il prigioniero collabora pienamente, tutto sarà reso pubblico", e avevano finito con il farfugliare che niente poteva esser rivelato che il popolo già non sapesse [...].⁷⁵²

Here too, then, Moro's words were an embarrassment. Twelve years after his death, it is clear that Moro did not lie to his questioners

⁷⁵¹ "You read about Moro who always wore a tie and a dark double-breasted suit, Moro who 'never let himself go': and you remember those photographs of him in shirtsleeves." Sofri 100. The photographs referred to are those taken by the Red Brigades in the "people's prison."

⁷⁵² "Sciascia already demonstrated how Moro failed to live up to the ambitious expectations of his questioners. They began by announcing: 'The prisoner is collaborating fully, everything will be rendered public', and they ended by mumbling that nothing could be revealed that the people didn't know already." Sofri 26.

and even came close to disclosing a number of state secrets, such as the existence of Gladio. He only came close because the meaning of his words would have been clear, in 1978, to none but those already fully informed. After the scandals and disclosures of the twelve years following Moro's death, it has become possible to "read between the lines" and understand what Moro was hinting at: "Solo i dodici anni [...] hanno reso picanti quelle carte. [...] I dodici anni le fanno leggere in filigrana; fanno leggere ciò che Moro non pensò nemmeno di scrivere."⁷⁵³ Now that Moro's more obscure statements are better understood, previous interpretations of them have been revealed to be false. Against those who concocted grand conspiracy theories on the basis of Moro's letters, Sofri insists: "L'arredamento di questa storia è penosamente ordinario."⁷⁵⁴ He shows the wilful misinterpretation of those letters went hand in hand with careless scholarship, as when the claim that Moro's letters were censored by the Red Brigades was supported by passages whose grammatical ambiguity in fact allows a number of other interpretations. In this sense, those who read Moro's letters carefully, without jumping to conclusions, treated him more respectfully than those who merely sought to instrumentalise his words by using them to support, however tenuously, their prejudices: "Ecco un caso nel quale la

⁷⁵³ "Only the twelve years that have passed have rendered those papers controversial. Those twelve years make one read between the lines; they make one read what Moro would never have dreamt of writing." Sofri 27.

⁷⁵⁴ "The trappings of this story are painfully ordinary." Sofri 9.

cautela metodica coincide con la simpatia per lo stato d'animo di Moro, e viceversa."⁷⁵⁵

Sofri demonstrates convincingly that the instrumentalisation of Moro's predicament continued after his death. For him, it is in the illusion that underlies this instrumentalisation – the illusion that, since Moro is dead, one can manipulate the facts of his case as one sees fit – that the tragedy of the kidnapping consists. The surfacing of the via Monte Nevoso documents in 1990 is merely a poignant example of how Moro's voice refuses to falter, indicting those who took his "silence" for granted too quickly. The return of the dead, their refusal to fall silent, and the consequences of this refusal for those who ignore it, are for Sofri central elements of the literary genre of tragedy: "La debolezza degli uomini può suggerir loro l'illusione che la morte di chi hanno abbandonato valga a sbarazzarli del rimprovero e del rimorso. Questa illusione è l'antefatto di ogni tragedia. I morti, infatti, tornano."⁷⁵⁶ Like the ghost of Elsinore, the dead continue to speak out against the injustices committed against them, and be it only by tormenting the consciences of those responsible: "Si appostano, come il fantasma di Elsinore, di

⁷⁵⁵ "Here's a case of careful analysis coinciding with sympathy for Moro's state of mind, and vice versa." Sofri 37.

⁷⁵⁶ "The weakness of men may lead them to believe that the death of those they have abandoned can protect them from accusations and remorse. This illusion is the premise of every tragedy. In fact, the dead return." Sofri 73. Later, Sofri describes the Moro kidnapping as the only genuinely tragic event in postwar Italian politics (Sofri 91).

preferenza nelle notti, e rosicchiano i sonni e i sogni."⁷⁵⁷ This is the metaphorical shadow of Moro: his calling into question – from beyond the grave, as it were – what is said about him: "Le sue profezie sono state eluse, o differite, ma la sua ombra si è drizzata brusca e irridente in una quantità di punti e di momenti inattesi."⁷⁵⁸ The false wall behind which Moro's letters were discovered in 1990 becomes a metaphor for the illusionary permanence of the boundary between the living and dead:

La distanza che separa il primo dal secondo ritrovamento di via Monte Nevoso a Milano confonde poi in modo bizzarro la nettezza della soglia che separa i vivi e i morti. Si comportano, ci comportiamo, vivi, come se a separarci dall'aldilà ci fosse una muraglia cinese – e c'è un pannello spesso come un mignolo, che suona vuoto, e sta in piedi con un paio di chiodini.⁷⁵⁹

In so far as the discovery of Moro's letters was a refutation of false claims made about him, a disclosure of the truth, the false wall is also a metaphor of the thin and tenuous line between falsehood and truth. Sofri quotes Montale to emphasise this point: "Si vive nell'intercapedine che corre tra l'incoscienza e i primi barlumi della

⁷⁵⁷ "Like the ghost of Elsinore, they appear, typically at night, to disturb our dreams." Ibid.

⁷⁵⁸ "What he predicted has been avoided, or deferred, but his shadow has appeared abruptly in various places and at surprising times." Sofri 73ff.

⁷⁵⁹ "The distance separating the first discovery in via Monte Nevoso from the second strangely dissolves the neat boundary that separates the living from the dead. Living, we behave as if a Chinese wall separated us from the hereafter – and there's only a thin panel, held in place by a few nails." Sofri 74.

coscienza."⁷⁶⁰ The readiness with which the living relegated Moro to a region irremediably removed from their own exposes their bad faith; it became necessary given the haste with which they sought to establish convenient "truths" where the actual truth was unknown or at best ambiguous. The fear of doubt and criticism, and with them the fear of having to revise a position exposed as mistaken, always lay at the heart of Moro's instrumentalisation.

Disrespect for Moro was always also disrespect for the truth; conversely, respect for the dead becomes respect for truth. L'ombra di Moro is a testament to Sofri's willingness to examine honestly, without prejudice or ulterior motives, the greatest political tragedy of postwar Italy. This willingness shines through in Sofri's linguistic precision and the close attention he pays to a text that is, as he says, all that is left of Moro, but whose relevance is not merely that of a historical document. As Sofri demonstrates, Moro's letters are – both by their content and by the history of their interpretation – an indictment of a mendacity and irresponsibility that Italy's political culture has yet to overcome.

⁷⁶⁰ "We live in the rift between ignorance and the first beginnings of awareness." Sofri 15.

Erri De Luca: Aceto, Arcobaleno

Erri De Luca's 1992 novel Aceto, Arcobaleno⁷⁶¹ is divided into a brief introduction and three main sections. In each main section, the nameless narrator receives a visitor in his remote country house. The first of these three visitors (all former schoolmates) is a militant responsible for the deaths of several political enemies; the other two are, respectively, a missionary returned from Africa and a devoted traveller. Poetically told and symbolically charged episodes from the lives of the three visitors combine to form a picture of contemporary life and the possibilities for personal fulfilment it offers.

In the opening pages, the narrator recalls his schooldays and offers an explanation for why his visitors are so eager to confide in him. He presents himself as an outsider by nature, one who is forever neutral in the conflicts that take place around him. This makes him an ideal listener: "Poiché non mi infervoravo di alcun entusiasmo e non prendevo le parti di nessuno, alcuni cominciarono a confidarsi con me."⁷⁶² His sanguine nature and unwillingness to take sides even when others attempt, through violence, to provoke an emotional reaction are illustrated by a brief episode. Beaten by a bully, the narrator fails to defend himself. This behaviour suggests a comparison to Christ, who turns the other cheek. The narrator

⁷⁶¹ Erri De Luca, Aceto, Arcobaleno (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1992). For background on De Luca, cf. Attilio Scuderi, Erri de Luca (Fiesole: Cadmo, 2001).

⁷⁶² "Seeing as I never became passionate and took the side of no one, some began to confide in me." De Luca 14.

rejects the comparison on the grounds that his behaviour is not founded on a moral code, but results from his temperament. It has always been impossible, he says, to antagonise him: "[...] con me era impossibile allestire uno scontro."⁷⁶³ Forever the observer, unable to take sides and actively participate in the struggles of his time, the narrator is sought out by his militant friend as a witness: "Volevi da me un testimone, uno chiamato a esserci, ad ascoltare il corso del tempo senza poterlo fermare."⁷⁶⁴

More than those of the other two visitors, the decisions taken by the militant are presented as leading to a dead end. They are also presented as being most in need of explanation. Accordingly, De Luca devotes more attention to the background of the militant than he does to those of the missionary and the traveller. The narrator and the militant spend considerable time discussing their schooldays, the militant's relationship to his father, and the militant's decision to become a factory worker after completing school.

The concept that most informs this exploration of the militant's background is that of class. For example, school is presented as the place where the narrator and the militant, both "figli di benestanti"⁷⁶⁵, first become aware of class difference. Eating their packed lunches while poorer students purchase their food from

⁷⁶³ "I didn't react. It was impossible to pick a fight with me." De Luca 15.

⁷⁶⁴ "You wanted me to be a witness, one called on to be present, to listen to the passage of time without being able to stop it." De Luca 30.

⁷⁶⁵ "Children of the well-off." De Luca 22.

the cafeteria, and noting how corporal punishment is applied more severely to those whose shaved heads designate them as children of workers, the narrator and the militant begin to understand – and are urged to accept – the fundamental injustice of class society.⁷⁶⁶ Later, when he begins to work for a living, the militant grows acquainted with “i mestieri della stanchezza”⁷⁶⁷ – physical wage labour or the hourly renting of the body.⁷⁶⁸ This is also the time of his politization, of his first demonstrations and acts of resistance – of relatively thoughtless, but deeply felt choices taken in the context of a mass movement: “Non si chiedeva di essere d’accordo con un progetto, solo darsi alle lotte. Furono case vuote che vennero occupate, pigioni che non si pagarono più, bollette di elettricità bruciate in piazza.”⁷⁶⁹ It is when the activism of the late 1960s peters out that the narrator’s visitor becomes militant. Refusing to treat his years of protest and resistance as a parenthesis, refusing, that is, to return to his middle-class background and to conventional

⁷⁶⁶ Cf. the passage on the beatings received by the poorer children, De Luca 23.

⁷⁶⁷ “The labours of exhaustion.” De Luca 19.

⁷⁶⁸ Cf. De Luca 19 : “Hai noleggiato il corpo a ore” [“You rented your body by the hour”]. By suggesting prostitution, this formulation stresses the exploitative and demeaning character of wage labour. Another passage suggests its dehumanising effect. The militant recalls that his co-workers were set apart from one another not by their names, but only by their faces: “Per riconoscerci avevamo le facce, i nomi erano astrusi e non si fissavano in mente” (De Luca 24) [“We recognised one another by our faces; the names were strange and hard to remember”]. Stripped of the individuality conferred by names, and by implication, of those uniquely human characteristics associated with the faculty of speech, the workers become beastlike.

⁷⁶⁹ “You didn’t have to endorse a particular project, just devote yourself to the struggles. Empty houses were squatted, the rent wasn’t paid, electricity bills were burned in the street.” De Luca 20.

life, he becomes a soldier in one of the "clandestine wars" that now unfold:

Poi la gente fu stanca di urti e d'improvviso non ci fu altro da aggiungere. Le migliaia che fummo si sparsero prima a gruppi, poi a polvere. Chi tornò alle professioni di prima, chi agli studi sospesi, mentre altre si sfondavano le vene or si arruolavano in guerre clandestine, io fui tra questi.⁷⁷⁰

In this, the militant's biography is fairly typical: his middle-class background, the curiosity about working class life that results from his sense of social justice, and his participation in the left-wing Movimento of the late 1960s recall the biographies of a number of actual Italian militants. Yet the character created by De Luca is not a stereotype. His unique and most interesting traits are those that emerge from his relationship to his father. De Luca devotes at least as much attention to these as he does to the biographical elements discussed above.

It is from one of the militant's memories of his father that De Luca's novel takes its title. "Aceto"⁷⁷¹ and "arcobaleno"⁷⁷² are the first words in an Italian-English dictionary used by the militant's father in an unsuccessful attempt to teach his children English. The symbolism of these words is twofold; it derives first from the fact

⁷⁷⁰ "Then people got tired of quarreling and there was nothing more to be said. There had been thousands of us; we dissolved first into small groups and then into dust. Some went back to their job, others continued their studies, still others became heroin addicts or joined clandestine wars; I was among the latter." De Luca 21.

⁷⁷¹ "Vinegar."

⁷⁷² "Rainbow."

that they signify the beginning of an unfinished project, and only then from the specific associations of "vinegar" and "rainbow." In narrating the story of the dictionary, the militant places great emphasis on the notion of the false start, of projects begun and then abandoned. He sees in it the symbolic key to his existence – more precisely, to that aspect of his existence which reveals most about the age in which he lives:

Aceto, arcobaleno: non si sono salvate altre parole, ho trattenuto quelle perché erano l'inizio e solo gli inizi mi hanno lasciato un resto. Perciò ho continuamente smesso lavori e città, eseguendo da capo gli esordi come un compito. In questo mi accorgo di somigliare al mio tempo, questo è un secolo che ha molto intrapreso per ansia di cominciare, senza riuscire a governare il seguito.⁷⁷³

De Luca does not specify what unfinished projects lie at the heart of the Twentieth Century, nor does he state precisely in what the choice suggested by the alternatives of "vinegar" and "rainbow" consists; it is clear, however, that he intends both the notion of the unfinished project and that of choice to be understood in historical, and possibly political terms. These notions are central not only to the life of the militant, but to the novel's entire analysis of the

⁷⁷³ "Vinegar, rainbow: only those words have remained, and I've kept them because they were the beginning and only beginnings have left me with something. That's why I constantly abandoned jobs and cities, beginning anew as if I were performing a task. I realise that this make me a child of the times; this is a century that's begun many projects, anxious to start, without succeeding in controlling what happened next." De Luca 41.

Twentieth Century.⁷⁷⁴ That they should be introduced as part of the militant's narrative suggests the scope of the issues raised by militancy is much vaster than it may first appear. Militancy becomes the key to understanding not merely one person's life, nor even postwar Italy, but the entire century.

The militant's father is one of the few characters in De Luca's novel representing the generation that lived consciously through the rise and fall of fascism, and through the violence of the Second World War. This generation presents the following one with a choice between "vinegar" and "rainbow." While one of these two options may be "poisonous," this does not in any way restrict the freedom of those who must choose between them: "Tu insegnavi aceto e arcobaleno, senza giudicarli me li mostravi e a me spettava di scegliere tra essi. Così fa il porcospino mostrando ai suoi piccolo ogni cibo, anche il velenoso, lasciando che ognuno di essi decida il proprio pasto."⁷⁷⁵ The militant recalls that when he made his choice, as an adult, its effect was to estrange him from his father. The choice made by the militant was that of engaging in political violence. In this way, De Luca suggests one possible interpretation of "vinegar" and "rainbow." They seem to represent, among other things, violence and nonviolence.

⁷⁷⁴ Aceto, arcobaleno's epigraph is an Osip Mandelstam poem whose title is "The Century."

⁷⁷⁵ "You taught vinegar and the rainbow. Without judging, you showed them to me, and it was up to me to choose. Like the hedgehog, which brings its children all manner of food, including poisonous food, and leaves it up to each to choose for itself." De Luca 46.

Violence, it transpires, is the poisonous option. One of its effects is to estrange the militant from his father. This estrangement is partly symbolised by the father becoming blind; blindness becomes a metaphor for the father's inability to understand his mature son and the world of which that son is a part: "Ero arrivato, uccidendo, lontano da lui. Mio padre che non poteva più vedermi, questa era la mia parte: nel buio non lui era stato chiuso, ma il mondo stesso e io."⁷⁷⁶

In narrating one act of political violence in which he participated, the liquidation of several unspecified political enemies, the narrator refers back to the symbol of the rainbow. Before setting fire to the apartment in which his enemies are trapped, the militant notices the colours of the rainbow in a puddle of spilt gasoline.⁷⁷⁷ It remains unclear whether the rainbow symbolises the violence the militant has chosen or the nonviolence he has rejected, although the latter seems more likely.⁷⁷⁸ If the rainbow is the symbol of nonviolence, then it suggests, in this episode, a crisis of conscience; just before he takes human life, the militant is reminded that this is the outcome of a free choice.

The freedom De Luca attributes to the generation of his protagonists is a freedom within history. It is a freedom to choose,

⁷⁷⁶ "By killing, I ended up far from him. My father who could no longer see me – that was my destiny: it wasn't he who had vanished in darkness, but the world itself and I." De Luca 47.

⁷⁷⁷ Cf. De Luca 48.

⁷⁷⁸ The rainbow's associations are obviously more placid than those of vinegar. The rainbow flag is also the symbol of the Italian pacifist movement.

but not a freedom from being conditioned by one's historical situation. There is much in the historical situation of the militant to predispose him towards violence – specifically, the “curse” of prior violence and its effects. His choice of political violence also has roots in his character. He confesses to carrying a “rage” within him; arguably, this rage is the product of his historical situation. The unrest of the late 1960s finds the militant “ready” in so far as it offers a way of “organising” his rage:

Da ragazzo scorgevo violenze dappertutto. Dagli scaffali di mio padre estraeva libri sulla guerra e crescevo sentendo di dover rendere conto di ferite, di offese che un'altra generazione aveva fatto ricadere su quelle a venire. Il novecento era diventato un secolo antico, pieno di maledizioni. Quando vidi nelle strade i colpi, gli urti, ero già pronto. Nella mia prima pietra tirata era già incluso l'uccidere e l'essere uccisi. La politica fu per me l'organizzazione di un'ira [...].⁷⁷⁹

While the leftist activities in which the militant engages purport to enact a break with the past, their violent character also point to a continuity. One of the men the militant is ordered to assassinate is a former comrade disillusioned with the revolutionary project for

⁷⁷⁹ “As a boy I discovered violence everywhere. I took books about war from my father's bookshelf and grew up feeling I needed to take account of injuries, of offenses one generation had left to another. The 20th Century had become an ancient century, full of curses. When I saw the fighting in the streets I was ready. To me, politics was the organisation of rage.” De Luca 32.

precisely this reason – its failure to render the new revolutionaries morally superior to non-revolutionaries:

Smetto perché ho mancato la prova di essere migliore,
migliore di prima, di quando ho cominciato. Sono peggiore e
ho provato schifo di somigliare a tutti gli altri, di essere simile
alle loro facce, ai gesti. L'ira si è decantata in ripugnanza,
questo succede ai vinti. Non voglio più avere parte, né diritto,
né ricordo.⁷⁸⁰

This rejection of the militant project – the recognition of its “defeat” – occurs after rage has been replaced by shame: shame over the failure of rage to bring about a qualitatively different and morally more justifiable state of affairs.

By assassinating his reformed comrade, the militant acts “shamelessly” – his own rage has not given way to shame.⁷⁸¹ It has, however, given way to cynicism. By the time he narrates his experiences, the militant has lost his ideals. He is not a “soldier”, but merely an “assassin”; not an agent of revolution, but “a body that has killed others”: “Mi sento dentro il nome di assassino [...] Sono solo un corpo che ne ha ammazzato altri, niente soldato di

⁷⁸⁰ “I stop because I’ve failed to become better than before, better than when I started. I’m worse and I’ve felt disgusted at being like everyone else, like their faces and gestures. Rage has given way to this revulsion; that’s what happens to the vanquished. I no longer wanted to take part, claim any right, remember.” De Luca 53.

⁷⁸¹ Cf. De Luca 64, where the militant says: “Non mi vergogno [...] di quello che ho fatto” [“I’m not ashamed of what I’ve done”].

guerra minore, niente nemici."⁷⁸² In this radically materialist worldview, the rhetoric of political struggle has become meaningless, as has all psychology. At best, the militant is a visitor in a world of matter which predates and will outlast him; the only future prospect left for him is that of his body's dissolution - his expulsion from the world of matter: "In ogni momento il corpo è pronto a sciogliersi, ogni giorno è pronto ad accogliere la vita e la morte con la stessa mano. È più antico di me e non è stato nemmeno mio, io sono solo l'ultimo dei suoi ospiti."⁷⁸³

The first section of De Luca's novel does in fact end with the suggestion that the militant has died, alone and disillusioned. Specifically, De Luca implies he froze to death on the street.⁷⁸⁴ This death by freezing suggests the moral coldness of the world the militant has fashioned for himself. Whatever the extent to which he was once motivated by the hope of creating a better society, his vision of the future has now been reduced to a vision of death. There is no more struggle for change, only the expectation of what is inevitable. The ideal of social transformation has been displaced by the most irreducibly subjective experience - although it is scarcely an experience: the death in terms of which the future is defined is presented as little more than the dissolution of a

⁷⁸² "Inside of me I sense the word 'assassin.' I'm only a body that's killed other bodies, forget about being a soldier in a small war, about enemies." De Luca 37.

⁷⁸³ "At every moment the body is ready to dissolve; every day it's as ready to die as it is to live. It's older than me and it's not even mine; I'm only the last of its guests." De Luca 64.

⁷⁸⁴ Cf. De Luca 64.

particular combination of matter, a chemical process in a world from which everything human seems in fact to have disappeared, including humanist values such as peaceful co-existence and moral betterment. Despite a hopeful beginning, characterised by a genuine sense of social justice, the would-be revolution of the militant's generation has turned out to be just another Twentieth-Century false start; following its endorsement of violence, it has lost its progressive character and become nothing but a force for destruction.

Carlo Castellaneta: Cerchi nell'acqua

Cerchi nell'acqua⁷⁸⁵ recounts the experiences of two Italians in the period between late 1979 and August of 1980 (the month of the Bologna massacre).⁷⁸⁶ Marina is an ex-student and single mother who abandons her family to join a left-wing militant organisation, Squadre Proletarie. She takes part in a bank robbery, the assassination of a policeman, and the kidnapping of a factory boss, before being arrested. Her experiences are recounted in the first person, while those of the novel's second protagonist are recounted in the third person.

⁷⁸⁵ Carlo Castellaneta, Cerchi nell'acqua (Milan: Mondadori, 1995). For a discussion of Castellaneta's early works, cf. Luigi Surdich, Invito alla lettura di Carlo Castellaneta (Milan: Mursia, 1975).

⁷⁸⁶ A number of actual events are referred to in the novel. Cf. eg. the reference to the December 1979 Red Brigades attack on a Turin business school (Castellaneta 59), and that to the death of Pinelli (Castellaneta 127).

This second protagonist, who remains nameless, is the editor of an Italian journal of economics, an unrepentant fascist, and a retired secret agent tried for involvement in the 1969 Piazza Fontana massacre, but never convicted. He continues to frequent members of the extreme right, including the leader of Orsa Maggiore, a clandestine organisation planning to take power by a military coup, and participates in covert operations involving arms traffickers and spies. At one point, he orchestrates the assassination, carried out by unwitting left-wing militants, of a judge who has begun investigating the illegal activities of the extreme right. The editor is jealously in love with Nora, a young woman whom he seduced years ago, but who has since left him. Discovering her address by chance, he confronts Nora, is turned away, and strangles her in a fit of rage. While the ensuing police investigation identifies Nora's boyfriend, a young communist, as her killer, the editor is faced with the prospect of being arrested for his ties to the perpetrators of the Bologna massacre. Prompted by his American friend Pollock, he leaves Italy to work for the CIA in Guatemala.

What the militants portrayed in this novel have in common is ignorance of the extent to which their actions serve the interests of the powerful. The editor muses repeatedly on the political utility of "terrorism" and the way in which operations such as the Moro kidnapping served to consolidate the power of Italy's ruling party.

Only Marina and her comrade Ermann come close to understanding how militancy is being instrumentalised by those it set out to combat. Ermann suspects the actions of the Squadre Proletarie function as part of a larger political project whose nature the militants are ignorant of. He expresses his suspicion through a metaphor of entrapment that is more apt than he ever has a chance to find out, comparing his situation to that of a Russian doll: "So che cosa contengo, man non so da cosa sono contenuto. Cose c'è sopra di noi, voglio dire..."⁷⁸⁷ Similar images of entrapment frame Marina's development as a militant. Cerchi nell'acqua begins with Marina standing in front of the tiger cage at her local zoo. By the end of the novel, she walks through the apartment where she has lived clandestinely for almost a year, and where she will soon be arrested, "come una belva in gabbia."⁷⁸⁸ Just as the tiger suggests ferocity, but poses no genuine danger in so far as it is caged, her political choices have turned out to be anything but a threat to the powerful.

While cognizant of how the political violence of insurrectionaries can unwittingly serve to legitimate state repression, the editor is also the victim of forces beyond his control. In his case, these are psychological. It is his obsession with Nora that motivates the editor's political choices. His vision of a

⁷⁸⁷ "I know what's inside me, but I don't know what I'm inside of. What's above us, I mean..." Castellaneta 210.

⁷⁸⁸ "Like a beast in its cage." Castellaneta 246.

totalitarian Italy is not, as it first appears to be, the fruit of pragmatic considerations, but part of a larger apocalyptic vision resulting from his wounded sexual pride. Spurned by Nora, he nurtures a desire for revenge not only on her, but on society itself: "Nora doveva gridare. La popolazione intera doveva gridare."⁷⁸⁹ While justified in terms of its supposed cathartic effect on Italian society, the bloodbath he dreams of really serves a different function – namely to procure for him a cathartic release from the torment Nora's departure has caused: "[...] quasi che alla mancanza di lei fosse legato quel desiderio di rivincita, di apocalisse riparatrice che egli non aveva mai dimessa dall'epoca della disfatta."⁷⁹⁰

The editor's skillful instrumentalisation of left-wing militancy and the adeptness with which he orchestrates covert operations are also placed by Castellaneta in a sexual context. The editor is a voyeur. At one point, he recalls spying on Nora through the keyhole and muses that "[...] nulla sarebbe stato in seguito altrettanto esaltante come quella prima istantanea rubata, in cui sconncezza e innocenza stavano così meravigliosamente rimescolate, l'ebbrezza di un'intimità che non sospetta d'essere violata [...]."⁷⁹¹ The blend of depravity and innocence the editor attributes to Nora might also be

⁷⁸⁹ "Nora had to scream. The entire population had to scream." Ibid.

⁷⁹⁰ "As if the absence of her were linked to his desire for revenge, for an apocalyptic settling of the score he had never stopped thinking about since the breakup." Castellaneta 223.

⁷⁹¹ "Nothing that came later was as exciting as that first theft, in which depravity and innocence were so marvellously blended, the rapture of an innocence that doesn't suspect its own violation." Ibid.

attributed to Marina, in the sense that what is true of Nora sexually is true of Marina politically. Marina's combination of ruthlessness and idealism, her willingness to engage in violence for the purpose of creating a nonviolent society, is presented by Castellaneta as no less paradoxical than Nora's blend of the proper and the improper, the pure and the impure. And just as the editor "steals" the image of Nora by spying on her, he and his fascist peers sabotage the project of left-wing militancy by using it for their own ends. The secrecy of his voyeurism finds its corollary in that of his political work.

As far as the interpretation of Italy's political conflicts is concerned, the editor is wiser than Marina. He is aware of the larger political developments in which she is merely a pawn. The very fact that the chapters in which he appears are narrated in the third person suggests his perspective affords a more comprehensive overview of the situation than hers. While no less eventful, the chapters in which the editor appears are characterised by a sense of stasis absent from those narrating the experiences of Marina. The editor's world view remains the same throughout Cerchi nell'acqua; Marina's is transformed in a process of gradual disillusionment, by the end of which her idealism is replaced by scepticism, her pride by shame. Only Marina can be said to learn; the editor merely acts.

On first joining the Squadre Proletaria, Marina is filled with "rabbiosa fierezza."⁷⁹² This sense of pride remains undiminished for considerable time. Occasionally Marina doubts the political wisdom of decisions made by her comrades, but she refrains from voicing her criticism. Her sense of discipline restrains her: "So che la disciplina, nella clandestinità, è il primo requisito."⁷⁹³ She accepts more or less uncritically the standard ideological positions of militancy, from its disdain for theory - "pura masturbazione davanti all'urgenza della lotta, alla necessità di restituire colpo su colpo"⁷⁹⁴ - to its distinction between violence and counterviolence: "Gli sfruttati hanno smesso non solo di lasciarsi sfruttare, ma rispondono con la violenza alla violenza della povertà."⁷⁹⁵ Then, when her first bank robbery results in a death, Marina's pride is transformed into shame and guilt: "[...] quel desiderio di onnipotenza che cresce

⁷⁹² "Angry pride." Castellaneta 121. Cf. also Castellaneta 18: "[...] sentivo irrobustite le mie radici di classe con una fierezza che non provavo da tempo" ["I felt my class roots had been fortified with a pride I had not known for a long time"] and Castellaneta 4, where Marina participates in the planning of her first bank robbery and says: "Mi sono sentita fiera del mio piccolo contributo" ["I was proud of my little contribution"].

⁷⁹³ "I know that in clandestinity, discipline is the first requirement." Castellaneta 49.

⁷⁹⁴ "Nothing but masturbation given the urgency of the struggle, the necessity of making one blow follow the next." Castellaneta 113. Cf. also Castellaneta 64, where the same metaphor is applied to writing: "[...] o scrivi o spari, nel senso che la letteratura è una specie di masturbazione, cioè un'azione mancata, il surrogato di una cosa non compiuta" ["Either you write or you shoot, in the sense that literature is a kind of masturbation - an act not performed, a surrogate for something not done"]. That Marina begins to keep a personal diary is a first indication of her estrangement from militant ideology.

⁷⁹⁵ "The exploited not only refuse to be exploited, but they respond violently to the violence of poverty." Castellaneta 112. Cf. also Castellaneta 100: "[...] uccidi per rispondere con violenza a quell'altra violenza invisibile ma continua, una violenza impalpabile che non riesci mai ad afferare man dentro la quale siamo cresciuti dannandoci [...]" ["You kill in order to respond violently to that other violence, invisible but constant, an elusive violence you can never grasp, but within which we've all grown up, cursing ourselves"].

impetuosamente nella clandestinità adesso lo sento umiliato, lo vivo come una colpa, un primo sintomo di vergogna che vorrei rimuovere, cancellare [...]."⁷⁹⁶

To be sure, Marina struggles with clandestinity from the start. She dreams about the son she has left behind and cannot resist phoning her family.⁷⁹⁷ Expected to enact a radical break with the past - "Dicono che si deve dimenticare il passato, lasciarsi alle spalle l'esistenza che fin qui abbiamo condotto e inventarci una nuova identità, quella rivoluzionaria"⁷⁹⁸ - she succeeds only in leading a double life of the mind. Far from achieving the ideal of a new and unitary "revolutionary identity," she is torn between past and present, her family and her comrades. Her identity becomes fragmentary: "[...] mi sento smembrata in cento personaggi, uno verso i miei, uno verso gli estranei, un altro verso i compagni, e uno ancora verso me stessa, il più oscuro di tutti, che devo approfondire, rimettere insieme come i frammenti di una statuetta andata in pezzi."⁷⁹⁹

The final blow to Marina's faith in militancy is dealt by her participation in the kidnapping of a factory boss. Confronted with

⁷⁹⁶ "That desire of omnipotence that grows impetuously in clandestinity has been humiliated; I experience it as a kind of guilt, the first symptom of a shame I would like to remove, erase." Castellaneta 55.

⁷⁹⁷ Castellaneta 63, 38.

⁷⁹⁸ "They say you have to forget the past, turn your back on the existence you've led until now and invent yourself a new identity, one that's revolutionary." Castellaneta 64.

⁷⁹⁹ "I feel fragmented into a hundred people. I'm one person with my family, another with strangers, another with the comrades, and still another with myself. The latter is the most mysterious of them all; I have to understand it better, reassemble it like the fragments of a broken statue." Castellaneta 65.

the boss as flesh-and-blood human being, she becomes incapable of thinking in ideological terms founded on his reduction to a symbol. The boss suffers from the summer heat, amplified by the soundproof walls of his prison. To make matters worse, he vomits and develops diarrhoea. His banal physicality refutes the abstract theories on the basis of which his kidnapping was justified, and leaves in their place a sense of absence and inadequacy: "[...] ho la sensazione di uno svuotamento, quel livello eroico che avevo vagheggiato ora si riduce a un brutale problema di feci, schiacciato dalla volgarità dei fatti [...]." ⁸⁰⁰ The boss is transformed from a symbol into a man, and with the recognition of his shared humanity comes a sense of solidarity: "[...] è stupido ma non so impedirmi di pensare all'ostaggio in termini di rispetto [...], dopotutto anche se rappresenta il simbolo dello sfruttamento anche lui è un essere umano [...]." ⁸⁰¹

Marina's discovery comes too late. By the time she has understood the nature of militancy, having been confronted with the reality behind its ideological facade, the police have tracked her down. Never hampered by idealism and always one step ahead of Marina, the editor escapes arrest. He is free to observe the further

⁸⁰⁰ "I feel empty; my former heroism has been reduced to a problem of human waste, crushed by the vulgarity of the facts." *Castellaneta* 208.

⁸⁰¹ "It's stupid, but I can't help thinking of the hostage respectfully. After all, he may be the symbol of exploitation, but he's also a human being." *Ibid.* Speaking earlier of the statements issued following an assassination, Marina notes "[...] il contrasto tra il linguaggio burocratico e l'enormità dell'omicidio, fra la terminologia politica e il sangue versato [...]" (*Castellaneta* 162) ["the contrast between the bureaucratic language and the enormity of homicide, between political terminology and the blood that's been shed"].

development of the militant conflict from abroad - "[...] finché nello stagno l'ultimo cerchio d'acqua si fosse infranto contro la riva."⁸⁰²

Vincenzo Mantovani: Il cattivo maestro

Il cattivo maestro⁸⁰³ tells the story of Lorenzo Vitali, formerly a professor at Milan university, who has moved to France after having spent eight years in prison for his involvement – as a public speaker and writer – in the student unrest of the 1960s.⁸⁰⁴ The motives behind Lorenzo's politization are endearingly human: ideas of sexual liberation provided him with a good opportunity for wooing young women. Specifically, he was having an affair with one of his activist students, Eleonora.⁸⁰⁵

At the time of narration (the late 1990s), Lorenzo's relationship to Italy (and more generally, to his own past) is a

⁸⁰² "Until the last ripple has met the shore." Castellaneta 244. Cf. also Castellaneta 184, where the editor speaks of how, after Piazza Fontana, "terrorist" operations came to be taken for granted by the public: "[...] gettato il sasso, l'acqua dello stagno si era subito richiusa [...]" ["Once the stone was thrown, the ripples disappeared from the surface of the water"].

⁸⁰³ Vincenzo Mantovani, Il cattivo maestro (Florence: Giunti, 1997). Mantovani is a translator (of Ernest Hemingway, Henry Miller, Jack Kerouac, and Saul Bellow, among others), a journalist and a historian, as well as a novelist. Cf. in particular his account of the 23 March, 1971 terrorist attack on the Teatro Diana in: Vincenzo Mantovani, Mazurka blu: la strage del Diana (Milan: Rusconi, 1979).

⁸⁰⁴ As did Antonio Negri, on whose biography Lorenzo's is clearly based. The phrase "il cattivo maestro" ["the malignant teacher"] has been used to describe Negri. Many of the central episodes in Mantovani's novel are based on historical events, and many of the characters on actual people. For example, Chapter 5 features a description of the Piazza Fontana massacre, and the editor mentioned in that chapter is clearly Feltrinelli; the character Ennio, who makes an appearance in Chapter 4, is based on Patrizio Peci.

⁸⁰⁵ Eleonora later goes on to become militant and is killed in a shootout. The episode (Mantovani 192ff.) is based on the death of Cagol. The statement issued by Eleonora's comrades (Mantovani 198ff.) contains phrases from the Red Brigades statement issued after the death of Cagol, including the frequently quoted "Che mille braccia si protendono per raccogliere il suo fucile!" ["May a hundred arms reach out to pick up her gun!"].

profoundly disturbed one. He lives with his English girlfriend Edwina, avoids reading the newspaper, and while working on a mock dictionary of terms related to Italy's sociopolitical situation, in fact does his best to avoid engaging seriously with politics, particularly those of his home country.⁸⁰⁶ One day, Lorenzo accidentally hears a news item about the arrest of former militant Giovanni (Nanni) Ferraresi, who was, for a time, Eleonora's boyfriend. Like Lorenzo, Nanni is a French resident; that Nanni has been extradited does not bode well for Lorenzo. Nanni is murdered in prison shortly after being arrested. More worrying still, Lorenzo learns that, before the murder, the former militant made an unsuccessful attempt to contact him.

The troubling news prompts Lorenzo to re-examine his past, first by engaging in lengthy discussions with Edwina, then by travelling to Paris, where Nanni last lived. His research then takes him to England, France, and Patagonia; it involves interviews with

⁸⁰⁶ Cf. the entry Lorenzo writes for "Italia" (Mantovani 10); while fraught with topical references (eg. the founding of the "partito azienda" ["business party"] Viva l'Italia, clearly a thin novelistic disguise for Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia), the tone of this text is flippant rather than serious. Lorenzo's friend Sandrino, another Italian expatriate with a history of activism, indicates Lorenzo's estrangement from contemporary Italy when he says: "[...] se per caso tu dovessi tornare in Italia, ti troveresti in un paese dov'è cambiato tutto" (Mantovani 38) ["If by chance you were to return to Italy, you'd find everything changed"]. Sandrino's comment refers specifically to the political changes in Italy during the 1990s – the replacement of the Communist Party by L'Ulivo, the foundation of radically nationalist groups like the Lega Nord, and the rehabilitation of fascism. As Sandrino says: "Dopo il crollo del muro di Berlino, non soltanto i comunisti non mangiano più i bambini, ma i fascisti sono diventati rispettabili. Non sanno cos'è l'olio di ricino e hanno attaccato il manganella a un chiodo" (Mantovani 39) ["After the fall of the Berlin wall, not only do the communists no longer eat little children, but the fascists have become respectable. They no longer know what castor oil is and they've hung their nightsticks on the wall"]. That Lorenzo needs to have these changes explained to him shows his knowledge of post-1970s Italy is superficial.

several behind-the-scenes protagonists of the 1970s, and yields disturbing discoveries about the instrumentalisation of the militant conflict by the intelligence services of various nations. Eventually, Lorenzo's discoveries lead to his being framed and arrested by the police in Rome.

