History, Mourning, and Postwar Cinema:

French and German Film as a Theater for Working Through the Horrors of the Second World War

by

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INTRODUCTION

History as Picture Show: Postwar Film Examining History

In the decades following WWII, both France and Germany sacrificed an understanding of their recent past in order to quickly recover from the horrors of war. However, this reconstructed Europe was built on a foundation of silence, myth, and unclaimed responsibility, issues that would ultimately need to return to haunt the people. Raised in silence about the national past, a second generation came of age and began to demand some kind of understanding. In politics, arts, and literature, an attempt was made to work through the silence; it was in film, however, that the history of the war could be worked through for national audiences.

These second generation filmmakers, addressing their stunted national understanding, engaged in a conversation with both national audiences and historical scholars. For the viewers, these films raised questions and realties that had never been addressed, placing on screen unpleasant portions of national histories that had been cut away in service of false narratives. The communal experience of watching these films provided a place for the people to engage in a process of mourning, becoming absorbed in the realities of the past. Thus, rather than remain passive receivers of information (as a reader of a book), they become both observer and actor. Through an emotional response to the film, audiences are able to think about and respond to their own stories.

While working to rediscover and rebuild the lost national understanding, these filmmakers were engaged in a conversation with historians of the period. The

filmmakers began writing their own history of the war, one shaped by personal experience and responsibility. In several cases, the filmmakers make direct connections to scholarship, responding to it and working to explore the issues presented.

I will examine French and German films as they addressed the issues of memory, guilt, and national identity. This is essentially a progression, a process of understanding what happened, recognizing the complexity of determining guilt, and rebuilding a national identity that incorporates this. In the following chapter, I will explain the historical context for the silence following the war, and the growing discomfort with it. In Chapter II, I discuss the move to break the silence by reexamining personal memories of the war by looking at Alain Resnais' 1959 film Hiroshima Mon Amour and Hans-Jürgen Syberberg's 1977 film Hitler: A Film from Germany. Chapter III explores how Louis Malle's 1974 film Lacombe, Lucien and Volker Schlöndorff's 1979 adaptation of *The Tin Drum* challenged accepted notions of who may have been guilty for the war. The final chapter, looking at Marcel Ophüls' 1971 release *The Sorrow and the Pity* and Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *The* Marriage of Maria Braun from 1979, tackles the problematic national identities that developed after the war. Each film was chosen for its relationship to creating a new understanding of the war. They took part in a much larger examination through film, but these particular films were chosen for the strength of the director, wide audience appeal, or their unique addition to the debate.

Please note that when I discuss postwar Germany in the following chapters, I refer only to West Germany. The Communist leadership of East Germany adopted

their own understanding of the war, one that focused on the issues of capitalism rather than a national seduction by Hitler. The recovery of a German past was essential to the filmmakers I will discuss, as it was for the French filmmakers, allowing a more thoughtful comparison of these two perpetrator nations. France and Germany were, of course, not the only countries to go through a process of delayed mourning, nor were their filmmakers alone in bringing this process to the national screen. However, for the purposes of my research, I have chosen to examine only these two.

Additionally, I focus here on the intent of the filmmaker, thus looking at how they engaged (perceived or true) history through their medium. This means that my analysis has been shaped by an auteur approach, focusing on the director as the primary creative force of a film. This theory was being developed by the critics from the *Cahiers du Cinema* (they would eventually become the filmmakers of the French New Wave), at the time that many of the filmmakers I examine were working through the postwar history on film.¹ The directors' personal experiences and thinking shaped the way they presented their films to the audiences.

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¹ For more information on auteur theory, see *Auteurs and Authorship: A Film Reader*, ed. Barry Keith Grant (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008).

CHAPTER I

Europe: Risen from the Ashes

"Europe in the aftermath of the Second World War offered a prospect of utter misery and desolation," begins Tony Judt's book *Postwar: A History of Europe Since* 1945.² The war had left the continent physically ravaged, with emotional scars to match. As the years passed, a deep silence descended in France and Germany. For decades, there was no discussion of many of the realities of the war. In this period, classified by a continued trauma, any attempt to move on from the horrors of the war were blocked. Without mourning their destroyed countries, the people could not rebuild.

Of course, in order to understand the devastation of the Second World War, one has to consider that this destruction took place in a context already deeply shaken by the dire consequences of WWI. In the nearly four and a half years of the Great War, Europe had been subjected to terrible losses, both human and material. The years after the war, in both France and Germany, were dominated by attempted recovery, economic depression, growing social divisions, and recurring failures of parliamentary government. In the midst of this instability, Hitler began his campaign to conquer Europe. Though other world powers initially made attempts to appease him, it became increasingly clear that war was unavoidable. During the Second World War, France and Germany were spared the worst physical destruction, though

² Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 13.

still suffered heavily. Aside from physical destruction, the populations were again severely diminished. However, it was the emotional recovery that would prove most difficult.

As memories of WWII were suppressed in a substantial and systematic way, an entire generation would grow up denied a full understanding of their national history. For the most part, it was not until the late 1960s that these young adults even began asking questions about the roles that their families, friends, leaders, and nations had played in the massive devastation of Europe and the grand scale of horror that occurred. Part of an international wave of youth political action, they sought answers about the past in order to understand their present. They turned to history, politics and the arts for answers. Film would be one medium in which this exploration took place.

In this chapter, I will first look at the French and then German history of the period, beginning with the outcome of the First World War. These two wars, fought with vastly different tactics and for entirely different reasons, were inextricably linked. The origins of the Second World War come out of the history of the Great War and its aftermath.

France: from the Hollow Years to the Broken Mirror

At the end of WWI, ten percent of the active male population of France (1,400,000 men) had been killed in service, with twice as many wounded.³ Most of the Western Front battles had been fought on French soil, leaving the country with a physically devastated landscape as well. These "hollow years" were plagued with many economic and social problems, and the fear of war continued to loom large throughout the postwar period. Stagnating population growth, failure to industrialize, rising unemployment, and financial instability were key issues that led to unrest in the 1930s. In response to the February 6, 1934 right-wing demonstrations (and in the opinion of many an attempted fascist coup), a general strike brought millions of workers to Paris. The resulting counter-demonstration merged numerous left-wing groups, and is considered the beginning of the Popular Front. In an effort against the growing threat of fascism, the Communist, Socialist, and Radical parties agreed to work in a coalition government, and the subsequent elections on May 3, 1936 yielded a victory of 386 seats of 608. The government would be headed by the Socialist and Jewish Léon Blum as Prime Minister, with a coalition cabinet in power. However, Blum's administration lasted just over a year, and the Popular Front was then

³ Julian Jackson, *The Fall of France: The Nazi Invasion of 1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 149.

⁴ For more information on the interwar years, see Eugen Joseph Weber's *The Hollow Years: France in the 1930s* (New York: Norton, 1994).

effectively defunct. Vigorously adapted cultural policies, and labor agreements did little to help public opinion of the coalition, and Blum resigned in June 1937.⁵

Édouard Daladier became Prime Minister in April 1938, after the failure of the Popular Front. This was his third time holding the office, though he had served for less that eleven months total in his prior two terms. This points to the incredible instability and uncertainty of the period, as each administration lasted a short time, and power shuffled back and forth between a few men. The Munich Agreement and subsequent German invasion of Czechoslovakia had occurred during this Daladier regime, when the intensity of the nation's desperation to avoid war came to a fore. On September 29, 1938, Daladier, Hitler, Neville Chamberlain, and Benito Mussolini met to discuss the German annexation of the Sudetenland, the Czechoslovakian borderlands populated largely by ethnic Germans.⁶ Chamberlain was eager to appease the Germans, thinking that the Sudetenland would satisfy Hitler's aims. When he returned to England, he waved a signed peace treaty, proclaiming "peace for our time." Daladier capitulated, giving in to the other three men, though he seemed aware of Hitler's larger and insatiable intent. When he returned to France, expecting a furious mob but welcomed by cheering crowds, Daladier said to his aide, "Ah, the fools!" Future Prime Minister Michel Debré remembered the agreement as, "a

⁵ For more information on the evolution and failures of the Popular Front, see Julian Jackson's *The Popular Front in France: Defending Democracy, 1934-1938* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

⁶ Weber, 175.

⁷ Neville Chamberlain, "Peace in our Time," *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, Vol. 339 (October 3, 1938).

http://www.wwnorton.com/college/history/ralph/workbook/ralprs36.htm

⁸ Julian Jackson, *France: The Dark Years 1940-1944* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 91.

crushing diplomatic defeat and the delirious popular enthusiasm that greeted it." An opinion poll in October 1939 showed that only 37 percent opposed it. This mass support must be understood in the context of the financial constraints, limited population growth, and intense pacifism that brought the French people to embrace the betrayal of an ally; "this was a pacifism rooted in exhaustion, in deep pessimism—or realism—about whether France could survive another bloodletting on the scale of the Great War." ¹⁰ The total devastation of the Great War made national preservation the ultimate factor. "Those who subscribed to this uncompromising pacifism placed it above patriotism or Republicanism or indeed any alternative ideology. Their patriotism had died in the mud of Verdun." An entire generation had been lost, and with it came the loss of a national interest rooted in anything other than the will to survive. This desperation to keep peace created a near hysteria for some. "This extreme position was held by only a small minority, although an influential one. Most people subscribed to a kind of bruised patriotism that went hand in hand with a profound sense of the horror of war and a desperate desire to avoid it at almost any cost." The nation was defined not by their identity or culture, but rather an all-encompassing fear of war. This resulted in national support of the Munich Agreement in order to avoid more war at any cost, including the potential loss of traditional longstanding French pride.

A year later, when war came anyway, the pacifist movements had lost power, or at least the fervor that had been present during Munich. A Prefect of the Rhône

⁹ Weber, 176. ¹⁰ Jackson, 149.

¹¹ Ibid., 148.

¹² Ibid., 148.

described the attitude as, "something between resolution and resignation." The population was ready to accept that war was inevitable. However, the military strategy rested on a determination to keep the war out of France. The Maginot Line was built around French borders, from Switzerland to Luxembourg, intended to give the army time to mobilize, save manpower, and keep the fighting off French soil, using the Line as a basis for a counter-attack. 13 This plan was supported by the likes of Marshall Pétain, while Paul Reynaud and Charles de Gaulle advocated instead for a plan of action, calling for investment in armor and aircraft. The Germans came through the Ardennes, where they were met with some of the least experienced French soldiers. Though the French had among the most modern armed forces in Europe at the time, their tactics and leadership were outmoded, and the best of their weaponry and divisions were encircled at Dunkirk. Having expected a war of attrition like the Great War, the strategies focused primarily on keeping the fighting out of France. The German forces had adapted their tactics to modern warfare, and the French plans were no match for the crippling German blitzkrieg.

On May 17, the Supreme Commander Maurice Gamelin was dismissed and replaced by Maxime Weygand. However, by the time any of his orders were ready to be carried out, the Germans had consolidated their gains, and the majority of the Allied troops remained trapped in Belgium. On June 14, German forces entered Paris, and on June 22, 1940, an armistice was signed at Compiègne. The forest was chosen as a location because it was the same site in which the 1918 armistice had

¹³ For information of the French military strategy, see Marc Bloch's *Strange Defeat; a statement of evidence written in 1940*, trans. Gerard Hopkins (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999).

been signed, signaling the German defeat. Hitler then sat in the same railcar, in the seat that French Marshal Foch had sat when the defeated German representatives had surrendered the First World War. The document established the German occupation of three-fifths of France, the surrender of all persons granted political asylum, and the French assumption of all occupation costs. With the armed forces virtually destroyed, the French representatives agreed to the armistice, thinking the war would last only a few weeks until the British forces could no longer hold out. This explained the acceptance of the clause stipulating that all French prisoners of war would remain so until the end of hostilities with the British, meaning some million prisoners would spend the next five years in German camps. The government was reestablished in the zone libre at Vichy, headed by the WWI hero Marshal Philippe Pétain.