Initially, Lorenzo's attitude to his past is resentful. He feels he has been unjustly accused and punished excessively. He, who never took up arms, has been made a scapegoat by the Italian authorities, who have consistently exaggerated his importance: "Ero l'organizzatore di tutto," he remembers sarcastically. "Il Grande Vecchio. Il Pericolo Pubblico Numero Uno."⁸⁰⁷ His friend and former comrade Sandrino, another Italian expatriate, points out that lending ideological support to political violence is no trivial matter. According to Sandrino, Lorenzo simply lacked the courage of his convictions, and let others act on his words: "La tua arma era la lingua. Che ne uccide più della spada, l'hai dimenticato? Oh, li ricordo bene i tuoi sproloqui! Dimmi. Perché canciavi tanto? Per convincere gli altri a fare ciò che non avevi il coraggio di fare tu?"⁸⁰⁸

⁸⁰⁷ "I was the one who organised everything. The Great Old Man. Public Enemy Number One." Mantovani 50. The phrase "il Grande Vecchio", frequently bandied about by Italian "dietrologi" or conspiracy theorists, refers to an unknown person supposed to have orchestrated the entire "terrorist" conflict for reasons typically not specified. The expression was first coined by Italian prime minister Bettino Craxi.

⁸⁰⁸ "Your weapon was language. Which kills more than the sword, remember? Oh, I remember them well, your talks. Tell me. Why did you rant like that? To convince others to do what you lacked the courage to do yourself?" Mantovani 39. Lorenzo faces the same accusation when he meets Nanni in prison; it is implicit in the disrespectful smile that appears on Nanni's face: "Che ci fai qui, professore? Non è il tuo posto, questo. Torna dietro la tua cattedra, a montare e smontare parole. O sopra, se credi, ad arringare la gente. Qui finiscono quelli che fanno,

Eventually, Lorenzo accepts something very close to Sandrino's view. He remembers how his time in prison afforded him the opportunity to reflect carefully on everything he did during his years in Milan, and how he arrived at the conclusion that, despite the exaggerated nature of the accusations brought against him, he was, in some sense, responsible for the crimes committed by others:

Riflettendo sulla sua vita passata – il carcere gliene offriva l'occasione – cominciò a scorgere una precisa relazione tra le sue parole e le azioni dei terroristi. Non come la intendeva la magistratura – le seconde puri e semplici effetti delle prime – che voleva attribuirgli penalmente la responsabilità di qualche reato per avere qualcuno sui cui rovesciare tutte le colpe di nove anni di terrorismo. Ma nel senso che lui, dentro di sé, si sentiva complice degli stessi delitti che fuori i terroristi commettevano con le armi.⁸⁰⁹

non i cacciaballe come te. Gli uomini d'azione, non i fanfaroni. I rivoluzionari, non le mosche cocchiere" (Mantovani 55) ["What are you doing here, professor? This isn't the place for you. Go back to your lectern, keep playing with words. Or get on top of it, rant at people. This is the place where people who do something end up, not those who play games like you. Men of action, not loudmouths. Revolutionaries, not hangers-on"]. In fact, this distinction between those who merely theorise and "teach" and those who act is less obvious than it seems. As one of Lorenzo's acquaintances, the Red Brigades member Matteo, explains, the militants were themselves characterised by a "vena pedagogica" (Mantovani 140) ["pedagogic vein"]. As Matteo says: "Avrai notato che è presente dappertutto. Persino negli slogan. 'Colpirne uno per educarne cento.' Ricordi? Educare, educare, educare... C'è l'avevamo nel DNA questo spinta al proselitismo, questa vocazione all'insegnamento" (ibid.) ["You'll have noticed it's everywhere. Even in the slogans. 'Strike one to educate a hundred.' Remember? Educate, educate, educate... We had it in our DNA, this missionary zeal"].

⁸⁰⁹ "Thinking about his past life – prison gave him the opportunity – he began to discern a real connection between his words and the actions of the terrorists. Not the kind the judiciary meant – taking the latter simply as effects of the former – when it wanted to attribute to him penally the responsibility for some crime in order to have a scapegoat for nine years of terrorism. But in the sense that,

Lorenzo's "responsabilità morale"⁸¹⁰ consists in the way he chose to handle language, in his underestimating the power of words to provoke action. Although he did not engage in violence himself, his incendiary rhetoric is something to be ashamed of: "Lorenzo, gran maestro di parole, scopriva di averle usate con troppa leggerezza. 'Boicottare', 'demolire', 'eliminare', 'distruggere', 'spazzar via'... Eccone alcune, tra le tante, che sarebbe stato meglio maneggiare con cautela."⁸¹¹

Lorenzo's life in France has been an attempt to forget his guilty past. It is the news of Nanni's arrest that demonstrates to him the futility of this attempt. The news is a surprise not only because Nanni's arrest comes out of the blue, but also because it teaches Lorenzo a lesson about himself: he was too eager to ignore a personal history that cannot simply be shaken off.

La notizia dell'extradizione di Nanni è stata una sorpresa, una sorpresa che lo ha turbato più di quanto Lorenzo abbia lasciato intendere a Edwina. Dunque non è bastato cambiare nome, nazione, città, confondersi tra stranieri in un paese straniero, evitare di farsi riconoscere, isolarsi, prendere tante

inside, he felt himself an accomplice of the crimes the terrorists were committing." Mantovani 146.

⁸¹⁰ "Moral responsibility." Mantovani 146f.

⁸¹¹ "Lorenzo, great wielder of words, discovered he'd used them too lightly. 'Boycott', 'demolish', 'eliminate', 'destroy', 'get rid of'... These were some of those words it would have been better to handle carefully." Mantovani 147. Cf. also Mantovani 148, where Lorenzo is even more explicit in assuming responsibility for the political violence of the 1970s: "Ho parlato soltanto, questo è vero. Ma le mie parole non hanno pesato meno del piombo di cui erano fatte le pallottole che hanno ucciso questa gente. Non posso fingere di non averle mai dette" ["I only talked, that's true. But my words didn't weigh any less than the lead of the bullets that killed these people. I can't pretend I never said them"].

precauzioni. Non è bastato buttar via il televisore, troncare i collegamenti telefonici, smettere di comprare i giornali, riempirsi di muscia le orecchie per impedire al mondo di far udire la sua voce. Per quanto ci si sforzi di ignorarlo, il passato ci segue.⁸¹²

This realisation leads to the breakdown of the routines that have characterised Lorenzo's life in France. His dictionary project, exposed now as the distraction it was, suddenly seems a waste of time. Lorenzo is unable to continue working on it: "Si spinge gli occhiali sulla fronte e si massaggia le palpebre chiuse. [...] Tutto il lavoro gli appare, a un tratto, inutile. Che stupido a pensare di poterlo riprendere stanotte, come se nulla fosse."⁸¹³

Following Nanni's death, Lorenzo's interest in politics is revived. He begins to research Nanni's past, travelling to Paris and obtaining his library of books on militancy. His interest in how the history of postwar Italy has been written by others follows his abandonment of the belief that he himself knows how it ought to be written. This belief was implicit in his dictionary project. In his

⁸¹² "The news of Nanni's extradition had come as a surprise, a surprise that upset him more than Lorenzo had told Edwina. So it wasn't enough to change name, nation, and city, mixing with strangers in a foreign country, taking care not to be recognised, isolating himself, taking so many precautions. It wasn't enough to throw away the television set, disconnect the telephone line, stop buying newspapers, filling his ears with music to drown out the voice of the world. No matter how hard we try to ignore it, the past follows us." Mantovani 51.

⁸¹³ "He pushes up his glasses and massages his closed eyes. All his work suddenly seems useless. How stupid to think he could continue it tonight, as if nothing had happened." Mantovani 54. Significantly, the last dictionary entry Lorenzo works on is that for "crisi" ["crisis"]. Later, Lorenzo has a nightmare in which he encounters Marco Bassi, another one of his former students become militant. Cf. Mantovani 131. Following the death of Nanni, Lorenzo's nervousness is transformed into "paura" (Mantovani 159) ["fear"].

attitude to the past, Lorenzo has gone from certainty to uncertainty. He has been transformed from someone who self-confidently produced speech acts to one who questions those of others.

As Lorenzo immerses himself more and more in the history of the 1970s, Sandrino begins to worry about him. Sandrino accuses Lorenzo of failing to enact a clear break with the past: "I miei sono peccati di gioventù. Ormai lontani. Espiati. Tu, invece, la pensi ancora così. Fingi di aver cambiato idea, ma dentro di te sei sempre lo stesso."⁸¹⁴ Sandrino warns his friend of the danger this entails, hinting at the possibility that Lorenzo is being observed by the French and Italian intelligence services: "Tu sei un uomo pericoloso, Lorenzo. E non mi meraviglia che ti tengano d'occhio."⁸¹⁵ Lorenzo's research, Sandrino suggests, may lead to serious repercussions:

Finché te ne sei stato tranquillo, è andato tutto bene. Finché ti sei occupato solo del dizionario, non è successo niente. Non davi fastidio a nessuno e ti hanno lasciato in pace. Ma ora che cominci ad agitarti, a curiosare dove non dovresti... Devi essere più prudente, Lorenzo. Non stuzzicare il cane che dorme. Se non la smetti, cambieranno sistema. Non vorrei che un giorno o l'altro ti facessero qualche brutto scherzo.⁸¹⁶

⁸¹⁴ "Mine are youthful sins. Long gone. Expiated. You, on the other hand, still think the same way. You pretend to have changed your attitude, but inside you're still the same." Mantovani 292.

⁸¹⁵ "You're a dangerous man, Lorenzo. And I'm not surprised they're keeping an eye on you." Ibid.

⁸¹⁶ "As long as you kept quiet, everything was fine. As long as you only busied yourself with the dictionary, nothing happened. You didn't bother anyone and they left you in peace. But now you're starting to get nervous, to wonder about

Moved partly by the memory of Eleonora, but also by a sense that Nanni had uncovered information of the utmost importance, Lorenzo disregards Sandrino's warning. The political work he once engaged in so frivolously now assumes a new significance. He begins to value it for its own sake, not for the romantic adventures it led to. This development culminates in a declaration of his continuing loyalty to communism. The history of Italian militancy, Lorenzo points out, is a history of political violence perpetrated by both the right and the left. The injustice of the right having been treated so leniently while the left suffered massive repression rekindles the fervour of his Milan days:

Una volta c'erano i rossi e i neri. Gli 'opposti estremismi', come si diceva allora. I rossi della guerriglia e del partito armato, delle Br, di Prima Linea, dei Nuclei Comunisti Combattenti, di Senza Tregua, delle Ronde Proletarie, di Guerriglia Popolare, di Lotta Comunista, di altre cento sigle. E i neri di Ordine e Progresso, di Boia Chi Molla, del Fronte Delta, del Drago Nero, dei Nuclei Armati Rivoluzionari, di Avanguardia Nazionale, delle Squadre d'Azione Mussolini. In dieci anni, i primi sono stati sbaragliati. I secondi, non. Coccolati e protetti da settori degli apparati statali, hanno attraversato impunemente ogni bufera giudiziaria. Sono

things you shouldn't concern yourself with... You have to be more careful, Lorenzo. Let sleeping dogs lie. If you don't stop, they'll change their approach. I wouldn't want them to pull some dirty trick on you one of these days." Mantovani 293.

passati altri vent'anni, e i loro scheletri restano ben chiusi negli armadi. Noi rossi abbiamo pagato, tutto, tutto fino all'ultimo centesimo, e in qualche caso più del dovuto. I neri, no. Oggi si dice che non ci sono più, né gli uni né gli altri. Ma per me non è così. Io sono rosso, Edwina, e rosso resto.⁸¹⁷

Alerted by the notes in Nanni's books to the existence of a mysterious agent provocateur, Blanco, Lorenzo travels to London. He meets Colin Haskell, a former member of the British foreign office, who tells him about the CIA's anti-communist operations in Europe, quoting from Honorable Men, the memoir of former CIA director William Colby.⁸¹⁸ Haskell insists anti-communism is the key by which the history not only of militancy, but of postwar Italy itself, needs to be understood:

Per capire la storia d'Italia – parlo di quella del dopoguerra, si capisce – non occorrono strumenti particolarmente raffinati.

C'è una chiave che apre tutte le porte: il passe-partout

⁸¹⁷ "Once, there were the reds and the blacks. The 'opposed extremisms,' as was said. The reds with their guerrilla and their armed party, the Red Brigades, Prima Linea, the Nuclei Comunisti Combattenti, Senza Tregua, the Ronde Proletarie, Guerriglia Popolare, Lotta Comunista, and a hundred other names. And the blacks of Ordine e Progresso, Boia Chi Molla, Fronte Delta, Drago Nero, the Nuclei Armati Rivoluzionari, Avanguardia Nazionale, the Squadre d'Azione Mussolini. In ten years, the reds have been defeated. The blacks, no. Pampered and protected by parts of the state, they've survived all their legal problems. Another twenty years have gone by, and their skeletons remain well hidden in the closet. We reds paid down to the last cent, and in some cases more than we ought to have. The blacks didn't. Today people say the reds and the blacks no longer exist. But it's not that way for me. I'm red, Edwina, and red I remain." Mantovani 283.

⁸¹⁸ Here too, Mantovani's fiction is based on historical research. For information on the CIA's anti-communist operations in Western Europe (including direct sponsorship of clandestine right-wing organisations), cf. Philip Agee and Louis Wolf, Dirty Work: The CIA in Western Europe (Secaucus: Lyle Stuart, 1978), in particular pp. 79ff. (on the CIA in Greece) and 168ff. (on the CIA in Italy).

dell'anticomunismo. Leggete la storia d'Italia in questa chiave e tutto sarà chiaro [...] In Italia la paura dei comunisti ha sempre spiegato e giustificato ogni cosa.⁸¹⁹

As his research proceeds, Lorenzo is able to corroborate many of Haskell's claims. Joining forces temporarily with journalist Robert Fisher, he interviews the head of a right-wing organisation, Bruno Ratti, instrumental in the December 1970 attempt to stage an Italian military coup on the model of the Greek coup of 20-21 April, 1967.⁸²⁰ Ratti speaks warmly of the Greek coup, confirms his connections to the CIA, and outlines his plan for creating a new, totalitarian Italy.⁸²¹ He also proudly announces to Lorenzo that there was scarcely a legal or clandestine left-wing group not infiltrated by the right, including the XXII October Group, which

⁸¹⁹ "To understand Italian history – I'm speaking of postwar history, obviously – you don't need very refined instruments. There's a key that opens every door: the master key of anticommunism. Read the history of Italy in this light and everything will be clear. In Italy the fear of communism always explained and justified everything." Mantovani 306.

⁸²⁰ For background on the abortive Italian military coup, cf. Zavoli 124ff.

⁸²¹ Cf. Mantovani 325: "Il colpo dei colonnelli fu il nostro modello [...] il nostro sogno tradotto in realtà. Andavamo preparandoci da anni per arrivare a un risultato simile. [...] A livello internazionale, mentre il capo della Cia romana, il mio vecchio amico Karamessines, chiedeva il nostro appoggio per varare un piano permanente di difesa anticomunista detto in codice Demagnetize, noi stringevamo nuove alleanze: con Ordre et Tradition di Yves Guérin Serac in Portogallo, con il Nouvel Ordre Européen di Guy Amaudruz in Svizzera, con la Guardia di Ferro romena, con altri gruppi creati in Spagna, Sudafrica, Germania, Francia. Il nostro compito? Forgiare un'élite che potesse diventare per davvero la spina dorsale di questo paese smidollato, una classe dirigente da cui partisse il rinnovamento dello Stato nazionale" ["The colonels' coup was our model, our dream become reality. We prepared for years in order to achieve that kind of result. On the international level, while the head of the CIA in Rome, my old friend Karamessines, asked our support for a plan of anticommunist defense code-named Demagnetize, we formed new alliances: with Yves Guérin Serac's Ordre et Tradition in Portugal, Guy Amaudruz's Nouvel Ordre Européen in Switzerland, the Iron Guard in Rumania, and other groups in Spain, South Africa, Germany, France. Our task? To create an elite that could become the backbone of this country, a ruling class which could implement the recreation of the nation state"].

Ratti describes as the precursor of the Red Brigades.⁸²² Recalling the widespread view that the Piazza Fontana massacre was a right-wing (and possibly even state-sponsored) provocation, Mantovani has Ratti boast about the campaign of provocations his followers conducted: "Altri camerati, camuffati da anarchici o da extraparlamentari, svilupparono una ben orchestrata campagna di provocazioni in numerose città d'Italia. Erano tutti membri del mio gruppo."⁸²³

Eventually, Lorenzo is able to determine the identity of the mysterious Blanco. An agent provocateur who infiltrated the Red Brigades in 1974, the year of Eleonora's death, Blanco set out to discredit the organisation.⁸²⁴ Lorenzo tracks Blanco down in Patagonia, where the former fascist now lives under a false name. During his discussion with Blanco, Lorenzo learns the full truth of

⁸²² Cf. Mantovani 330: "Quasi tutti i gruppuscoli della sinistra extraparlamentare furono infiltrati da nostri elementi fidati, che nella maggior parte dei casi agivano anche come leali collaboratori della polizia. Altri agenti provocatori usciti dalle nostre file fecero sì che le manifestazioni organizzate dal Movimento studentesco cominciassero a degenerare in azioni di inutile e feroce vandalismo, mentre scoppiavano le prime bombe e i giornali ne incolpavano i rossi" ["Almost all the small left-wing extraparlimentary groups were infiltrated by our trusted agents, which in most cases were faithful police collaborators. Other agents provocateurs made sure the organised demonstrations of the student movement began to degenerate into useless and violent vandalism, while the first bombs exploded and the newspapers blamed the reds"].

⁸²³ "Others, disguised as anarchists or members of the extraparlimentary left, developed a well-orchestrated campaign of provocations in a number of Italian cities. They were all members of my group." Mantovani 331.

⁸²⁴ Cf. Mantovani 353: "Un neofascista vive la sua breve vita felice di gorilla e picchiatore fino a ventiquattro anni di età, quando perisce in un falso incidente stradale. Dalle sue ceneri nasce un valoroso guerrigliero che, accolto trionfalmente in seno alle Br, non sarà contento finché non le avrà condotte alla rovina" ["A neofascist lives his brief and happy life as a thug and strongarm until, twenty-four years old, he dies in a staged car accident. From his ashes rises a brave guerrillero who, welcomed triumphantly by the Red Brigades, won't be content until he's ruined them"]. Blanco is loosely based on Silvano Girotto (Frate Mitra).

Eleonora's death: she was shot in cold blood by two policemen following their discovery of a stash of money in her hideout. Now that Lorenzo has uncovered both the fate of his former beloved and the Italian government's best-kept secrets, Sandrino's prophecy is fulfilled: upon returning to Rome, Lorenzo is arrested on fraudulent charges by the Italian police.

The premise of Il cattivo maestro – that Italian militancy needs to be examined in the larger context of the covert operations of intelligence services – is also that of Cerchi nell'acqua and La borsa del presidente (discussed below). It reflects a growing trend in Italian scholarship, following such disclosures as that of the Gladio affair, to discuss the possible instrumentalisation of militancy by larger, often occult political interest groups. While a work of fiction, Mantovani's novel does indicate a historical truth often forgotten: that the reductive rhetoric of "terrorism" has served to distract from the political nature of militancy, and from its place in the global ideological conflict that was the Cold War.

Alberto Franceschini: La borsa del presidente

Co-written with screenwriter Anna Samuelli, La borsa del presidente⁸²⁵ combines Franceschini's memories of militancy and

⁸²⁵ Alberto Franceschini/Anna Samuelli, La borsa del Presidente: ritorno agli anni di piombo (Rome: Ediesse, 1997). Taking as his point of departure the notion of exile and Jacques Derrida's theory of hospitality, Giancarlo Lombardi compares this novel to Mantovani's Il cattivo maestro. Cf. Giancarlo Lombardi, "Parigi o cara: Terrorism, Exile, and Escape in Contemporary Italian Cinema and Theatre", in: *Annali d'italianistica* 20 (2002) 403ff.

prison, the various unanswered questions surrounding the Moro kidnapping, and the staple characteristics of the detective novel to make an intriguing and carefully constructed crime story. The novel's epigraph, a quotation from André Gide, points to its status as a product of the imagination that is yet not totally divorced from fact, and whose account of "what might have been" may even be more revealing than any purely factual account.⁸²⁶ As the title of Chapter III states (ironically subverting the novelist's usual disclaimer): "Ogni riferimento a fatti realmente accaduti è meditato e intenzionale."⁸²⁷ By utilising the facts of the Moro kidnapping in a crime story – that is, in a story whose format encourages the reader to think sceptically and question appearances – Franceschini urges a reconsideration of those facts. He raises the question of whether there is not more to be discovered about the background of the kidnapping than is commonly assumed, "esponendo argomenti che permetteranno al lettore di esercitare il proprio giudizio e la propria riflessione."⁸²⁸

⁸²⁶ The quotation is from The Vatican Cellars: "Il romanzo è un frammento di storia che avrebbe potuto essere; la storia, un romanzo che si è svolto nella realtà. Spesso il romanziere merita più fede di quanta ne meritino i fatti" ["The novel is a fragment of history that might have been; history a novel that took place in reality. Often, the novelist is more trustworthy than the facts"].

⁸²⁷ "Every reference to actual events is premeditated and intentional." Franceschini/Samueli 18.

⁸²⁸ "Presenting arguments that will allow the reader to exercise his own judgement and reason." Ibid. In an interview with Sergio Zavoli, Franceschini expresses his conviction that much remains unknown about the history of the Red Brigades, and by implication about the Moro kidnapping: "I don't think everything is known about our organisation; I think there are a lot of things still to be discovered [...]" (Zavoli 103).

A number of the characters in La borsa del presidente are obviously based on actual people. The biography of protagonist Amos Riani recalls that of Franceschini. Riani is an ex-militant, incarcerated before the kidnapping, now more than decade ago, of a president identified only as "M." He has completed his prison sentence and lives alone, without contact to his former comrades. One of these is Ettore Ghia, accused of having masterminded the kidnapping. Riani frequently remembers another co-founder of the Red Brigades, Valeria. She was shot, also before the kidnapping of M, in circumstances closely based on the death of Margherita Cagol.

Riani's relationship to his own past is that of many actual ex-militants. He feels he has put it behind him and finds it difficult to talk about, always at a loss for words "per parlare di ideologia senza rischiare la retorica, di violenza senza scadere nel giustificazionismo o in un pacifismo ipocrita."⁸²⁹ The recurrence of this uncomfortable past is a central theme in the early chapters of La borsa del presidente - expressed metaphorically in references to karma and archeology.⁸³⁰ The novel opens with Riani being summoned by the police. He is interrogated by the magistrate Finzi, who has reopened the investigation into the kidnapping of M. Finzi leads Riani to believe new evidence has surfaced due to the surprising

⁸²⁹ "For talking about ideology without resorting to rhetoric, about violence without falling into justificationism or a hypocritical pacifism." Franceschini/Samueli 99.

⁸³⁰ Cf. eg. Franceschini/Samueli 30, 32. Cf. also the italicised passages in which Riani remembers experiences of militancy and incarceration, eg. Franceschini/Samueli 13ff.

discovery of a suitcase owned by M.⁸³¹ Riani discusses the possible meaning of this with another magistrate, Maraini, who is murdered soon after. Riani narrowly survives an attempt on his own life. His research eventually leads him to conclude the kidnapping of M was organised by the Italian intelligence service, who instrumentalised the Red Brigades in order to eliminate a political opponent.⁸³² In the novel's final chapter, he succeeds in discovering the documents originally contained in M's briefcase, but decides not to look at them or take them with him. Instead, he takes another document, which proves his suspicion that Valeria was shot in cold blood.

In so far as the militant project Riani helped to initiate was hijacked by M's political enemies, Riani and M are victims of the same sinister scheme. The novel's middle chapter explores this notion of the supposed opponents having more in common than they first appear to. The chapter is a flashback to the time of the kidnapping, a time when Riani was already in prison. Alone in his cell, Riani begins to suspect M knows about possible intelligence service involvement in the kidnapping. His suspicion, which he discusses with no one, alienates him from his comrades, who continue to think of the Red Brigades as acting autonomously. Not only are M and Riani both physically imprisoned, but they are

⁸³¹ The question of whether one of the several suitcases Moro carried with him mysteriously "disappeared" has been a subject of public debate in Italy ever since the kidnapping.

⁸³² Cf. Franceschini/Samueli 103 - "Invece di fermarli [sc. the Red Brigades], qualcuno decide di usarli" ["Instead of stopping them, someone decided to use them"].

mentally isolated by virtue of knowing more than those around them. Hence it is not surprising that Riani begins to identify with M: "Mi succede sempre più spesso di pensare 'Io sono, si dice, un altro.' Ma non è mia, questa. È un'altra delle frasi del Presidente, scritta dal nascondiglio dove i miei lo tengono prigioniero. Mentre i suoi, certo, tengono prigioniero me."⁸³³ While M's phrase "Io sono, si dice, un altro" refers overtly to the claims that he was mentally unstable, it also expresses the "otherness" of both M and Riani with regard to those who know less than they do.

That the truth is something more than what most people believe, and that official accounts such as those of M's kidnapping may do more to obscure than to disclose it, is the central premise of La borsa del presidente. Franceschini also suggests the truth should not be thought of as unitary, but as a multiplicity of truths: "Di verità ne esistono molte: verità soggettive o assolute. Nude, ufficiali o contraffatte, a due facce o rivoluzionarie, capaci di lusingare ma anche di ferire. Verità innegabili, illuminanti o improbabili, raramente pure e quasi mai semplici."⁸³⁴ Riani's choice to leave the president's documents in their hiding place while taking the document proving the murder of Valeria is a choice between two

⁸³³ "More and more often I find myself thinking 'I am, they say, another.' But that's not my phrase. It's one of those written by the President, in the hiding place where my comrades are holding him prisoner. While his colleagues, sure enough, are holding me prisoner." Franceschini/Samueli 56.

⁸³⁴ "There are many kinds of truth: subjective and objective truth. Naked, official, and counterfeit, two-sided and revolutionary, flattering but also painful. Undeniable truths, illuminating and improbable truths, rarely pure and almost never simple." Franceschini/Samueli 25.

truths – between that concerning the larger political machinations in Italy and that concerning the death of a dear friend. Riani opts for personal peace of mind – an end to the questions he has been posing himself about Valeria's death – rather than for a disclosure so momentous its consequences cannot be foreseen. His desire for truth is not disinterested, just as his desire for justice is not total. This results from his renunciation of politics, his unwillingness to become involved in issues whose importance is more than personal. Riani breaks off his investigation the moment he has discovered enough of the truth to find peace of mind; he does not care for bringing to justice all those whose wrongdoings he could expose. In this sense, he opts for truth over justice: "La giustizia riguardava gli altri, la verità unicamente se stesso."⁸³⁵

Given the name of its author and its clever use of actual events, readers of La borsa del presidente might expect from this novel some new disclosure about the Moro kidnapping. Yet Franceschini provides his readers with more questions than answers. He urges them to develop their own intellectual curiosity in what one of his protagonists calls a "palestra di logica."⁸³⁶ Like the sculpted hand Riani notices outside a museum – a hand that points upwards "come a indicare qualcosa"⁸³⁷ – his novel indicates the existence of something unknown or unnoticed, without

⁸³⁵ "Justice concerned the others, truth only him." Franceschini/Samueli 63.

⁸³⁶ "Logical gym." Franceschini/Samueli 21.

⁸³⁷ "As if to point to something." Franceschini/Samueli 31.

disclosing it or even making any claim to knowing what it may be.⁸³⁸

Filippo Canu: Funerale di stato

Funerale di stato⁸³⁹ is a clever variation on the story of Faust's pact with the devil.⁸⁴⁰ Canu traces the rise to fame of journalist and political commentator Carlo Marcozzi, from his humble beginnings as a shy and disingenuous student to his death as victim of a Red Brigades assassination. The novel begins with a description of Carlo's funeral, attended by none less than the Italian president, and closes with the musings of police inspector Santangelo. The latter has discovered the manuscript of a novel by Carlo, and suspects it may be a roman a clef, riddled with clues about the corruption of the Italian government. Santangelo does not know that, shortly before the assassination, several pages of this manuscript were read by one of Carlo's politically connected acquaintances, who also interpreted it as a coded account of shady

⁸³⁸ This also casts light on Franceschini's preference for oblique chapter headings, which briefly outline the events about to be narrated without disclosing any details, in the manner of the titles of Boccaccio's novellas. Another aspect of the novel that fits well with this gesture of indicating without disclosing is the recurring trope of the medieval mystery play, which is portrayed in Franceschini's descriptions as a genre founded on the distinction between text and performance, between what is said and what is shown. Cf. eg. Franceschini/Samueli 74ff.

⁸³⁹ Filippo Canu, Funerale di stato (Sassari: Carlo Delfino, 1998). Canu has also published plays and short stories. Cf. Filippo Canu, Teatro (Milan: Sipario, 1993) and Quel caffè sul corso: piccole storie di avvenimenti e personaggi anche importanti (Sassari: Carlo Delfino, 1995).

⁸⁴⁰ Canu alludes once to the story of Faust, when he has the protagonist Carlo ask himself: "È possibile che stia svendendo il mio modo di essere di pensare. In cambio di che poi? La mia anima in cambio di una trasmissione televisiva?" (Canu 189) ["Can it be I'm betraying my way of being and thinking. In exchange for what? My soul for a television broadcast?"].

political goings-on. Canu suggests this acquaintance, the mysterious Dr Golin, either directly arranged Carlo's death or suspended whatever machinations previously prevented it.

Throughout the novel, Carlo is presented as hapless and naive. Just as his various romantic affairs see him constantly misinterpreting the intentions of others and tend to end disappointingly, his political naivety provokes his downfall. "Io non capisco di politica," one woman tells Carlo, following his boorish failure to respond to her advances, "ma lei capisce poco di donne."⁸⁴¹ As it turns out, Carlo understands little more about politics than he understands about women.⁸⁴² When he suggests, in his manuscript, that the 1980 Bologna bomb may have been organised by members of government, he does not realise he may unwittingly have struck upon the truth.⁸⁴³ His rise to fame is the result first of accidents, then of his public rants against "terrorism" being more useful to people such as Gorin than he suspects. Carlo occasionally wonders whether Gorin, forever surrounded by government ministers and military officials, may be more than a

⁸⁴¹ "I don't understand politics, but you don't understand much about women." Canu 150ff.

⁸⁴² Also, most of the turning points in Carlo's life are marked by encounters with women. For example, the chain of events that leads to him becoming a journalist begins with his brief and abortive sexual adventure with Laura, the daughter of his landlord (Canu 57ff). His novel is brought to Gollin's attention following a sexual encounter with his former friend Valeria (Canu 231). And the death of Carlo's mother marks the point at which he breaks with his provincial past (Canu 124).

⁸⁴³ The Bologna bomb is one of several actual events referred to by Canu (206). Cf. also the references to the Moro kidnapping (144ff.), and that to the assassination (on 16 November, 1977) of journalist Carlo Casalegno (139). (For background on the latter, cf. Zavoli 242ff.)

"faccendiere"⁸⁴⁴ - perhaps even "un centro di potere vero."⁸⁴⁵ Yet he refuses to believe Gorin's support for his work may be motivated by political pragmatism, rather than straightforward admiration.

Gorin is a reactionary who speaks warmly of the Argentinian dictatorship (without mentioning his business assets in that country). Initially, he takes well to Carlo's demonisation of the left, in which left-wing militancy serves to discredit even the Communist Party that is constantly criticising it: "Esasperando sempre di più i toni, aveva finito per schematizzare i suoi discorsi: tutto il bene da una parte, tutto il male a sinistra. E nella sua sinistra c'era di tutto. Dalle Br ai comunisti."⁸⁴⁶ At one point, Carlo asks himself: "[...] perché non ipotizzare che le Br non sono che uno strumento del partito comunista?"⁸⁴⁷ The leitmotif of his political commentaries is that "solo una politica di fermezza paga sempre."⁸⁴⁸

Carlo feels this view is confirmed by the success of Israeli prime minister Begin's policy towards Egypt, which he is asked to report on at one point. Similarly, his claim "Il disordine è la tomba della democrazia"⁸⁴⁹ is illustrated by him with reference to Argentina. This earns him the reproach of his friend Fabrizio, who exclaims: "Ti sei messo perfino a difendere i generali fascisti di

⁸⁴⁴ "Meddler." Canu 159.

⁸⁴⁵ "A real centre of power." Ibid.

⁸⁴⁶ "Becoming more and more extreme, he had ended up making his arguments schematic: all the good on one side, all the bad on the left. And his left included everything. From the Red Brigades to the communists." Canu 141.

⁸⁴⁷ "Why not suggest the Red Brigades are nothing but an instrument of the Communist Party?" Canu 142.

⁸⁴⁸ "A tough politics is the only one that pays off every time." Canu 141.

⁸⁴⁹ "Disorder is the tomb of democracy." Canu 162.

Buenos Aires!”⁸⁵⁰ Fabrizio goes on to speak of the Uruguayan Tupamaros, likening them to the Red Brigades and arguing that such groups have the dangerous effect of increasing a desire for “order” that is instrumentalised by the far right.

Carlo, whose knowledge of foreign affairs is scant, refuses to respond to this argument. Not much later, however, he is sent to Argentina by Gollin, who wants him to report sympathetically on the local junta. During his trip, Carlo learns of Gollin’s close ties to that junta. He also learns that Gollin has stalled the liberation of Ana Todaro, an incarcerated Uruguayan political dissident. Not only does Ana’s story cast doubt on Gollin’s moral integrity, but she has renounced her comfortable lifestyle in favour of her political views. What is more, she is a former friend of Carlo. The question of how to report her story provokes in him a crisis of conscience. He becomes acutely aware of his political power as a journalist, and of his dependence on mentors such as Gollin. He realises he has the chance either to revise his right-wing stance or maintain it at the cost of portraying Ana as a madwoman who simply got what she deserved:

La storia di Ana si poteva raccontare in tanti modi, come tutte le storie, d’altra parte. Ana poteva essere rappresentata come un’eroina, che lascia gli agi per unirsi ai disperati che lottano per cambiare una società repressiva e fondarne una più

⁸⁵⁰ “Now you’re even defending the fascist generals of Buenos Aires!” Canu 163.

sensibile ai bisogni della gente, o come una che, annoiata dagli ozi che la sua posizione le assicura, trova stimolante schierarsi al fianco di un gruppo di esaltati che respingono ogni tipo di regola. Quelle regole che sono il fondamento del convivere civile.⁸⁵¹

It is by his comparatively sympathetic account of Ana's fate that Carlo first earns Gollin's disfavour, which ultimately leads to his downfall. When, increasingly alienated from his friends and colleagues, he begins to write his novel, he makes its protagonist a young and idealistic journalist who insists on telling the truth even against the interests of "gente che parla di ideali e fa affari."⁸⁵²

Another character is the ambitious police inspector Fichera, who Carlo decides will only rise in rank after compromising his ideals. Canu's novel ends with police inspector Santangelo wondering about the resemblance between the names of Fichera and Pichera, the latter being Santangelo's new boss, who urges him not to pursue the notion that Carlo's manuscript may be a politically explosive roman a clef.

In this way, Canu makes of Carlo's manuscript a symbol with multiple meanings. It represents the naivete of an ambitious

⁸⁵¹ "The story of Ana could be told in many ways, like all stories, for that matter. Ana could be represented as a heroine who surrenders comfort to join those desperate people struggling to transform a repressive society and create one more cognizant of the people's needs, or as someone bored by the privileges her position provides her with, who finds it stimulating to side with a group of crazies who reject all manner of rules. Those rules which are the basis of civil society." Canu 188.

⁸⁵² "People who speak about ideals and make business deals." Canu 221.

journalist who fails all too often to understand the consequences of his words, and who remains largely blind to the network of political power relations within which he is operating.⁸⁵³ A text whose full meaning is disclosed only in the act of reading, and which is never entirely understood even by its author, it also functions as a metaphor for literature. The dangerous “revelations” in Carlo’s manuscripts are products of his imagination – but there is more truth in them than he himself suspects. Like Franceschini in La borsa del presidente, Canu proposes a model of literature as a depositary of truths that are not necessarily factual, but ought not therefore to be dismissed as meaningless – truths which may, in fact, provide that overarching account of a historical moment which no accumulation of facts can ever be.

Cesare Battisti: L’ultimo sparo

The subtitle of Battisti’s novel⁸⁵⁴ accurately states its premise: Un “delinquente comune” nella guerriglia italiana. The protagonist,

⁸⁵³ In many ways, Carlo recalls the Diehl of Ein Held der inneren Sicherheit. Diehl is a servant of political power without fully realising what this means; when he does, he is faced with the question of changing his life, and chooses not to. Carlo never fully understands the extent to which he is a servant of power, and becomes a subversive almost by accident. Diehl’s story ends with a promotion, Carlo’s with an assassination.

⁸⁵⁴ Cesare Battisti, L’ultimo sparo (Rome: DeriveApprodi, 1998). The novel is based on Battisti’s experiences as a militant in the Proletari Armati Per Il Comunismo. Battisti was incarcerated in 1979 and liberated by his comrades two years later. Sentenced to life in prison, he escaped to Mexico. For many years, he lived in Paris, where he has published a number of crime novels, among them Les Habits d’ombre (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), Nouvel an, nouvelle vie (Paris: Mille et une nuit, 1995), and Un drôle de bouquet (Paris: Hachette, 1998). In 2003, Battisti was unexpectedly extradited to Italy, where he is currently being held in prison.