When defeat became clear, Prime Minister Paul Reynaud and many others in the cabinet considered the possibility of continuing the war from North Africa, but he was outnumbered and eventually resigned. President Albert Lebrun then asked Pétain to form a new government, and Pierre Laval was brought in to the government because of his Third Republic connections, and the necessity of an experienced parliamentarian to deal with the Chamber and Senate. Sworn in on June 27, Laval led discussions in the National Assembly about the abolition of the Third Republic Constitution of 1875. On July 10, the National Assembly voted 569 to 80 in favor of granting Pétain full powers, including authorization to draft a new constitution. The next day, Pétain formally assumed the title of Head of the French State. There was little opposition:

In the summer of 1940, Pétain fitted the national mood to perfection: internally, a substitute for politics and a barrier to revolution; externally, a victorious general who would make no more war. Honor plus safety.¹⁴

In addition to his war record, Pétain had little connection to the politics of the Third Republic. He was trustworthy in a way few French politicians at the time could be. In propaganda, Pétain became the personification of France, with posters asking, "Are you more French than he?" Pétain, in his first address as Head of State said, "I give France the gift of myself." He was made to be a savior of France again, the old hero who could restore France to glory. Vichy propaganda assured the people that it was not their fault that France had been defeated, but that it was rather a sort of divine retribution for the decadence of the Third Republic. The new regime "claimed to be above, or outside, politics, even above, or outside history, in the sense that Pétainism was seen to correspond to something supra-historical in the French nation, to relate to an essentialist code of national and familial values, which the highly political regime of the Third Republic was accused of subverting in the interest of faction, class and party." They positioned themselves as everything the Third Republic had not been. The early messages of Vichy preached a moral and spiritual revival with a place

¹⁴ Robert Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940-1944*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 35.

¹⁶ Debórah Dwork and Robert Jan Van Pelt, *Holocaust: A History* (New York: Norton, 2002), 160.

¹⁷ John Fletcher, "Vichy Propaganda,"

http://ics.leeds.ac.uk/papers/pmt/exhibits/2498/Vichy.pdf

¹⁸ Gerhard Hirshfeld, and Marsh, Patrick, ed., *Collaboration in France: Politics and Culture during the Nazi Occupation, 1940-1944* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 32-33.

alongside Germany in the "New Europe." ¹⁹ The reactionary France of the National Revolution presented a country based on "Work, Family, Homeland," featuring a powerful France and a united people. The depression, disunity, and defeat of the Third Republic were readily exchanged for the promises of Pétain's France. This ready abandonment of the Republic and vigorous acceptance of the conservative leader is a theme that would be examined by filmmakers in the postwar years. For decades after the war, this wide acceptance of Pétain was forced from public memory, and the second generation would work to remind the French of the truths of their own behavior during the war. Wartime Vichy propaganda worked to convince the people not only of the validity of the new Vichy administration and the nation's deserved place in Germany's New Europe, but also used the failings of the Third Republic and Popular Front to bolster their acceptance. The former leaders were vigorously pursued and punished, blamed for the defeat of France. For example, Pierre Mendès-France, a Radical (and Jew) who had served in the National Assembly and as Secretary of State for Finance under Blum's administration, was arrested and charged with desertion, sentenced to serve six years imprisonment, though he escaped to Britain, where he joined de Gaulle.

Collaboration must be understood in both its political and social functions. In perhaps the most direct way, Vichy was responsible for collaboration with the Germans, even going beyond the agreements between the nations. With the state as the head of an effort for collaboration, individual collaboration takes on an interesting meaning. Immediately following the war, and then again with films from the 1970s,

¹⁹ Roderick Kedward and Roger Austin, ed., *Vichy France and the Resistance: Culture and Ideology* (Totowa: Barnes and Noble Books, 1985), 237.

this issue of defining collaboration and finding those responsible would continue.

Denouncements, civil work, and war profiteering are just a few examples of collaboration of the most basic and individual level.

The Resistance groups in France were largely delineated by regional and political interests. The larger political groups and the rural *maquis* performed acts of sabotage against the German and Vichy forces, created escape networks for Allied soldiers, and provided information through underground newspapers. Destructive and counter-intelligence acts against the occupying forces or Vichy were the focus of many of the groups. Especially early in the Occupation, subtle undermining of authority, such as a scrawled "V" or cross of Lorraine²⁰ (de Gaulle's symbol) over a Vichy propaganda poster worked to signal others to the continuing fight and, "to inform the enemy that, although he may have the upper hand militarily, he is surrounded hostile, elusive, and immeasurable forces." Outnumbered and undersupplied, it was particularly important that the Resistance movements be able to keep their opponents on edge.

At the outbreak of the war, de Gaulle was only a colonel, though he was promoted to brigadier general after the success of his armored division and his use of mobile units had proved to be a rare moment of success for the French during May 1940. On June 6, Reynaud appointed de Gaulle Under Secretary of State for National

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²⁰ The "V for victory" and cross of Lorraine were common symbols of the Resistance, and appeared often. In April 1941, the Prefecture of Police reported 6400 inscriptions of Gaullist slogans, the cross of Lorraine, "RAF," "V," or other such neutralizing messages written across Vichy and Nazi posters.

Jean-Pierre Azema et al., trans. Lory Frankel, *Collaboration and Resistance: Images of life in Vichy France, 1940-1944.* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2000), 218. ²¹ Anthony Rhodes, *Propaganda: The art of persuasion World War II* (New York: Chelsea House Publications, 1976), 185.

Defense and War, placing him in charge of coordination with England. Just ten days later, de Gaulle returned to Bordeaux (the temporary wartime capital), where he and several officers rebelled against the new French government, and then he escaped to London. In an appeal over the BBC radio, de Gaulle denounced the armistice and asked the people to resist the occupying forces and the Vichy regime. "But has the last word been said? Must we abandon all hope? Is our defeat final and irremediable? To those questions I answer - No!... Whatever happens, the flame of French resistance must not and shall not die." In this first broadcast, de Gaulle focused on the people, calling upon them to keep up hope and resistance. His purported assumption of power, and thus the resultant invalidation of the power of the Vichy government, did not become an issue until the next day:

Frenchmen must now be fully aware that all ordinary forms of authority have disappeared. Faced by the bewilderment of my countrymen, by the disintegration of a government in thrall to the enemy, by the fact that the institutions of my country are incapable, at the moment, of functioning, I, General de Gaulle, a French soldier and military leader, realize that I now speak for France. In the name of France, I make the following solemn declaration: It is the bounden duty of all Frenchmen who still bear arms to continue the struggle. For them to lay down their arms, to evacuate any position of military importance, or agree to hand over any part of French territory, however small, to enemy control, would be a crime against our country. For the moment I refer particularly to French North Africa - to the integrity of French North Africa.