Claudio, is a common criminal; the novel begins with the description of his escape from the police following a robbery. Through his contacts to the extraparliamentary left, and in particular to Lotta Continua, Claudio finds a place to live in Milan. His hosts, among them the affable and unpretentious Kino, are members of a militant organisation, in whose activities Claudio participates. He becomes romantically involved with Alessandra, the girlfriend of his comrade Stefano. Following various bank robberies, a failed kidnapping, and the assassination of a secret agent, Claudio is incarcerated at a time when the state's mechanisms of repression – from random arrests to torture – have almost succeeded in defeating the various militant organisations. He is liberated by his comrades, but can no longer identify with their increasingly desperate struggle, and leaves the country. Stefano commits suicide; his final night is described in a brief first-person account inserted into Claudio's narrative. In the concluding section, Kino exposes himself as the novel's true narrator, who has set out, following the demise of militancy, to tell the stories of Claudio and Stefano from their points of view.

The story of Claudio is loosely autobiographical. This helps to explain Battisti's recurrence, in a brief note preceding the novel itself, to a distinction made in many memoirs by ex-militants: that between history as it is written by the victors and as it is written by the vanquished. Battisti identifies the organic and unitary narrative of the well-told story with the former: "Le storie che finiscono con la

pretesa di aver compiuto le promesse del principio appartengono alla demagogia dei vincitori."⁸⁵⁵ His own narrative, he suggests, is not of this kind. He describes himself as a survivor who has adapted to a changed world by exorcising his memories through the act of writing: "Espulse le cellule carcerogene, la guarigione germoglia."⁸⁵⁶ Yet he insists this healing process ought not to be equated with pentitismo or an unconditional renunciation of the past. Rather, Battisti's attitude to the past is that of the ex-militants discussed in Chapter III: he accepts militancy's failure without adopting the outlook of those who always already condemned it. His author's note ends with a polemic against those reformed ex-militants whose estrangement from their own experience has made them instruments in the hands of their former enemies – "i testimoni forzati di una memoria che non è più la loro, che è stata modificata, riletta, distorta con la lente di osservatori disonesti."⁸⁵⁷ Battisti's attempt to capture the experience of militancy in a way that is not simplistic or reductive also explains his use of multiple narrators.

The "last gunshot" of the novel's title is the one by which Stefano takes his own life. The motif underscores the failure of militancy. In part, Stefano commits suicide as a result of his estrangement from Alessandra. While apparently banal and

⁸⁵⁵ "Stories that end by fulfilling the promises with which they begin belong to the demagoguery of the victors." Battisti 12.

⁸⁵⁶ "Once the cancer cells have been expelled, the healing process begins." Ibid.

⁸⁵⁷ "The constrained witnesses of a memory no longer theirs, which has been modified, reread, distorted through the lens of dishonest observers." Ibid.

personal, this motive in fact exposes one aspect of militancy's failure. The eleventh chapter of *L'ultimo sparo* is devoted to showing how Stefano's jealousy reveals "la riproduzione di norme borghesi in seno all movimento rivoluzionario."⁸⁵⁸ Much as Claudio has to force himself to think of his victims as mere targets, rather than human beings, he and his comrades fail to live up to the ideal of the "new man" – jealousy interferes with their notions of free love, the need for peace of mind with their ability to withstand the pressures of clandestinity.⁸⁵⁹ Their decision to take up arms and transcend the empty rhetoric of others – be it that of the ex-partisan Fernando, who fantasises about armed struggle when drunk, or that of the student movement, whose rants against Trotsky do precious little to advance concrete goals – leads not to victory, but to a confrontation with their own powerlessness.⁸⁶⁰

The powerlessness of the various militant organisations expresses itself in their furious production of theoretical texts and the proliferation, within these texts, of acronyms that are as unnecessary as they fail to mask the underlying confusion and

⁸⁵⁸ "The reproduction of middle-class norms within the revolutionary movement." Battisti 81.

⁸⁵⁹ Cf. eg. Battisti 101, where Claudio feels the need to convince himself a woman he is about to assassinate is not "un essere umano come tutti gli altri" ["a human being like all the others"] and Battisti 91ff., which describes the monotony of clandestinity, and in which Claudio rejoices over an opportunity to celebrate Christmas in typically middle-class fashion: "Era un giorno di festa e anche noi, gli invisibil, avevamo diritto alla nostra cena in famiglia" (Battisti 95) ["It was a holiday and we too, the invisible ones, had a right to our family dinner"].

⁸⁶⁰ Cf. Battisti 33, 45.

uncertainty.⁸⁶¹ It is the powerlessness of insurrectionaries who lack both contact with the general population and the hope of defeating the state on their own. On being liberated from prison, Claudio is struck by the hysterical behaviour of his liberators, a result of their having lived for so long in clandestinity. Noting the squalour of his hide-out, he is reminded of the prison from which he has just escaped: "[...] più di una volta mi ero ritrovato a paragonare la puzza di muffa di quella cantina con l'odore di brodaglia del carcere."⁸⁶² He tells his comrades: "[...] vi siete imprigionati da soli!"⁸⁶³

The life of the militant is reduced, then, to a choice between two equally unappealing alternatives: incarceration and the self-imposed prison of clandestinity. Those who escape this dilemma are faced with another choice: that of accepting, like Stefano, a defeat so total as to leave no other option but suicide, and that of abandoning militancy while continuing to resist the morality and ideology of the society militancy contested. The latter is the choice of Claudio and Kino, who keep alive the memory of their struggle through an effort at recollection that becomes, in the case of Kino, an act of writing.

⁸⁶¹ Cf. Battisti 116.

⁸⁶² "More than once I found myself comparing the rotten smell of that cellar to the stench of prison broth." Battisti 132.

⁸⁶³ "You've imprisoned yourselves!" Ibid.

Vincenzo Consolo: Lo spasimo di Palermo

Lo spasimo di Palermo⁸⁶⁴ is one of the few novels to portray the situation of the Italian expatriates: those members of the legal and clandestine left constrained to leave the country in order to avoid incarceration. It also examines the militant conflict within the context of a larger generational conflict. The protagonist, Gioacchino, travels to Paris to meet his expatriate son Mauro, who was never a militant, but one of those members of the legal left deemed guilty by association.⁸⁶⁵ During his trip, Gioacchino remembers his own childhood during the final years of the Second World War, in particular the death of his father, executed by German soldiers for harbouring a deserter. He also remembers a film shown during the war, in which the black-clad Judex dispenses justice without regard for the letter of the law. The showing was disrupted due to an air raid, and Gioacchino has gone for years without knowing how the story ended. He succeeds in finally watching the end of the film in Paris. Then, somewhat unhappy about his meeting with Mauro, who he feels refuses to recognise him as a father, Gioacchino returns to Italy. He muses on the lawlessness rampant there, in particular on the activities of the

⁸⁶⁴ Vincenzo Consolo, Lo spasimo di Palermo (Milan: Mondadori, 1998). Cf. Giuseppe Traina, Vincenzo Consolo (Fiesole: Cadmo, 2001) and Concetto Ternullo, Vincenzo Consolo: dalla ferita allo spasimo (Catania: Prova d'autore, 1998). The latter contains an unsympathetic reading of Lo spasimo di Palermo, lamenting what Ternullo identifies as the novel's proselytizing tone and disparate structure and culminating in the judgement: "It's not Consolo. At least not the Consolo we knew" (Ternullo 66ff.). Cf. also the interview with Consolo in: Gemelli/Piemontese 29ff.

⁸⁶⁵ Cf. Consolo 84.

mafia. The novel ends with the assassination of a magistrate outside Gioacchino's house; the assassination takes place while Gioacchino is writing a letter to Mauro.

Two of the novel's themes are of particular interest here: that of generational conflict and that of extralegal violence. The former is best understood by considering Consolo's portrayal of two father-son relationships: that between Gioacchino and his father, and that between Gioacchino and Mauro. The theme of extralegal violence needs to be examined in terms of the *Judex* motif and Gioacchino's musings on the mafia.

Consolo establishes an analogy between the relationship of Gioacchino to his father and that of Mauro to Gioacchino. He suggests both can be understood in terms of patricide. Gioacchino is haunted by the suspicion that he may have revealed his father's hiding place to the Germans: "Non sono mai riuscito a ricordare, o non ho voluto, se sono stato io a rivelare a quei massacratori, a quei tedeschi spietati il luogo dove era stato appeana condotto il disertore."⁸⁶⁶ If Gioacchino is indeed responsible for his father's death, then his is an actual patricide, whereas that of Mauro is metaphorical. Mauro's patricide consists in his refusal to treat Gioacchino as a father; he never addresses him by that title. This refusal is founded on a rejection of Gioacchino's entire generation –

⁸⁶⁶ "I've never been able to remember, or I didn't want to, whether it was I who revealed to those killers, those ruthless Germans the place where the deserter had just been taken." Consolo 126f.

the generation that witnessed both fascism and its defeat, but failed to make the transition to communism, or at least to a society more egalitarian than that of Christian Democrat rule. As Gioacchino writes to Mauro: "So, Mauro, che non neghi me, ma tutti i padri, la mia generazione, quella che non ha fatto la guerra, ma il dopoguerra, che avrebbe dovuto ricostruire, dopo il disastro, questo Paese, formare una nuovo società, una civile, giusta convivenza."⁸⁶⁷ The troubled relationship of Gioacchino and Mauro is that of Italy's postwar generation to the one that followed, the generation of student protest and militancy. This relationship is characterised by an implicit hostility, unspoken accusations, and a failure to communicate. Gioacchino comments repeatedly on a metaphorical silence between him and his son: "Il silenzio, ancora e sempre, il silenzio duro si stendeva tra di loro."⁸⁶⁸

Gioacchino also speaks of another silence: that concerning his own guilt towards his father. Gioacchino is a former writer. By his own account, his choice to become a writer was that of confronting his patricidal guilt: "Il bisogno di trasferire sulla carta [...] il mio parricidio [...]."⁸⁶⁹ His decision to abandon writing is related by him to his failure to absolve himself of his guilt, or even to understand it: "Ho fatto come te, se permetti, la mia lotta, e ho pagato con la

⁸⁶⁷ "I know Mauro, that you're not denying me, but all fathers, my generation, the one that didn't fight in the war, but lived through the postwar period, the one that ought to have rebuilt, after the disaster, this country, to create a new society, a civil and just community." Consolo 126.

⁸⁶⁸ "As always, a hard silence lay between them." Consolo 52.

⁸⁶⁹ "The need to transfer onto paper my patricide." Consolo 127.

sconfitta, la dimissione, l'abbandono della penna."⁸⁷⁰ Gioacchino's literary projects were a "struggle" like that of Mauro and his generation; both were failed attempts to come to terms with the preceding generation.⁸⁷¹ In this sense, "La storia è sempre uguale."⁸⁷² It is "l'antica tragedia sempre in atto."⁸⁷³ By implication, militancy was, like the struggles of the legal left, the consequence of an inability to understand history as it manifests itself in the relationship of one generation to another.

A family conflict – the troubled relationship between a father and his son – becomes emblematic of larger historical conflicts. Militancy is portrayed as one consequence of these conflicts. It results when the unresolved generational problem – which is also that of Italy's historic failure to make the transition from fascism to a society characterised by justice and equality – is coupled with what Consolo describes as middle-class adventurism, tinged with narcissism. The latter is symbolised by a militant friend who lives briefly with Mauro: "nudo davanti allo specchio, studiava pose, giocherellava con la pistola."⁸⁷⁴ In part, Gioacchino muses, this narcissism and adventurism result from a faith in ideology of which

⁸⁷⁰ "I struggled like you, if you'll let me say this, and I paid with defeat, resignation, by abandoning the pen." Ibid.

⁸⁷¹ Mauro's failure and the resulting resignation are expressed in his refusal to become a father himself. This, Consolo suggests, is also an attempt to negate his own status as son: "Nessuno dopo di lui. Nessuno prima..." (Consolo 95) ["No one after him. No one before..."]. By liquidating his own family history, Mauro removes himself from the chain of disappointments and failures that Italian history is portrayed as.

⁸⁷² "The story is always the same." Consolo 9.

⁸⁷³ "The ongoing ancient tragedy." Consolo 67.

⁸⁷⁴ "Naked in front of the mirror, he practised poses, toyed with the gun." Consolo 90.

Mauro is also guilty: "Ti sei nutrito d'astrazioni, dottrine generali, ed ostinato credi che ancora possono salvare."⁸⁷⁵

That the generational conflict should lead to militancy is also related, according to Consolo, to a specifically Italian distrust of the state and a disposition to resolve conflicts by illegal and violent methods. The film character Judex symbolises this faith in a justice outside the law. Judex is "la figura del giustiziere che giudica e sentenza fuori dalle leggi."⁸⁷⁶ His story rests on the premise "che Judex alla fine avrebbe vendicato gli innocenti, vinto gli avversari."⁸⁷⁷ As such, he is the paradigm of militancy, but also of the mafia. The faith he expresses – that in justice outside the law – is one of the continuities in Italian history; the Judex film Gioacchino saw during the 1940s returns to haunt him during his visit to Paris, and informs his reflections on the mafia violence he witnesses following his return to Italy. The time between the first, disrupted screening of the Judex film and the second screening in Paris is the time of history as experienced by Gioacchino: "In quel taglio, quel vuoto, in quel buio erano i fotogrammi segreti della sua storia, della vita sua oscura e inconclusa [...] delle colpe sepolte e

⁸⁷⁵ "You lived off abstractions, general doctrines, and obstinately you continue to think they might offer salvation." Consolo 35.

⁸⁷⁶ "The figure of the judge who judges and convicts outside the law." Consolo 129.

⁸⁷⁷ "That in the end Judex would have vindicated the innocent, defeated the enemies." Consolo 21.

obliterate."⁸⁷⁸ The "buio sospeso" is also that of problems whose solution is still pending – such as that of the proper relation between legal and illegal violence, and that of how to transform a repressive society.

Given the continuity of these problems – and in particular, of an irresponsible attitude toward illegality and violence – it is only appropriate that a number of Gioacchino's memories from the postwar period should foreshadow militancy and events associated with it. One of Gioacchino's memories is of a cache where the guns of the partisans were deposited; as a young boy, Gioacchino stole a number of these weapons and mounted a playful attack on the local orphanage.⁸⁷⁹ Another memory concerns a postwar protest march that foreshadows the demonstrations of the 1970s.⁸⁸⁰ Both memories suggest the generation of militancy acted on tendencies that preceded it.

That Consolo's novel should end with an episode of violence (the assassination of a magistrate by the mafia) underscores the point that Italy has not succeeded in overcoming these tendencies and breaking the cycle of injustice, subversion, and violence. Gioacchino's failure is that of a man who can only describe and foresee further episodes in this cycle; in his last novel, he foresees

⁸⁷⁸ "In that rift, that emptiness, that darkness were the secret photographic images of his story, of his dark and unfinished life, his buried and forgotten guilt." Consolo 47.

⁸⁷⁹ Cf. Consolo 30.

⁸⁸⁰ Cf. Consolo 31.

the police hunting for his son. By abandoning literature, he concedes defeat to the violent momentum of history; the explosion that concludes Lo spasimo di Palermo occurs after Gioacchino has risen from his desk, leaving there his unfinished letter to Mauro. This unfinished letter is the symbol, like Gioacchino's trip to Paris, of an abortive attempt to understand the mechanisms of historical violence by establishing a dialogue between generations. Unfinished and unmailed, it does not succeed in breaking the silence between Gioacchino and his son. Constrained by state repression to leave Italy physically, Mauro has also abandoned Italian history, renouncing the possibility of resolving its conflicts, be it by failing to respond to his father's attempts at establishing a dialogue, or by his refusal to become a father himself. In this profoundly pessimistic vision of Italian society, the left-wing activist's exile is only one manifestation of a more general kind of exile – that of the historically conscious citizen who can never, Consolo suggests, feel truly at home in a country torn by injustice and violence.

Alberto Arbasino: Paesaggi italiani con zombi

Alberto Arbasino's 1998 publication Paesaggi italiani con zombi⁸⁸¹ contains a chapter titled "In questo stato (1978-1998)" which presents, in the form of aphorisms interspersed with quotations from Moro's letters, reflections on the kidnapping in via Fani. Like

⁸⁸¹ Alberto Arbasino, Paesaggi italiani con zombi (Milan: Adelphi, 1998). For an early formulation of Arbasino's poetics, cf. Il romanzo sperimentale 138ff.

Sciascia's L'affaire Moro, Arbasino's text is fraught with literary references and aims not merely to chronicle a series of already well-documented events, but to arrive at general conclusions about the state of Italian society. Arbasino compares himself, as a political observer, to Montaigne (who light-heartedly went about writing his Essais in a castle in which he could not move freely for fear of assassination), points out the Kafkaesque language of Italy's political discourse, and paints a picture of the kidnapped Moro as a contemporary version of Pirandello's Henry IV, "'Non presente', però non già 'sostenzialmente pazzo'."⁸⁸² The juxtaposition of ominous phrases from Moro's letters – "Il mio sangue ricadrebbe su di voi"⁸⁸³ – with Arbasino's own satirical observations on contemporary Italian culture results in a profoundly pessimistic vision of the nation and its inhabitants. The sheer abundance of material on which Arbasino feels the need to comment – related in part to his observations on the proliferation of culturally meaningless commodities in late capitalist society – expresses itself both in a fragmented, aphoristic style, and in lengthy passages in which he limits himself to listing the phrases he hears and the objects he sees, as well as the tired rituals to which Italian public life has been reduced.⁸⁸⁴ The text ends with a journal entry that reports a discussion on the concept of

⁸⁸² "Not quite lucid, but not fundamentally insane." Arbasino 127. Cf. also Arbasino 108, 116.

⁸⁸³ "My blood would fall back on you."

⁸⁸⁴ Cf. Arbasino 118.

decadence, interrupted after a snack break by the news of Moro's death.

Introducing the theme of the Moro kidnapping, Arbasino immediately places it both in a personal and a historical context:

E nelle prime ore si sono sentite soprattutto preoccupazioni per le vacanze di Pasqua imminenti di certi bambini anglo-italiani: sarebbe stato pericoloso mandarli all'Argentario dai nonni, tra legge marziale e guerra civile? Da altre parto, da chi "c'era già passato": ecco un ritorno ai più classici anni Trenta, quando trovandosi in viaggio per l'Europa si dovette restare all'estero per decenni, con un po' di carte e libri spediti fortunosamente da casa, e tornando poi in una patria distrutta e irriconoscibile.⁸⁸⁵

These two experiences of the Moro conflict – that of the child looking forward to its Easter vacation, and that of the adult remembering the 1930s – establish a generational distinction which will prove fundamental to Arbasino's argument that postwar Italy's material prosperity is only the corollary of moral degeneration. The "destroyed and unrecognisable" fatherland of 1945 marks the dividing line between the older generation, at home not only in Italy but in Europe, and "educated" not merely formally but by a

⁸⁸⁵ "And in the first hours one heard mainly worries about the upcoming Easter vacation of certain Anglo-Italian children: would it be safe to send them to their grandfathers in Argentina, in a time of martial law and civil war? And then, from those who had 'already been there': here we are back in the 1930s, when travelling abroad, you had to stay there for decades, have some papers and books sent you, only to return to a destroyed and unrecognisable home." Arbasino 107.

historically significant experience of hardship, and the spoilt, overly sensitive, and grossly depolitized younger generation.

The passage is also characteristic of Arbasino's desire to find historical corollaries to the Moro kidnapping – a desire examined in a section titled "Il demone dell'analogia"⁸⁸⁶, where he asks how the events of 1978 compare to the assassinations of Umberto I, Matteotti, Kennedy, and other major political figures of the past. Later, he quotes the fragment of a letter written by Marie Antoinette immediately before her execution; Marie Antoinette's concern for her children recalls Moro's frequent references to his family. In another section, Arbasino compares the political "orphanhood" of the Christian Democrat party to the situations arising from the deaths of Louis XIV, George Washington, Queen Victoria and others, noting, however, that those cases marked the end of an era, while the Moro kidnapping is merely symptomatic of the ongoing malaise of postwar Italy: "lì finiva un'epoca. Qui, no."⁸⁸⁷

The era that refuses to end with Moro's death is that of a frenetic media culture. Arbasino refers repeatedly to media theorist Marshall McLuhan and insists the escalation of Italian militancy is not so much the expression of an economic crisis as of the symbolic havoc worked in the minds of Italian citizens by their culture: "[...] tutta la crisi contemporanea ci appare non tanto un fatto

⁸⁸⁶ "The demon of analogy." Arbasino 109.

⁸⁸⁷ "Then, it was the end of an era. Not here." Arbasino 136.

economico, ma innanzitutto un disturbo mentale.”⁸⁸⁸ To Arbasino, public life in the Italian republic is simply “McLuhan as usual.”⁸⁸⁹ The perversity of the society he describes emerges from one newspaper’s juxtaposition of Moro’s “death sentence” with the usual trappings of popular culture:

Per la settimana dell’“Ultimatum della Morte”, “l’Espresso” con tale titolo in copertina propone: una polemica sulla parapsicologia, una raccolta di pettegolezzi letterari, un festival di antico cinema porno, il catalogo d’una mostra d’automobili, una rievocazione di cari affetti familiari dell’altro ieri, un’esposizione di fumetti di satira politica.⁸⁹⁰

This disappearance of tragedy in the quotidian is also the subject of another passage, in which Arbasino records the graffiti he has seen on a walk through an Italian city. The scrawlings of this city’s graffiti artists mirror the chaotic mingling of the political and the personal, the profound and the banal that is so skilfully performed by the media. Whatever political content the graffiti contain is immediately diluted by its juxtaposition with confessions of love and angry outbursts of a purely personal nature, such that when a political statement does appear, it hardly seems worth taking seriously:

⁸⁸⁸ “The entire contemporary crisis seems to us not so much an economic fact as a mental disturbance.” Arbasino 114.

⁸⁸⁹ Arbasino 116. English in original.

⁸⁹⁰ “During the week of the ‘ultimatum of death’: L’Espresso announces on its title page a polemical article on psychoanalysis, a collection of literary texts, a festival celebrating old porn films, the catalog of a car exhibition, a re-evocation of family sentiment from the old days, satirical political cartoons.” Arbasino 126.

Visti i nuovi graffiti. "A morte l'arte dei padroni". "Moro boia".
 "Argan boia". "Curcio assassino". "Omo è bello". "Roma
 merda". "Rivoluzione cerebrale". "Rivolta totale". "Abbasso il
 materialismo". "Topina ti amo". "Magica Roma". "Sieg Heil".
 "Orietta è pazza".⁸⁹¹

In a section titled "Spirituals," and hence suggestive of a musical form characterised both by the expression of profound religious sentiment and the degradation of that sentiment to a pop culture commodity, Arbasino portrays the political commitment of Italy's younger generation as an excuse for personal gratification, an entertainment event masking as revolutionary protest:

Ai funerali del compagno caduto è stato veramente bellissimo. Tanti giovanissimi. Grazie, compagni caduti! La parte più andata bene è stato il corteo, con l'inno e tutti i bei discorsi e gli slogan ben scanditi, nella semplice solennità di una sfolgorante giornata, immersa nel verde e favorita da un clima invidiabile. È stato bello stare bene ancora una volta tutti insieme, con due compagne veramente tenere incontrate nell'autostop: Rita da Roma e Caterina da Cortona.⁸⁹²

⁸⁹¹ "Saw the new graffiti. 'Death to the art of the authorities.' 'Moro's an executioner.' 'Argan's an executioner.' 'Curcio's a killer.' 'Omo is nice.' 'Fuck Rome.' 'Cerebral revolution.' 'Total revolt.' 'Down with materialism.' 'Topina I love you.' 'Magical Rome.' 'Sieg Heil.' 'Orietta's crazy.'" Arbasino 136.

⁸⁹² "It was really very nice at the funeral of our fallen comrade. Lots of really young people. Thanks, fallen comrades! The best part was the assembly, with the hymn and all the nice speeches and the well-chanted slogans, in the simple solemnity of a hot day, out in the country and favoured by an extraordinary climate. It was nice to feel good with everyone else again, with two really sweet

Arbasino insists, however, that it is not merely would-be revolutionaries who are in bad faith; he is no less relentless in dismantling the rhetoric of politicians. He ridicules Moro's plea to spare his life for the sake of his family, suggesting that Moro's family has less need of him than he of it:

Quell'insistenza così ossessiva e possesiva sul tema "la mia famiglia ha il più grave e urgente bisogno di me" appare subito singolare, nelle prime lettere di Moro, perché in effetti non sarà tanto la famiglia ad aver bisogno di una vittima, bensì il contrario, di solito.⁸⁹³

In the eyes of Arbasino, much of the political rhetoric he comments on amounts to little more than the attempt to distract public attention from the country's political and social crisis; in particular, the ruling party is concerned to distract the public from its own embarrassing mistakes, not unlike the Oxford count who travelled Italy for seven years in order that the royal court might forget the fart that escaped him when he bowed to Queen Elizabeth.⁸⁹⁴

Arbasino portrays Italian society as profoundly apolitical, maintained in a state of ignorance by clumsy and largely incompetent politicians. This perception explains Arbasino's refusal to commit either to the cause of the militants or to that of the government

comrades we met while hitchhiking: Rita from Rome and Caterina from Cortona." Arbasino 125.

⁸⁹³ "That obsessive and possessive insistence on the theme 'my family has a profound and urgent need for me' in Moro's first letters is immediately striking, because in the end it's hardly the family that needs a victim, but rather the other way around, normally." Arbasino 130.

⁸⁹⁴ Cf. Arbasino 129.

they attack: "Nè col sistema di merda", he writes, "né col terrorismo idem."⁸⁹⁵ For Arbasino, both the state and the attack mounted against it are only the symptoms of a widespread Italian decadence.

Arbasino voices his disgust over this decadence most clearly when commenting on Italy's youth, which he perceives as the spoilt inheritor of postwar prosperity: "Ecco la retorica fisiognomica dell'imbruttimento egemone e contagioso, la pulsione rognosa di malattia e morte che si allarga e diffonde attraverso la prima generazione italiana che abbia mai avuto abbastanza da mangiare."⁸⁹⁶ The final pages of Arbasino's reflections are dedicated to a bleak and disquietingly biologicistic vision of a generation that is physically well-nourished but spiritually bankrupt, and attracted to morbid and dangerous attitudes and ideologies.

[...] i "nati in più" che per la loro scarsa attitudine vitale si sarebbero spenti in qualunque altra epoca nella fascia della "mortalità infantile", ancora in culla, nei primi mesi. E invece la scienza media e il nutrimento abbondante ora li salvano da questa "morte fisica". Ma non già da quella che si portano dentro per sempre. [...] [La nuova generazione] continuò [...] istintivamente verso modelli e retoriche di bruttezza e tristezza, pallore e squallore, tendenze a un'infelicità

⁸⁹⁵ "Neither for the shitty system nor for the equally shitty terrorism." Arbasino 122.

⁸⁹⁶ "Here's the characteristic rhetoric of hegemonic and contagious decadence, the foul current of disease and death spreading through the first Italian generation that has enough to eat." Arbasino 144.

istituzionalizzata, rifiuto d'ogni vitalità attiva, malattie
dell'obbligo, disturbi perenni, autodistruzione lenta...⁸⁹⁷

Arbasino mentions existentialism as one excessively morbid
outgrowth of spiritual bankruptcy, but it is clear the reduction of
political discourse to mere rhetoric, the narcissistic striking of
revolutionary poses, and the commodity fetishism of capitalism are
to him more important and widespread expressions of the same
phenomenon.⁸⁹⁸ The Moro kidnapping and the reactions to it, both
on the part of the government and of the press, provide him with
ample opportunity to analyse and satirise a culture that, far from
being itself moribund, thrives on the death and suffering of others:
"Cade ogni animazione, se per almeno una settimana non si
ammazza nessuno, in qualunque parte del mondo. La vitalità si
riaccende ad ogni nuova vittima."⁸⁹⁹

Arbasino's aphorisms are a striking example of how strongly a
critique of militancy may itself be ideologically informed. His rhetoric
of decadence, which he shares with Camon, is founded on a number
of ideological assumptions: that societies can be legitimately

⁸⁹⁷ "That 'surplus of children' who, given their lack of vitality, would in any other time have been done away with in a matter of months by 'infant mortality.' Instead medical science and generous diets save them from this 'physical death.' But not from the one they carry inside themselves. The new generation is drawn instinctively towards a rhetoric of ugliness and sadness, paleness and squalor, a tendency towards institutionalised unhappiness, the rejection of all active vitality, compulsory sickness, ongoing disturbances, slow self-destruction..." Arbasino 141.

⁸⁹⁸ Cf. Arbasino 114.

⁸⁹⁹ "It's no fun if no one is killed for a week, somewhere in the world. Vitality renews itself with every new victim." Arbasino 145.

compared to living organisms, and thus analysed in categories such as those of disease and health; that consumer culture and the media have a stultifying effect and foster political ignorance; that violence, including political violence, ought to be explained not in sociological or political terms, but in terms of morality; that popular culture is itself morally corrupt. Arbasino's eclecticism – his reference (not always explicit) to notions culled from thinkers as diverse as Montaigne, McLuhan, and Nietzsche – is a particularly crass example of a general feature of the Italian texts discussed above: they invoke a far greater number of discourses than those of German authors. These discourses include those of feminism (in Ginzburg and Maraini), psychoanalysis (in Camon, and to some extent also in Castellaneta), theology (again in Camon), and vitalism (in Arbasino). The ideological notions inherent in these discourses include those that social oppression can be traced to patriarchy, and hence to the structure of gender relations; that a person's political stance can be accounted for in psychoanalytic terms; that religion is the paradigm by which political movements ought to be analysed; and that societies and cultures can grow, decline, and die in a way that is analogous to the life span of organisms. Existentialist notions such as those of alienation and incommunicability also inform a number of texts (particularly Ginzburg's Caro Michele). A peculiar discourse of sexuality, which draws analogies between political and sexual violence, or between

political and sexual liberation, is invoked not only by feminist writers such as Maraini, but also by Balestrini (in the final chapter of La violenza illustrata) and Castellaneta. Similarly, Balestrini's media critique, which begins from the ideological notion that political power is exercised through the regimentation, censorship, and reproduction of speech acts, invokes not the discourse, but the methodology of linguistic analysis, much as Sciascia resorts to the methodology of textual criticism in his analysis of the Moro kidnapping.

Often, although not always, these discourses serve to personalise political issues, either by illustrating how they are subjectively experienced, or by explaining them in personal terms. A central aim pursued by Sciascia is to reconstruct the interiority of Moro. Similarly, the Balestrini of Gli invisibili offers insights into a political event – the defeat of militancy – by reconstructing the interiority of someone who witnessed that event. Analogies between political and sexual violence, such as those found in Maraini and Castellaneta, bring about a comparable shift of emphasis from collective to subjective experience. Camon and Arbasino effectively eliminate all political terms from their discourse, by suggesting political conflicts are really the expression of cultural decay, or by explaining the behaviour of militants in terms of their psychological condition. This emphasis on the personal is also reflected in the attention Italian writers devote to the experience of the hostage: in

Cerchi nell'acqua, Marina's encounter with the hostage is one of the crucial turning points, and even Balestrini, who is generally more interested in collective than in individual experience, devotes a central chapter of La violenza illustrata to Sossi's release. Formally, the emphasis on subjectivity is reflected in the fact that many Italian novels (Donna in guerra, Gli invisibili, Funerale di stato, L'ultimo sparo) are varieties of the Bildungsroman. Two are epistolary novels – a genre that also tends to foreground subjective experience, and which is not used by any of the German authors discussed earlier. Even where they are not epistolary, the novels of Italian authors share some characteristics of that genre. For example, Erri De Luca's Aceto, Arcobaleno, in which the narrator recounts the stories told him by three visitors, is founded on the notion of communicated subjective experience, which is also at the heart of the epistolary novel.

The example of De Luca shows that the privileging of the subjective need not go hand in hand with a dismissal of the social. In fact, while those German authors who are particularly interested in subjectivity (such as Heidenreich, Demski, and Goetz) tend to portray highly isolated individuals whose worldviews sometimes verge on solipsism, the subjective experience Italian writers are most interested in is a subjective experience of the social. This is true even of Ginzburg, who does invoke the rhetoric of solipsism. Her protagonists engage not so much in a retreat from the social

sphere as in an attempt to reach those who seem themselves to be retreating from it. Similarly, the defining moments in the stories of self-discovery told by Maraini and Camon are moments of social interaction. As discussed earlier in this chapter, notions of family crucially inform many Italian texts, precisely because the family provides a paradigm for social interaction.

In a sense, the relation of the Italian to the West German literary texts on militancy is the reverse of that between the Italian and West German memoirs discussed in the previous chapter. There, it was seen that German writers tended to write in an overtly ideological language – that of anti-capitalism – whereas Italian writers shied away from obviously ideological statements. It was also seen that this apparent absence or distrust of ideology was misleading. This chapter has shown that while both West German and Italian literary texts are ideologically informed, the ideological import of the Italian texts is far more crass and apparent.

V. Cinema

For Walter Benjamin, cinema was – at least potentially – the most revolutionary art form: the one that departed most radically from traditional aesthetics, freed art from its roots in ritual, and could be of the greatest use to those seeking to educate the public on the need for social and political revolution. By its very format, it captured the dangerous and unpredictable life of modern man. Arguably, film lends itself more readily to political purposes - is more easily inserted into political praxis - than fiction. Documentary or not, every film creates, at the very least, a semblance of documentation that sets it apart from literature, which tends to present itself as creative artefact (fiction) rather than document. At least one of the films discussed below (Deutschland im Herbst) deliberately dissolves the already tenuous boundary between film as document and film as fiction in order to call into question – in the manner of avant-garde works – the autonomy of art or the perception that art must by definition remain extraneous to political praxis. And at least one director discussed below argued repeatedly for the politically subversive nature of cinema, likening it to militancy on these grounds: “I don’t throw bombs, I make films,” is

one of the most frequently quoted statements by Rainer Werner Fassbinder.¹

That such a statement should have been made by a German director indicates one of several important differences between the German and the Italian cinema of militancy. The theme of militancy is far more central to West German cinema than to Italian cinema; it is a theme to which a number of the GFR's most illustrious directors have repeatedly devoted their attention. The events of 1977 prompted one of the most original and thought-provoking films ever to emerge from the GFR, Deutschland im Herbst. This film takes the militant crisis as a point of departure for reflecting on German history in its entirety, much as Fassbinder's films are interested in militancy as a symptom of larger issues of dehumanisation and alienation under capitalism. The films of Hauff, Von Trotta, and Schlöndorff are characterised by an attention to historical fact that never loses sight of cinema's potential for transcending facticity by images whose poetic richness conveys more than any historical account is able to.

Much like the authors of those countries, the film directors of the GFR and Italy approached the theme of militancy in very

¹ A related (albeit more sophisticated) notion of cinema's subversive potential is articulated by Giancarlo Lombardi in a discussion of films that deal with Italian right-wing terrorism. Cf. Giancarlo Lombardi, "Terrorism, Truth, and the Secret Service: Questions of Accountability in the Cinema of the stragi di stato", in: *Annali d'italianistica* 19 (2001) 285ff. Lombardi begins his article with an exposition of methodological considerations culled from Julio Cabrera's Da Aristotele a Spielberg. Capire la filosofia attraverso i film (Milan: Mondadori, 2000).

different ways. By and large, German directors have been particularly interested in the state and the ways it exercises its authority, whereas Italian directors have focused more on issues of trust and betrayal that are played out in the sphere of personal relations. German directors have directed their attention to issues of legality, in particular to the administration and possible abuse of justice, while Italian directors repeatedly analyse militancy through the lens of family and generational issues. Some German films (those of Fassbinder) are informed by an anti-capitalist ideology that is less evident in Italian cinema. Furthermore, and partly as a consequence of their interest in questions of governance and the administration of justice, German directors have referred more frequently to totalitarian rule in their portrayal of the militant conflict. Comparisons to the Nazi period recur in the German films discussed below, whereas there are virtually no comparisons to Italian fascism in the films of Italian directors. A concern with what occurred in Stammheim on the night of 17/18 October also leads to the recurrence of the motif of suicide in German films, and reinforces the more general concern of German directors with the abuse of state power.

Like German authors, German film directors tend to foreground the more abstract and theoretical issues addressed by militant ideology. The question of theory and practice is largely absent from Italian cinema, as it is from Italian literature. German

directors treat this issue in some detail, although their analysis differs in some ways from that of German authors. For instance, the rift between theory and practice identified in Bakunin and other texts is not seriously examined in the German cinema of militancy. The German films discussed below do not so much illustrate the possibility or impossibility of making the transition from a given theory to the corresponding praxis; they limit themselves to discrediting militant theory. Fassbinder's Mutter Küsters' Fahrt in den Himmel portrays the theory of revolutionary action as a facade for adventurism, a critique which becomes still more radical in a later Fassbinder film, Die dritte Generation. Margharethe Von Trotta's Die bleierne Zeit raises the question of whether or not the theory of militancy adequately grasps the sociopolitical reality it sets out to explain, thereby casting doubt on the adequacy of the praxis that theory demands. Die bleierne Zeit poses the question of whether the path of reform may not be more constructive than that of revolution. Certain scenes in this film suggest the radicalism of militant theory is welcome to those whose motives are existential rather than political: Von Trotta suggests that Marianne, the militant protagonist of the film, may be less interested in political change than in the spectacle of her own self-realisation, or that her apparent concern for sociopolitical issues merely masks a peculiar form of narcissism. The only Italian director to seriously address the issue of theory's relation to practice is Gianni Amelio; he identifies

militant praxis as resulting from the application of an outdated revolutionary theory (that of the partisans) to a changed sociopolitical reality (that of postwar Italy). For Amelio, an excessive fondness for a certain theory produces a praxis that is “blind” in so far as it does not depart from an adequate understanding of the world in which it operates.

Questions of legality are foregrounded most strikingly in Reinhard Hauff’s reconstruction of the Stammheim trial, simply titled Stammheim. Like many of the novels discussed in the previous chapter, this film exposes the willingness of the state to break its own laws and portrays the legal order as a mere facade for repression. Similarly, a semblance of legality serves to disguise illegal goings-on in Fassbinder’s Die dritte Generation, which features a policeman whose actions are not only morally corrupt, but obviously criminal. By contrast, the policeman in a recent Italian film, Wilma Labate’s La mia generazione, is clearly morally corrupt, but not criminal. Nor is he, like Fassbinder’s police inspector, something perhaps still more sinister than the servant of a repressive state, namely the servant of business interests for whom the state is as much a facade as the legal order.

Volker Schlöndorff also highlights the illegal operations of the state in Die Stille nach dem Schuß. There is, however, an important difference: in this film, the state is one of two (the GFR and the GDR), and the decision to act illegally is taken within the larger

context of a struggle between nations, or indeed between the First and the Second World. This is a clear example of how German directors tend to bring to their analysis of legality not just the emphasis on the personal effects of legal decisions that is also present in a film like La mia generazione, but more overtly political notions such as those of statehood, nationhood, and international conflict. They are interested in the ways in which the legal order shapes collective experience, whereas Italian directors have tended to focus more on subjective experience. Schlöndorff is the only director discussed below to place militancy in an international context. Other German directors come close to doing this, while it is never attempted by Italian directors.

It was noted in the previous chapter that Nanni Balestrini's concern with issues of legality places him closer to German writers than to his compatriots; as if to correct this incongruity, Pasquale Squitieri's film adaptation of Balestrini's Gli invisibili dispenses with the court episodes so central to the novel. Some representatives of the legal system do appear in the film, and as in Balestrini's novel, they are presented as deceitful and malignant. Yet absent the larger analysis of legality found in the novel, there is little to suggest that these traits may be more than personal idiosyncrasies, that is, that they may express the nature of the legal order itself.

Where Italian directors such as Giuseppe Bertolucci, Gianni Amelio, and Marco Turco concern themselves with questions of

legality, they tend to analyse these questions through their relation to human (often family) relations. Bertolucci and Amelio portray situations in which their protagonists have to choose between faith to the legal order and faith to their friends or family members. In the case of Amelio's Colpire al cuore, the situation ends tragically as a result of the protagonist Emilio placing his loyalty to the state over that to his father; Emilio identifies with the legal order to the point of renouncing his identity as a son, and the obligations it implies. Similarly, Wilma Labate's La mia generazione portrays the state's ruthlessness by illustrating the destructive effect of its policies on a romantic relationship.

Unlike questions of legality, questions of violence and counterviolence are treated in roughly comparable ways in German and Italian cinema. That militant violence needs to be seen in the larger context of state violence is one of the positions formulated by Squitieri in Gli invisibili. As in Balestrini's novel, insurrectionary violence becomes laughable by comparison to the state's brutality. A similar effect is achieved in Von Trotta's Die bleierne Zeit; while the protagonist is understood to have engaged in acts more violent than those of any militant in Gli invisibili, none of those acts are directly represented, whereas she is portrayed for half of the film as the victim of a (possibly homicidal) carcerial violence. By contrast, the concept of militant violence as counterviolence is thoroughly discredited in Gianni Amelio's Colpire al cuore, in which the only act

of state violence (the shooting of a militant) is represented not as a justification for militancy, but as an adequate response to it. In this film, the violence militancy contests remains, for the most part, entirely abstract, as a result of which the physical violence of militancy comes to appear unjustified. Similarly, Giuseppe Ferrara's Il caso Moro clearly identifies the Red Brigades as aggressors, rather than respondents to pre-existing state violence. Their radicalism is contrasted with the parliamentary politics of Moro, which promise a degree of social progress the Red Brigades can only dream of (and which they effectively stall). The Manichean world view on which the ideological concepts of violence and counterviolence are premised is also presented as outdated and destructive in Marco Turco's Vite in sospenso. And the German collaborative production Deutschland im Herbst begins and ends with a call for seeing beyond the narrow parameters of the debate about violence and counterviolence; what matters is not the origin of violence or its justification, but the possibility that it might end: "An einem bestimmten Punkt der Grausamkeit angelangt, ist es schon gleich, wer sie begangen hat: sie soll nur aufhören."²

Ideological notions of revolutionary identity are subjected to particularly close scrutiny in the films discussed. The unity of personal and political morality is exposed in Mutter Küsters as the unity of a blind desire for personal justice with abstract ideological

² "Arrived at a certain level of cruelty, it no longer matters who started: it only has to stop."

models whose purpose is to instrumentalise that desire. In Die dritte Generation, there is no personal morality, only an irresponsible adventurism, which is similarly instrumentalised. In much the same way, the character Giovanni succeeds, in Vite in sospenso, to marry personal insecurity to a pseudo-ideological world view that allows him to manipulate those around him. In this film, it is precisely the divorce of personal morality from a (misguided) political morality that promises hope. Schlöndorff suggests, in Die Stille nach dem Schuß, that this may be too optimistic a position. Even after his protagonist has renounced aspects of her political morality, such as her endorsement of violence, it continues to complicate her personal choices and restrict her freedom.

Revolutionary identity under pressure is the subject of Stammheim, Die bleierne Zeit, Gli invisibili, and La mia generazione. These films feature militants who refuse to be corrupted; their revolutionary identity and the uncompromising hostility towards the state it entails remain intact, even at the cost of profound personal loss, or (in the cases of Stammheim and Die bleierne Zeit) death. Within the context of the state's triumph over militancy, even those militants who survive (the Sirio of Gli invisibili and the Braccio of La mia generazione) suffer a metaphorical death: the denial of possibilities for personal fulfilment and (in the case of Sirio) the erasure of their fate from the public record. While these characters are heroic, they are tragic heroes. In these films, the

revolutionary identity of the militant is as admirable as its consequences are catastrophic.

If questions of legality are most clearly foregrounded in a German film, Stammheim, Italian director Mimmo Calopresti's La seconda volta enjoys the distinction of devoting itself more than any other film to exposing the full consequences of militancy's reductive view of the individual; generally, the question of individuality is scrutinised far more in Italian than in German cinema. Calopresti demonstrates the lasting effects of an ideology that reduces individuals to their sociopolitical function; even when this ideology is formally revoked, the actions that have resulted from it continue to prohibit all satisfactory communication between the militant and his victim.

Where Calopresti portrays the personal tragedy that results from such a view, Giuseppe Ferrara focuses more on its politically tragic outcome, in his reconstruction of the Moro kidnapping, Il caso Moro. Ferrara shows the militant view of individuality to be premised on a miscalculation: political power is perfectly capable of ignoring the humanity of the kidnapped Moro, and the importance of his sociopolitical function turns out to have been grossly overestimated by the Red Brigades. In fact, Moro's cabinet is not inclined to think of him in terms any less reductive than theirs. In this sense, Ferrara effectively illustrates Sciascia's notion of the clash between two Stalinisms; only the members of Moro's family

think of him first and foremost as a human being, while the main protagonists of the conflict – the state and the Red Brigades – are interested only in expanding or consolidating their political power.

That recognising the humanity of one's perceived enemy provides an opportunity not only for overcoming reductive notions of individuality, but for ending violence altogether, is suggested by Francesco Rosi in Tre Fratelli. The notion of a common and equally vulnerable humanity is this film's emphatically emphasised promise of utopia. By making a possible victim of militancy and one who is more or less sympathetic to its members of the same family, Rosi stresses this notion of a bond that transcends political agendas.

One German film, Deutschland im Herbst, takes a singularly original approach to the problem of individuality. In its portrayal of Schleyer, this film does not set out to refute a conception of the individual that concerns itself only with that individual's sociopolitical function by pointing out that behind this function lies a human being. Rather, the film takes militant ideology at face value, and proceeds to examine in detail not just the sociopolitical function of Schleyer, but the larger historical context within which his assassination occurred. This approach is the pragmatic alternative to Rosi's utopianism. Schleyer may be a crucial element in a system of repression that has perpetuated itself for decades or even centuries, but far from being a radical alternative to that system, militancy has been contaminated by it (witness the similarities

between Schleyer's patriotic and militarist rhetoric and that of revolutionary socialism). Similarly, the RAF's contempt for Schleyer is shown to be the mirror image of the public's contempt for the RAF. The solution the directors propose is not the naive one of simply forgetting the complicity of certain individuals in repressive sociopolitical mechanisms; it will not do to think of those individuals only in terms of an abstract humanity in which all distinctions vanish. Rather, what is in order is an investigation into how those mechanisms, and with them the individuals that perpetuate them, are historically constituted. Such an investigation may then allow for the formulation of a program that transcends the shortsightedness of individual terror without renouncing politics altogether.

The differences between Tre Fratelli and Deutschland im Herbst are symptomatic of the larger differences between the German and Italian cinemas of militancy. The issues of family and intersubjectivity already so evident in the Italian texts discussed in the previous chapter lead to a greater foregrounding, in Italian cinema, of the issue of individuality. The only German film to analyse that issue merely takes it as a starting point for a larger meditation on history, just as, in general, the German films discussed below have tended to focus more on the experiences of large collectives, such as nations and states. By and large, they have also devoted themselves to issues of theory, legality, and

violence without reading those issues through the lens of subjective experience.

Rainer Werner Fassbinder: Mutter Küsters' Fahrt zum Himmel

Fassbinder's 1975 satire examines the instrumentalisation of personal tragedy in a society characterised by the disintegration of family ties, sensationalist journalism, and left-wing fringe groups estranged from a working class that neither appreciates nor even understands them.³ As in many of his films, Fassbinder's characters display an ill-fated blend of adjustedness and alienation, selfishness and exploitation, deceit and honesty. Theirs is a story of survival attempts in an unliveable world; doomed from the outset, each survival attempt leads either to moral corruption, physical annihilation, or both. In a bizarre twist of plot involving the reckless spontaneity of a self-proclaimed political vanguard, even the protagonist's effort to resist instrumentalisation is instrumentalised.

Mother Küsters is an unpretending, politically ignorant, but content working class housewife who supplements the salary of her husband, a factory employee, by outwork. Her son Ernst is married and a prospective father; her daughter Corinna works in nightclubs

³ The film's title recalls Phil Jützi's Mutter Krausens Fahrts in Glück, a 1929 film chronicling the trials of a working class mother in the Berlin of Weimar Germany. For background on Fassbinder's cinema, cf. Paul Foss (ed.), Fassbinder in Review: An appreciation of the Cinema of Rainer Werner Fassbinder (Sydney: Australian Film Institute, 1983) and Thomas Elsaesser, Fassbinder's Germany: History, Identity, Subject (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996). Mutter Küsters' Fahrt in den Himmel has been released with English subtitles as Mother Küsters Goes To Heaven.

while dreaming of a musical career. Ernst and his wife Helene are about to have dinner at Mother Küsters' apartment when she learns her husband, Hermann, has run amok in the factory, killing first the son of his boss and then himself. This cataclysmic event and the theme of "changing one's life when it's necessary" (a subject raised by Helene with reference to her planned trip to Finland) become the premises of the film.

Mother Küsters first hears of Hermann's suicide on the radio. Because his name is not mentioned, she does not realise the demented murderer and her life partner are one and the same. Her absent-minded comment "Was heutzutage alles passiert"⁴ indicates her ignorance of the extent to which she is personally implicated in what has happened. When she wonders innocently why her husband has not yet arrived, Ernst assures her: "Der wird schon kommen. Der ist bisher noch immer gekommen."⁵ This assumption that things will always continue the same way expresses the resignation Ernst has inherited from his mother – the inability and even unwillingness to imagine a radically different future. It is this attitude and the innocent selflessness associated with it that render Mother Küsters so helpless in the face of what is to come.

Shortly after Ernst's comment, a man rings on the door and repeats the news announced on the radio; this time, however, it is clear that the worker who killed himself is Hermann. The messenger

⁴ "The things that happen these days."

⁵ "He'll get here. He always has."

makes a half-hearted attempt at understanding the motivation behind the crime: "Hermann muß was gehört haben von Massenentlassungen oder so..."⁶ The scene introduces two central themes: the disparity between personal tragedy and its packaging by the media, and the socioeconomic context of personal tragedy - more precisely: the attempt to explain tragedy by reference to this context.

The first of these two themes is explored mainly in the first half of the film. Mother Küsters is interviewed and photographed by a number of journalists. One of them returns the following day and meets Corinna, who goes to bed with him in return for favourable comments on her talent as a singer. When Mother Küsters reads the sensationalist stories in the papers, she is puzzled and upset; the journalists she thought of as responsible and caring have betrayed her trust by transforming her husband into a "blutrünstiges Monster."⁷ More important from the point of view of this study is the visit she receives from Karl and Marianne, two upper middle-class members of a communist organisation. They comfort her, and Karl writes a more sympathetic article for his own publication. Reacting against the instrumentalisation of Hermann's death by the media, Mother Küsters strikes up a friendship with Karl and Marianne. It soon becomes apparent, however, that their interest in her is no

⁶ "Hermann must have heard something about the large-scale sacking of employees, or something like that..."

⁷ "Bloodthirsty monster."

less selfish. To them, Hermann provides evidence for their theory of capitalist exploitation: "Sein Problem ist ja das der gesamten Arbeiterschaft."⁸ They recruit Mother Küsters for their organisation and invite her to speak at a meeting. Karl says to Marianne that he is attempting to awaken Mother Küsters' "consciousness" of exploitation; when Marianne wonders whether his methods are any better than those of the journalists, he concedes they are not: "Die Methode mag dieselbe sein. Auf das Ergebnis kommt es an."⁹

Karl's comment reveals that the self-styled revolutionaries are no different than the society they claim to be at odds with. The camera angles Fassbinder uses in the scene in which Mother Küsters meets with Karl and Marianne are the same he uses when she is photographed by the reporter Niemeyer. When Niemeyer photographs Mother Küsters on her bed, he and his camera lens are in the foreground, while she is in the background, looking away from him; Niemeyer is standing while Mother Küsters is sitting. During the visit to Karl and Marianne, Mother Küsters is again in the background and sitting, while Karl stands in the foreground, observing her and listening without himself being seen.

Told about Karl and Marianne later in the film, Corinna immediately identifies the two as "Salonkommunisten"¹⁰: "Die quatschen und quatschen über Revolution und das was getan

⁸ "After all, his problem is that of the entire working class."

⁹ "The method may be the same. What counts is the result."

¹⁰ "Armchair communists."

werden muß für die Arbeiter, bloß die meisten kennen nichtmal im Leben 'nen Arbeiter."¹¹ The point is reinforced by Fassbinder, who shows the viewer the comfortable, upper middle-class house in which Karl and Marianne seem to do little more than read and drink tea. Karl is portrayed as vain; while talking to Mother Küsters about the revolutionary nature of Herrman's crime, he stops in front of an expensive mirror to adjust his hair. When their organisation meets, Karl has replaced his shirt and tie with a black turtleneck and leather jacket; nonetheless, large (and presumably expensive) oil paintings hang on the wall behind the podium with its red banner.

Karl and Marianne win Mother Küsters over to their cause by politicising the personal. Marianne says of Hermann: "Er hat diesen Mann nicht getötet, nur um sich aus einer Zwangslage zu befreien."¹² Rather, Hermann was a budding revolutionary who merely chose the wrong form of struggle. As Karl says: "Ihr Mann hat eben richtig gedacht, aber falsch gehandelt."¹³ This exaggerated interpretation of Herrman's suicide flatters Mother Küsters, who becomes increasingly involved with the would-be communists. Ironically, what appeals to her most in Karl's comments is the notion that Herrmann was acting selflessly: "Er hat immer an die andern gedacht."¹⁴ Mother Küsters fails to see that Karl and

¹¹ "They talk and talk about revolution and what needs to be done for the workers, except most of them have never even met one."

¹² "He didn't just kill that man to free himself from an oppressive situation."

¹³ "Your husband thought correctly, but acted wrongly."

¹⁴ "He always thought of others."

Marianne are themselves far from altruistic. She also does not understand that her identification with their cause is a reaction to her own increased isolation: Herrmann has died, Ernst and Helene are moving out, and Corinna has shacked up with Niemeyer. It is from Karl's rhetoric of revolution that Mother Küsters derives the strength to confront this situation, as when she says to Helene and Ernst: "Ich werde kämpfen."¹⁵

Despite being newly assertive, Mother Küsters remains vulnerable. A response to the shamelessness with which the story of Hermann's suicide is treated in the mass media, her "radicalisation" is no less shamelessly instrumentalised. After speaking at a communist meeting, Mother Küsters is approached by Horst Knab, a young man who feels Karl and Marianne are not radical enough. "Was sie brauchen," he tells Mother Küsters, "ist eine Aktion."¹⁶ Knab is described by Karl and Marianne as an anarchist, "einer von denen, die nur zerstören wollen, anstatt aufbauen."¹⁷ In fact, Knab's rhetoric is quite clearly based on that of the RAF. He rejects Karl's organisation as "eine bürgerliche Partei, nichts weiter"¹⁸ and proposes to Mother Küsters that she join him and others in a sit-in at the office of Niemeyer's editor. Mother Küsters agrees and watches helplessly as the sit-in turns into a kidnapping, during which Knab identifies himself as the leader of the "Kommando

¹⁵ "I will fight."

¹⁶ "What you need is action."

¹⁷ "One of those who only want to destroy, instead of constructing."

¹⁸ "A middle-class party, nothing more."

Küsters", describes Hermann as an "Einzelkämpfer der Revolution"¹⁹, and demands "die sofortige Freilassung aller politischen Gefangenen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland."²⁰ While Knab speaks, the camera focuses on Mother Küsters, standing behind him with a puzzled expression on her face. The scene recalls earlier ones in which Mother Küsters stands behind Niemeyer and Karl; the suggestion here as in those scenes is that she is a pawn in other people's projects.

According to Fassbinder's script, the closing scene (not filmed, but described in a short text projected onto the final shot of Mother Küsters standing behind Knab) was to feature the arrival of the police and the accidental shooting of Mother Küsters. This projected ending confirms the point made throughout the film: that Mother Küsters is a victim rather than a protagonist, that her attempt to further her own interests in fact only reinforces this victimisation.

Within this analysis of an "exploitation" no less subtle and heinous than that described by Karl, left-wing militancy occupies no very prestigious place. It is merely one more example of the working class being misrepresented and abused for reasons of personal gain. For Fassbinder, the economic exploitation of the working class is no worse than its instrumentalisation on the part of sensationalist mass media and political fringe groups, be they legal

¹⁹ "Lone revolutionary fighter."

²⁰ "The immediate liberation of all political prisoners in the Federal Republic of Germany."

or illegal, violent or nonviolent. The suffering of workers is not so much a genuine concern of these groups as an excuse to engage in self-aggrandizing rhetoric and reckless behaviour. Left-wing militants may not be "armchair communists," but neither are they the spokesmen of the proletariat or the revolutionary vanguard. While arguably in need of a revolutionary transformation of society, the working class is largely unaware of this need. Even if such an awareness existed, the groups who speak of revolution are far from being able – or even willing – to bring it about; their approach to the putative "revolutionary subject" is as selfish and inadequate as that of the rest of society.

Alf Brustellin et al: Deutschland im Herbst

Deutschland im Herbst is a collaborative production by a number of German film directors, including Alf Brustellin, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Alexander Kluge, Edgar Reitz, and Volker Schlöndorff.²¹ Heinrich Böll contributed to the script. The film is divided into episodes, some of which, such as the interview with Horst Mahler, are of a documentary nature. Together, these episodes explore the political climate in the GFR following the events of October 1977.

The film begins and ends with footage of funerals. Before the opening credits, footage of the Schleyer funeral is presented alongside a quotation from Schleyer's letter dated 8 September,

²¹ The film has been released with English subtitles as Germany in Autumn.

1977: "Es gibt, wie man gesehen hat, keinen absoluten Schutz, wenn man so sorgfältig und konsequent arbeitet wie die RAF."²² A second quotation is from a German mother speaking in 1945: "An einem bestimmten Punkt der Grausamkeit angelangt, ist es schon gleich, wer sie begangen hat: sie soll nur aufhören."²³ This second quotation also appears at the very end of the film, following footage of the funeral of Baader, Ensslin, and Raspe. By framing the film in this way, the directors make a number of points. They suggest there was violence on both the sides of the conflict - insurrectionary violence and state violence – and that Schleyer was unwittingly speaking for the RAF as well as for himself when he described the absence of "total security." They also identify a continuity between this political conflict and earlier ones, specifically between the violence of 1977 and that of the Nazi regime. Finally, they formulate an appeal to see beyond narrow political agendas and recognise the overarching human need for an existence not threatened by violence.

Following the credits, the film launches into the most autobiographical of its episodes: Fassbinder's account of how he experienced the days before and after the deaths of Baader, Ensslin, and Raspe in Stammheim. The episode sees Fassbinder a nervous wreck, constantly arguing with his boyfriend Armin, trying

²² "As has been seen, there can be no total security when one works as thoroughly and consistently as the RAF."

²³ "Arrived at a certain level of cruelty, it no longer matters who started: it only has to stop."

to finish work on a film with the aid of cocaine, and discussing current events in a series of phone calls. Interspersed between these scenes are parts of a conversation between Fassbinder and his mother, in which he questions her about her political ideals and elicits, after an extended analysis of the concept of democracy, an endorsement of dictatorial government. The episode portrays the effect of October 1977 on two apparently radically different sectors of society: the bohemian world of Fassbinder and Armin, and the lower middle-class world of Fassbinder's mother. Both of these – and, by implication, West German society as a whole – are plunged into a state of terror by what has happened. One form this terror takes is distrust: just before his mother articulates her desire for "ein totalitärer Herrscher der ganz gut ist und ganz lieb und ganz ordentlich"²⁴, Fassbinder throws a homeless stranger out of his apartment, then breaks down and cries out of shame. Fassbinder's mother fears the violence of the RAF; he himself fears state repression. He suspects the stranger may be a police observer, having only just flushed his cocaine purchase down the toilet in expectation of a police raid. The beginning of the episode sees Fassbinder attempting to persuade a journalist to delete from an interview a disparaging remark on marriage: the implication is that such comments on middle class institutions will lead, in the charged political climate of 1977, to criticism of Fassbinder. (During her

²⁴ "A totalitarian ruler who's good and nice and orderly."

discussion with him, his mother mentions Böll, who was attacked for an article in which he ostensibly downplayed the threat posed by the RAF.) West German society is a thoroughly "terrorised" society, and just as this terror does not emanate from insurrectionary groups alone, it does not target only them, but anyone whose lifestyle and views place him outside the social norm.

This state of affairs only becomes possible because profoundly right-wing views have remained widespread in post-1945 Germany. In particular, both Armin and Fassbinder's mother propose indiscriminate or at least unconstitutional violence as a device for combating the RAF. Armin suggests blowing up the Landshut, then shooting and hanging the Stammheim prisoners (this is before the events of 17 October); Fassbinder's mother proposes the public execution of the Stammheim prisoners. Similarly, Armin claims anyone shot by a policeman has only himself to blame, while Fassbinder's mother speaks out against public debate on current events and describes democracy as "das kleinste aller Übel."²⁵ She explicitly compares the current situation to life under Hitler: "Mich erinnert das [...] an die Nazizeit, in der man einfach geschwiegen hat [...] um sich nicht in Teufels Küche zu bringen."²⁶ Instead of concluding from this parallel that what is needed is more rather than less democracy, she formulates her vision of a benevolent

²⁵ "The smallest evil."

²⁶ "It reminds me of the Nazi era, when you just kept your mouth shut so as not to get into trouble."

dictator. She has no reply to Fassbinder's question: "Darf es überhaupt eine Situation geben in der es dich nicht interessiert wer für dich Gesetze macht, und welche?"²⁷ Nor does she have a proper response to Fassbinder's suspicion that she wants to undercut public debate on the "terrorists" because they may be responding to legitimate grievances: "Ist das schlimme bei den Terroristen vielleicht nicht daß sie vielleicht sogar Gründe haben die du verstehen könntest?"²⁸

The notion that such grievances may be related to Germany's Nazi past is further explored in the following episode, directed by Alexander Kluge. It begins with history teacher Gabi Teichert (the protagonist of an earlier Kluge film, *Die Patriotin*) digging in the snow. As Kluge explains in the voice-over: "Entweder sie gräbt sich einen Unterstand für den Dritten Weltkrieg, oder aber sie gräbt nach prähistorischen Funden."²⁹ The suggestion is that the alternative to an examination of the past is annihilation. Teichert, it turns out, is "digging" through history for the sake of the future.

Kluge presents her findings. A series of children's illustrations evoke moments of history when an act of suicide shaped political developments. One illustration represents the double suicide of crownprince Meyerlinck and his lover: the crownprince holds a gun

²⁷ "Should there even be a situation in which you don't care whose writing the laws for you, and what those laws are?"

²⁸ "Couldn't it be that what's so frightening about the terrorists is that they may even have reasons you could understand?"

²⁹ "Either's she digging herself a bomb shelter for the Third World War, or she's digging for prehistoric objects."

to his head while his lover lies dead beside him. No German viewer could miss the parallel to the ostensive suicide of Baader and his lover Ensslin. Kluge comments in the voice-over: "Selbstmord begeht, was nicht in diese Welt passt."³⁰ That the world to which Baader and Ensslin refused to belong may not have been as idyllic as it first appears is suggested by the illustration presented next. Kluge does not show all of it immediately, but presents a series of details. First, the viewer sees a peaceful country town; then, an ominous black train approaching to the side. Next, a woman is seen lying with her head on the tracks. The following images show the woman's gory death, then her funeral.

From this, Kluge cuts directly to documentary footage of Schleyer's memorial service. The footage is part of a sequence that considers the effects of Schleyer's death. What consequences does it have for those who survive him? What are their feelings on what has happened, how do they behave, and do their feelings correspond to their behaviour? Kluge suggests the answers to these questions vary from one group of people to another, although they do not vary randomly. Rather, the difference in reactions results from a difference in class background. Kluge shows that the people living in the GFR are not a homogeneous group; some are privileged, others underprivileged, and many are not even German (they tend to coincide with the underprivileged).

³⁰ "Whatever has no place in this world commits suicide."

Inserted into the footage of the memorial service is the humorous story of a Turkish man arrested for carrying a legally purchased gun. He is told by the police he cannot be walking the streets with a gun on the day of Schleyer's memorial service, and led off despite his protestations that he only wanted to shoot himself a pigeon for lunch. The world of this hapless and hungry man is very different from that of the Mercedes executives for whom the memorial service is screened in the Daimler Benz museum, which is crowded with shiny antique cars. The Turk is more concerned with his next meal than with the death of Schleyer; the same is likely to be true of the Mercedes factory employees who are made to stop working and stand silently in memory of Schleyer, and 95% of whom are foreigners, as the voice-over explains. Similarly, it is only another working day for the catering staff paid to prepare a meal for the mourning executives. (Their boss also speaks with a foreign accent.)

Later in the film, Kluge presents further historical tidbits, all of which are part of Teichert's attempt "die Dinge in ihrem Zusammenhang zu sehen."³¹ He sets up a parallel between the state's memorial service for Schleyer and an earlier one: that of Rommel, "1944 vom Staat durch Gift getötet."³² The German word for a memorial service organised by the state ("Staatsakt") literally translates as "act of state." The implication is that Schleyer's death

³¹ "To see things in context."

³² "Killed by the state through poison in 1944."

might also be interpreted as resulting from actions taken by the state. (Of course, the causal chain is a longer one: state troops killed the hijackers of the Landshut, whereupon the Stammheim prisoners died, which led in turn to the death of Schleyer.) To stress these parallels between the past and the present, Kluge points out that Rommel's son is the current mayor of Stuttgart - the man responsible for organising the funeral of Baader, Ensslin, and Raspe. Kluge also presents footage of the older Rommel's African campaign, which evokes the deaths of the Landshut's kidnappers in Mogadishu.

The harsh tone favoured by the RAF in its proclamations finds its antecedent in a socialist song from the Weimar Republic:

Da steht ein Mann, so fest wie eine Eiche.

Er hat gewiß so manches schon erlebt.

Vielleicht ist er schon morgen eine Leiche

Wie es so vielen Freiheitskämpfern geht.³³

The second verse of this song features the line "Dem Kampf sind wir geweiht."³⁴ This rhetoric of martyrdom and struggle is not unlike that of the RAF; it certainly resembles the language of the Landshut's Palestinian hijackers. Yet it is also the language of the speaker at Schleyer's memorial service, who says: "Wir alle bejahen

³³ "There stands a man as solid as an oak. / He's surely lived through a lot. / Maybe tomorrow he'll be a corpse. / That's the fate of many a freedom fighter."

³⁴ "To battle we are consecrated."

den demokratischen Kampf."³⁵ And it is that of Schleyer himself, whose letters feature phrases such as "wie es auch im Kriege war"³⁶ and "fürs Vaterland zu sterben."³⁷ The same militaristic rhetoric is used by an anonymous military official in a documentary sequence on training exercises conducted in 1977 by the West German army: "Wozu gebe ich Befehle, wenn sie nicht eingehalten werden?"³⁸

Kluge suggests those members of the left who became militant were only following a well-established German tradition of resolving political conflicts through force of arms. He also suggests their society offered them little else, apart from "der Einladung zum fröhlichen Konsum als Voraussetzung als Voraussetzung des Wirtschaftswachstums"³⁹ – these being the words of Max Frisch at the 1977 party congress of the German Social Democrats, of which Kluge also presents documentary footage. Kluge's Luxemburg quotations – the words of the revolution: "Ich war, ich bin, ich werde sein!"⁴⁰ and the famous alternative "Sozialismus oder Barbarei"⁴¹ – are presented without direct comment, but their context in Deutschland im Herbst is perhaps comment enough. After Germany's failure to realise socialism, and after the barbarity of Hitler's regime, the "revolution" does appear to be alive and well,

³⁵ "We all approve of democratic struggle."

³⁶ "As it was during the war."

³⁷ "To die for the fatherland."

³⁸ "What do I give orders for if they're not followed?"

³⁹ "The invitation to cheerful consumerism, as a requirement for economic growth."

⁴⁰ "I was, I am, I shall be!"

⁴¹ "Socialism or barbarity."

but it seems itself to have taken on the aspect of "barbarity" – not so much through any tactical fault of its putative leaders as through their failure to break with the continuity of violence that is German history. It is only fitting, then, that Baader, Ensslin, and Raspe should be buried on a former shooting range (another fact mentioned by Kluge).

This failure to escape historical conditioning is also the subject of a lengthy interview with former RAF-member Horst Mahler, inserted between the footage of Schleyer's memorial service and that of Rommel in Africa. Mahler identifies three historical turning points in the history of Germany in the twentieth century: 1945, when the political, but not the ideological power of fascism was broken (there was no antifascist revolution in Germany, Mahler points out); 1967, when the protesting students rose up against the continuity of fascist ideology, identifying the USA's war in Vietnam as the prime example of that continuity; and 1977, when the defeat of a left-wing fringe group revealed the failure of the left to reform the consciousness of the German people.

Mahler speaks of the events in Mogadishu as indicative of a "Krise der Linken"⁴², relating this to a paradoxical decision, on the part of left-wing militants, to fight capitalist imperialism by its own violent methods:

⁴² "Crisis of the left."

Das [sc. Mogadischu] hat die Voraussetzung geschaffen, daß nun die Krise, die ich sehe als die Krise der Linken, unseres linken Bewusstseins, nun endlich, als Krise, diese auch uns zum Bewußtsein kommt, als Punkt unserer Schwäche eben Gegenstand unserer Kritik wird. Und ich glaube man kann es sich nicht radikaler zugespitzt sich vorstellen, als diesen Gegensatz, daß wir einerseits mit unserem Protest, mit unserem Aufstand gegen den Imperialismus, angefangen haben, daß wir zum Beispiel wegen des Massakers in My Lai, an der vietnamesischen Bevölkerung, auf die Strasse gegangen sind und jetzt erleben müssen, daß eine Gruppierung aus dieser Bewegung, um Gefangene zu befreien, mit denen sich das Volk in keiner Hinsicht identifiziert, völlig unbeteiligte Zivilisten wehrlos – Frauen, Kinder, Greise – als Geiseln nimmt und sie mit dem Tode bedroht, also mit einem Massaker droht, ohne daß die Frage gestellt wurde, offensichtlich die Frage gestellt wurde, ob das überhaupt noch was mit linker Politik zu tun haben könnte.⁴³

⁴³ "Mogadishu made us aware of the crisis of left-wing consciousness as a crisis, allowed it, our weak point, to become the object of our criticism. And I think one cannot imagine it more clearly than in the form of this paradox, that we began with our protest, our revolt against imperialism, that we took to the streets, for example, because of the massacre at My Lai, a massacre perpetrated on the Vietnamese population, and that we now have to observe how a section of this movement takes hostage, in order to liberate prisoners with whom the population in no way identifies, completely uninvolved civilians – women, children, elderly people – and threatens them with death, that is, threatens itself to perpetrate a massacre, without asking the question, at least apparently, whether that can still have anything to do with left-wing politics."

This paradox of militancy is related by Mahler to the problem of individuality. He points to one of the central tenets upheld by the founders of the RAF: that the institutions of capitalism and imperialism must be stripped of their apparent anonymity, and that one of the main tasks of anti-imperialist struggle must be to identify and punish those individuals who are personally responsible for maintaining, defending, and expanding the mechanisms of capitalist oppression. On the basis of such considerations, Mahler argues, radicals who began by criticising capitalism's disregard for human life began themselves to endorse the practices of kidnapping and massacring civilians. A central aspect of this development was the shift from an emphasis on the criticism of institutions to notions of personal guilt:

Die Frage, wie kommt ein Mensch wie Ulrike Meinhof dazu, andere Menschen zu töten, oder wenigstens das in Kauf zu nehmen. Ein krimineller Mörder, der verlässt das moralische Wertsystem. Ein Revolutionär übersteigert es, d.h. der moralische Rigorismus des Revolutionärs, der sich bis zu einem subjektiven, anmassenden Eigendünkel steigern kann, wird gleichzeitig die Voraussetzung dafür, die Skrupel, die man als Linker hat, wenn es darum geht, einen Menschen zu töten, zu überwinden. Man sieht die moralische Verkommenheit des kapitalistischen Systems. Man sieht die Menschen, die in diesem System verkommen handeln,

beurteilt sie moralisch, verurteilt sie, und von diesem moralischen Urteil aus verkörpern sie das Böse, d.h. man lebt in der Vorstellung, daß dort auch persönliche Schuld eine Rolle spielt, und es zur Befreiung notwendig, und daher auch gerechtfertigt ist, dieses Böse, auch wo es sich personifiziert, zu vernichten, das heißt also Personen zu vernichten.⁴⁴

Do individuals forming the vanguard of capitalist institutions forfeit their right to be recognised as individuals, perhaps even their right to life? The RAF's answer to this question was affirmative. Mahler argues that such disrespect for human life is not new, that it has always been the response of those seeking radical transformation in Germany. His alternative proposal – creating, on the collective level, the psychological conditions for political transformation, rather than directly attacking political institutions – is also that of Kluge. For both Mahler and Kluge, reflecting on history is the means to this end.

That engagement with the problem of "terrorism" may be stalled deliberately is the import of the final narrative episode of Deutschland im Herbst, which immediately precedes the closing

⁴⁴ "The question of how a person like Ulrike Meinhof comes to kill other people, or at least to accept that. A criminal killer leaves behind the system of moral values. A revolutionary takes it to the extreme, that is, the moral rigour of the revolutionary, which can take the form of hubris, simultaneously becomes the condition for the overcoming of the scruples one has, as a member of the left, when it comes to killing a man. One sees the moral corruption of the capitalist system. One sees the people who act corruptly within this system, judges them morally, condemns them, and from the position of this moral judgement, they represent evil, that is, one adopts the view that personal guilt is involved, and that it is necessary for liberation, and hence justified, to destroy this evil where it becomes personified, that is, to destroy people."

funeral footage. This episode, based on a script by Heinrich Böll and directed by Volker Schlöndorff, sees executive members of a television station debating whether or not to air a performance of Antigone. They are concerned that it may be interpreted as an incitement to violence and revolution, consider the possibility of adding one of several disclaimers in the form of a prologue, and then decide to postpone the showing until "ruhigere Zeiten."⁴⁵ As one of them says: "Es ist einfach zu aktuell."⁴⁶ Schlöndorff cuts back and forth between the executive meeting and black-and-white scenes of the performance, exploiting to full effect the humorous contrast between the banality of the former and the pathos of the latter. His episode establishes two important facts: that problems of civil disobedience go back as far as human memory, and that the events of 1977 created a climate of fear in the GFR in which even the most harmless and (apparently) unrelated activities could implicate one in the conflict between "terrorism" and the state.

The sections of Antigone shown are those most obviously related to the events of 1977. The first dialogue between Antigone and Ismene raises the question of whether or not to risk a confrontation with the state. Ismene points to the state's power – "Der Stärkere hat über uns Gewalt"⁴⁷ – and declares herself a conformist: "Ich füge mich der Obrigkeit. Maßlos zu handeln hat ja

⁴⁵ "Quieter times."

⁴⁶ "It's just too topical."