De Gaulle claims the ability to, "speak for France," in doing so positioning himself as the legitimate continuation of the government and attempting to invalidate all Vichy actions. He offers no explanation for the legitimacy of his power, simply positioning himself as a loyal Frenchman answering the imperative call of his countrymen.

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²² Charles de Gaulle, "June 18, 1940," quoted in "The Flame of French Resistance: the Greatest Speeches of the Twentieth Century, http://www.guardian.co.uk/theguardian/2007/apr/29/greatspeeches1

Having wanted to move the government to North Africa, he reminds the people of their vast Empire; it is not just Continental France that matters and the Battle of France is not the war. On June 22, he says it is a "world war," not to be determined so simply. Though the British and especially Americans were initially hesitant to allow de Gaulle to claim such power, the Allies gradually came to support him. After the Allied invasion of North Africa, de Gaulle moved his headquarters to Algiers in May 1943. Though de Gaulle controlled the Free French Forces outside of France, he was not the de facto leader of all Resistance movements. The Resistance was made up of many different interest groups fighting around the country, initially unwilling to coordinate with each other. In June 1943, the French Committee of National Liberation (CFLN) was formed with de Gaulle and General Henri Giraud at its head, intended to unite and coordinate the liberation of France from Nazi and Vichy control. As the war continued, the committee expanded and reorganized, creating a functional administrative body.

In January 1942, de Gaulle gave Jean Moulin the order to work with the Resistance leaders in France in order to create a unified movement. Parachuting back into France, Moulin met with various leaders, and initially succeeded in joining the Combat, Libération-Sud, and Franc-Tireur into the *Armée Secrète*. On May 27, 1943, the National Council of the Resistance (CNR) met for the first time, joining together the eight main Resistance movements, members of six of the major political parties, and representatives from the two largest pre-war trade unions.²³ After the arrest and

²³ The eight Resistance movements were represented by Pierre Villon (*Front National*), Roger Coquoin (*Ceux de la Libération*), Jacques Lecompte-Boinet (*Ceux de la Résistance*), Charles Laurent (*Libération-Nord*), Pascal Copeau (*Libération-*

death of Jean Moulin on June 8, 1943, Georges Bidault, and then Louis Saillant took over as President. On March 15, 1944, after long negotiations, the CNR adopted a program outlining immediate and post-Liberation goals and changes. The preamble states:

The mission does not end at the Liberation. It is, in effect, only in regrouping all the forces around the quasi-unanimous aspirations of the Nation, that France will again find her moral and social equilibria, and will give back to the world the image of her grandeur and the proof of her unity. ²⁴

The organization thus planned not just how to finish the war, but also how to reform the country afterwards. Even while fighting, a chief concern was the renewal of French honor in the eyes the eyes of its own citizens and of the world's powers. The plan later outlines the formation of local committees charged with the expansion of the Resistance movement within the interior, the protection of veterans and women, and the punishment of "agents of the Gestapo and the Militia Darnand." Part of

Sud), Jacques-Henri Simon (Organisation Civile et Militaire), Claude Bourdet (Combat), and Eugène Claudius-Petit (Franc-Tireur). Representatives from the Confédération générale du travail (CGT, Louis Saillant) and the Confédération Française des Travailleurs Chrétiens (CFTC, Gaston Tessier) joined the representatives of the six major political parties of the Third Republic. These men were André Mercier (Parti communiste français, PCF), André Le Troquer (Section française de l'Internationale ouvrière, SFIO), Marc Rucart (Radicaux-Socialists), Georges Bidaut (Démocrates Populaires), Joseph Laniel (Alliance Démocratique), and Louis Marin (Fédération Républicaine).

Le Conseil National de la Résistance (liste des membres),

http://www.archives.premier-ministre.gouv.fr/juppe_version1/hist/histgvt2.htm ²⁴ "Cette mission de combat ne doit pas prendre fin à la Libération. Ce n'est, en effet, qu'en regroupant toutes ses forces autour des aspirations quasi unanimes de la Nation, que la France retrouvera son équilibre moral et social et redonnera au monde l'image de sa grandeur et la preuve de son unité."

[&]quot;Le Program du Conseil National de la Résistance," http://www.ldh-toulon.net/spip.php?article323
²⁵ Ibid.

restoring the honor to France would involve purging the "spies and traitors" who had betrayed the country. The second half of the document outlines "measures to be taken at the liberation," announcing the determination of the CNR to remain united after the Liberation. It outlines the establishment of a Provisional Government of the Republic under de Gaulle, ensuring the punishment of collaborators, and the reinstatement of civil liberties and necessary reforms. ²⁷ By that time, the Allies were closing in and an Allied victory seemed increasingly possible. The CNR program points to the ways in which the Resistance began thinking about the future. Having claimed throughout the Occupation that the Vichy government was illegitimate, the quick formation of a new order was necessary.

From the Normandy landings on June 6, 1944 until the German retreat on August 20, there was no legitimate government in control. This was a period of vengeance and violence, as collaborators of all kinds were imprisoned, tortured, and killed. Though individual retribution and punishment certainly had occurred throughout the war, it began on a large scale once the Allies forces landed in France:

Popular frustrations and personal vendettas, often colored by political opportunism and economic advantage, led to a brief but bloody cycle of score settling. In France, some 10,000 people were killed in 'extra-judicial' proceedings. ²⁸

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ The economic and social reforms detailed seem to take much from the Communist influence of the *Front National*, creating a "genuine economic and social democracy." The plan specifies a subordination of private interests in the name of public, which was carried out after the liberation with the nationalization of energy, insurance, and banks, the reestablishment of independent trade unions, and the creation of social security programs. The program also extends the political rights of the colonial populations, and suggests an educational system based on merit rather than birth.

²⁸ Judt, 42.