⁴⁷ "The stronger one has power over us."

keinen Sinn."⁴⁸ At this point, one of the executives leaves the room, declaring: "Ich halt das nicht aus!"⁴⁹ Outside, he reads a newspaper that presumably recounts the most recent turn of events in the conflict between the RAF and the government. Meanwhile, one of his colleagues laments that the disclaimer – "Gewaltiges kündend, künden wir doch nicht Gewalt"⁵⁰ – is not clear enough, while another laments the ambiguity of "gewaltig", which means both "great" and "violent." Before there is a time for an extended discussion of this semantic problem, another executive dismisses the entire play as inappropriate: "Diese Anspielungen: verweigerter Beerdigungen, terroristische Weiber..."⁵¹

A second disclaimer – "Gewalt zwang uns, Gewaltiges zu künden"⁵² is also dismissed, while a third fails to impress because its language is as bland as that of a legal statement ("Wir distanzieren uns aufs schärfste von jeder Form der Gewalt..."⁵³). One executive suggests the third disclaimer may be interpreted as ironic, adding: "Ironie ist doch das, was wir im Augenblick am wenigsten gebrauchen können."⁵⁴ Those in favour of broadcasting the performance raise the question of how far censorship can be taken – "Ich meine, wenn wir nicht einmal mehr Sophokles

⁴⁸ "I bow to authority. To act excessively is senseless."

⁴⁹ "I can't stand it!"

⁵⁰ "Speaking of great things, we do not speak of violence."

⁵¹ "These suggestions: denied burials, terrorist women..." Later, the prophet Tiresias is described as "eine Art vorweggenommener Intellektueller" ["a kind of prototypical intellectual"].

⁵² "Force constrained us to recount great/violent things."

⁵³ "We strongly disclaim all forms of violence..."

⁵⁴ "Irony is the last thing we need right now."

inszenieren können...⁵⁵ - and point out the impossibility of deleting all politically problematic passages from classical texts in the way sexual references were once deleted from Ovid. A compromise is reached with the discussion to broadcast not Antigone, but a dramatisation of Caesar's De bellum gallicum. The latter may not be devoid of political content, but at least it is "ein Kriegsstück, kein Terrorstück."⁵⁶ The episode closes with the meeting breaking up. One executive asks naively: "Sagen sie, das Ende, ist das so bei Sophokles?"⁵⁷

After the executives have left, the tape of the performance runs on. One of Creon's soldiers recites his final monologue, about the death of Antigone. This death is described as "des Vaters Werk."⁵⁸ If the parallels between Sophocles's play and the events of October 1977 are valid, then the father (Creon) corresponds to none other than the West German state. This phrase is therefore more politically charged than any the executives disapproved of.

After the soldier has finished speaking, the camera pans from the television screen in the meeting room to the broadcasting tower outside the window. Again, there is a contrast between the pathos of the Greek play and contemporary life, only that now the sense of the connections between the two is stronger. More importantly, the television station has been implicated in the current conflict. By

⁵⁵ "I mean, if we can't even perform Sophocles..."

⁵⁶ "A war play, not a terror play."

⁵⁷ "Tell me, does it really end that way in Sophocles?"

⁵⁸ "The work of the father."

refusing to broadcast the play, written in the 5th century BC, it undermines public debate about questions that are not only related directly to the RAF, but also of general importance. Thereby it plays a part in preventing criticism of how the "terrorist" crisis was handled, effectively reinforcing the position of the state. (The comment on irony made by one executive is also telling. What troubles him is the subversive potential of irony – the fact that by its very nature irony requires the audience not to take any statement at face value. Schlöndorff suggests that such scepticism is precisely what those seeking to reinforce the position of the state are most afraid of.)

As mentioned above, Deutschland im Herbst ends with a documentary section on the funeral of Baader, Ensslin, and Raspe. Ensslin's sister narrates the story of how she learned of the Stammheim deaths upon returning from her vacation. She mentions the first words she saw in the newspaper: "Ab in die Kläranlage."⁵⁹ The problem of how to dispose of the bodies of the dead assumes a metaphorical dimension. How to handle these last physical reminders of a resistance that seems now to have been quashed? Can what happened be "buried" or have the seeds of new conflicts been sown? The latter possibility is suggested by the protesters who call out "Mörder!"⁶⁰ to the policemen guarding Dornhalden cemetery, before chanting "Sieg Heil!" in provocation. When the

⁵⁹ "Into the sewage."

⁶⁰ "Murderers!"

Stuttgart mayor explains his desire to resolve the problem of burial "schnell und sauber [...] im menschlichen Sinne"⁶¹, it is difficult not to remember the Schleyer funeral, which never presented any such problem. (What is more, the qualification "in the human sense" is only added after some prompting by the interviewer.) The point is reinforced by an interview with the couple who agreed to cook for the mourners after a number of local innkeepers had refused to do so. The couple provides a stark contrast to the professional caterers at Schleyer's memorial service. The refusal of the other innkeepers suggests that large parts of the GFR's population are far from ready to confront even their most recent past.

Rainer Werner Fassbinder: Die dritte Generation

Where Mutter Küsters portrays the instrumentalisation of the working class by militancy, Die dritte Generation examines the instrumentalisation of militancy itself.⁶² The militant protagonists of this film embody the decline of militancy, once a politically motivated program of revolutionary action, into an adventurism that is more than welcome to the echelons of capitalism. The militants are comfortable middle-class citizens in search of excitement.⁶³

⁶¹ "Swiftly and tidily, in the human sense."

⁶² This film has been released with English subtitles as The Third Generation.

⁶³ Fassbinder suggests the failure of Germany's revolutionary movements is directly related to the fact that its protagonists have almost always been compromised by their middle-class background. In one scene, a history class discusses the 1848/49 revolution. A student identifies as the cause of this revolution's failure an excessive attachment to middle-class values: "Zuerst wollen sie die große Revolution, dann bekommen sie aber Angst, weil auf der

Their putatively subversive activities are funded and orchestrated by a computer salesman who requires the spectacle of "terrorism" in order to boost sales for counterinsurgency information technology. Under pressure from his boss in Texas, this salesman, P.J. Lurz, conspires with a police investigator to promote the would-be insurrectionaries, infiltrated by him through an agent provocateur. His most spectacular exploit is the orchestration of his own kidnapping, during Berlin's annual carnival festivities. The film ends with him drinking with his kidnappers in an underground hideout. He cheerfully collaborates with the "militants," who are dressed up as clowns and pirates, and records a message to the public: "Ich werde hier gefangengehalten im Namen des Volkes und zum Wohle desselben."⁶⁴ Drained of its subversive potential, militancy becomes a media spectacle and a sales strategy; recuperated by the very socioeconomic order it set out to contest, it reduces itself to a farce.⁶⁵

anderen Seite ihre bürgerlichen Werte in Gefahr sind" ["First they want a great big revolution, but then they become scared, because their middle-class values are in danger"].

⁶⁴ "I'm being held here in the name of the people and for their benefit."

⁶⁵ Fassbinder himself described this decline of militancy as follows: "[...] die dritte Generation hat, so scheint mir, mit ihren Vorgängern weniger gemein als vielmehr mit dieser Gesellschaft und deren Gewalt, die diese, zu wessen Nutzen auch immer, ausübt. Ich bin überzeugt, sie wissen nicht, was sie tun, und was sie tun, hat Sinn in nichts weiter als im Tun selbst, der scheinbar erregenden Gefahr, dem Scheinabenteuer in diesem – zugegeben – immer beängstigend perfekter verwalteten System. Handeln in Gefahr, aber ganz ohne Perspektive, und wie im Rausch erlebte Abenteuer zum Selbstzweck, das sind die Motivationen der Dritten Generation" ["It seems to me the third generation has less in common with its predecessors than with this society and the violence it practices, whoever may benefit from that violence. I'm convinced they don't know what they're doing, and what they do has no other meaning than action itself, the apparent excitement of danger, the apparent adventure in this – admittedly – ever more frighteningly administrated system. Acting dangerously, but without perspective, adventures

The final scene sets up a contrast between reality and representation; while the viewer sees Lurz collaborating with his kidnappers, the recorded message that will be released to the public shows only him, alone in a dungeon that is in fact only a stage set. This contrast pervades the entire film, whose first shot is a close-up of a television screen; Lurz's secretary Susanne (who is also a member of the would-be militant organisation) is watching a film in his office.⁶⁶ Lurz himself is an avid movie-watcher, and engages, at one point, in a discussion of cinema's relationship to truth and falsehood. "Film," he tells the police inspector, Kommissar Gast, "das ist fünfundzwanzigmal in der Sekunde Lüge. Und weil alles Lüge ist, ist es auch die Wahrheit, und daß Wahrheit eben Lüge ist, das gibt jeder Film preis. Es ist nur, daß im Film Begriffe die Lüge tarnen und sie als Wahrheit erklären, und das ist für mich die winzige und einzige Utopie."⁶⁷ This dismissal of truth – all that

experienced in a state of intoxication, and as ends for themselves: these are the motives of the Third Generation"]. That the appeal of militancy consists only in its promise of adventure is confirmed by one of Fassbinder's protagonists, Rudolph, who describes guerrilla training as "eines der letzten großen Abenteuer der Menschheit" ["one of the last great adventures of mankind"].

⁶⁶ Much as Lurz's secretary Susanne is a member of the third-generation militants, the police inspector is the father of another member, Edgar. Family relations become a metaphor for the links between state and business institutions and would-be insurrectionaries. The fact that members of the same family should operate on opposite sides of the same (albeit farcical) conflict also reinforces the sense of alienation that characterises the relations between most characters in this film. In one particularly striking scene, the third-generation militants rob a bank to whose director one of them is married; the bank director recognises his wife before she shoots him. Another moment of recognition also ends in death: once the ex-navyman Bernhard, an idealistic reader of Bakunin who has moved in with the militants, finds out about their instrumentalisation, he is pushed down a stairway by the police investigator.

⁶⁷ "Film, that's falsehood twenty-five times a second. And because everything is falsehood, it's also the truth. That truth is falsehood is what every film reveals.

exists is falsehood, and what appears to be truth is only falsehood disguised – might serve as the motto to the entire film. Properly speaking, militancy no longer exists, but no matter: what counts are representations of militancy. They create an appearance of subversion that disguises its own falsehood.⁶⁸

Similar epistemological notions are evoked by the codeword used, in a number of early scenes, by the third-generation militants: "Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung."⁶⁹ It was in the philosophical investigation of the same name that Schopenhauer claimed to have resolved Kant's distinction between things "in themselves" and things as they are perceived. For Schopenhauer, what is masked by appearances is not the world of objects, which does not exist, but the metaphysical force he termed "the will." In Die dritte Generation, the will is replaced by the capitalist imperative of maximising profit. It is the hidden – but hardly metaphysical – force behind the appearances by which ordinary men are deceived.

It is not only with deceitfulness that this imperative is associated, but also with contempt for human life. Early in the film, the militant Edgar asks his grandfather to explain Schopenhauer's

It's just that, in film, concepts disguise falsehood and declare it to be true. To me, that's a tiny utopia, the only one."

⁶⁸ Following their discussion on cinema, Gast jokingly recounts a dream to Lurz: "Ich hatte da neulich einen Traum, da hat das Kapital den Terrorismus erfunden um es besser zu schützen. Ist sehr komisch, nicht" ["Not long ago I had a dream, in which capital invented terrorism in order to protect itself more efficiently. Very funny, isn't it?"]. That the truth should be formulated in a dream further underscores the notion that reality and illusion are inextricably intertwined.

⁶⁹ "The world as will and representation."

ideas. The answer he receives attributes to Schopenhauer a disparaging view of the value of human life: "Dieser Schopenhauer sagt, die Existenz eines Menschen ist nicht wichtiger als die eines Steines."⁷⁰ Edgar's grandfather disapproves of such ideas and proposes the experience of war as a remedy "Das ist was für Menschen, die nichts rechtes mit ihrem Leben anfangen können. Für die muß wieder ein Krieg her, dann werden sie bald merken, daß ein Leben mehr wert ist als ein Stein."⁷¹ While contempt for human life undoubtedly underlies the activities of both the militants and those who profit from them, the grandfather's notions of war are hopelessly outdated. Far from being a remedy for such contempt, the clandestine "war" conducted by the militants is only one of its symptoms.⁷²

One of the preconditions for the instrumentalisation of militancy – its reduction to a profitable spectacle – is the existence of a highly developed media culture. This media culture is constantly evoked by Fassbinder. In most scenes, someone is listening to the radio or watching television. The film's soundtrack combines hectic, atonal music with news reports on Vietnam, China, and Iran. It suggests the reduction of political conflicts to a media babble that is not qualitatively distinct from the products of the

⁷⁰ "Schopenhauer says the existence of a human being is no more important than that of a stone."

⁷¹ "That's something for people who don't know what to do with their lives. They need a war, then they'll discover that a life is worth more than a stone."

⁷² The outdatedness of the grandfather's ideas is suggested by the old-fashioned furniture crowding his house, which contrasts markedly with the modern appearance of Lurz's office, in which the preceding scenes are set.

entertainment industry. Similarly, the shooting of a bank director is foreshadowed by a murder scene in the film Susanne watches in Lurz's office. The last words of the murdered man express disappointment at the sordidness of what he hoped would be a sublime moment: "Ich dachte, in so einem ernsten Augenblick wären die Gedanken erhaben."⁷³ That nothing but sordidness underlies the apparent excitement of militancy is emphasised by Fassbinder's division of his film into numbered episodes, each of which begins with an obscene quotation from a public restroom.⁷⁴

Several scenes in Die dritte Generation see the protagonists playing games. Lurz is an avid chess player, and the militants spend their spare time playing "Monopoly." Two of them own a mechanical toy, consisting of a series of metal spheres set in motion by a slight gesture. Asked about this toy, one of the militants, Hilde, explains: "Es ist soetwas wie ein Code. Die Videoanlage auch."⁷⁵ Both the toy, which is presumably expensive, and the video recorder suggest middle-class prosperity. They are also emblems of militancy's instrumentalisation; one represents a process that continues mechanically once it is set in motion, the other reveals the device – media culture – by which militancy is "mechanised." That Lurz should be kidnapped during carnival week – he cheerfully blows into

⁷³ "I thought one's thoughts during such a serious moment would be sublime."

⁷⁴ The quotations, in which strangers offer sexual services to one another, also reinforce the sense of alienation that pervades Fassbinder's film. The sexual exchanges described are examples of human beings "instrumentalising" one another.

⁷⁵ "It's a kind of code. The video recorder too."

a paper trumpet before he is led off by his kidnappers – further exposes the game character of militancy. The bored middle-class adventurers whom it promises entertainment are nothing but pawns in the hands of capital.

Margarethe Von Trotta: Die bleierne Zeit

Loosely based on the story of Gudrun Ensslin and her sister, Die bleierne Zeit is often seen as the definitive cinematic treatment of German militancy.⁷⁶ Two sisters – Marianne and Juliane Klein – share a similar left-wing outlook, but one opts for clandestinity and armed struggle, the other for social reform within the bounds of the law. Marianne becomes a member of an unspecified militant organisation, undergoes training in guerrilla warfare in Beirut, and dies under dubious circumstances following her incarceration in the GFR. Juliane works for a feminist periodical and feels compelled, following an attempt on the life of Marianne's son, to investigate the circumstances of her sister's death.

The distinction between revolution and reform informs much of the film. The radicality of Marianne's choice has compelled her to abandon her son, Jan, and his father, Werner. The latter criticises her decision, but is also plagued by the suspicion that his criticism is nothing but cowardice. He commits suicide early in the film. During his last meeting with Juliane, he argues it is facile to dismiss

⁷⁶ The film has been released with English subtitles as Marianne and Juliane.

Marianne's ideas as insane: "Als ob ihre verflixten Ideen nicht in uns drinstecken würden – in dir genauso wie in mir. Nur sind wir zu feige oder zu vernünftig."⁷⁷ That Werner and Juliane reject militancy in bad faith is also the position of Marianne, who plays down the importance of legal work and says to her sister reprovingly: "Du konntest immer sehr konsequent sein."⁷⁸ Juliane is not convinced; she lacks Marianne's sense of urgency. Wenn she is told "Gedanken verändern nichts,"⁷⁹ she replies: "Doch, nur langsamer."⁸⁰

Marianne's impatience emerges from her angry retort: "Als alte Frau mach ich keine Revolution mehr."⁸¹ That Marianne immediately applies the question of revolution and reform to herself, replying in the first person, indicates the narcissism that informs her impatience: she is not interested in a transformation of society that does not immediately and spectacularly involve her.

Possible explanations for the choices of Marianne and Juliane are offered in a series of flashbacks chronicling the childhood experiences of the two sisters. The first such flashback sees their father praying at the table. With its rhetoric of liberation, guilt, and self-imposed servitude, the prayer foreshadows the religious fervour of many of Juliane's later pronouncements. The father's phrase

⁷⁷ "As if her damned ideas weren't inside of us too – inside you and inside me. It's just that we're too cowardly or too reasonable."

⁷⁸ "You were always very consistent."

⁷⁹ "Thoughts change nothing."

⁸⁰ "They do, it just takes longer."

⁸¹ "I'm not going to make the revolution as an old woman."

"selbstverschuldete Knechtschaft"⁸² becomes, in a later statement by Juliane, "freiwillige Knechtschaft."⁸³ Another flashback shows Marianne and Juliane watching Alain Resnais' Holocaust documentary Night and Fog at school; the gruesome images of Auschwitz cause Juliane to throw up. This flashback is immediately followed by a scene in which the incarcerated Marianne speaks of her hunger strike. The association emphasises the transformation both sisters have undergone: Marianne is now the one who reacts radically to (actual or perceived) injustice. In a later scene, she tears Juliane's clothes from a wardrobe and tosses them onto the floor as if to express her contempt for her sister's comfortable middle class life. She herself, the viewer has just learned, has given away her clothes upon flying to Beirut.

Another such thematic link occurs in a later sequence. Returning from a visit to prison, Juliane reads a note her sister has secretly given her. In the note, Marianne urges Juliane to orchestrate a campaign to raise awareness about prison conditions. Juliane is struck by the harsh tone of the note: "Sie bittet nicht, sie befiehlt."⁸⁴ The flashback that follows chronicles a wartime air raid. The juxtaposition of Marianne's military language with an image of actual war stresses the extent to which Marianne and her comrades interpret their situation in military terms; whether such an

⁸² "Self-imposed servitude."

⁸³ "Freely chosen servitude."

⁸⁴ "She doesn't ask, she gives orders."

interpretation is apt or misguided is left to the viewer to decide. Von Trotta also suggests Marianne's stance is closer to totalitarianism than she herself would ever admit. As Juliane says to Marianne in a later scene: "Eine Generation früher und du wärest BDM geworden."⁸⁵

The flashbacks indicate Von Trotta's concern with placing militancy in its historical context. Die bleierne Zeit repeatedly poses the question of what might be a responsible attitude to the past. Marianne's decision to break with conventional society entails that of abandoning her son Jan, but Jan refuses to disappear; in fact, he becomes the victim of a murder attempt that is probably a direct consequence of her political choices. Marianne's decision to abandon her family is not simply personal, but conditioned by history. It is informed by a rejection of maternity that is related to her condemnation of Germany's Nazi past. As Juliane points out at one point, the cult of maternity was an essential component of Nazi ideology, and: "Es waren die Mütter, die die Katastrophe herbeiführten, um dann am meisten unter ihr zu leiden."⁸⁶ Marianne's antifascist revolt is also a revolt against traditional notions of femininity. Yet her radical break with such notions is made in bad faith; she ignores that Jan has already been born, and deserves to be taken care of. Juliane's pregnant friend Sabine

⁸⁵ "One generation earlier and you would have joined the BDM." The BDM or "Bund Deutscher Mädchen" was a Nazi youth organisation for girls.

⁸⁶ "Mothers brought the catastrophe about, and then suffered most from it."

indicates this problem when she comments sarcastically on Marianne's radicalism: "Gibt ihr Kind auf, um die sogenannte Menschheit zu retten."⁸⁷

Jan is raised under a false name out of fear that his mother's notoriety might compromise his safety. This attempt to protect him, which is also an attempt to erase the past, fails. The violence Marianne engaged in returns to haunt her son. His first reaction is to want to have nothing to do with his mother; in one of the film's most striking scenes, he tears apart a black-and-white photograph of Marianne Juliane has attached to her pinboard. This amounts to another attempt at erasing the past. One of the film's most hopeful moments sees Jan changing his attitude and beginning to ask about Marianne. "Ich muß alles wissen,"⁸⁸ he tells Juliane with an impatience that recalls his mother. It is with this demand that the film ends. An investigation of the past, Von Trotta suggests, is the first requirement for preventing further tragedy.

Such an investigation necessitates an awareness of history that needs first to be created, as emerges from Juliane's failure to interest a journalist in her findings about her sister's death. "Ob Mord oder Selbstmord interessiert keinen Menschen mehr,"⁸⁹ the journalist says, adding: "Aktuell sein heißt die richtige Meldung zum richtigen Zeitpunkt. Alles andere gehört auf den Misthaufen der

⁸⁷ "Gives up her child to save so-called humanity."

⁸⁸ "I have to know everything."

⁸⁹ "Today no one cares whether it was murder or suicide."

Geschichte oder meinetwegen in die Geschichtsbücher."⁹⁰ This position is exposed as irresponsible by the experiences of Jan and Juliane. The lesson they have learned is that history cannot simply be relegated to history books, and that every attempt to ignore what appears not to be "topical" can only lead to further catastrophe. As unlikely as it may appear, the journalist's position – premised on a rejection of history and a refusal to examine particular events in their larger context – is not far removed from that of Marianne, who criticises her sister's attempt to explain her choices by reference to their childhood: "Du kannst mich nicht aus meiner persönlichen Geschichte heraus beschreiben. Meine Geschichte beginnt erst mit den anderen."⁹¹ Von Trotta confirms the opposite position, that of Juliane: "[...] daß wir uns aus unserer persönlichen Geschichte nicht befreien können."⁹² By her use of flashbacks, Von Trotta shows personal history is always also political history. The question of whether or not to enact a radical break with the past is shown to be misguided: even a break as radical as that of Marianne does not simply eliminate the past. The lifestyle she has abandoned has led to the birth of Jan, and her refusal to acknowledge the extent to which her choices affect him is not revolutionary, but simply irresponsible.

⁹⁰ "Topicality means: the right news at the right moment. Everything else belongs in the dustbin of history or, if you prefer, the history books."

⁹¹ "You can't describe me on the basis of my personal history. My history only begins with the others." By "the others," Marianne means other militants.

⁹² "That we can't free ourselves from our personal history."

Reinhard Hauff: Stammheim

Reinhard Hauff's 1986 film, for which journalist and RAF-expert Stefan Aust wrote the script, reconstructs the trial of Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin, Ulrike Meinhof, and Jan-Carl Raspe in Stammheim. Both action and dialogue closely follow the trial records; in this sense, the film is not so much a work of fiction as a dramatisation of documented events.

Hauff sees the RAF as an insurrectionary movement so radical as to prohibit any meaningful dialogue between itself and its enemy, the state; he uses the Stammheim trial to illustrate how this impossibility of communication reduces all relations to relations of force, thereby condemning the weaker of the two parties (the RAF members) to physical annihilation. The radicality of the RAF's protest is evoked during the first minutes of the film, which present original black-and-white footage of the arrest of Andreas Baader and Holger Meins. The first words the audience hears are those of a policeman urging the two cornered militants to throw away their arms; the request is responded to with renewed gunfire. Shortly afterwards, the half-naked Meins and the wounded Baader are dragged from their hiding place by policemen. The sounds of the arrest are replaced by slow, ominous music which foreshadows the tragic deaths of the militants as they will result from their refusal to bow to the state's superior might (the latter being powerfully

suggested by the police's sheer force of numbers, and by the images of a large armoured vehicle rolling towards the hiding place of Baader and Meins).⁹³

The remainder of the film is set mainly in the court hall specially constructed for the Stammheim trial. The camera switches frequently from the point of view of the defendants to that of the judges, further emphasising the antagonism between the RAF and the state. Baader and the judges are presented as nervous and restless. While Baader and the other militants frequently vent their anger by pointing fingers, shouting insults, and physically attacking court members, the judges attempt to preserve an appearance of dignity, although their strained voices repeatedly betray uncertainty and helplessness (the latter being aggravated by frequent shouts and hoots from a court audience outraged by the prosecution's more dubious legal manoeuvres). Yet mostly the atmosphere is not one of heated emotions, but of a "chilling" alienation. The predominant colours (not only in the court scenes, but also in those set within Stammheim prison) are cold greys and blues, and the trial scenes are interspersed with images of barbed wire, snowdrift, and artificially lit prison walls. When Baader and his companions are not suffering outbursts of anger or desperation, they present a facade of stoic indifference towards their surroundings: while being

⁹³ In this scene, Baader and Meins are outnumbered by the police in the same way that Böll famously said of the RAF that it was outnumbered by those whose society it sought to destroy (Böll spoke of the RAF's struggle as that of "six against sixty million").

driven to court, they sit silently and with expressionless faces; they frequently wear dark sunglasses; and in one suggestive scene, Raspe is shown sitting with his back to one of the prison guards, headphones over his ears.

Hauff carefully chronicles the immoral and illegal treatment of the RAF members both in prison and in court: the withholding of court materials from the lawyers of the defendants; the persistent refusal of the court to let the defendants speak (at times by switching off their microphones); the use of "bought" witnesses made to recite prepared testimonies; the installation of secret recording devices in the rooms reserved for the discussions of the defendants with their lawyers; the creation of pretenses for gratuitous physical violence against the defendants; the violent removal of the defendants from the court; the judge's various attempts to prohibit a later revision of his pre-determined sentence by reaching an agreement with the court responsible for such a revision; and open calls for execution and suicide.⁹⁴ The failure of the militants and the prosecutors to properly communicate emerges from the court's willingness to bend and break its own laws, as well as from the defendants' repeated but fruitless attempts both to place the trial in a larger political context (that of the Vietnam war) and to contest the legitimacy of the court. The court proceedings

⁹⁴ At one point, Baader discovers a note next to his microphone that reads "Kopf abnehmen" ["Take his head off"]; later, an envelope containing a noose and a letter urging Raspe to commit suicide is allowed to pass through the prison's otherwise rigid system of mail censorship.

are characterised by constant misunderstandings, and by outbursts of anger and physical violence; the audience is left with the impression that the prosecution and the defendants are talking not so much with as at one another, and that their radically divergent positions can only lead to the breakdown of what little communication there is.

Reviews of Stammheim have tended to emphasise the film's "objectivity." In part, this relates to Hauff's refusal to take a clear stand on the questions of whether or not the RAF's denunciation of the court as "fascist" was legitimate, and of whether Baader, Ensslin, Meinhof, and Raspe were killed (the death of Meins is not a subject of the film – Meins died before the beginning of the trial). The film ends with the deaths of Baader, Ensslin, and Raspe, but does not answer the question of whether they committed suicide or were murdered: Hauff merely shows the bluish screens on which the prison guards observed the cells of the prisoners, while a voice-over reports the deaths, closing with the ambiguous remark: "Die Ermittlungen der Staatsanwaltschaft ergaben: Selbstmord."⁹⁵ What actually happened is left to the audience to decide; the bluish light of the surveillance monitors suggests an inhuman and deathlike environment, but does not reveal whether the RAF members ended their own lives to escape that environment, or whether they were physically murdered by the state representatives that created it.

⁹⁵ "The investigations of the judiciary concluded: suicide."

Volker Schlöndorff: Die Stille nach dem Schuß

Partly based on the memoirs of Inge Viett, Die Stille nach dem Schuß remains the only German film to portray the life of an ex-militant.⁹⁶ Its protagonist, Rita Vogt, moves to the GDR following the defeat of militancy, and lives there under a false name until 1989. Threatened with arrest following the reunification of Germany, she makes a last desperate escape attempt and is gunned down at a police checkpoint. Only the first section of Die Stille nach dem Schuß is devoted to her activities as a militant; the bulk of the film describes her experiences in socialist Germany and the vagaries of life under a false identity. Schlöndorff is also the first director to examine the relationship of the GDR's secret police (the Staatssicherheit or Stasi) to the West German militancy.⁹⁷

The film opens with images of what Vogt calls "die heiteren Jahre"⁹⁸ of militancy: Rita and her comrades rob a bank only to leave a substantial part of their booty with a homeless man who can barely believe his good fortune. The robbery is characterised by an innocent playfulness that recalls the early exploits of the 2 June

⁹⁶ This film has been released with English subtitles as Legends of Rita. For background on Schlöndorff's cinema, cf. Hans-Bernhard Moeller, Volker Schlöndorff's Cinema: Adaptation, Politics, and the "Movie-Appropriate" (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002).

⁹⁷ Ties between the 2 June Movement and the East German Staatssicherheit or Stasi (the intelligence service) are discussed by Inge Viett in her memoir. Cf. also Meyer 363ff. and 451ff. The estate in which Rita and her comrades meet their Stasi contact, Erwin, is probably based on Objekt 47, a Stasi base mentioned by Meyer.

⁹⁸ "The merry years."

Movement. (Like the members of that group, Rita and her comrades distribute chocolate candy to the bank's customers.) Images evocative of the late 1960s and early 1970s (posters of Che Guevara and Jimi Hendrix, a Marx bust, a Ton Steine Scherben record) are set to the tune of a Rolling Stones song ("Street Fighting Man"). Rita's interception at Berlin-Schönefeld airport, which ends with the Stasi-agent Erwin giving her a contact number and sending her on her way, foreshadows what will become a major theme of the film: the Stasi's willingness to offer protection to militants. Following the liberation of the imprisoned militant Andreas Klein, clearly based on that of Andreas Baader, Rita and her comrades take up Erwin's offer to meet with him in the GDR and discuss the prospects for "armed struggle" in West Germany.⁹⁹

The Stasi's attitude to militancy is ambiguous. Erwin's boss echoes the traditional Marxist condemnation of "individual terror." "In Deutschland ist immer von rechts geschossen worden," he says, "aber natürlich sind wir auch gegen den Terror von links. Der führt ja zu nichts, erschreckt die Leute und formiert den Abwehrapparat. Das hat ja schon Lenin erkannt."¹⁰⁰ This pragmatic rejection of militancy is tinged with sympathy for "romantische junge Leute."¹⁰¹ The Stasi promises not to collaborate with the West German police

⁹⁹ Another one of Rita's comrades, Friederike, is based on Ulrike Meinhof.

¹⁰⁰ "In Germany shots were always fired from the right, but of course we're also opposed to terror from the left. It leads nowhere, just scares people and consolidates the mechanisms of defense. Lenin already understood this."

¹⁰¹ "Romantic young people."

in return for Klein's guarantee that he and his comrades will not engage in armed operations on East German territory.

The Stasi's pragmatism is repeatedly contrasted with the youthful adventurism of the militants, as when Erwin and his colleague sour-facedly turn off the recording device by which they have unexpectedly become the audience of Rita and Andreas, who are having sex nextdoor. In a discussion with Rita and her comrades, Erwin paraphrases Marxist state theory by characterising the GDR as "die organisierte Form der Gewalt."¹⁰² By contrast, the insurrectionary violence of the militants is portrayed as spontaneous and chaotic.

As such, it is destined to remain short-lived. Not long after their meeting with Erwin, Rita and her comrades are stranded in Paris, as far removed from the prospect of staging a genuine revolution as they are from the country where they first envisioned it. All that is left of their revolutionary impetus is reductive rhetoric. What is more, they have come to enjoy the comforts of prosperity, and with them the very middle-class lifestyle they set out to contest. Andreas is dressed in an expensive suit, and Rita has invested in a motorcycle. The bank robbery Andreas proposes has only one thing in common with their earlier activities – its criminal nature. The political dimension of their "struggle" has vanished.

¹⁰² "The organised form of violence."

The following sequence sees Rita and Friederike riding their motorcycle through Paris. A policeman stops them for not wearing helmets. When he asks for their papers, they try to escape. Rita is cornered by another policeman and shoots him. This entirely apolitical crime marks the end of militancy. The militants escape to the GDR, from where they are flown to Beirut – with the exception of Rita. Increasingly disappointed with Andreas, she chooses to remain in East Germany.

The motorcycle episode is the first of three moments of transition, all of which involve a policeman alerted to Rita by a traffic violation, and two of which involve a motorcycle. In a later scene, Rita and her East German friend Tatjana attract the attention of a policeman after Tatjana has driven Rita's car into a tree. Like the Paris episode, this comparatively harmless event foreshadows the final sequence of the film, during which Rita rides a stolen motorcycle through a West German police checkpoint and is gunned down.¹⁰³

Rita's life in the GDR contrasts sharply with her life in the GFR and France. She trades her designer clothes for a plain dress, her true name for the equally plain "Susanne Schmidt," and takes up work in a textile factory. After a brief affair with the alcoholic

¹⁰³ The scene in which Rita returns the ticket to Beirut she is offered features another image emblematic of this first moment of transition. After stating her decision to remain in the GDR, she runs into the woods, hides her face in the space between two trees, and cries. The image of Rita's face between the two trees captures her situation, that of a person torn as much between the two German states as between the life of the militant and that of the ex-militant.

Tatjana, who is disillusioned with life in the GDR and dreams of moving west, Rita is constrained to move to another town and adopt yet another new identity: a co-worker has noticed the scar on her elbow, identifying her as a wanted ex-militant. Rita is unwilling to abandon her life with Tatjana, but Erwin insists the Stasi's complicity with militancy must not be revealed. Their argument captures the conflict between personal happiness and larger political necessities that characterises Rita's existence in the GDR. Rita asks Erwin: "Interessiert ihr euch eigentlich für Menschen?"¹⁰⁴ He replies: "Das ist unser Beruf."¹⁰⁵ This exchange further emphasises the contrast between Rita's anarchic idealism and the GDR's post-Stalinist humanism-as-bureaucracy.

Rita's next love affair, with the lifeguard Jochen Pettka, also fails: Jochen dreams of moving to the USSR, but Rita cannot follow him because Erwin insists she must remain in the GDR.¹⁰⁶ Her status as an ex-militant condemns her to an ongoing shiftlessness that prohibits human closeness. This is metaphorically expressed in the scene in which she explains to Erwin's colleague how she learned to move naturally with a gun tucked into her trousers: "Dein Körper hat eine Mitte, um die bewegst du dich."¹⁰⁷ Rita's renunciation of militancy leads precisely to the loss of this "centre,"

¹⁰⁴ "Do you even care about people?"

¹⁰⁵ "That's our job."

¹⁰⁶ When Rita reveals to Jochen her status as an ex-militant, he is shocked. His "innocent" surprise is captured in the image of him rising naked out of the bathtub.

¹⁰⁷ "Your body has a centre. You move around it."

and leaves her in a state of ongoing imbalance. Her female body is quite literally the victim of this imbalance; after leaving Jochen, she has to undergo an abortion.

The documents Rita is given following her renewed adoption of a false identity announce the imminent demise of the GDR, which will also be her own. The date on these documents is "1989." The fall of the Berlin wall is followed by East Germany being swamped with the symbols of Western capitalism: Woolworth shopping bags, bananas, and oranges. No one shares Rita's positive view of the GDR's "großer Versuch."¹⁰⁸ Rita is doubly exposed: to the West German police, which seeks to incarcerate her, and to the remnants of the East German state, which have decided to cooperate with their former enemy. Standing on a highway bridge with Rita, Erwin points east and west and tells her: "Gesucht wirst du überall."¹⁰⁹ The traffic passing below captures the sense of rapid historical transformation whose victim Rita will become. The snow that falls on the checkpoint where she is gunned down following her desperate escape attempt recalls an earlier scene, in which Andreas commented on how cold it is in East Germany. In both scenes, winter, the season that sees the transition from one year to the next, functions as a signifier of transformation. In the earlier scene, the transformation is the attempted one from Nazi Germany to socialism; in the later scene, in which the development comes full

¹⁰⁸ "Great experiment."

¹⁰⁹ "They're looking for you everywhere."

circle like the sequence of the seasons, the transformation is that from the failed socialist experiment to triumphant capitalism. This final transformation is the death toll of the egalitarian utopia that prompted Rita to become militant – a utopia that survived the defeat of militancy, but not the larger historical mechanisms of the Cold War.

That the German cinema of militancy should raise issues related to Germany's particular history – such as those related to the Third Reich, or to Germany's division and reunification – is not surprising. Yet history alone cannot account for the features that set this cinema apart from its Italian counterpart. German cinema is also characterised by particular ideological notions, which it shares, to a large extent, with German literature.

Fassbinder's films are informed by a bleak view of capitalist culture that is ideological in so far as it asserts that capitalism cannot accommodate humanist values such as personal autonomy and dignity. Fassbinder's deliberate "misreading" of Schopenhauer, in Die dritte Generation, is perhaps the starkest expression of this ideology: it asserts that all phenomena in the capitalist "universe" can be reduced to the imperative of maximising profit. Like Schopenhauer's will, this imperative becomes the Kantian thing-in-itself; it leaves no room for the pursuit of moral values, but merely uses them to disguise itself. This anti-capitalist ideology is related to

an anti-technocratic stance already identified as a key feature of the German literature of militancy. As in the work of writers such as Delius, it frequently takes the shape of a media critique that asserts the irresponsible and inhuman character of media culture, its tendency to dehumanise individuals in a ruthless quest for spectacle. (A milder critique of media culture also informs Die bleierne Zeit, which sees Juliane failing to interest a journalist in the story of Marianne's death.) The notion of instrumentalisation that informs both Mutter Küsters and Die dritte Generation, and which is articulated through mechanical metaphors in the latter film, is one aspect of this anti-technocratic ideology.

The German cinema of militancy also shares with its literary counterpart a concern with class issues that frequently begins from the premises of a Marxist or pseudo-Marxist analysis. The working-class milieu so prominent in texts like Brandstellen and Die Glücklichen also occupies a central position in the narrative of Mutter Küsters. A critical view of the middle class as one that has outlived its previously progressive character, become parasitical, and is now reduced to a destructive adventurism significantly informs Mutter Küsters and is central to Die dritte Generation; the same view is implicit in the work of Goetz, Kuckart, and other German authors.

Finally, that "the state" is the ultimate wellspring of repression and violence is an ideological notion that recurs throughout the

German films discussed above; it is particularly evident in the final section of Deutschland im Herbst. Again, this notion is present in the work of German authors such as Goetz. Italian writers tend not to concern themselves with it. Nor do Italian directors, as will be seen below. Central to their analyses of militancy, which are shaped by the historical and social peculiarities of Italy, such as the existence of a significant anti-fascist movement and the country's division into a rural south and an industrial north, is the ideological notion that the family is the ultimate paradigm of human relations, including political relations. This notion is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the earliest of the films discussed below, Francesco Rosi's Tre Fratelli.

Francesco Rosi: Tre fratelli

Left-wing militancy is not the central theme of Tre Fratelli.¹¹⁰ Rosi's film tells the story of three brothers who return to their rural hometown for the burial of their mother. One of the three brothers, Raffaele, is a Roman judge who regularly receives death threats from militant left-wing groups. The other two, Nicola and Rocco, work, respectively, in a Turin Fiat factory and a Naples orphanage.

¹¹⁰ Tre Fratelli was released in 1981. A version with English subtitles has been released as Three Brothers. The Italian script is available in book form. Cf. Tonino Guerra and Francesco Rosi, Tre fratelli: sceneggiatura dell'omonimo film di Francesco Rosi (Mantova: Publi-Paolini, 1999). In the book's preface, Alberto Cattini discusses how the film is loosely based on "The Third Son," a 1936 short story by Andrei Platonovic Platonov. Cf. Guerra and Rosi 7ff.

Nicola is involved with the labour movement, but critical of the militant project.

The film opens with the image of a bleak housing project and the sounds of a passing airplane and a factory siren. In the context established by the scenes that follow, this image and these sounds function as signifiers not only of modernity, but of one of its specific manifestations: Italy's industrial north, which will henceforth be contrasted repeatedly with the rural south. The first image of life the viewer is presented with is that of scuttling rats, creating an impression not so much of vitality as of decay. The suggestion that life in industrial society is inhuman, or even that such a society is inherently hostile to life, will recur throughout the film. The thumping heartbeat that is heard next seems to be struggling to assert itself in the environment portrayed.¹¹¹

These dichotomies – the rural south and the industrial north, vitality and decay – frame much of the discourse of the film.¹¹²

¹¹¹ The rats also suggest dispossession and marginalisation – and thereby those members of industrial society for whom Nicola speaks when he defends the labour movement.

¹¹² The fundamental dichotomy is that of vitality and decay, or more generally, of life and death. A number of minor scenes are based on a contrast between the material and emotional needs of human beings (needs that express their vitality, their character as living creatures) and the cold, "lifeless" environments and regimented lifestyles that prohibit the satisfaction of these needs. In one scene, Raffaele's wife laments the extent to which security measures taken to protect his life begin to impede that life, alienating him from his family. She accuses him of "organising everything like a chessboard." In another scene, Nicola and his daughter are driving along a highway when she feels the urge to urinate; because she cannot wait until the next gas station, Nicola has to stop at the side of the highway and let her urinate there – an episode that suggests a conflict between biological need and the regimentation of that need in industrial society. If the highway that cuts across the countryside is a signifier of that society, the mountain of grain on which Nicola's daughter plays in a later scene recalls agricultural society. Here, the contrast is obviously also one between the north

Nicola's defense of the labour movement is, arguably, one example of a character asserting the right to a dignified and humane existence against the claims of an inhuman industrial society. For Raffaele, the labour movement is inseparable from that "terrorism" in which he can only see a force for death.

Early in the film, Nicola and Raffaele discuss militancy and the labour movement. Nicola objects to the facile conflation of the two: "Io ho il diritto di esprimere il mio malcontento e di lottare senza per questo dovermi trovare un bollo di assassino stampigliato sulla fronte!"¹¹³ The strikes and demonstrations of the labour movement, Nicola insists, "sono separati da un abisso dagli atti di terrorismo."¹¹⁴ If they are violence, then so is the life of the factory worker: "Certo i miei scioperi per cambiare l'ambiente li ho fatti anch'io e qualche fastidio alla ditta l'ho dato, non dico di no. [...] Ma

and the south, between the modern and the pre-modern. (Nicola and his daughter are travelling south on the highway, from Turin to the southern home of Nicola's father.) When Nicola's daughter sleeps beside his father the night before the funeral, she discovers the alarm clock beside the bed is broken. Her grandfather assures her he can tell the time by the stars and the sounds of animals. When she tells him there are no animals in her hometown (Turin), he replies: "Ma ci stanno le stelle" ["But there are stars"]. This is one of many hopeful moments in Rosi's film; it suggests the values he associates with pre-industrial society may survive its decline. There is hope even for the Turin of which Nicola says, at one point, that it terrifies him, "così grande, così fredda, così chiusa verso noi meridionali" ["so big, so cold, so shut off from us southerners"]. The dichotomy of life and death is also evident in the scene in which Raffaele leafs through a file he has taken with him from his office. The file contains black-and-white photographs of assassination victims. The emotional impact of their tortured faces contrasts markedly with the "cold" bureaucratic associations of the file.

¹¹³ "I have the right to express my dissatisfaction and to struggle without thereby being labeled an assassin."

¹¹⁴ "Are separated by a chasm from acts of terrorism."

questo è fare violenza? E allora la violenza della catena di montaggio?"¹¹⁵

Entirely loyal to the labour movement, convinced of the legitimacy both of its claims and its mode of action, Nicola condemns militancy as much as he condemns the state; he feels militancy discredits the labour movement by association. To Raffaele, this position is unacceptable; he argues one must take sides - either for the state or for the "terrorists" -and rejects the viability a third, intermediate position. He insists Nicola is downplaying the continuities between the labour movement and militancy. For Raffaele, Nicola is a hopeless idealist who does not understand the full consequences of what he is advocating; somewhat condescendingly, Raffaele points out he is some twenty years older than his brother. The discussion does not arrive at a satisfying conclusion; Nicola, outraged over working conditions in the factories, and Raffaele, convinced of the ties between the labour movement and those groups that have repeatedly threatened to assassinate him, cannot agree. Their failure to understand one another reflects the larger tensions in Italian society.

In another central scene, Raffaele finds himself at an inn where a number of townspeople are discussing militancy. More specifically, they are discussing the question of whether someone

¹¹⁵ "Sure I too went on strike to change the [working] environment, and I'm not saying I haven't caused trouble for the company. But is that really violence? Then what about the violence of the assembly line?"

who witnesses an assassination ought to denounce the assassin to the police. The townspeople ask Raffaele to join them at the table and share his views.¹¹⁶ Raffaele expounds a definition of militancy as terrorism, a politics of fear, then goes on to argue that what Italy needs is not fear but trust.¹¹⁷ He accuses the militants of substituting "persuasion" with "fear" and condemns the implications this has for society: "[...] la paura non può essere un sentimento normale su cui si fonda una società. La paura è un'eccezione, la regola deve essere la fiducia, se no come si può vivere?"¹¹⁸ Just as he accused Nicola of being a misguided idealist, Raffaele goes on to condemn the revolutionary project as madness, "la follia di pensare di poter cambiare tutto e subito."¹¹⁹

The night before his mother's funeral, Raffaele has a nightmare. In it, he is shot, on a bus, by a group of militants. It is only at the last moment, when the corpse is examined by the police, that the viewer discovers it to be that of Raffaele. To the

¹¹⁶ The workers, dressed in unbuttoned short-sleeve shirts, smoking and drinking, evoke the proletarian culture from which Raffaele has become increasingly estranged. Yet the scene is hopeful in that it shows how that estrangement can be overcome through dialogue. It also presents a moment of personal fulfilment for Raffaele. He has just completed a phone call to his worried wife in Rome; himself no less worried, he steps out of the phone cabin and takes a seat at the crowded table. There is a shift from the fear and estrangement characterising Raffaele's relationship to his wife (and his life in Rome in general) and the trust and solidarity of the townspeople.

¹¹⁷ There are obvious links between this dichotomy of fear and trust and the other dichotomies that structure *Tre Fratelli*. It seems clear that the trust of which Raffaele speaks is most readily found in the rural, pre-modern environment of the Italian south. Militancy is an urban phenomenon; for Rosi, it is related to everything that is flawed in the urban culture of the north.

¹¹⁸ "Fear can never be a normal feeling on which to base society. Fear is an exception; the rule has to be trust. Otherwise how can one live?"

¹¹⁹ "The folly of thinking one can change everything immediately."

militants making their escape, he is simply "un nemico del popolo"¹²⁰ whom they have "giustiziato."¹²¹ The clash between abstract rhetoric and its translation into practice could not be more forceful; for the viewer, the hopelessly vague categories of "the enemy" and "the people" can never do justice to the richness of Raffaele's individuality. Crucially, the militants seem as terrified by what they have done as the people on the bus; they are highly nervous as they make their retreat. Their slogans are barely heard over the cries of panic, suggesting their political message is obscured by the manner in which they choose to present it; whatever the merit of their political ideals, thoughtful engagement with them is prohibited by an overpowering sense of terror.¹²²

At the close of the scene, the heartbeat heard at the beginning of the film is heard again. It now suggests both the terror of Raffaele and the bus passengers and, more generally, the fragility of every human life. In the opening scene, the hostile force against which the heartbeat asserted itself was that of a decrepit urban environment, associated with an inhuman industrial society; now it is the ruthless violence of a group devoted to transforming that society. Suggestive of an irreducible will to live, the heartbeat reconciles Nicola and Raffaele; although their views pit them against

¹²⁰ "An enemy of the people."

¹²¹ "Brought to justice."

¹²² The scene recalls Dutschke's statement that "terror" stalls the learning process of the masses. Cf. Chapter II.

each other, those views result from the same desire for survival, security, and dignity.¹²³

Gianni Amelio: Colpire al cuore

As in many of the novels discussed in the preceding chapter, militancy is analysed, in Colpire al cuore, as part of a larger generational conflict, and related to the question (still controversial) of how fascism and the partisan resistance of the 1940s ought to be understood.¹²⁴ The film tells the story of the adolescent Emilio's alienation from his father. Emilio discovers his father was not only involved in the more radical activities of the partisan resistance (the execution, after the end of the war, of former fascists), but also directly supports a militant organisation. The process by which Emilio comes of age ends with him denouncing his father to the

¹²³ Although the connection is not immediately apparent, this scene deserves to be examined in relation to a flashback narrating the liberation of an Italian town at the end of the Second World War, and to the dichotomy of the modern and the pre-modern discussed above. In the flashback, a tank rumbles through the countryside – a threatening symbol of modernity in a placid pre-modern landscape. The tank is inhuman and lifeless, but at a crucial moment, its hatch opens and the tank operator climbs out. He turns out to be an Italian. He kisses the earth and then embraces his countrymen. The scene suggests a re-emergence of the fraternity and humanity Rosi associates with rural life from the threatening and alienating modernity symbolised by the tank. (In addition to its connection with this flashback, the assassination scene also prefigures, by its more hopeful implications, one of the film's final scenes. Like the assassination scene, this scene presents a dream that is also a vision of the future. This time, Rocco is dreaming. He imagines himself leading a crowd of children through the streets of an Italian city, sweeping up first cigarette butts and syringes, then firearms, and finally the "trash" of an American city and of Moscow: dollar notes and military decorations, respectively. In a vision of global renewal, these symbols of urban depravity, capitalism, and militarism are burnt. Crucially, this happens on a green field, suggestive of the rural environment Rosi consistently presents in positive terms.)

¹²⁴ For background on Amelio's cinema, cf. Emanuele Martini (ed.), Gianni Amelio: Le regole e il gioco (Turin: Lindau, 1999) and Alberto Cattini, Le storie e lo sguardo: il cinema di Gianni Amelio (Venice: Marsilio, 2000).

police. The “blow to the heart” that was the slogan for the militant attack on the state becomes the symbol of a different kind of conflict, that which pits a son against his father.

Colpire al cuore’s first scene already suggests Emilio’s alienation from his father. Emilio’s father is telling him a joke that fails to provoke more than a smile. The father’s frantic gestures and his way of speaking quickly betray his desire to impress the silent and distracted Emilio. The joke itself turns on the motif of repetition, which is central to the film: a group of psychiatric patients performs a song; when it is asked to give an encore, it can only perform the new song to the tune of the old one. This failure to adapt to a changed situation is precisely what Emilio will go on to accuse his father of: the father’s support of militancy results from him interpreting the political situation of postwar Italy in the outdated terms of the partisan resistance.

The scene is charged with similar symbolism. The father, a university professor, goes on to speak warmly about one of his former students: “Era il migliore degli miei studenti.”¹²⁵ Emilio’s reply – “Adesso è il più idiota dei miei professori”¹²⁶ – foreshadows the stance he will take with regard to the relation of the partisan resistance to militancy: that what was once appropriate or even laudable may later be inappropriate or stupid. During the conversation, the son plays idly with a sickle that foreshadows the

¹²⁵ “He was my best student.”

¹²⁶ “Now he’s the most idiotic of all my teachers.”

spray-painted hammer and sickle in the militant hideout where he will later watch his father being arrested. And the conversation ends with the father lamenting his colleagues' refusal to talk about their past, "come se avrebbero vergogna degli anni passati sui libri."¹²⁷ Their denial of the past is contrasted, in the course of the film, to a different kind of denial: that of the father, whose valourisation of the past prohibits him from understanding the changed circumstances of the present.¹²⁸

During the conversation, Emilio is ignorant of his father's involvement with political violence past and present. This changes quickly. The father has invited two friends to the family house, both of whom turn out to be militants. One of the two, Sandro, shows Emilio a picture, taken in June of 1944, on which the father is carrying a Sten machine gun, and explains: "La guerra era finita da un pezzo. C'era la caccia alle spie, ai fascisti, ai traditori. Ne ha messo ai muri tanti, sai."¹²⁹ This photograph is one of three that punctuate Emilio's increasing alienation from his father. In the scene that follows, Emilio takes a photograph of his parents listening to music with their two visitors, Giulia and Sandro. Later,

¹²⁷ "As if they were ashamed of times past."

¹²⁸ In this scene, Emilio wears a black-and-red sweater. These colours, traditionally associated with fascism and communism, inform a discussion he overhears in a later scene: his grandmother talks to a visitor about red and black roses. The visitor, who later turns out to be a militant, speaks about how he threw away a red rose, whereupon the mother mentions receiving a black rose as a prize. This displacement of red by black suggests the replacement of the "red" partisans by militants whose violence increasingly resembles the "black" one of fascism. In a later scene, the visitor (Sandro) makes himself an apologist for Ortega y Gasset's support of fascism.

¹²⁹ "The war was long over. There was still the hunt for spies, fascists, traitors. Your father finished off a lot of them, you know."

he will take a photograph of his father meeting secretly with Giulia, who by then is on the run from the police. Like that shown Emilio by Sandro, this third photograph has an incriminating effect. The difference is that it is deliberately taken by Emilio; his alienation from his father assumes an increasingly deliberate character.

The second photograph neatly captures the generational conflict at the heart of Amelio's film. The scene Emilio photographs assembles the representatives of three generations: on the left side of the screen, Sandro, only a few years older than Emilio, is dancing with Emilio's grandmother; on the right side, Emilio's father leans against a tree, observing the dancers with an air of detachment. Another tree bisects the centre of the screen. The generations of fascism, partisan resistance, and militancy are all present; crucially, the representatives of fascism and militancy are dancing arm in arm. The father, a former partisan, seems pleased, as if he did not understand the import of this union, or the possibility that militancy may be closer to fascism than its proponents suspect. The final words of the song to which Sandro and the grandmother are dancing – "Spera in vano / Ma non torna più"¹³⁰ – provide an ironic commentary to the father's hope for a return not only of the antifascist violence of the partisans, but also of the moral clarity of their era.

¹³⁰ "Hope in vain / But he will not return."

Two generations are not represented in this image: that of Emilio, who is watching the dance from inside the house, and that of Sandro and Giulia's infant son, who is also indoors. They represent the future for the sake of which the militant struggle is ostensibly conducted, but which in fact is largely excluded from its discourse. Sandro will turn against his father and the militant project, and the militant Giulia will go on to feel shame in the face of her son. "Che li racconterò quando sarà grande?" she asks Emilio's father in a later scene. "Che suo padre andava e ammazzava la gente? E che io sapevo e non ho fatto nulla?"¹³¹

That the father's concept of militancy is a romantic one which younger generations are largely unable to share is the import of another scene, in which he reads a Nerval poem at university and then comments to Emilio on the ignorance of his students. Two lines from this poem – "L'esperance a fuit comme un songe / Et mon amour seul m'est resté"¹³² – indicate both the father's betrayed hope of a partisan revolution, and his isolation as someone who continues to cherish similar hopes for the future. The ignorance of his students emerges from an anecdote concerning someone's faithful but mindless memorisation of a textbook – "Aveva imparato a memoria anche gli errori di stampa."¹³³ This faithful but uncritical reception of ideas also characterises the father himself, who

¹³¹ "What will I tell him when he's grown? That his father went around killing people, and that I knew it, but did nothing?"

¹³² "Hope has disappeared like a dream / And my love is all that has remained."

¹³³ "She even learned the printing errors by heart."

adheres to the revolutionary ideals of the partisans without questioning their appropriateness in postwar Italy.

The conflict between father and son reaches its first climax when Emilio walks through Milan at night and sees the corpse of Sandro, killed in a police shootout. Emilio learns that Sandro was a wanted militant, and informs the police of his father's friendship with him.¹³⁴ The father is questioned and subsequently rebukes Emilio, who takes badly to this reaction. His behaviour becomes increasingly independent and increasingly threatening to the father. Emilio begins following Giulia, who now lives in hiding, through the city, and takes pictures of her in the place where he will later arrange for her and his father to be arrested: a decrepit modern building, one of whose walls features the spray-painted militant slogan "Finché la violenza dello stato si chiamerà giustizia la giustizia del proletariato sarà violenta."¹³⁵ Later, he takes a photograph of his father secretly meeting with Giulia at university.¹³⁶

A second climax in the conflict is reached when Emilio's father discovers this photograph and confronts his son in what develops

¹³⁴ The scene in which Emilio grasps the full import of this friendship sees his sister solving math problems on the phone, while a news report chronicles the police shootout. The mathematical problems Emilio's sister is solving become a metaphor for Emilio "doing the math" about his father.

¹³⁵ "As long as the violence of the state calls itself justice the justice of the proletariat will be violent."

¹³⁶ Emilio's alienation from his father goes hand in hand with a loss of respect for his mother, who is entirely ignorant of her husband's activities. This is strikingly expressed in a scene in which Emilio insults his mother – "Sei una povera stupida, non sai niente" ["You poor fool, you don't know a thing"] – while she merely smiles, unable to hear him due to a set of headphones she has placed over her ears.

into a prolonged nocturnal argument.¹³⁷ At one point, Emilio's father produces his son's identity card and says: "Guarda che faccia da ragazzino avevi. Adesso invece sei grande. Sei già in grado di giudicare adesso."¹³⁸ The father's angry and patronising remark betrays his fear; Emilio is indeed coming of age, and refuses to uncritically adopt his father's morality. Emilio's father attempts to stall this process by arguing he has simply been misunderstood – "Dal buco della serratura sembriamo tutti ladri, tutti assassini"¹³⁹ – but Emilio refuses to be distracted from the simple truth he has discovered: "I tuoi amici sparano. Sparavi anche tu una volta."¹⁴⁰

The next scene that sees father and son together is that of the arrest. Emilio's father has bought a train ticket for Giulia and resolved to improve relations with his son by going on vacation with him. The plan is never realised; alerted by Emilio, the father and Giulia are approached by the police outside Giulia's hideout. Before the arrest, a group of children are seen playing football in the decrepit building where Emilio first photographed the fugitive Giulia.

After the arrest, what appears to be the foot of an adult is seen

¹³⁷ This is one of three nocturnal scenes, each of which marks a moment of discovery that escalates the conflict between father and son. In the first nocturnal scene, Emilio drives to Milan in Giulia's car; she tells him his father is worried he might be developing into a boor. The second nocturnal scene sees Emilio's father meeting his son at the police station, following the death of Sandro. In the first scene, Emilio makes a discovery about his father (specifically, about the way his father thinks of him). In the second scene, Emilio's father makes a discovery about his son (that he is willing to betray him to the police). The third scene (that of the argument) sees both making discoveries about each other: Emilio is confronted with his father's fear, while the father discovers Emilio's resoluteness.

¹³⁸ "Look what a little boy's face you had. Now you're big. You're already able to sit in judgement."

¹³⁹ "Seen through the keyhole, we all seem like thieves, like assassins."

¹⁴⁰ "Your friends shoot. You shot too, once."

rolling the deserted ball around idly before kicking it away violently. The foot turns out to be that of Emilio, who watches his father and Giulia being led away by the police. Emilio's coming-of-age process has come to an end; the price of adulthood was the betrayal of his father.¹⁴¹

Giuseppe Bertolucci: Segreti segreti

Clandestinity is the central theme of Segreti segreti. Bertolucci's 1985 film explores the tensions that arise from one militant's double life within the larger context of questions about secrecy, trust, and betrayal.¹⁴² The film opens with a scene that presents the protagonist Laura as a ruthless killer, then switches to a portrayal of the well-protected, childlike existence she leads with her former maid in the family villa. Bertolucci's analysis of the conflictual and dishonest life of the middle class is expanded by a subplot that narrates the narcissistic Renata's recovery from a half-serious suicide attempt. Another central strand of the plot shows how Rosa, the sister of Laura's comrade Pietro, reacts to his assassination at the hands of Laura, and leads up to an encounter between Rosa and Laura. The film ends with Laura's confession to the police as a result

¹⁴¹ This recalls the notion of patricide formulated in Lo spasimo di Palermo. Both Consolo and Amelio approach militancy as a generational problem. In Consolo's novel, militancy entails a metaphorical patricide – a break with the nonviolence of the older generation. Amelio subverts this notion: in his film, it is the break with militancy that is conceived of as patricidal, in so far as the father is associated not with nonviolence, but with violence.

¹⁴² For background on Bertolucci's cinema, cf. Massimo Giraldi, Giuseppe Bertolucci (Milan: Il castoro, 2000).

of an investigation that also results in the suicide of Laura's mother. This final confession indicates the historical context within which the film was made – that of a society characterised by impassioned debates on pentitismo or police collaboration.

The film is structured around parallel situations, motifs, and themes. The doubleness of its title is also that of a number of central scenes in which symmetry is the guiding aesthetic principle. For example, one scene shows Laura sitting with splayed legs in the garden of the family villa. She is cleaning the gun with which she has shot both her comrade Pietro and the man whom Pietro was charged with assassinating, but failed to confront after a crisis of nerves. When Laura's maid Gina calls Laura's name from offscreen, Laura hides the gun in a bag and goes to meet Gina in another part of the garden. Gina gives Laura her childhood toys and announces she is resigning after more than forty years of working for the family. Laura sits down with splayed legs again; this time her toys lie in front of her. She places them in the blue bag that already contains her gun before rushing after Gina and asking for the reasons behind this abrupt departure. The parallelism of the gun and the toys frames a scene at whose centre lies a moment of radical transformation. When Gina hands over Laura's toys, she says to her: "Portali via."¹⁴³ This suggests a break with the past, in particular with the childhood innocence Laura seemed to rediscover

¹⁴³ "Take them away."

momentarily upon her return to the villa. The visual symbolism of the gun and the toys is reinforced by Bertolucci's use of sound. At the moment that Gina hands over the toys, a churchbell is heard ringing in the distance, and one of Laura's wind-up toys begins playing a childlike melody. The churchbells recall a funeral, and with it Laura's assassination of Pietro; the melody indicates the innocence Laura has lost by this act.

It is significant that both the gun and the toys should lie between Laura's splayed legs. In the preceding scenes, which are set on the day of Laura's arrival at the villa, Gina has repeatedly suggested to Laura she should give birth to a son. When Laura protested that she does not want children, Gina said to her: "Non bestemmiare."¹⁴⁴ By her choice of militancy, Laura has betrayed Gina's middle-class dreams of family life, renouncing her biological function as a woman in favour of lethal violence. Just as the toys between Laura's legs remind the viewer she was herself once a child, fostered by a loving mother, the gun indicates the replacement of this traditional female role through that of the "revolutionary" who administers death. The "blasphemy" of Laura relinquishing her role in human procreation is reinforced through the image of a garden fountain that dries up at the moment when Gina makes her way to the villa's gate to leave forever, an image of lost fecundity. This series of symbols is taken to its logical

¹⁴⁴ "Don't swear [or blaspheme]."

conclusion with the suicide of Laura's mother shortly before the end of the film.

Gina has discovered Laura's secret. Her discovery began with a sequence of scenes structured around the motif of the look – both the look that probes secrets and that which discloses them. During the first scene in which Laura and Gina appear together, Gina is watching the television news show that reports the death of Pietro. Laura refuses to look both at the screen and at Gina, just as she refuses to answer questions which stress Laura's middle-class background and the apparent contradiction between it and her choice of militancy. ("Te che hai studiato, dimmi a che serve,"¹⁴⁵ Gina says to Laura, referring to political violence; she elicits no reply.) Laura turns off the television and changes the topic by producing the family photo album.¹⁴⁶ Laura's militancy refuses to be easily ignored: after Laura produces the photo album, Gina notices a bloodstain on her stockings; when Laura removes the stockings and throws them into the fire, remarking with feigned casualty that they cost only a thousand lire, the smell of burning fabric recalls yet again what Laura has done.

Crucially, Laura has her back turned to Gina during most of this scene, as she does for the better part of one that shows her

¹⁴⁵ "You who've gone to university, tell me what good it does."

¹⁴⁶ The picture that attracts the attention of both Laura and Gina is one of Laura's father, who has been dead for ten years. This recalls the frequent characterisation of the first generation of militants as the "fatherless generation" and suggests one possible source of the breakdown of middle-class family structures described by Bertolucci.

coming to Gina's bedroom for a bedtime story that evening. Gina's story turns on the motif of a transgression that refuses to be ignored, and whose repercussions end only through an act of violence committed by a mother against her daughter. It is the story of a naughty girl struck dead by God as punishment for her habit of chewing her nails; after the girl's death, she continues to thrust her hand from the grave in an act of defiance, until the hand is cut off by the girl's mother. Just as the little girl finds peace only after suffering pain inflicted by her mother, Laura does not confess her crime to the police (thereby resolving the conflicts arising from her acts of political violence) until she suffers the emotional turmoil caused by her mother's suicide.

Gina learns what Laura has done before Laura's mother does; after telling her story, Gina makes a remark about how well she has raised Laura, to which Laura replies: "Te che ne sai. Non sai niente."¹⁴⁷ "Basta che ti guardo negli occhi, indovino tutto,"¹⁴⁸ Gina says. Laura takes up the challenge; "Guarda,"¹⁴⁹ she says, turning around for the first time in the scene to look Gina in the eye. The camera focuses on Gina's face, whose expression changes from self-assurance to shock. The following scene is that of Gina's departure.

This episode is followed by that of Renata's recovery from her suicide attempt. Renata and Laura are friends. Before being visited

¹⁴⁷ "What do you know. You don't know anything." The remark indicates the film's central theme of secrecy.

¹⁴⁸ "It's enough for me to look into your eyes, I'll guess everything."

¹⁴⁹ "Look."

by Laura, Renata is kept company in hospital by Laura's mother. Renata is presented as a chronic attention-seeker; her narcissism is portrayed in the larger context of the theme of middle-class decadence. "Perché si dice tentativo di suicidio invece di suicidio fallito?"¹⁵⁰ Renata asks carelessly. Laura's mother replies: "Perché siamo così presuntuosi che l'idea di un fallimento ci da noia sempre [...] anche quando si tratta del fallimento di un suicidio."¹⁵¹ Renata is herself the prime example of this presumptuousness, which is an outgrowth of narcissism; visited by Laura the following day, she explains she attempted suicide out of a morbid obsession with herself: "Fin da bambina, mi amavo. Non ho mai smesso di amarmi, mai. Anzi con gli anni l'amore è aumentato, si è raffinato fino al punto di scazzare con una lametta intorno ai miei polsi."¹⁵² In an image of solipsistic self-centredness, Renata likens her suicide attempt to a cat playing with a mouse: "Io sono il gatto e sono il topo."¹⁵³ The motif of the look is reintroduced, as is that of birth and death, when Renata says she wanted to watch herself die because she was unable to watch herself being born: "Siccome quando sono nata non potevo guardarmi nascere, volevo guardarmi mentre morivo. Ma non volevo morire, solo guardarmi mentre me ne andavo, perché in quel momento mi sarei amata più che in qualsiasi

¹⁵⁰ "Why is it called a suicide attempt instead of a failed suicide?"

¹⁵¹ "Because we're so presumptuous that the idea of failure always bothers us, even when it's a question of a failed suicide."

¹⁵² "From the time I was a girl, I loved myself. I never stopped loving myself. In fact, the love increased over the years. It became more refined, to the point of slitting my wrists with a razor."

¹⁵³ "I am the cat and I am the mouse."

altro momento."¹⁵⁴ Hers is the self-fascination of a person for whom there exist no secrets in the outside world; the only ones worth probing are those directly related to herself.

The source of the violence Renata commits against herself is the same as that Laura commits against others; both reflect a kind of presumption or hubris – that of caring more about oneself than about others, and that of feeling justified in deciding the fate of others. Bertolucci constantly emphasises this parallel, behind which lies an analysis of the larger “failure” of the middle class. The middle class has become increasingly self-referential, detached from a larger social context to the point of spawning transgressive behaviour which brings about death rather than life; it has exhausted its productive capabilities. To emphasise the similarities between the two characters, a result of their common class background, Bertolucci has Renata try on Laura’s dress. The scene ends with Renata sitting in Laura’s place, trying on the sunglasses about which she remarked they make one look like a gravedigger. The judgement is smilingly confirmed by Laura, who seems, after an initial discomfort, to discover her affinity with Renata. The murdered Pietro is an invisible third presence in this scene; Laura is carrying a bag of his clothes with her, and accidentally drops a

¹⁵⁴ “Since I couldn’t watch myself being born, I wanted to watch myself die. But I didn’t want to die, just to watch while I passed away, because at that moment I would have loved myself more than at any other.”

childhood photograph of him from a jacket pocket.¹⁵⁵ The symbols of the photograph and the sunglasses indicate the motif of the look. Here, that motif is linked to the question of the disparity between how people perceive themselves and how they are perceived by others, a disparity deliberately exploited by those engaging in secretive behaviour.¹⁵⁶

While this happens, Pietro's sister Rosa is attempting to track down Laura. She finds a note indicating Laura's address among Pietro's possessions; in one of the film's many examples of role reversal, Laura does not open the door when Rosa rings the bell, and then goes on to trail her pursuer. Laura follows Rosa onto a waiting train; in a scene that cuts constantly from one character's perspective to the other's, they share a compartment and engage in a few minutes of small talk. After some prompting, Rosa recognises Laura as her brother's killer. (She was provided with a sketch of Laura at the police department.) Rosa's initial question "Quanto ci manca?"¹⁵⁷ refers overtly to the time remaining before the train's departure, but also indicates it is only a question of time before this moment of recognition occurs. Laura steps off the train just as Rosa guesses her identity. The train then pulls out of the station. Again,

¹⁵⁵ The photograph was taken during Pietro's communion. It indicates the disparity between childhood innocence and adult guilt discussed above, as well as emphasising the middle-class customs and traditions which the militants have abandoned.

¹⁵⁶ The theme of the look that discovers more than is proper or intended is also suggested by a nurse's unforeseen entrance at the moment when Laura has taken off her dress.

¹⁵⁷ "How much longer?"

Laura's cold stare (contrasted with Rosa's tendency to glance away to the side) is the stigma that reveals her crime.

Just as this scene plays on perspective and the characters' changing perceptions of themselves and one another, the film itself constantly returns to the same events while presenting them from different points of view. A phone call Renata makes to her daughter is seen first from the point of view of Renata, then from that of the daughter. A radio announcement is heard three times: once by Rosa's mother and her lover¹⁵⁸ following the funeral of Pietro, once by Laura's mother while she waits for the police to arrest her daughter, and once by the judge who will interrogate Laura. A television show whose theme song ("Che patatrà"¹⁵⁹) humorously comments on the conflicts portrayed in the film is also seen repeatedly, not by different characters, but at various stages of the plot's development.

The final encounter of apparent strangers whose interaction reveals secrets and yields a deeper affinity is that of Laura and the judge who interrogates her after her arrest. Laura is arrested by the policemen waiting for her at the family's city house; upon finding the policemen waiting there, her mother has thrown herself from

¹⁵⁸ Laura's mother also has a lover, a further example of Bertolucci's use of parallelism. In one scene, Laura's mother asks her daughter to peek at the lover from a balcony. While they watch, he urinates against a tree. This scene recalls the nurse's embarrassing entry into Renata's hospital room while Laura is in her underwear. In both scenes, a compromising "secret" is accidentally revealed by a probing look.

¹⁵⁹ "What a mess."

the window.¹⁶⁰ Her interrogator is similarly distressed, having just learned from her daughter that her husband is cheating on her.¹⁶¹ The interrogation, during which a crying Laura betrays her comrades, becomes emblematic of all the secrets hidden and revealed during the film; in a final cathartic moment, after the secret actions of Laura and the other characters have caused the maximum amount of distress, all secrecy is abandoned.

Giuseppe Ferrara: Il caso Moro

Like Hauff's Stammheim, Il caso Moro follows the historical record so closely as to assume an almost documentary character: Ferrara

¹⁶⁰ The suicide of Laura's mother is the result of another secret revealed. Laura's mother discovers her daughter's clandestinity and is constrained to re-examine her own identity in the light of this discovery; she is last seen staring at herself in the mirror. (The scene during which Laura's mother finds the policemen in the house also features some more light-hearted examples of parallelism. For example, Laura's mother is distressed about the state of the house, which has been searched, and says to the chief of police that she has been in this situation before. The chief of police assumes she means her house has been subjected to a police search before, but in fact she is thinking of a break-in. When the chief of police leaves Laura's mother alone in her room, he snatches a cigarette from the hand of one of his officers, rebukes him for smoking, and then finishes the cigarette himself.)

¹⁶¹ The judge's words to her daughter upon learning this secret indicate a view of human relations as characterised by a reciprocity that is violated both by the keeping and the disclosing of secrets. It also recalls the earlier contrast of the innocent child with the guilty adult: "Tante volte io e papa abbiamo avuto dei problemi. Una volta l'ho fatto soffrire io, una volta mi ha fatto soffrire lui. La vita è fatta così. Le cose succedono e poi passano. Non è giusto che una bambina piccola... Non è giusto perché quello che è successo fra me e papa è una cosa che riguarda soltanto noi. Tu non c'entri. Sono fatti nostri" ["Father and I have had problems many times. Once I made him suffer, once he did it to me. Life is like that. Things happen and then pass. It's not right that a small girl... It's not right because what happened between me and Father is something that regards only us. You're nothing to do with it. It's our business"]. Itself founded on the perspectival nature of human relations (on the subject/object distinction), the exclusion on which secrecy is founded fails, and the result is mutual suffering. As the judge tells her daughter: "Hai tradito papa e dato un dolore a me" ["You've betrayed Father and caused me pain"]. (The theme of childhood innocence is stressed in the following scene, which sees the judge in the prison building, examining Laura's possessions, among them the doll given to her by Gina.)

abstains from invention as a far as possible and sets out to recount the events of the Moro kidnapping with maximum accuracy.¹⁶² The film begins with the day of the kidnapping, chronicles Moro's interrogation and the various attempts to obtain his liberation, and ends with the discovery of his corpse.

In chronicling the morning of the kidnapping, Ferrara sets up a clear distinction between the affable Moro, who does not leave home without appeasing his grandson's desire for a fairy tale (ominously, Moro chooses a story involving a hunter and a wolfpack), and the coolly pragmatic militants, who don their wigs and bulletproof vests to dramatic music. The larger political context of the kidnapping is briefly but effectively suggested by a scene in which Moro's driver reads the communist newspaper *L'Unità*, which comments favourably on Moro's collaboration with the PCI. The effect of this scene is to emphasise the rift between the Red Brigades and the parliamentary left; it also helps to explain why the PCI, having finally succeeded to consolidate its political power, becomes one of the most ardent critics of militancy, which threatens to discredit the entire left. More importantly, the scene casts the Red Brigades as demented radicals who succeed only in

¹⁶² Not only is there scarcely a scene that is not based on a historically documented event, but the actors were clearly chosen for their marked resemblance to the protagonists of those events. Ferrara does depart from the historical record in one important way: in his film, Moro's kidnappers do not disguise themselves when they interrogate him. According to Moretti, Moro never actually saw the faces of his kidnappers. Cf. Moretti 141. In the film, Moretti justifies the lack of disguise by reference to Fidel Castro, who he says didn't cover his face at Moncada.

endangering a hard-won and promising consensus between the left and the political centre. The catastrophic effect of their activities is emphasised by the kidnapping scene itself, in which Ferrara dwells at length on the massacre perpetrated on Moro's bodyguards.

The kidnapped Moro is subjected to the standard rhetoric of militancy with its trademark expressions "prigione del popolo"¹⁶³ and "attacco al cuore dello stato."¹⁶⁴ Meanwhile, the Italian parliament begins to debate the appropriate response to the kidnapping. The debate immediately contrasts two diametrically opposed views: "È in gioco la vita di Moro"¹⁶⁵ and "È in gioco il governo."¹⁶⁶ The film then goes on to chronicle the triumph of the latter view, which entailed sacrificing Moro rather than negotiating with the state's declared enemies. The PCI is instrumental in supporting this view - "Nessuno dovrà trattare con questi criminali"¹⁶⁷ - which could not be further removed from that of Moro himself. He immediately attempts to find a compromise with his kidnappers: "Cosa possiamo fare insieme per non distruggere cose essenziali ed entrambi?"¹⁶⁸ Ferrara leaves open the question of whether Moro's position is conditioned by his situation, or whether it is one he would have taken even if his own life were not at stake.