Women suspected of "collaboration horizontale" became prime targets, having offered sexual services to the German soldiers. They were rounded up and publicly humiliated, having their heads shaved in front of angry mobs and then they were paraded around the towns. Judt attributes this to the humiliation of the Occupation. If the feminized France had been "seduced by the masculine charms of their Teutonic rulers," then the explicitly sexual crimes of collaboration illustrated this seduction. Those carrying out Liberation justice were then able to "overcome the discomforting memory of personal and collective powerlessness." Through highly targeted retribution, the people were able to ease their own humiliation and anger.

Former Prime Minister Edouard Herriot said, "France will need first to pass through a blood bath before republicans can again take up the reins of power." Indeed, this is what occurred in the months when fighting continued and no government had been established. It was of pressing importance, however for governments to quickly establish order and take the power of serving justice out of the hands of makeshift courts out for blood and retribution. A blind eye was turned to the frenzied justice of the months after the Liberation, until the Provisional Government was able to take over the dispensing of justice.

A question that emerged was how to define collaboration, or deal with the retroactive creation of an unprecedented crime. In France, many were brought to trial and convicted for "intelligence with the enemy" under Article 75 of the 1939 Penal Code. Of course, the chief collaborator was the Vichy government itself, and it was difficult to charge ordinary people with the same crimes. Because collaboration was

²⁹ Ibid., 43.

³⁰ Ibid., 42.

so widespread, it went relatively unpunished once order had been established. Less that a tenth of a percent of the population were jailed for wartime offenses, and in from 1944-1951, official courts sentenced 6,763 people to death (3,910 in absentia) for treason and related offenses, but only 791 sentences were carried out.

The main punishment for French collaborators was "national degradation," introduced on August 26, 1944, which denied them various rights such as wearing war decorations, and barred them from a variety of jobs, such as lawyers, publicschool teachers, publishing, or directors of insurance companies or banks. Almost 50,000 Frenchmen received this punishment. Though eleven thousand civil servants were removed from their posts, most were reinstated over the next six years. It is interesting to note that French courts did not punish anyone for "crimes against humanity." ³¹ Given the issues of collective versus individual guilt, this points to a clear division in Europe between collaboration as treason, while Nazi policy carried out by Germans was often met with war crimes charges. The collaborators, among them Pétain and Laval, had betrayed the French nation. Individuals were brought to trial so that the nation could come to terms with what their countrymen had done, and with what the people had allowed to happen in the country. Passive collaboration and even denunciations went unpunished because of the mass scale on which they occurred, but there was a need for some sort of reckoning before the country could move on to recover from the war.

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³¹ Ibid., 45-47.

As the years passed, the memories of the war indeed faded. On August 25, 1944, with just a few sentences, de Gaulle shaped what would become the popular memory of the war:

Paris! Paris humiliated! Paris broken! Paris martyrized! But Paris liberated! Liberated by itself, by its own people with the help of the armies of France, with the support and aid of France as a whole, of fighting France, of the only France, the true France, the eternal France.³²

It is true that French troops were the first to enter France, and that the efforts of the Resistance were very important for the Liberation. However, de Gaulle only mentions the Allied troops later on, and glosses over the issue of large-scale collaboration. In the 1991 book *The Vichy Syndrome*, Henry Rousso outlines the process of the spread of the myth of the Resistance: "The Vichy syndrome consists of a diverse set of symptoms whereby the trauma of the Occupation, and particularly that trauma resulting from internal divisions within France, it reveals itself in political, social, and cultural life."³³ Following the war, the people were in need of a strong leader and a unifying mentality. As de Gaulle's popularity solidified in the years following the war, so too did this myth of a united France that had resisted the Germans. Rousso suggests four stages to the syndrome. In the decade following the Liberation, France had to deal with lingering issues of "civil war, purge, and amnesty;" Rousso calls this the "mourning phase." As the country tried to rebuild, there were conflicting needs to both move on from the past and to deal with it. As the decade wore on, the issues of the war were overshadowed by more pressing problems that came to the fore, such as colonial wars (and the loss of French Indochina) and an

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³² Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 16. ³³ Ibid., 10.

unstable Republic plagued by internal divisions. Following this was a period of "resistancialism":

A process that sought to minimize the importance of the Vichy regime and its impact of French society, including its most negative aspects; second, the construction of an object of memory, the 'Resistance,' whose significance transcended by far the sum of its active parts and whose existence was embodied chiefly in certain sites and groups, such as the Gaullists and Communists...; and, third the identification of this 'Resistance' with the nation as a whole, a characteristic feature of the Gaullist version of the myth.

This phase covers the years of de Gaulle's return to power, from his acceptance of power at the collapse of the Fourth Republic and the crisis around Algerian question in 1958 to his resignation in 1969 and death in 1970. A clear breaking point from this myth occurred from 1971 to 1974, which Rousso calls "the broken mirror." Beginning in May 1968 with student uprisings, a generation questioning authority (largely de Gaulle and Gaullists in government) began to also question the history they had been taught: "In May 1968 a generation noisily proclaimed its repudiation of a certain type of society and therefore, implicitly, a certain vision of its history." The stage was set for a reexamination of the accepted version of the past. Along with the removal of de Gaulle from power, there was a move to understand the war, collaboration, and resistance freed from the Gaullist myth.

The 1971 release of Marcel Ophüls documentary *The Sorrow and the Pity*, in looking closely at a single town during the Occupation, evoked awareness and introspection concerning the existence and complicity of a true fascist contingent in France, the widespread support of Pétain, and the reality of a Resistance that lacked unity or large-scale support. Historians such as Robert Paxton, with the 1973

³⁴ Ibid., 10.

³⁵ Ibid., 98.

translation and French release of his book *Vichy France*, brought the question of this mythic Resistance out in the open:

From the outset it dispensed with all traditional views of the subject. Previously, Vichy had referred to a government, a regime, a particular period. At the time, however, it was highly unusual to associate all of France with the government that grew out of the defeat and governed only a small fraction of French territory.³⁶

Paxton then revealed the wide scale collaboration, Pétainist support, and even resentment of de Gaulle and the Resistance of the war years. The realizations that de Gaulle had not led a nation of Frenchmen loyally resisting the German forces brought on "fresh memories, new questions, a rekindled fascination with the past," sparking a period of what Rousso calls "obsession." The importance of the Occupation took a place in current French politics, films, and literature, signaling its renewed prominence in the nation's collective memory.