The contrast between the situations in which Moro and his political

¹⁶³ "People's prison."

¹⁶⁴ "Attack on the heart of the state."

¹⁶⁵ "Moro's life is at stake."

¹⁶⁶ "The government is at stake."

¹⁶⁷ "No one shall negotiate with these criminals."

¹⁶⁸ "What can we do together in order not to destroy things that are essential and concern us both?"

colleagues must take their decisions is emphasised by their environments: the members of parliament meet at a large wooden table in a spacious room, while the room in which Moro is held is filmed in such a way as to create a sense of claustrophobia.

The film goes on to emphasise the ideological rift that separates Moro and his kidnappers, mostly by portraying Moro's utter inability (at least initially) to make sense of the pseudo-Marxist jargon used by the Red Brigades. He attempts to correct their inflated view of his political importance, raising the possibility that the "system" on which his kidnappers have declared war may find him dispensable. Moro accepts Moretti's statement that he is to his kidnappers little more than a symbol, that he is thought of by them purely in terms of his sociopolitical function: "Lei non è un uomo per noi, ma è una funzione, la funzione che lei svolge all'interno del sistema."¹⁶⁹ He insists, however, that he is being overestimated even in terms of his function, and that the view the Red Brigades have of his party is hopelessly mythological: "Davvero mi è difficile capire la visione che avete voi del mio partito: un monolite. Tutto partecipa di un disegno dei grandi contorni. [...]. Comunque cosa accade in quel partito non è in virtù di un grande

¹⁶⁹ "You're not a man to us, but a function, the function you serve within the system."

disegno quanto della catenazione più o meno casuale di tutta una serie di circostanze piccole."¹⁷⁰

The sordid drama that followed the publications of Moro's first letters – the insistence, by his political colleagues, that he was not his true self – opens a subplot within the film: that of the increasing disappointment of Moro's family, and in particular of his wife, with the way the kidnapping is handled. Andreotti's contention that "questa lettera e le altre che dovessero seguire non sono moralmente attribuibili al suo autore"¹⁷¹ clashes markedly with the view expressed by Moro's daughter: "C'è proprio lo spirito e la fermezza di papà."¹⁷² Her "È lui, me ne sono certo"¹⁷³ could not contrast more strongly with the verdict of the graphologist who announces to the members of parliament: "È Moro, ma non è Moro."¹⁷⁴

The film goes on to chronicle other central episodes of the kidnapping, from Pope Paul VI's public address and the forged Red Brigades statement announcing his execution to the discovery of a

¹⁷⁰ "I really have a hard time understanding the vision you have of my party. A monolith in which everything is part of a grand design. Whatever happens in that party doesn't happen by virtue of a great scheme, but results from a more or less random chain of small events."

¹⁷¹ "These letters and those that may follow are not morally attributable to their author."

¹⁷² "It's just the spirit and the firmness of father."

¹⁷³ "It's him, I'm sure of it."

¹⁷⁴ "It's Moro, but it's not Moro." Later, a psychologist announces on television: "Aldo Moro mostra tutti i sintomi di una ben nota situazione patologica" ["Aldo Moro displays all the symptoms of a well-known pathological condition"], to which Moro's daughter responds with an angry "Figli di putana" ["Sons of bitches"]. Ferrara also documents the ludicrous theories that Moro's letters spawned, such as the one that Moro's frequent use of the word "sotto" ["under"] might be a coded reference to his being held in a "sottomarino" ["submarine"].

Red Brigades hideout in via Gradoli. It also touches on postwar Italy's history of abortive right-wing coups, and on the fact that Andreotti and other important politicians were members of the same masonic lodge (the P2).¹⁷⁵ The film's leitmotif remains the refusal of Moro's colleagues to negotiate with his kidnappers, crassly underscored by a scene set several days before Moro's death, in which DC members contemplate an election poster that features the words "Aldo Moro è stato assassinato."¹⁷⁶

Ferrara also suggests the decision to kill Moro was not only not taken lightly, but conditioned by a sense of urgency resulting from increased police surveillance. The meeting during which the "strategic command" of the Red Brigades discusses the issue is ended prematurely, as police cars are heard in the neighbourhood. The scene of Moro's "execution" sees him a broken man; he is unshaven and weak. Moretti does not tell him he will be killed – "Presidente," he says euphemistically, "abbiamo deciso di liberarla"¹⁷⁷ – but when Moro asks how many days he has been held, and Moretti replies that this is the fifty-fifth, the audience knows well what will happen next (as Moro himself does: despite Moretti's assurance that he will not be killed, he refuses to take the

¹⁷⁵ Both are discussed in detail by Zavoli and Galli.

¹⁷⁶ "Aldo Moro was assassinated." This scene follows Eleonora Moro's attempt to contact DC politician Zaccagnini; she has just received a phone call from Moretti urging her to do so immediately in order to save her husband's life. The image of a phone-tapping device is inserted before Eleonora Moro finds her telephone does not work. When she uses her neighbour's phone, she is told Zaccagnini is not in his office. The sequence suggests the DC went further than is often supposed in its willingness to sacrifice Moro, by deliberately stalling efforts to save his life.

¹⁷⁷ "President, we've decided to liberate you."

glasses he has left behind). The death sequence is interrupted by brief scenes detailing the mendacious parliamentary debates on whether or not he might be saved. One particularly verbose statement – “Bisogna considerare in concreto quale tra le iniziative proposte sia la più idonea per aiutarci a fronteggiare positivamente questa drammatica vicenda”¹⁷⁸ – immediately precedes the scene in which Moro is shot. The irresponsible – if not homicidal – motives behind this rhetoric are exposed in the final image of Moro’s corpse, which is removed from the car in which it is found in a dramatic image of disclosure.

Pasquale Squitieri: Gli invisibili

Pasquale Squitieri’s adaptation of Nanni Balestrini’s novel departs from it in important ways. For example, it introduces the character of a nameless “professor,” whose physical resemblance to Toni Negri adds a polemical component to the narrative.¹⁷⁹ It gives a name (Sirio) to Balestrini’s protagonist and makes him a somewhat hapless accessory to his more aggressive-minded friend, the militant Apache. The film accurately recounts the police brutality at the heart of the novel, although its cinematic portrayal is perhaps somewhat less disconcerting than the images Balestrini conjures in the reader’s imagination. Squitieri makes no attempt to find a

¹⁷⁸ “We have to consider concretely which of the proposed measures is the most appropriate for helping us to confront positively this dramatic event.”

¹⁷⁹ One episode involving the professor seems to be based on a confrontation between Franceschini and Negri described by Fenzi in his memoir (Fenzi 102ff.).

cinematic corollary to the avant-gardistic formal features of the novel.

The film does not begin in court, like the novel, but relocates the confrontation between the state and a largely defeated left to a police interrogation room. A sweating Sirio, a scab on his face, is seen handcuffed to a chair. He defies his interrogator, who pushes over his chair, throwing him onto the floor. Sirio is then led off to prison, where the bulk of the film is set. This scene is one of several similar ones that punctuate the narrative. Later, Sirio is seen seated across from a magistrate who does not so much openly interrogate him as propose his release from prison in return for information on other members of the Movimento (what the magistrate terms "un atto di buona volontà"¹⁸⁰). The scene is filmed from the side. The magistrate, clean shaven and dressed in a bluit suit, is seated to the left, the scruffy and unshaven Sirio to the right. The table between them suggests the division between the state and the Movimento that Sirio is asked to eliminate by creating another division within the Movimento itself. He refuses. Towards the end of the film and after the sequence detailing the brutal crackdown on the prison riot, he is summoned by the magistrate a second time. This time, the magistrate's false friendliness has given way to the open threat of a lengthy prison sentence. The scene is shot from Sirio's point of view. The viewer sees the magistrate refusing to meet Sirio's gaze,

¹⁸⁰ "An act of good will."

as if he knew his talk of separating good from evil is in bad faith. Again, the magistrate attempts to drive a wedge between Sirio and his comrades, this time by giving him a chance to identify the planners of the revolt. Sirio's continued solidarity with his comrades – "Nonostante tutti i suoi errori, sono sempre i migliori di lei e di tutti i suoi colleghi"¹⁸¹ – leads to utter incomprehension. "Ma lei è pazzo,"¹⁸² he is told by the magistrate, as if to confirm his status, which is also that of the revolutionary left, as someone entirely outside society's norms.

This is the penultimate scene of the film; the next one sees Sirio holding a torch out his window like Balestrini's protagonist in the final chapter of the novel. The final sentence of the novel (slightly shortened) is spoken in a voice-over. As if to emphasise its importance, Squitieri adds another image to express both the invisibility imposed on the Movimento and prison culture's defiance of that invisibility: he has Sirio remove the whitewash with which a mural painted by his friend Willi has been covered. The centrepiece of the mural is a portrait of Sirio's friend Apache, who has been transferred to another prison, where he ostensibly committed suicide. By uncovering the mural, Sirio preserves the memory of Apache as he was thought of by those who knew him. He violently rejects his reduction, by the media, to an "estremista di sinistra."¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ "Despite their errors, they are always better than you and your colleagues."

¹⁸² "But you're crazy."

¹⁸³ "Left-wing extremist."

When he hears Apache being described thus on television, Sirio grabs his chair and smashes the screen.

Like Balestrini, Squitieri punctuates his protagonist's early prison experiences with flashbacks to the activities of the Movimento. The first of these experiences has Sirio witnessing the self-mutilation of another inmate in the prison corridor. While the inmate slashes his chest, other inmates, including Sirio, bang their tin cups against the doors of their cells. The banging sound provides a transition to a flashback of the Movimento demonstrating in the streets of a city. Not only is the cheerful protest contrasted with the sordid violence of prison; Squitieri also suggests the effect of the prison environment is to transform the Movimento's efforts at self-expression into acts of self-destruction. The solidarity of the protesters becomes the mob spirit of the inmates witnessing an act of self-mutilation. As one inmate tells Sirio: "Qua dentro è l'unica maniera possibile di protestare."¹⁸⁴

The following scene underscores the recurring theme of the radical disparity between the inmates and the authorities. A prison guard tells Sirio about the death of one of his superiors, who is described as "un uomo per bene,"¹⁸⁵ while the inmate whose self-mutilation Sirio has witnessed is described as a man whose wife was unfaithful to him. Sirio hears a different version of the story from another inmate: the murdered prison overseer was "un vero

¹⁸⁴ "In here it's the only possible way of protesting."

¹⁸⁵ "A good man."

maiale,"¹⁸⁶ and the motive for the act of self-mutilation was the denial, to the prisoner who slashed his chest, of a chance to meet his wife. Much as the truth about Apache (and later, about the events of the prison riot) is distorted by the authorities, their version of this event contrasts markedly with the second, suppressed version of the inmates.

Following a stabbing in the prison courtyard, Sirio is transferred to a high-security prison, where he meets his former friend Apache, who opted for militancy (like Cotogno in Balestrini's novel).¹⁸⁷ He also meets the German activist (or perhaps militant) Willi, who paints and plays the violin only to have his fingers broken during the crackdown on the prison riot, as well as Apache's comrades Pacco and Maurizio, and the chess-playing professor. The first words the professor is heard to speak – "Non voglio entrare nelle loro pieghe, non voglio essere coinvolto"¹⁸⁸ – identify him as the kind of intellectual opportunist that Negri is frequently made out to be: he theorises violence, but refuses to take responsibility for the praxis that results from his theories, and seeks both to associate himself with the radical left and to remain comfortably aloof from it. During the prison riot, this academic detachment will be captured by a scene in which the professor shuts himself up in his cell to read and listen to classical music. The professor remains

¹⁸⁶ "A real pig."

¹⁸⁷ In another flashback, this one to an early debate on the prospects of militancy, Apache voices the opinions expressed by Cotogno in the novel.

¹⁸⁸ "I don't want to enter into their fold, I don't want to be involved."

an ambiguous character throughout the film; his comments to Sirio, on inmates subjecting supposed traitors to mock trials, accurately identify militancy's tragic tendency to replicate the mechanisms of the state it contests, while simultaneously casting him as a haughty know-it-all.¹⁸⁹ Images of the professor playing chess suggest his role as a manipulator more involved in what he criticises than he is willing to admit.

A scene in which Sirio and Apache are allowed to meet visitors establishes a parallel between the situation of the inmates and that of the Movimento outside prison. Sirio meets his girlfriend, who tells him a mutual friend has become a heroin addict. Her addiction is presented as symptomatic of the Movimento's inner decline, the corollary of its military defeat by the state.¹⁹⁰ Sirio and his girlfriend also discuss the prospects for an escape from prison. Apache meets his father, who questions him about his motives for becoming militant. Apache paints a picture of Italian society as a kind of metaphorical prison: "La vita fuori di qui non è diversa da quella qui in carcere. È uno che chosa puo fare? Puo lottare o per rassegnarsi. Io voglio lottare. Voglia distruggerlo, questo carcere."¹⁹¹ The

¹⁸⁹ The professor's view of militancy corresponds roughly to that formulated by Ortica in the novel.

¹⁹⁰ A later scene sees the heroin addict in hospital, screaming at her friends: "Lasciatemi in pace!" ["Leave me in peace!"]. Squitieri cuts from this scene to one showing the arrival, by helicopter, of the police task force that will put down the prison riot. He suggests seeking "peace" in intoxication constitutes a betrayal of the Movimento, in so far as the latter is implicated in what amounts to a war.

¹⁹¹ "Life outside of here is no different from that in prison. And what can you do? You can struggle or you can resign yourself. I want to struggle. I want to destroy this prison."

father's question – "Distruggere, per andara dove?"¹⁹² remains unanswered. While Sirio and his girlfriend talk about an actual prison, and discuss a concrete plan of escape (albeit one that will never be realised), the prison that Apache talks about is metaphorical, and there is no plan of escape. The scene indicates that the defeat of the revolutionary left cannot be attributed to state repression alone; even if that were to be overcome, there would remain the repressive structures of the society itself. Following Balestrini, Squitieri suggests it is from them and the hopelessness they inspire that phenomena such as drug abuse arise. Furthermore, the public's lack of comprehension for the left (largely conditioned by the media) makes militancy a lost cause.

Understood in this way, the scene foreshadows the failure of the later prison riot, which remains a desperate undertaking doomed to failure. In Squitieri's film, the scenes chronicling the crackdown are set to Wagner's Tannhäuser. This is perhaps a nod to the famous Wagner sequence in Coppola's Apocalypse Now; it certainly suggests the spectacular military might with which the riot is put down.¹⁹³ The music provides the score for the savage beating of the inmates at the hands of the police, whose members mask their grim faces before producing their clubs. Squitieri then cuts from the nocturnal beatings to a daytime scene that sees the badly

¹⁹² "Destroy – to go where?"

¹⁹³ It also recalls the classical music the professor is fond of, thereby suggesting his complicity with the state. Crucially, the professor gets away with two slaps while the other prisoners are beaten savagely.

injured inmates sprawled across the prison courtyard. One inmate is listening to a radio report on the riot. The statement "Le condizioni dei feriti [...] vengono giudicati non gravi"¹⁹⁴ provides an ironic counterpoint to the scene of devastation Squitieri presents; crucially, the statement refers not to the injuries of the inmates, but to those of the police. When the radio reporter mentions the inmates, he does not speak of their injuries, but only of legal measures that may possibly be taken against them. It is in this scene that Squitieri comes closest to replicating Balestrini's forceful demonstrations of how the media grossly distort the truth without resorting to outright lies.

Mimmo Calopresti: La seconda volta

A response to the debate on the granting of pardons to former members of the Red Brigades, this 1995 film carefully portrays the routines and obsessions of a convicted terrorist, Lisa Venturi, and her intended victim, Professor Alberto Sajevo.¹⁹⁵ Calopresti

¹⁹⁴ "Injuries are said to be mild."

¹⁹⁵ For a useful discussion of the nature of the pardons granted and a reading of Calopresti's film in the context of the debate surrounding pardons, cf. Giancarlo Lombardi, "Unforgiven: Revisiting Political Terrorism in La seconda volta", in: *Italica* 77/2 (2000) 199ff. Lombardi's reading takes as its theoretical point of departure the concept of trauma articulated in Cathy Caruth's Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996). Elsewhere, Lombardi reads Calopresti's film in the light of a comment by Curcio (Curcio 212); Lombardi critically applies Curcio's evocation of the concept of pietas to La seconda volta and another film, La mia generazione (discussed below). Cf. Giancarlo Lombardi, "Virgil, Dante, Blade Runner and Italian Terrorism: The Concept of Pietas in La seconda volta and La mia generazione", in: *Romance Languages Annual XI* (2000) 191ff. For a discussion of the bond implicit in the enmity between Lisa and Alberto, cf. Claudio Mazzola, "La seconda volta di Mimmo Calopresti: Il nuovo cinema italiano tra impegno e

highlights numerous parallels between their lives while simultaneously rejecting any facile conflation of the categories of victim and perpetrator.

The degree to which Lisa and Alberto were involved in or affected by the militancy of the 1970s has left them estranged from the Italy of the 1990s. Their estrangement allows for the critical examination of a society whose relation to its revolutionary past is fundamentally one of bad faith or denial – a relation characterised both by the desire for an erasure of the past, and the failure to realise such an erasure. The extent to which Lisa and Alberto feel themselves to be outsiders is evident from the way in which they move through the Turin of the 1990s. Attentive and curious, Alberto no less resembles a tourist during his visit to an ultra-modern factory as when he is introduced to Ragamuffin music by his sister; he is estranged both from the public (economic) and the private (domestic) spheres. Calopresti's depiction of the former illustrates with particular vividness the failure of the 1970s revolutionary movement. While Alberto is estranged from other people by his obsession with the past, Lisa experiences the physical isolation of prison. Even when she moves outside the prison gate, her status as a convicted militant determines the behavior of others towards her (witness the pranks played by her colleagues at work). Like that of

disimpegno", in: *Italian Culture* 16.2 (1998) 111ff. Cf. also Giambattista Avellino, "La seconda volta: analisi e critica della struttura narrativa", in: *Script* 10 (1995) 37ff.

Alberto, Lisa's daily routine offers the viewer emblematic images of late capitalist Italian culture: her visits to a supermarket and a self-service restaurant suggest a society characterized by uncritical consumerism and impersonal interaction.

By insisting on the otherness of Lisa and Alberto, Calopresti sets up a dichotomy between those who cannot escape their (voluntary or involuntary) involvement with militancy, and those who choose to ignore or forget. Forgetting remains an option for citizens whose personal lives have not been obviously affected by the events of the 1970s – Alberto's relatives, Lisa's co-workers – but whatever the individual's attitude towards the past, he or she exists in a society whose legal and political institutions are continually confronted with the failed revolution, if only through such people as Alberto and Lisa – alienated figures condemned to negotiate their social identity in the liminal realm between their own remembrance and other people's forgetting.

The shared past of Alberto and Lisa locks them into repetitive, sometimes compulsive patterns of behavior: Lisa's daily activities are constrained by the strict prison schedule, and while Alberto exercises, monotonously repeating the same motions without moving forwards, he reads and recites militant slogans. It is the compulsive behavior of Alberto that first indicates his trauma, before any facts about his past are revealed. In withholding crucial information about his characters for much of the film, Calopresti

forces the viewer to engage attentively with those characters, to constantly correct premature judgements and avoid stereotypical notions associated with militancy. In fact, the plot of the film is structured in such a way that the viewer may not become aware of the subject of militancy for considerable time, instead believing himself to be witnessing a banal love story: when Alberto asks his sister whether he should shave his beard, it is not immediately clear he is not concerned about his good looks, but about whether he will be recognized by his would-be assassin.¹⁹⁶

The more explicit the theme of militancy becomes, the more Calopresti shifts from stressing the parallels between the lives of Alberto and Lisa to stressing the differences between them. In their remarks on 1990s Italy, both characters express disillusionment, even disgust; they disagree on whether violence is a legitimate means for altering an unjust society, and on whether those who

¹⁹⁶ The structure of *La seconda volta* is such as to force the viewer to think of Lisa and Alberto first and foremost in terms of their individuality, that is, outside of their historical and sociopolitical context. The film's focus on the present, its marked refusal to make use of flashbacks, results in the "low communicativeness" of the narrative structure, which allows the viewer to reconstruct the past of the characters only gradually. The film's subordination of story (fabula) under plot (syuzhet), that is, its structuring of the plot in such a way as to prohibit immediate understanding of the full extent of the relationship between Alberto and Lisa, prohibits the facile import of stereotypical notions of guilt and victimhood. It is the compulsive behavior of Alberto that first indicates his trauma, before any facts about his past are revealed. In withholding crucial information about his characters for much of the film, Calopresti forces the viewer to engage attentively with the characters, to constantly correct premature judgements. In many ways, the structure of the narrative is that of a detective story; the apparent austerity and "coldness" of the film result from its exclusion of melodramatic elements. For a discussion of "low communicativeness" in cinema, cf. Murray Smith, *Engaging Characters: Fiction, Emotion, and the Cinema* (Clarendon: Oxford University Press, 1995) 82ff. Cf. also the comments of scriptwriter Francesco Bruni in: "*La seconda volta*: incontro dibattito con uno degli autori", in: *Script* 10 (December 1995) 43ff.

commit violence ought to be forgiven. "Non mi piace, è troppo facile,"¹⁹⁷ says Alberto of Lisa's desire to transcend the past. It is this fundamental disagreement that prohibits not just reconciliation, but even continued communication: at the end of the film, Alberto writes a letter to Lisa, expressing his disappointment over their meeting; if this is already a gesture of disillusionment, his next act is more radical: he tears up the letter and throws it from a train window. The landscape rushing by outside creates an impression of rapid movement that contrasts sharply with Lisa's restricted motions in the prison courtyard. In this way, Calopresti ends his film by emphasising a rift between victim and perpetrator that refuses not only to be bridged, but seems in fact to be widening.¹⁹⁸

The scene of Alberto and Lisa's second encounter is interrupted by a blank frame that represents, as the viewer gradually comes to understand, Alberto fainting as a consequence of his nervous tension and the bullet lodged in his skull. It is relevant

¹⁹⁷ "I don't like it, it's too easy."

¹⁹⁸ The critic Robert Escobar has emphasised that Alberto's rage towards Lisa is founded both on his refusal to sanction her break with the past and on her failure to "recognise" him, not only in the literal sense, but also in that of disregarding his individuality: "Alberto is not a model of anything, he is not a symbol of any general and abstract figure of a victim. Lisa is not the a posteriori personification of a terrorist, she is not a compendium of impersonal and typical traits. [...] What happens when these two come face to face? For the second time, in fact, Lisa does not recognize Alberto. Back then, when she pointed her gun at him, she did not recognize him in the moral sense of the expression: she did not recognize him as an individual, as another person. For Lisa, Alberto was nothing more than a symbol, a model, a general representative of the Enemy. This time she simply does not connect his face with that of her past victim. Yet even this banal lack of acknowledgement is intolerable: for Alberto it is like a painful image of their first meeting, like a confirmation of the same." Roberto Escobar, "Il Sole 24 Ore", 12 November 1995. For a discussion of the film's deliberate lack of closure, cf. also Edoardo Bruno, "La fragranza plurale", in: *Filmcritica* 463 (March 1996) 115.

to Calopresti's concern with individuality that he should represent this event from Alberto's subjective point of view.¹⁹⁹ The blank frame immediately follows frontal shots of Alberto and Lisa. In this way, Calopresti juxtaposes the individual as it is perceived by others with its own experience of itself. While the perception of the individual as an "other" contains the possibility of a refusal to recognise that "other" as an individual, the individual's experience of itself is the basis for its indignation at such a refusal. The scene immediately following the second encounter between Alberto and Lisa concerns the use of false names by both of them. The same scene features a photocopier as a symbol of that notion of interchangeability which becomes a moral crime when it is applied to the individual. In this way, Calopresti explores the dialectics of recognition and the tension between the individual's experience of itself and its reduction, on the part of others, to an abstract function of sociopolitical mechanisms.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹ Calopresti clearly takes a stand for the recognition of individuality, against the reduction of individuals to their sociopolitical function: "[...] for me the solution always lies with the individual, because each one of us represents the universe. My idea of life is that inside each of us there is always something important we don't know about and we have to work hard to capture it." Mimmo Calopresti, interview with Barbara Corsi, in Mimmo Calopresti, booklet accompanying a showing of La felicità non costa niente (New York University, 2002).

²⁰⁰ Former Red Brigades member Barbara Balzerani discusses Calopresti's film in her memoir Compagna luna. The chapter in which Balzerani discusses La seconda volta is titled "Solo un film" ["Just a film"] – a title that calls into question the La seconda volta's claim to being an accurate representation of either a personal or a political reality, rather than a work of fiction in which signifiers of Italian militancy serve as mere "props." Balzerani criticises Calopresti's choice largely to eliminate from his film the sociopolitical context of militancy; the main reason why the second encounter of Lisa and Alberto remains so frustrating for both of them is their refusal, which is also Calopresti's, to face the political issues behind Lisa's attempted assassination of Alberto. Cf. Balzerani, Compagna luna 126ff. Balzerani also comments on Lisa as a voiceless character. According to Balzerani,

Wilma Labate: La mia generazione

La mia generazione portrays the situation of the incarcerated militant, and the problem of pentitismo, in an elegantly structured narrative whose protagonist, Claudio Braccio, becomes a Christlike figure on a carcerial via crucis.²⁰¹ Sentenced to a thirty-year prison sentence, Braccio is told one morning that his request for a meeting with his Milanese girlfriend Giulia has been approved; a middle-aged policeman picks him up at the offshore high-security prison where he is held, ostensibly to drive him to San Vittore prison in Milan. The journey is interrupted by a number of apparent accidents. At the

for Lisa to speak more than she does might entail addressing the political context that Alberto is so unwilling to recognise; because Calopresti insists on avoiding this, Lisa "Non deve parlare. Può solo essere parlata" (Balzerani 129) ["She must not speak. She can only be spoken"]. In Balzerani's view, Calopresti's depiction of the former militant serves not so much to invite a reconsideration of the social and political roots of militancy as to legitimate a cruel and dehumanising penal system. The criticism of Calopresti that denounces the voicelessness of Lisa has also been formulated by Erri De Luca; De Luca's essay and Calopresti response can be found in issue 5/1995 of the journal *MicroMega*. Calopresti insists that Lisa's refusal to respond verbally to Alberto's accusations is itself an appropriate response. He argues her muteness is a sign of strength rather than weakness. Enrico Fenzi concurs in his discussion of La seconda volta (Fenzi 208ff.): Lisa's silence is not a symptom of powerlessness, but "la condizione e lo strumento attraverso il quale la ragazza attua la propria ricomposizione e riesce a definirsi, nel presente, come persona" (Fenzi 210) ["the condition and the instrument by which the young woman recomposes and succeeds in defining herself, in the present, as a person"]. For a discussion of Fenzi's view that silence is a justified response to the questions and accusations brought against ex-militants, cf. Chapter III.

²⁰¹ The film's allusions to the story of Christ's passion range from the motifs of betrayal and that of the man who shoulders the guilt of others, to its very structure, which is that of a journey punctuated by allegorical episodes (the stops made by the police van in which Braccio travels recall the stations of the cross). Cf. Giancarlo Lombardi's insightful reading of La mia generazione in the light of the Christian concept of *pietà* (pity/piety): Giancarlo Lombardi, "Virgil, Dante, Blade Runner and Italian Terrorism: The Concept of *Pietas* in La seconda volta and La mia generazione", in: *Romance Languages Annual XI* (2000) 191ff. (According to Lombardi, both La seconda volta and La mia generazione are motivated by an "ideological agenda" – namely to cause the viewer to feel compassion toward former militants. Lombardi discusses the absence, in both films, of representations of militant violence, related to the refusal of both Calopresti and Labate to make use of flashbacks.)

end of the film, Braccio is told the approval of his meeting with Giulia is a sham; only if he is willing to collaborate with the police and act as an informer will he be transferred to San Vittore. In a climactic final sequence, Braccio rejects the offer.

The opening images of the film capture the bleakness of the high-security prison at dawn. The harshness of the electric light corresponds to that of the predominant sounds: the rattling of keys and slamming of doors. The predominant colours are cold greys and blues. During the drive to the ferry that will take him to the mainland, Braccio looks out the window of the police van to see the sea, trees, and rocks. These images of nature contrast sharply with the coldness of the prison environment, and Braccio's expression suggests the urgency of his desire for a life in freedom.²⁰²

The policeman immediately sets out to win Braccio's trust. He comments sympathetically on his harsh sentence: "Ma insomma, ci sono andati un po' pesanti. Trent'anni non sono mica uno scherzo."²⁰³ He points out militancy has been defeated and suggests the time has come for a reconsideration of what he perceives as

²⁰² Similarly, the scenes that chronicle Giulia's life in Milan are characterised by the predominance of warm earth colours (reds and browns). The sounds of the city (traffic noises and those of people going about their daily business) also contrast markedly with the sounds of the high-security prison. In one scene, Giulia passes by a poster for the film *Blade Runner*, which combines (like *La mia generazione*) the theme of dissimulation with that of the will to live. (Lombardi comments extensively on Labate's reference to *Blade Runner*, identifying an analogy between the "replicants" in Ridley Scott's 1982/1992 film and the left-wing militant; both are not what they appear to be, and succeed by virtue of this fact in "terrorising" those around them. What Lombardi does not comment on is that, in *La mia generazione*, it is the policeman, not a militant, who engages in dissimulation. Lombardi also discusses the notion of memory central to *Blade Runner*, *La seconda volta*, and *La mia generazione*. Cf. Lombardi 2000 194ff.)

²⁰³ "Anyhow, they overdid things a bit. Thirty years are no joke."

Braccio's unrelenting hostility to the state: "Siamo su lati opposti della barricata. Soltanto che le barricate non le fa più nessuno."²⁰⁴ He even suggests he shares some of that enmity: "Se fosse per me le galere fossero piene. Ma non di gente come voi. Io ci metterei i grandi ladroni. Mi sono spiegato?"²⁰⁵ On the ferry, he defies police protocol by allowing Braccio to use the public restroom. Later, during a conversation about the benefits enjoyed by pentiti, he goads Braccio with the possibility of a reduced prison sentence: "Lei è ancora giovane. Può fare molte cose."²⁰⁶ While he says this, the policeman is playing a boardgame with a younger police officer. The image suggests the game character of the entire outing, which will be crassly revealed by the end of the film.

Next, there occurs the first of three "accidents" that punctuate the journey. The policeman is requested to pick up another prisoner, the common criminal Giuseppe, who was to be transferred to another prison by train; the train has been blocked by demonstrators. The second "accident" sees the van breaking down by the side of the highway, constraining the travellers to stop at the police station of a small town. In this town, a policeman has recently become the victim of an assassination; the travellers are met by an angry crowd, and someone throws a bottle at Giuseppe.

²⁰⁴ "We're on opposite sides of the barricade. It's just that no one puts up barricades any longer."

²⁰⁵ "If it was up to me, prisons would be full. But not with people like you. I would put the big robbers in there. You know what I mean."

²⁰⁶ "You're still young. You can still do a lot of things."

Having succeeded in distracting the crowd by staging a memorial procession to the dead policeman's grave, the travellers continue their journey in a new van. The third "accident" constrains them to change their route after they are denied access to their original destination; for reasons that remain unclear, the prison is surrounded by a roadblock. By this point in the film, the warm colours of the countryside have given way to the cold colours of the city at night. Flashing police lights and sirens recall the prison environment portrayed in the opening scene, suggesting the glimpses of freedom Braccio has enjoyed are illusory, and that despite having been physically removed from prison, he remains controlled (and is manipulated) by the mechanisms of repression of which it is only one expression.

The journey narrative is disrupted at this point by a crucial scene chronicling Giulia's meeting with one of Braccio's former comrades, who has escaped incarceration. This man, Gabriele, tells Giulia of an argument he has had with his girlfriend or wife, turning on his refusal to become a father. Before they separate, Giulia urges Gabriele to change his mind. It is in this scene that the generational theme indicated by the film's title is fully developed. The generation of Braccio, Giulia, and Gabriele is presented as one that will leave no other legacy than destruction. This is only partly due to the sense of guilt expressed by Gabriele, which prohibits him from becoming a father; in the case of Braccio and Giulia, it is

exposed as the direct consequence of a state repression that not only physically removes Braccio from Giulia, but also makes the attitudes of hope and trust that fatherhood would seem to require prohibitory. Much as Braccio's trust is betrayed by the policeman, the offer of allowing Braccio to re-establish contact with Giulia is made dependant on an act of betrayal. Given this situation, in which the hope of a future worth living is bought at the price of a break with the past so radical it assumes the character of betrayal, it is perhaps understandable that Gabriele should not want to father a child. The tragic character of the situation is underscored by a scene in which Giulia watches a young couple and begins to cry. Later, Giulia is seen watching footage of a long-gone country outing with Braccio, while she listens to Dinah Washington's "If I Could Be With You One Hour Tonight."

The film proceeds to its climax with the policeman's decision to leave Giuseppe at a police station until he can be taken to prison. It turns out Giuseppe is carrying a gun on his person, which will no doubt be discovered at the police station. In an act of suicidal good will, Braccio takes Giuseppe's gun and hides it in his trousers. As the journey continues, the policeman continues his efforts to win Braccio's trust. "Inutile fare gli eroi quando la guerra è finita,"²⁰⁷ he insists. "Lei poteva fare di sua vita quello che voleva," he continues.

²⁰⁷ "There's no point in acting the hero when the war is over."

"Cosa si mette a fare? Lo scemo con le pistole in mano."²⁰⁸ Braccio's ironic reply – that the policeman might also be thought of as an armed idiot – is a rhetorical victory; in the larger context of Braccio's situation, however, it is the policeman who profits from this exchange, in so far as he succeeds in Braccio identifying (however sarcastically) something they have in common, thereby consolidating the impression of friendliness and trust he has been devoted to creating all along.²⁰⁹

After Giuseppe has been taken to the police station, the policeman finally reveals to Braccio that he will not be transferred to San Vittore unless he collaborates with the police by sharing the name of an unconvicted assassin (presumably Gabriele). Braccio is genuinely taken aback by the news: "Allora non è vero niente."²¹⁰ The scene, which sees Braccio and the policeman sitting across from each other in the semi-darkness of the van, is characterised by almost complete silence. It is framed by the sound of an engine

²⁰⁸ "You could have done whatever you wanted with your life. What did you choose to become? An idiot with gun in hand."

²⁰⁹ When Giuseppe challenges Braccio's hostility towards the policeman – "Mi pare una persona per bene" ["He seems like a good guy to me"] – Braccio recurs to militancy's Manichean rhetoric of the state as enemy: "Non lo vedi che è lo stato. Ti fidi dello stato?" ["Don't you see he's the state. Are you putting your trust in the state?"]. The film reveals that this rhetoric is in fact accurate, and Braccio's tragedy consists in his forgetting this truth, rhetorical outbursts notwithstanding. By the end of the film, the viewer understands that the policeman is in fact only playing at being "a good guy." His behaviour is a sham, and the reality is that he is indeed nothing but the personification of a state that pursues its ends with utter ruthlessness. Only once does Braccio begin to suspect the policeman's mendacity: when the travellers stop at a gas station, a dog comes running by and Braccio mentions that he once owned a dog. "Lo so" ["I know"], the policeman replies – a slip that betrays he knows more about Braccio than he has hitherto admitted.

²¹⁰ "So nothing is true."

starting and that of a horn; the absence of sound during the scene itself expresses Braccio's astonishment. It is as if the world he has taken for granted disappeared for a moment, only to reappear in a reconstituted (newly understood) fashion. It is also relevant that the first sound Braccio should hear after this moment of realisation, which ends with him giving in to the policeman's request for collaboration, should be that of a car horn, suggestive of imminent danger.

The police van is one of three spaces that feature in this final sequence; each marks a moment of transition. It is in the police van that Braccio agrees to collaborate. He is then sent to a phone booth, where he will be allowed to phone Giulia, effectively sealing the agreement. First, the line is busy. Then Giulia answers, but Braccio finds himself unable to say anything, swallows, and hangs up again. The shot emphasises the physical distance between Braccio and the policeman, who is watching from outside; this physical distance emphasises the moral distance between Braccio and the policeman, thereby suggesting their agreement remains tenuous. In fact, Braccio revokes his decision to collaborate. The silence by which he responds to Giulia's voice is also that he will continue to maintain towards the authorities; appropriately, since the policeman's manipulations have reduced Giulia to an instrument of those authorities.

The third liminal space that features in this sequence is the restroom of the gas station outside which the police van is parked. When Braccio leaves the phone booth, a prostitute comes walking by. Despite the policeman's protestations, Braccio insists on going to the restroom with her. Having posted guards outside the door, the policeman concedes them ten minutes.

The harsh electric light of the restroom is that of the prison Braccio has left, and to which he will return. It emphasises his metaphorical imprisonment in a hopeless situation. When Braccio hands the contents of his pockets to the prostitute, tells her not to scream, and enters a toilet stall with the words "Io adesso me ne vado"²¹¹ the viewer suspects he will use Giuseppe's gun to commit suicide. In fact, in what turns out to be the only genuinely hopeful moment in the narrative, he merely places the gun in the water tank, then leaves the restroom with the prostitute. It is at this point that he announces to the policeman his refusal to collaborate. "Io non ti ho niente da dire,"²¹² he says. Having twice taken upon himself the guilt of others (first by taking Giuseppe's gun, then by continuing to cover for Gabriele), and having preserved his integrity during the trial of a profound betrayal, Braccio is led into the police van and driven back to the high-security prison he vainly hoped to leave behind.

²¹¹ "I'm going to leave now."

²¹² "I have nothing to say to you." As in Squitieri's film, the reply this refusal to collaborate elicits is an accusation of insanity: "Non fare il matto" ["Don't be crazy"], the policeman says.