³⁶ Ibid., 252.

³⁷ Ibid., 131.

Germany: from New Empire to Divided Nation

When Germany surrendered to end WWI, the vast majority of the population was shocked by defeat. With the war largely fought on foreign soil, propaganda was successful in that the government had been able to convince the people that imminent victory was assured. The loss seemed inexplicable, and the anger that accompanied it exploded into revolution. With the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm II, the hastily established Weimar Republic was left to deal with the harsh consequences of war. An armistice was signed on November 11, 1918 at Compiègne, ending the fighting, though peace negotiations took another six months, when the Treaty of Versailles was finally signed on June 28, 1919.³⁸ Article 231 of the Treaty placed sole responsibility for the war on Germany, calling for full reparations (in April 1921, an Allied commission had determined reparations to be paid totaling 132 billion gold Marks).³⁹ The Treaty also severely limited the military power of the new Republic, forbade Germany to unite with Austria, and stripped them of all colonies as well as significant Continental territories. 40 The League of Nations was also established though, as it lacked any means of enforcing decisions, the body was largely irrelevant. The

³⁸ "Treaty of Versailles," http://www.milestonedocuments.com/documents/full-text/treaty-of-versailles

³⁹ Michael Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000), 54.

⁴⁰ Since the unification in 1871, there had been several territories claimed by Germany as historically "Germanic," but the Treaty forced a return of all disputed lands. This created several exclave populations in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Alsace and Lorraine. Additionally, several areas fell under the control of occupying forces, of either the Allies or League of Nations.

perception of the harsh dictates of the Treaty would become a source of great anger in Germany:

The Versailles Treaty appeared to be the triumph of an Allied conspiracy to enmesh Germany in a network of restrictions and obligations in perpetuity.... This perception discredited the international institutions and idealistic values of the post-war era.

Though the Versailles Treaty and Woodrow Wilson pushed for self-determination, it seemed this was denied to the Germans. Feeling betrayed and unfairly punished by the world powers, Germany turned inward. Plagued by internal problems, Germans now had the addition burden of total assumption of war guilt.

The establishment of the Weimar Republic, however, did not simplify economic, cultural and political issues in Germany. The first several years after WWI were marked with violent eruptions by both left and right wing extremists and paramilitary groups. A right wing group of officers, in an attempt to discredit the new Republic and to divert blame for the lost war, blamed defeat on a vast Socialist and Jewish conspiracy. In the midst of this fighting, Friedrich Ebert, the Social Democratic Party (SPD) leader, became the first President of the German Republic in February 11, and signed the Constitution on August 11, 1919. He then called on Philipp Scheidemann to form a coalition government of representatives from the SPD, Catholic Center Party, and liberal German Democratic Party (in January, the parties had won 76% of the votes cast). The hastily crafted Constitution and system it laid out, however, created many problems that would quickly become apparent. The Weimar system combined a parliament (the Reichstag) and President elected by all citizens over the age of twenty. The President was largely a figurehead position, though several clauses allowed for important powers. The President could dissolve

the parliament, nominate a Chancellor based on the likely support of the Parliamentary majority, and, under Article 48, had powers to issue emergency legislation, to suspend civil rights, and to deploy armed forces to restore order. Elections were determined according to proportional representation, allowing several fringe parties to gain seats. ⁴¹ This also made achieving a majority in the Reichstag nearly impossible, and several of the Chancellors were chosen by the President for this reason. There was little enthusiasm for the new Constitution or President, and popular support would not increase even as the years wore on.

While the people expected better conditions under the new government, there were no funds to support reforms. The government, already in desperate financial straits, then defaulted on two reparations payments in the end of 1922 and early 1923. In response, seventy thousand French and Belgian troops occupied the Ruhr. In response to that occupation, the government endorsed a policy of passive resistance, leading to cases of brutal treatment by the occupying forces, and ultimately causing a stagnant economy. Unemployment rose from 2 to 23 per cent, and hyperinflation made the overproduced money worthless. A barter economy developed, and "the perception grew that, as in wartime, the scum rose to the top." In the midst of this crisis, Gustav Stesemann (German People's Party, DVP) was appointed Chancellor of a new and very short-lived coalition government. Calling off resistance in the Ruhr and introducing a new currency, the Rentenmark, helped stabilize the situation by late in 1923. Dissatisfied with the way Stesemann dealt with the Hitler Putsch, the Social Democrats left the coalition.

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⁴¹ Burleigh, 43-45.

⁴² Ibid., 56

Despite this growing stability, on November 8, 1923, Hitler and his associates denounced the government, inspired by Mussolini's March on Rome. During this "Beer Hall Putsch," (also called the Hitler Putsch), Hitler and many SA members burst into a beer hall where Bavarian Prime Minister Gustav von Kahr was making a speech, and declared a revolution, detaining some three thousand attendees in the hall for several hours. The next day, lacking a clear idea of what to do, the Putschists marched towards Odeonsplatz, where there were met with a force of soldiers.

Gunfire was exchanged, and sixteen Nazis were killed, becoming "martyrs" of the Nazi cause. Two days later, Hitler was arrested and charged with high treason. He was sentenced to five years in prison, though he served just nine months. The leaders used the trial as an opportunity to spread National Socialist ideas and to gain national attention. While in prison, Hitler wrote *Mein Kampf*, and became determined that a true victory must be gained legally rather than by force. 44

After just over two months in office, the Centrist Wilhelm Marx became Chancellor, while Stresemann continued to serve in government as the Foreign Minister. His first major achievement in this office was the enactment of the Dawes Plan, which allowed the German economy a chance to recover through the aid of the Allies (hoping that by reviving the German economy, reparations would be paid). This plan only went so far, and was revised and replaced by the Young Plan

⁴³ Ian Kershaw, *Hitler: A Biography* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2008), 154-158.

⁴⁴ Ian Kershaw, Hitler: 1889-1936 Hubris (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998), 337.

⁴⁵ The plan provided short-term economic benefits for the German economy, softening the burdens of reparations, stabilizing the currency, and increasing foreign investment and loans in the German market. This was, in effect, an attempt by the Allied powers to collect reparations from Germany. The plan further allowed for the evacuation of Allied occupation troops in the Ruhr and reorganized the Reichsbank under Allied supervision, bringing significant order to the economy.

In 1932, representatives from Great Britain, Germany and France agreed to significantly reduce WWI reparations that had been imposed by the Treaty of Versailles. Because of the nearly world wide Depression at that time, it was clear by this point that German payments would be nearly impossible. 46

From 1930 to 1933, the administrations of Chancellors Heinrich Brüning, Franz von Papen, Kurt von Schleicher, and Hitler were all instituted through presidential decree rather than consultation with the Reichstag. This total lack of political majority points to the inability of the nation to unite politically or ideologically. In the midst of another round of deep depression and unemployment, a minimum of 6.12 million were registered as unemployed, not to mention those who went unregistered as well as the many millions of dependents affected by the Depression.⁴⁷ In 1930, President Hindenburg refused to allow any emergency decree (which Ebert had used during his term to check hyperinflation), leading to the collective resignation of the coalition cabinet in March and the dissolution of the Parliament a few months later. The Centrist Brüning headed a new government, and his two years as Chancellor saw a steady decline in parliamentary power as presidential decrees were increasingly used and each parliament would sit for a shorter time: "over time, this exceptional form of government, suspended between parliamentary democracy and authoritarianism, came to seem normal." This process of subtle radicalization and changing policy was only just beginning, and

⁴⁶ For more on the Weimar Republic, see Detlev Peukert's *The Weimar Republic: the crisis of classical modernity*, trans. Richard Deveson (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992).

Burleigh, 123.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 124.

would be a shaping factor in the ability of the Nazis to corrode the people's inhibitions.

As mass unemployment continued, as increasing class differences emerged, contributing to a process of political radicalization. As the more moderate parties crumbled, the fringe groups grew in power. In the September 1930 elections, the NSDAP⁴⁹ received 18.3% of the vote, filling 170 seats in the Reichstag and holding many positions in state governments. In the Reichstag elections of July 1932 and November 1932, the party received 37.3%⁵⁰ and 33.1% respectively. These fringe parties generally served only single interests and specific groups. The National Socialist Party, by adapting their policies and program slightly depending on their election base, were able to bring in the embittered public, drawing them away from the moderate parties:

Hitler himself had never believed that the homogeneity of the Movement could be sustained through a hard and fast program. What was required was an unconditional act of faith in a number of loosely defined by rigidly inflexible tenets of doctrine embodied in the person of Hitler.... Divisive points were played down wherever possible."

Thus, the party was able to gain a following around the charisma of the leader, rather than the specifics of a party plan. Through the promise of a unified and classless Germany, counter to the violent and disorderly Communists, the Nazis were able to pull in followers from several classes.

On January 4, 1933, von Papen and Hitler met to discuss the possibility of a coalition government, thinking that he could use Hitler to gain power; "the fatal

⁴⁹ National Socialist German Workers Party would become the Nazi Party.

⁵⁰ At the height of their electoral popularity,

⁵¹ Ian Kershaw, *Hitler: Profiles in Power* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 1991), 46.

miscalculation of the conservative Right was to imagine that Hitler would be 'tamed' by participation in the government so that the Nazi bubble would burst." Von
Papen then convinced President Hindenburg to dismiss Schleicher as Chancellor and appoint Hitler, with von Papen as Vice Chancellor. On January 30, 1933, Hitler was appointed Chancellor of Germany, with only two other Nazis in his cabinet. The Reichstag Fire on February 27 was then used by Hitler to restrict personal liberties through the passing of the Decree for the Protection of the People and the State.

Under this decree, the Nazi police were able to arrest and place people in custody without charging them, and this was used to effectively remove the Communists from the Reichstag. At the elections the following month, the Enabling Law was passed 444 to 94 (only the SPD voted against it), effectively ending parliamentary government, granting Hitler the right to issue laws without consent of the Reichstag and pass decrees without the signature of President Hindenburg.

Hitler and the National Socialist gained power through a vague program. They relied on the people's need for a charismatic leader and desire for drastic change in order to gain support:

The 'ultimate goal' of the movement remained vague, and for that very reason was immune from doubt. The need was to restore the disrupted 'normality' of life, a utopian normality to be sure, with a social hierarchy with was somehow

⁵² Ibid., 59.

on February 27, 1933, fire broke out at the Reichstag building, the Berlin seat of the parliament. The Dutch Communist Marinus van der Lubbe was found, apparently having claimed to have set the fire, was tried and sentenced to death. There is much controversy regarding this event, and van der Lubbe was posthumously pardoned. There is continued question about his role in the fire, and the possibility of Nazis having played a role in it remains a theory. The proximity to election time and the suspension of civil liberties immediately following the fire indeed point to the possibility of Nazi involvement, further complicated by testimony from the Nuremberg trails, where the question of Göring's responsibility was much discussed.

'just' and in which everyone had a niche where he could feel secure and respected: in short, a true 'national community' (*Volksgeneinschaft*). 54

The Nazis promised not only a restored national pride, but also a new Germany without the political and class divisions of the old. As class divisions had intensified, and the Weimar government became crippled by its overly complicated system, this utopia held massive appeal. In the midst of crisis, the Hitler was able to rapidly radicalize, aided by a process of coordination of the people (*Gleichschaltung*). The Nazification of Germany, either willing or coerced, used a process subordination or elimination of anything that would impede the growing strength of the party. This affected state organizations with the purge of all ideological enemies and the dissolution of all other political parties. Schools, churches, youth groups, and charities were all made subordinate to the party or disbanded. Involvement then was made visible through use of external symbols such as the Hitler greeting or party pins, carried more and more meaning. Though many of these groups were not compulsory (at least in the early years), non-conformity became increasingly dangerous, with the threat of internment looming in the shadows. 55

Beginning in 1933, Hitler began a process of overturning the Versailles Treaty. First leaving the League of Nations, then reintroducing full conscription, followed by the return of the Saar and the occupation of the Rhineland, the Treaty was entirely undermined by the 1938 Anschluss with Austria. Full employment was also reached in 1936 through a process of deficit spending. These achievements were seen as promises delivered to the people; they had suffered through inefficient

⁵⁴ Peukert, 41.