Marco Turco: Vite in sospeso

Appropriately, the last last work to be discussed in this study concerns itself (like Schlöndorff's Die Stille nach dem Schuß) with life after militancy. Vite in sospeso sees a young Italian journalist, Jacopo, visiting a group of ex-militants in Paris, where they are living in exile.²¹³ Jacopo arrives in Paris with his father, Pietro, then decides to extend his visit after Pietro has returned to Italy. Jacopo stays with his older brother, the ex-militant Dario, and entertains the prospect of producing a documentary on Dario and his friends. They begin to suspect he may be a police informer, and he is almost murdered by one of them. The film ends with Dario confessing to Jacopo an assassination he has hitherto kept secret.

Jacopo learns about Dario's guilt before this confession, which does not so much conclude Jacopo's learning process as the process by which Dario succeeds in confronting his own past – a transition from secrecy and guilt to openness and forgiveness. In an early scene, Pietro feels ill and makes his way to the restroom. There, he

²¹³ The life of expatriate ex-militants is also the subject of a 1996 TV documentary by Turco, Vite sospese. This documentary is in many ways a (non-fictional) predecessor to Vite in sospeso. In it, the ex-militants Pino Mitrani, Andrea Morelli, Livia Scheller, and Domenico De Feo narrate their experiences of militancy and exile. Andrea Morelli's account of his savage beating by San Vittore prison guards is of particular interest. For a reading of Turco's films in the light of Jacques Derrida's theory of hospitality, cf. Giancarlo Lombardi, "Parigi o cara: Terrorism, Exile, and Escape in Contemporary Italian Cinema and Theatre", in: *Annali d'italianistica* 20 (2002) 403ff. Lombardi focuses particularly on the opening scene of Vite in sospeso and reads the situation of the Italian expatriates in terms of a metaphorical patricide that recalls a similar notion found in Consolo's Lo spasimo di Palermo (see discussion of that novel in Chapter IV).

tells Jacopo: "Tuo fratello ha ammazzato uno, così, per la strada."²¹⁴

This restroom scene is one of two that indicate diametrically opposed attitudes to the past. Where the scene with Pietro and Jacopo involves a disclosure, the second restroom scene involves the denial of disclosure. Having initially agreed to narrate to Jacopo his experience of militancy, Dario's friend Giovanni, a wheelchair user, asks Jacopo to take him to the restroom. After Jacopo has helped Giovanni stand in front of the urinal, Giovanni reneges on his agreement to talk about the past; the promised confession turns out to merely have been an attempt to humiliate the curious journalist. Both scenes mark moments of transition for Jacopo: in the first scene, he learns about the guilt of his brother; in the second, he discovers the distrust that prohibits his brother's friends from talking about their guilt.

Jacopo, the younger brother of an ex-militant, becomes the representative of a generation that did not participate in militancy, but strives to understand it. His interest is personal rather than professional; while he does consider making a documentary, he wants first and foremost to discover for himself what the motives for militancy were. The conflict between him and the ex-militants arises from their inability to understand this personal interest; their suspicion that he is not only a journalist, but a police informer seeking to inculcate them and prepare their extradition to Italy,

²¹⁴ "Your brother killed a man, like that, on the street."

reflects their long-standing inability to grasp the humanity of strangers they instinctively suspect to be enemies. Conditioned by the threat of incarceration, they continue to treat strangers as servants of a hostile state; only with Dario's final confession is this continuity of reductive perceptions disrupted.²¹⁵

Dario is an avid runner. Jacopo accompanies him twice. The first time, his inquiry into Dario's past meets with a denial. "Perché sei diventato un terrorista?"²¹⁶ Jacopo asks. The answer he elicits is: "Io non ero un terrorista. I terroristi mettevano le bombe, io no."²¹⁷ The second running scene, which concludes the film, sees Dario finally confessing his crime to his brother. Both scenes end with an elevated view of the city, suggesting the possibility of an "overview" not only of Paris, but of Dario's past. It is only in the second scene that this possibility is realised.²¹⁸

The interviews of Dario's friends Jacopo records are not well-received by them. Dario rejects the notion that they might contribute to an increased understanding of militancy. "Mi sembra tutto finto,"²¹⁹ he says. Dario's friend Ivan insists that the interview

²¹⁵ Two film posters that decorate the streets of Paris suggest these reductive or stereotypical perceptions: one advertises the second instalment of *Rambo*, the other *Robocop*. Where the former suggests the morally forthright lawlessness that is the stereotype of militancy, the latter becomes the emblem of a relentless police system that allies itself with technology (the documentary footage recorded by Jacopo, which Dario's friends suspect to be part of an attempt to inculcate them).

²¹⁶ "Why did you become a terrorist?"

²¹⁷ "I wasn't a terrorist. Terrorists planted bombs, I didn't."

²¹⁸ Dario's initial refusal to confront Jacopo and the questions he poses is also suggested in an earlier scene, which sees the two riding the metro. Both are silent and looking in opposite directions.

²¹⁹ "It all seems fake to me."

with him be deleted, having compromised his alibi by a slip of the tongue. This episode indicates one of the many difficulties characterising the situation of the exiled ex-militants. Not only are they constantly in danger of incriminating themselves, but their inability to return to Italy effectively ruins their personal lives. Thus Maurizio does not succeed in having his dying mother transferred to a French hospital; she dies without him. Similarly, Eugenia can only meet her Italian son during his brief visits to Paris.

The distrust with which Jacopo is confronted, and the rift his enquiry provokes within the community of ex-militants, is expressed in a scene involving Dario and his wife Fabienne. The scene sees Dario on the phone to Ivan, discussing the question of how to behave toward Jacopo. He is at the front of the shot, while Fabienne sits on the bed behind him, her back turned to him. The next scene is a frontal shot of Fabienne; this time, Dario is behind her, with his back turned. The question of whether Jacopo can be trusted – he has been rummaging through Dario's documents – drives a wedge between the husband and his wife. The source of the rift between them is Dario's past. As Fabienne says of Dario in an earlier scene: "Divide tutto con me, ma dal suo passato mi tiene fuori."²²⁰ It is only when Dario revokes his secrecy that this and other family relations are normalised.

²²⁰ "He shares everything with me, but he keeps me out of his past."

Turco plays with the viewer's own uncertainty by making it seem plausible, for a considerable part of the film, that Jacopo may indeed be a police informer. The interview footage, inserted at various points into the film, does have the sinister quality of an interrogation. When Eugenia becomes romantically involved with Jacopo, she discovers in his wallet what seems to be a police badge. It later turns out to be a document issued to him during his military service; Turco delays this discovery long enough to test the viewer's faith in the innocence of Jacopo's motives, effectively causing him to undergo the same experience of doubt as the ex-militants. When Ivan is arrested for cocaine use, leading to the police searching a restaurant owned by Giovanni, the suspicions of the ex-militants reach a climax. (Concerned about his wife, Ivan has asked his lawyer not to disclose the reasons for his arrest.) Maurizio, who is ordered by Giovanni to trail Jacopo, comes close to shooting the journalist; it is only when he sees Jacopo's astonishment at having a gun pointed at him that he makes up his mind about Jacopo's innocence.

Ultimately, Giovanni emerges as the one truly unreformed character in the film. He continually pits the other ex-militants against Jacopo. The climate of fear and distrust he perpetuates consolidates his authority over them; until all suspicions are finally dissolved, they treat him, who is both wealthy and crafty, as their protector. By maintaining the Manichean world view that was a key

characteristic of militancy, Giovanni corrupts the relations of the ex-militants both to one another and to other people. In the case of Maurizio, this almost leads to a further act of lethal violence; Turco suggests that as long as this climate of distrust is not dissolved, senseless death will continue to be a genuine danger. Maurizio is both the person Giovanni manipulates most effectively, and the one to break most radically with him. His sorrow over his mother's death is instrumental in bringing this transformation about. It prompts Maurizio's insight into the extent to which the world-view perpetuated by Giovanni corrupts personal relations and ruins all prospects for happiness.

In addition to the striking recurrence of family and generational themes (absolutely central to four of the eight films discussed: Tre Fratelli, Colpire al cuore, Segreti segreti, and Vite in sospenso), the Italian cinema of militancy is characterised by ideological notions that also inform the Italian literature on the subject. The vitalism identified as a key feature of Arbasino's worldview is also found in Tre Fratelli, where it is used to blur distinctions of class and political interest, or at least to suggest the common denominator of "life" can help overcome them. There is also a tendency, in this film, to ellide issues of political difference through an idealistic rhetoric of "trust" strongly akin to that invoked at the end of Nerino Rossi's novel La voce nel pozzo.

Likewise, the tendency to analyse militancy in terms of gender and sex, so evident in the work of Dacia Maraini, Carlo Castellaneta, and other Italian writers, recurs in the Italian cinema of militancy. For example, the motifs of maternity, fecundity, and sterility are central to the analysis of militancy offered by Bertolucci in Segreti Segreti. Another feature of the Italian literature of militancy – the use of religious motifs – is also a feature of at least one film discussed here, Labate's La mia generazione. The discourses of sexuality and religion betray that militancy is not analysed from a position beyond ideology, but that the analysis is itself ideologically informed.

One other, at least partly ideological notion recurs throughout the Italian films discussed. This is the notion, central to such novels as Il cattivo maestro, that the responsibility for the militant conflict lies to a considerable extent with irresponsible intellectuals. An image of the intellectual as a manipulative and deceitful turncoat is offered by Squitieri in his adaptation of Balestrini's Gli invisibili.²²¹ It is one of two crucial departures from Balestrini's text that Squitieri undertakes (the other being the dropping of the courthouse episodes). Unsympathetic portraits of intellectuals are also found in Colpire al cuore and, to some extent, Segreti segreti (whose

²²¹ The intellectual in Gli invisibili (the professor) is presented as manipulative; as mentioned above, one way by which this is done is through images of him playing chess. The boardgame is a recurring motif in both German and Italian films on militancy (witness the game of Monopoly in Die dritte Generation and the boardgame played by the policeman in La mia generazione). It is an emblem of instrumentalisation. Only in Gli invisibili, however, is it linked to the anti-intellectualism discussed here.

protagonist not only fails to explain militancy, but participates in it, in spite of having "gone to university" – or perhaps because of it). This anti-intellectualism fits well with the use of crassly mystificatory discourses such as those of vitalism and religion, and constitutes a final crucial difference between the Italian and the German cinema of militancy.

VI. Conclusion

Speaking of the fact that he was condemned to a sixteen-year prison sentence for subversive statements made during his trial, whereas he received only a fifteen-year sentence for his activities as founder and leader of the Red Brigades, Renato Curcio has said: "That's how I understood the powerful are more disturbed by words than by kidnappings and assassinations."¹

The fact that attempts were made to censor or suppress a number of the texts discussed in this study (Baumann's memoir and Chotjewitz's novel, to name only two) suggests ideological statements such as those made by Curcio during his trial are not the only "words" by which the state is "disturbed." In addition to the suppression of, for example, many of the RAF statements, there were attempts to suppress memoirs and novels, particularly during the first years of the militant conflict. The films discussed in the previous chapter have fared better, but this should not lead one to suppose that cinema's combination of word and image is by definition any less threatening.² What, then, is the common link

¹ Curcio 188.

² Those films in which the critique of the state is most clearly formulated appeared at a time when the militant conflict had already been decided in favour of the state; then (after 1980, roughly), such a critique was already much less incendiary than it would have been previously. Deutschland im Herbst is one notable exception; it is probably no accident this film was independently produced and released. Two other examples: In February of 1968, later RAF-member Holger Meins presented his short film Wie stelle ich einen Molotow-Cocktail her? ["How do I make a molotov cocktail?"] at Berlin university. It remains unthinkable that such a film would have been widely distributed at the time. Bambule, Ulrike

between the ideological statements of militants and the artworks discussed here? What is the relation between an insurrectionary ideology and the aesthetic examination or articulation of it - the relation between ideology and aesthetics?

It would be facile to claim works of art are censored or suppressed only when they reiterate a "dangerous" ideology. The question arises of what exactly is meant by "reiteration." Clearly, a novel is something other than a pamphlet. There occurs some translation from overtly ideological to aesthetic terms. What is more, it is simply not the case that the works censored were mere vehicles for militant ideological positions. Drawing a simple distinction between an affirmative and a negative relation of the artwork to militant ideological positions, one is constrained to admit that most of the works discussed in this study are characterised by the latter. Cases such as that of Christian Geissler, who is fundamentally in agreement with the RAF ideologues, are extremely rare.

At first glance, what is "reiterated" in the texts and films analysed in this study is not any straightforward ideological position, but the problem which that position addresses (and the transformation of that problem, for better or worse, once it is approached ideologically). Zeller's Heidelberger Novelle, Ginzburg's

Meinhof's semi-documentary film on West German foster homes, was to be screened on the state television channel ARD in May of 1970; following her involvement in Baader's liberation, it was removed from the program and remained unseen for more than two decades.

Caro Michele, and Bertolucci's Segreti segreti cannot be interpreted as "statements" to the effect that clandestinity is a requirement of militancy; rather, they explore the contradictions inherent in the notion of clandestinity by considering the effects of its translation into praxis. They ask, for example: What are the consequences of the clandestine militant always already being inserted into social relations that are corrupted by secrecy, such as family relations? Can the tension between secrecy and openness be reconciled, or does one give way to the other, and what happens then? The positions these artworks formulate are based on the analysis of situations transformed by ideology. Crucially, they are also themselves ideological positions, or at least informed by ideological notions that may or may not coincide with those of the militants. As has been demonstrated, militant ideology is never critiqued from a position that is itself beyond ideology; the critiques offered by the writers and directors discussed are informed by a plethora of ideological discourses, including those of vitalism, existentialism, theology, and psychoanalysis. Ideological notions of family, legality, and "the state" inform the work of German and Italian writers and directors to varying degrees.

Far from advocating the unconditional unity of theory and praxis, Bienek's Bakunin reveals the potentially catastrophic outcome of such a position. In writing Die Herren des Morgengrauens, Chotjewitz did not simply sign his name to the

RAF's statement that "legality is a question of power." Rather, he explored poetically the partisan character of the legal order and the helplessness of those victimised by it, helping to explain how one might arrive (rightly or wrongly) at a position such as that of the RAF. La violenza illustrata supplements considerations about violence and counterviolence by an analysis of the linguistic and representational violence of the media. When he reproduces verbatim sections of Curcio's obituary for Cagol, Balestrini is not simply echoing a call for renewed revolutionary counterviolence; he is raising questions about how such calls function in the context of other speech acts, some of which are sympathetic, others hostile. Many of the memoirs discussed in Chapter III do not explicitly concern themselves with the notion of revolutionary identity, but they reveal, in their very form, how various experiences – from a crisis of conscience to incarceration – can explode the unity of personal and political morality. Similarly, La seconda volta features dialogues in which the approach of the Red Brigades to their targets is formulated, but this approach is only one of many elements in a complex situation, Calopresti's portrayal of which in fact problematises the position of the Red Brigades. All of these works insert ideological positions that are by definition abstract into the context of lived experience. What results presents itself as a critique or condemnation of ideology, but is revealed, on closer scrutiny, to be determined by other, perhaps more opaque ideological concepts

– such as that of the family as the paradigm of human relations, or that of a biologicistic cultural theory that treats the language of health and disease as the best possible medium for the analysis of sociopolitical issues.

Often, then, the artwork is not “disturbing” to the authorities because it makes itself a vehicle for an ideological position that might just as well have been expressed in straightforwardly political language. Rather, it prompts efforts at censorship and suppression when its analysis of the sociopolitical context in which an insurrectionary ideology appears and functions begins to provide support for that ideology, or at least of some positions formulated in it. Die Herren des Morgengrauens and Gli invisibili are not themselves calls to take up arms against the state, but they do urge reconsideration of the possible justification of such calls by exposing the state’s own modus operandi – from the abstract violence of laws rewritten or ignored to the physical violence of torture. However, these texts do not achieve this effect by speaking from a position of unproblematic “truth” – rather they read one ideology through concepts culled from another (such as that of “the state” as the locus of repressive violence, or that of technology as a force that infringes on values of privacy, autonomy, and dignity).

In so far as the political conflicts outlined in Chapter I can be described as conflicts between insurrectionary groups and the state, the artist (like all observers) occupies a third position, regardless of

whether or not he explicitly says so (like Arbasino when he writes: "Né col sistema di merda, né col terrorismo idem"). Even an ostensibly pro-RAF novel such as kamalatta does not make its author a RAF member; for all its partisanship, this novel is not propaganda, but an analysis of the implications of the RAF's theory and practice that presupposes some degree of detachment. What the artist observes from his third position is the clash of state violence with insurrectionary violence. It is from this clash and the questions it raises – When is insurrectionary violence legitimate? What are or ought to be the limits of state violence? – that the ideological issues discussed in Chapter II arise: the praxis theorised by militancy is a violent praxis; the state's legal order can neither be maintained nor dismantled without violence; the overcoming of "middle-class schizophrenia" through "revolutionary identity" turns on the decision to reject the state's perceived monopoly on violence (that is, to engage in insurrectionary violence); and what is the reduction of the individual to his sociopolitical function if not an act of "moral violence" intended as a legitimization of its physical corollary? Violence and the conditions of its legitimacy are both the fundamental ideological problem of left-wing militancy and the central theme of the artworks that explore militancy.

Walter Benjamin points out the forms of violence theorised in traditional political philosophy are of two kinds: "lawmaking or law-

preserving.”³ His analyses of strike laws, the death penalty, and the police corroborate this. In search of a theory of revolutionary violence, Benjamin is constrained to venture beyond political philosophy; he insists such violence has yet to be properly theorised. What is more, he finds existing theories offer no satisfactory demonstration even of the legitimacy of what he calls the state’s monopoly on violence. The concession of certain legal powers to the police seems in fact to express a kind of embarrassment over this lack of legitimacy; it marks, as Benjamin writes, “the point at which the state, whether from impotence or because of the immanent connections within the legal system, can no longer guarantee through the legal system the empirical ends that it desires at any price to attain.”⁴

How, then, does the state’s perceived monopoly on violence come about? How is the legal order founded from which that monopoly appears to derive, and for the defense of which it is ostensibly employed? In answering these questions, Benjamin directs the attention of his reader to forms of violence that fall outside the scope of political philosophy, such as the “immediate” violence of a fit of rage – a violence that is “not a means but a manifestation.”⁵ Such forms of violence, portrayals of which Benjamin discovers in the myths of Niobe and Prometheus,

³ Walter Benjamin, “Critique of Violence”, in: *Reflections*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York/London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovitch, 1978) 287.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Benjamin 294.

constitute the blind spot of both social contract theory and legal positivism. It is through them – that is, through simple force or what Benjamin calls “mythical violence” – that legal orders are first established: “Lawmaking is power making, and, to that extent, an immediate manifestation of violence.”⁶ This discovery leads Benjamin to condemn all existing legal orders as fundamentally indefensible:

Far from inaugurating a purer sphere, the mythical manifestation of immediate violence shows itself fundamentally identical with all legal violence, and turns suspicion concerning the latter into certainty of the perniciousness of its historical function, the destruction of which thus becomes obligatory.⁷

There is a second form of immediate violence, Benjamin argues. This is the violence of resistance – a “divine violence” that opposes mythical violence. It is the paradigm of revolutionary violence. In extreme cases, it is the violence of “revolutionary killing of the oppressor.”⁸ Such violence cannot be discredited, Benjamin insists, by pointing to the sanctity of human life. What divine violence defends is not human life, but humanity. The two are distinct and at times mutually exclusive:

⁶ Benjamin 295.

⁷ Benjamin 296f.

⁸ Benjamin 298.

Man cannot, at any price, be said to coincide with the mere life in him, and no more than with any other of his conditions and qualities, not even with the uniqueness of his bodily person. However sacred man is [...], there is no sacredness in his condition, in his bodily life vulnerable to injury by his fellow men.⁹

For Benjamin, revolutionary violence remains "the highest manifestation of unalloyed violence by man."¹⁰ It may be destructive – "but it is so only relatively, with regard to goods, rights, life, and suchlike, never absolutely, with regard to the soul of the living."¹¹

In many ways, this theory would seem to provide a useful paradigm for analysing militancy. Like Benjamin's "divine violence," the insurrectionary violence of the RAF and the Red Brigades found its justification outside the existing legal order – in a notion of man fundamentally irreconcilable with a state whose violence was exposed as mythical and therefore illegitimate. The ideal of being "human" rather than a "pig" is central to many RAF statements, and inseparable from the notion that preserving one's humanity could very well require the sacrifice of one's life. This is evident from the relentlessness of the RAF hunger strikes, in which the militants risked death by making symbolic weapons of their bodies. Clearly,

⁹ Benjamin 299.

¹⁰ Benjamin 300.

¹¹ Benjamin 297f.

the militants were no less inclined than Benjamin to equate humanity with human life. Their defense of humanity was simultaneously a dehumanisation of their enemy, by that ruthless logic which Heiner Müller describes in his introduction to Brecht's Untergang des Egoisten Johann Fatzer: "When the emancipation of mankind is at stake, the enemy is an enemy of mankind, therefore not a man."¹²

Arguably, the ruthlessness and relentlessness of this "divine violence" would have been unthinkable without the exposure of state violence as "mythical violence." It is no accident that so many of the texts and films analysed in this study call the legitimacy of the state and its legal order into question, without necessarily advocating militancy or the ideological positions formulated by militants. These texts and films would seem to be cognizant of the character of state violence as mythical violence, the mythical foundations of the state's legal order having been revealed by militancy. On this view, the militant attack on the state has forced that state to respond more and more harshly. The edifice of legality has begun to crack as laws have been ignored and rewritten; the state has become increasingly incapable of maintaining its power without recurring to repressive measures that explode the existing legal framework. In bearing witness to the crisis, the texts and films analysed in the preceding chapters could be said to bear witness to

¹² Müller in Brecht 1994 12.

the truth that the violence of militancy responds to the original violence of the state – not simply to acts of violence perpetrated in the service of the state, but to the character of the state as violence.

Yet while Benjamin's theory of violence appears to lend itself to an analysis of militancy, and indeed to sit well with militant ideology, the theory also presents problems. While Benjamin's critique appears, through its excursion into mythology, to transcend the bounds of state theory, the concept of "the state" as the locus of repressive violence remains central. In this way, Benjamin simply reiterates an orthodox Marxist position (that articulated by Lenin in State and Revolution, namely that the state is a "special force of repression"). Regardless of how accurate this position may have been in the past, it has become increasingly clear that it does not do justice to the realities of the postwar era. The Red Brigades ideologues were cognizant of this; their concept of the "Imperialist State of the Multinationals" shifts emphasis from the political to the economic sphere, reducing the national state to a mere instrument in the hands of the multinational corporation. (One might add that in doing so, it foreshadows ideas circulating among today's anti-globalisation activists, making the theories of the Red Brigades less "outdated" than they are often said to be.) It is not clear that this attempt to "locate" the source of repressive violence is any more satisfying than Benjamin's; it does, however, cast doubt on

Benjamin's theory, and perhaps even on all attempts to identify a single wellspring of repression. What is more, it raises the question of whether the forms of "divine violence" may not be as multiple as those of "mythic violence." Like those militant ideologues who were perhaps too quick to subsume student protest, the labour movement, racial unrest in the USA, and anti-colonialism under the broad category of "the revolution," Benjamin does not sufficiently differentiate between various forms of resistance, whose origins and aims may be quite different.

If Benjamin failed to articulate a conclusive theory of violence, then the plethora of ideological discourses invoked by the writers and directors discussed in the previous chapters suggests they have been following in his footsteps. The issue they grapple with more than any other is that of violence; even where that issue appears to be ellided (it seldom does), the plausibility of the views they advance stands and falls with their engagement with the question of violence. Some discourses – such as those developed from Marxist premises – lend themselves more readily to an analysis of violence. However, they too need to be exposed as ideological, and hence as attempts to frame the issue of violence in ways that are more or less conducive to understanding it. Whatever "understanding" the artist finally arrives at needs in turn to be examined in terms of how it has itself been ideologically determined.

Adorno has argued that what results from the artwork's critique of ideology is not a new or modified ideology. On this account, the truth presented in the artwork is not ideological, because it is not discursive: "The seal of authentic artworks is that what they appear to be appears as if it could not be prevaricated, even though discursive judgement is unable to define it."¹³ Adorno claims that what results from art's critique of ideology is a "historical truth" or, more precisely a "crystallisation" of objective historical truth in the work as artefact or subjective engagement with history, and hence a transcendence of the artist's subjectivity: "History in artworks is not something made, and history alone frees the work from being merely something posited or manufactured: Truth content is not external to history but rather its crystallization in the works."¹⁴

According to Adorno, this historical truth is not consciously posited by the artist. It is not a question of a simple declaration, and hence not of the political positions that authors formulate more or less explicitly. The work discloses the truth of its historical period not by virtue of political positions superimposed on it, but through its very form. Nor must the absence of political declarations condemn these works to neutrality. Their partisanship is as much rooted in their form, and perhaps even in their very nature as works of art, as the truth they reveal. Where that truth is an indictment of

¹³ Adorno 132.

¹⁴ Adorno 133.

certain political positions, or even of social praxis in its entirety, the artwork transcends the false neutrality of aestheticism:

Real partisanship, which is the virtue of artworks no less than of men and women, resides in the depths, where the social antinomies become the dialectic of forms: By leading them to language through the synthesis of the work, artists do their part socially [...].¹⁵

Adorno goes on to argue that the partisanship of the artwork is partisanship for a humane society, one in which all forms of violence – structural as well as physical – have been eliminated as far as possible. In so far as praxis is always characterised by violence, it is necessarily subjected to a critique by the artwork: “According to its sheer form, praxis tends towards that which, in terms of its own logic, it should abolish; violence is immanent in it and is maintained in its sublimations, whereas artworks, even the most aggressive, stand for nonviolence.”¹⁶ The artwork offers a critique of praxis by preserving the utopia of a manifold whose parts relate to one another harmoniously, not violently. This is the utopia of an existence free of repression – one in which the violence of praxis becomes superfluous. Until it is realised, art confirms its possibility: “Beauty in art is the semblance of the truly peaceful. It is this

¹⁵ Ibid. Cf. also Adorno 227: “What is social in art is its immanent movement against society, not its manifest opinions.”

¹⁶ Adorno 241.

toward which even the repressive violence of form tends in its unification of hostile and divergent elements."¹⁷

Despite formulating insights that are doubtless helpful to any investigation of the relationship between ideology and art (such as the insight that the "truth" contained in an artwork cannot be equated with statements made by the artist), Adorno's account tends towards precisely the view that the preceding chapters have argued against: namely that art succeeds in transcending ideology. Adorno's discussion of form is also itself profoundly ideological, being strongly informed by a quasi-theological utopia of "peace on earth" and by a humanism that posits violence as something extraneous to "humanity," something from which mankind could conceivably liberate itself. While it is clear that the language of art is not "discursive" in the way that the language of philosophy is, to suggest that this alone can guarantee the absence of ideology from art is something of a leap. One might ask whether what Adorno identifies as "the seal of authentic artworks" – that they appear as statements that cannot be prevaricated – is not a consequence of the way in which those works frame their subject matter. Many of the ideological discourses concealed in the artworks discussed here present themselves as extraordinarily convincing not because what they say is "true," but because they ellide certain themes and motifs. Only when these ellisions are pointed out does it become

¹⁷ Adorno 258.

apparent that there is often no legitimate reason for them. A discourse that presented itself as the only sensible one is then exposed as gratuitous or contingent on the historical experience and ideological inclination of the writer. What appeared "true" because it led to formal beauty is exposed as one possible approach among others. In this sense, it might just as well be argued that the formal organisation of an artwork contains an element of mendacity, rather than of truth. This mendacity is one of obfuscation and ellision – in a word, of mystification. It is precisely by this category that Adorno's analysis needs to be supplemented and corrected. To salvage art from ideology, Adorno had to make it a depository of truth that transcends "socially necessary semblance," or society's false consciousness. As ideology, such false consciousness determines the perceptions and value judgements of individuals and groups – it determines what they become aware of and how they evaluate it. Yet if art does not escape ideology, then its analysis is itself skewed by virtue of being informed by uncritically accepted assumptions – conceptual blind spots that foreground certain issues while relegating others to obscurity. It is itself mystificatory. Even where the artist devotes himself to the analysis of a particular ideology (such as that of militancy), he does not thereby liberate himself from all ideology. Nor does the artwork he creates somehow transcend it by virtue of its formal beauty. Rather, the critique of ideology is situated in and framed by further ideological discourses.

The task of interpreting the artwork is not, as Adorno suggests, merely one of translating truth from aesthetic into "discursive" terms. It is a process of decoding, rather than of translation – a process of exposing the conceptual paradigms by which particular issues are framed. This is so because the relationship of art to ideology is twofold: art can critique a particular ideology, but it cannot do so without valourising another, or even several others, however subtly. To use the stark language so characteristic of Adorno: the relationship of art to ideology is not that of truth to falsehood, but that of one falsehood to another.

Postscript

Readers of the preceding study have raised a number of questions about the claims advanced in it and the terminology used to advance them. Two of these questions concern matters of fundamental importance and deserve to be addressed here: 1. What, if any, is the distinction between ideology and truth, and what role does truth play in the relationship between ideology and art? 2. Can it really be claimed that the historical events described in Chapter I fundamentally transformed the societies of Italy and the GFR? The first question is theoretical, the second historical. They will be addressed in the order in which they are listed here.

Ideology and truth

That ideology and truth are polar opposites is a position that is always implicit, often explicit in the writings of Adorno. The definition of "ideology" proposed in this study departs from Adorno in that it rejects this dichotomy. "Ideology" is defined as a system of ideas and representations that determines the beliefs and value judgements of individuals and groups. These ideas and representations can take the form of metaphors, images, and theoretical concepts; what is important is that they are treated as paradigmatic, that they provide

the conceptual tools inevitably defaulted to in the interpretation of any phenomenon in need of explanation, and that they determine the behaviour, both conceptual and material, of individuals and groups.

Following Althusser¹, it can be said that every ideology is "centred" around one or more key concepts. (Althusser provides the example of monotheistic religion, an ideology whose conceptual centre is God.) The individual that thinks ideologically finds itself in what Althusser calls a twofold "specular" relationship to the conceptual centre: the individual is able to "reflect itself" in that centre, that is, it defines itself by its relationship to that centre, and the centre itself is "reflected" in the individual, that is, the individual internalises the centre or makes it an integral component of its way of thinking and acting. This individual becomes a "subject" in two senses of the word: it becomes the author of verdicts and actions, and it is "subjected" to the ideological centre in making those verdicts and actions. The ultimate effect of every ideology is therefore to make the individual freely accept its own subjection.

It should be clear from this brief summary how ideology informs the literary texts and films analysed in the preceding study. The ideologies of feminism, anti-capitalist and anti-technocratic humanism,

¹ Cf. Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses", in: Louis Althusser, Lenin and Philosophy, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review, 1971) 127ff.

and vitalism that inform such texts as Donna in guerra, Erfinder des Glücks, and Paesaggi italiani con zombi have as their respective centres the concepts of patriarchy, the autonomous individual endowed with inalienable rights, and a culture conceived of in biologicistic terms. The authors of these texts are guided by these conceptual centres in their analyses of militancy and militant ideology; this leads to differences in emphasis and evaluation. While sharing the same topic, these authors “frame” that topic in highly divergent ways.

The ultimate effect of ideology is a mystificatory one; that is, it tends to obscure the true nature of society, which, for Althusser and other Marxists, is determined, in the last instance, by property relations. In this sense, ideology is indeed, as Adorno and Horkheimer assert, “socially necessary semblance.” Yet this point can be overstated, as Adorno sometimes does. It cannot be ruled out a priori that ideology may coincide with truth, and the difference between ideology and a correct analysis cannot be reduced to the difference between falsehood and truth. Rather, the difference consists in how the conceptual paradigm internalised by the “subject” is arrived at. The hallmark of ideology is that its concepts (ideas, representations) are unexamined: they appear in the form of dogma or, more frequently, as assumptions presented as “obviously true.” When Althusser insists that the Marxist analysis is not ideological, he does so

on the basis of pointing out that its concepts are the product of a theoretical labour; they result from a critical endeavour, an investigation. It should be clear that the same cannot be said about the notions which inform such texts as Camon's Occidente; here, the use of certain central conceptual tools (concepts, metaphors, images) is never justified. These notions are ideological in that they constitute the threshold beyond which critical thought never ventures.

To say that a novel or a film is ideologically informed is not, therefore, to say that it contains nothing that is true. Obviously, many of the texts and films discussed make use of historical facts whose truth it would be frivolous to dispute. Their analyses of those facts may also well be true, although this can certainly not be said in every case. To the extent that they are ideologically informed, however, these works present verdicts and representations – sometimes true, sometimes not – that result from their subject matter being framed on the basis of unexamined conceptual paradigms.

Social transformation

That the societies of the GFR and Italy were profoundly transformed by the events described in Chapter I of this study is the contention of a number of the writers and directors discussed. Are they right?

In answering this question, it will be helpful to distinguish various sectors of society. This can be done on the basis of the traditional Marxist distinction between superstructure and infrastructure (base). On this model, the superstructure is made up of the institutions through which state power is exercised: government institutions (e.g. the Bundestag and the Bundesrat in the GFR, parliament in Italy), the political parties themselves, various public institutions such as the courts, the police, and the military, and what Althusser terms "ideological state apparatuses," such as churches, schools, and the media. The infrastructure consists of the means of production, handled in accordance with the relations of production characteristic of capitalism, such as wage labour.

The historical period examined in the preceding study sees dramatic changes in infrastructure: the so-called "second industrial revolution," characterised by the development of nuclear power, labour-replacing (as opposed to labour-saving) machines, information technology, and the "agricultural revolution" (resulting from the use of scientific stock breeding and improved seeds, among other factors). The effect of these developments on the development of social protest movements (the anti-nuclear movement, the Italian labour movement, the "green" movement) can hardly be overestimated; it was perhaps not stressed enough, in Chapter I, that these movements formed a

significant component of the environment from which left-wing militant groups emerged, and with which they continued, however ineffectively, to maintain a dialogue.

To some extent, then, left-wing militancy was a response to these changes in infrastructure. In at least one case, it was, if not a cause, then at least a catalyst. This is the case of the transformation of the factory (through automatisisation) in the Italy of the late 1970s and thereafter. It is clear that this development was largely driven by the recognition, on the part of employers, of the fact that the traditional labour force (the industrial proletariat recruited from Italy's rural south) was becoming increasingly ungovernable. No doubt left-wing militancy played a crucial part in this development.

Changes in the superstructure are too numerous to be analysed in detail here. They were no less dramatic than the changes in infrastructure. It hardly needs to be stressed that the kidnapping and assassination of a head of state (Moro in Italy) has a profound effect on political institutions and their process of policy formation, as well as on the policies themselves. Events such as the kidnapping of Peter Lorenz also clearly affected the outcome of elections. With the shooting of Benno Ohnesorg, the state's legitimacy and its "right" to resort to violence became a subject for debate, which it had scarcely been in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The attack on Dutschke,

prompted by a rabid Bild article, raised the issue of media responsibility in a way that was qualitatively new. The scandals surrounding the Stammheim trial were unprecedented in the GFR, and made the abuse of legal power an issue no politically conscious citizen could ignore. Similarly, the issue of torture could no longer be associated only with Third World dictatorships; respected humanitarian groups were accusing the government in Bonn of having sanctioned the torture of its own citizens. These changes in how the state was perceived are changes in the public sphere and can legitimately be cited as instances of society being transformed.

It was in the 1970s that the GFR and Italy saw the militarisation of their police forces. This development has been particularly well-documented for the GFR. There, Horst Herold completely reformed the police force. His BKA (Bundeskriminalamt) set worldwide standards for riot control, surveillance, and nationwide investigation. The use of information technology for purposes of nationwide surveillance (the PIOS database) became a central component of police activities. In part, such technological changes were made possible by a substantial rewriting of the law to allow for secret house searches, the tapping of telephones, and the searching of mail. It would be frivolous to claim that West German society was not transformed by such legal changes, or by those which allowed for censorship and media blackouts and

prohibited prominent individuals (such as psychologist Peter Brückner) from practising their professions, often for decades. The Notstandsgesetze (emergency laws) not only altered the lives of individuals; they permanently transformed the public sphere, in particular media and academic culture.

What is perhaps most important is that the existence of a domestic threat to state security brought about a shift in the dominant ideologies of West German and Italian society. In the GFR, an anti-communism whose traditional bogeymen had been the Soviet bloc and the GDR (a state the government in Bonn refused to recognise) could now point to a "red threat" at home. The demonisation of the student movement by the Springer press (their demonstrations were described as "terrorist" acts) seemed, with the emergence of the 2 June Movement and the RAF, to have been legitimated post factum. This resulted in a tremendous boost in the confidence with which all extraparliamentary movements, indeed all unorthodox ways of life, could be denounced.² The ideological denunciation of the RAF as the "Baader-Meinhof gang" became a staple of worldviews articulated behind lecterns, on pulpits, and in the media. In much the same way,

² Cf. eg. Taschau's comments on how West German citizens are deemed "suspicious" or "unsuspicious" on the basis of their television viewing habits (discussed in Chapter IV).

every left-wing protester became, for the Italian *Corriere della sera*, at least a potential "terrorist."

Contemporary debates such as that concerning an exhibition on the RAF in Berlin or that surrounding the issue of legal pardons in Italy bear witness to the central position occupied by left-wing militancy in the historical memory and political consciousness of German and Italian citizens. While it would be absurd to claim that these societies were profoundly transformed simply because a number of individuals were kidnapped and assassinated, or because bombs were detonated in military installations, it would be no less absurd to maintain that the larger social and political developments of which these events were a part (and from which they should never be abstracted) did not amount to a radical transformation of society whose effects are still with us, and whose ultimate outcome remains to be seen.

M.H. April 2004

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