⁵⁵ For more information on how Nazis appealed to voters and eventually gained power, see Ibid.

government for decades and were drawn in by the efficiency of the Nazi Party. Having suffered from the humiliation and blame for defeat, the people accepted (whether actively or passively) a leader who not only could better the nation, but also assured the people of their own privileged place in the world. From the beginning of the war until nearly its end, Germany did not adopt a full-scale war economy. By using the resources and labor from the occupied territories, the Germans were able to keep the economy rather stable. The military strategy rested on a rapidly won war⁵⁶, because it was clear that the people would not support a long drawn out war. The damages of the Great War were still haunting the populace. Hitler's authority rested on the constant support of the people, which would be called into question if Germany again found itself in a long, harsh war.

Despite this relative continued prosperity, the physical destruction of Germany must be noted. An Allied objective was to win the war by bombing Germany to the point that its economy and civilian morale collapsed. Bombing of Berlin began in 1940, becoming increasingly effective and frequent over the next years, lasting until the Red Army was outside the city in April 1945. Fighting in the

Knowing that they had neither the resources nor public support for a war of attrition like the Great War, the German military made use of a new "lightening war" strategy. This blitzkrieg strategy necessitated vast and rapid advance into enemy territory backed up by air support. After the war, many Occupied countries adopted an idea that the German military had been able to overpower the countries with superior military force, in order to justify national capitulation. In fact, the Wermacht was poorly supplied and did not have the modern resources that the other European powers had. However, superior training, tactics, and leadership allowed for rapid victories against armies planning a war with outdated tactics. For more on the blitzkrieg and German WWII military tactics, see Omer Bartov's *Hitler's Army: Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

city streets raged from January through April, further ravaging the city.⁵⁷ When the Soviet forces entered the city, over 2 million people were living there, mostly women and children. The soldiers looted the ruined city and raped almost any woman they came across.⁵⁸ The war destroyed the city physically, and crippled the population emotionally and mentally. The anonymously published journal *Woman in Berlin* tells the story of the Soviet occupation of Berlin; on April 20, 1945, the first entry begins, "It's true: the war is rolling towards Berlin."⁵⁹ Though the city had been bombed nearly beyond recognition, people had largely been saved until that point from land combat. It is possible that the atrocities committed by the invading Red Army were some kind of retribution for the horrors inflicted on their own Soviet populations, ⁶⁰ but it was also sanctioned by the Soviet Command.⁶¹ Aside from looting the cities, the Soviets took advantage of the large and unprotected female population. No

⁵⁷ University of Wisconsin Digital Collections, "Germany Under Reconstruction," *Digital Collections*, http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/History.GerRecon.

⁵⁸ BBC, "World War II: Battle of Berlin,"

http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwo/berlin_01.shtml

⁵⁹ A Woman in Berlin: Eight Weeks in the Conquered City, trans. Philip Boehm (New York: Picador, 2000), 1.

⁶⁰ Though the Western Occupied countries were treated with some regard for civilian life and society, no such restraint was regarded for the arch ideological enemy confronted in the Nazi invasions of Slavic lands. This was both ideologically and eugenically based, as the Nazi High Command sanctioned deliberate disregard for the rights guarantees of the Hague and Geneva Conventions. This was sanctioned by the Barbarossa Decree of May 1941 and the Commissar Order a month later. For more on the brutalities of the Nazi push through Soviet lands, see Christopher R. Browning's *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992).

⁶¹ Judt, 20.

women were raped.⁶² Despite the mass rape and the some 200,000 "Russian babies" that resulted,⁶³ this aspect of the defeat was effectively blocked from postwar memory, becoming a taboo subject. Even the German publication of the *Woman in Berlin* released in 1959 was met with controversy, accused of "besmirching the honor of German women."⁶⁴ In her diary, the author notes the "collective experience" of rape during war. The women were about to understand each other, while being forced to remain mute on and even to forget what had happened to them.

On May 23, 1949, the Federal Republic of Germany was created out of the Western sectors of the country then occupied by the United Kingdom, the United States, and France. In the Soviet occupied East, the German Democratic Republic was declared on October 7, 1949, as a Soviet satellite state. West Germany was established as a parliamentary democracy with its capital at Bonn. By 1955, most of the state's sovereignty had been regained. Benefiting from the 1948 currency reform and the aid of the Marshall Plan, the economy grew rapidly, with a two decade long period known as "the economic miracle." Until the late 1960s, politics and public opinion remained relatively stable.

Part of this stability resulted from a nearly national silence about their Nazi past. In 1967, Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich published *The Inability to Mourn*, discussing this phenomenon. Struck by an apparent absence of emotion in postwar German society, they noted that neither contrition nor a desire to remember

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⁶² *Berlin*, introduction by Anthony Beevor, xx. This book gives a detailed daily account of one woman's experience during the eight weeks of the Occupation until the defeat.

⁶³ Judt, 20.

⁶⁴ Beevor, xv.

were prominent in the national consciousness. They focused, however, on the apparent absence of mourning. This, they insisted, came from a "derealization of the past", and an inability to work through what had happened. Before Germany would be able to perceive the magnitude of the crimes and mourn for the victims, they must first work through their shattered relationship with Hitler. Having sacrificed an independent national identity in favor of a promised utopia, Germans remained silent on their past rather than work through the implications of it.

This "inability to mourn" was then passed on to the second generation. These children had been raised with an awareness of their nation's defeat and responsibility for the war, but the specifics of the atrocities of the Nazi regime were downplayed. With the 1961 trial of Adolf Eichmann ("the architect of the holocaust") and the Auschwitz trials in Frankfurt from 1963 to 1965, public attention was suddenly brought to the true horrors of the regime. The second generation, those born during or after the war and so lacking a direct knowledge of life under Hitler (notably Rainer Werner Fassbinder), began to understand German failings though the errors of the Bonn Republic:

West Germany's post war democracy was not the solution; it was the problem. The apolitical, consumerist, American-protected cocoon of the *Bundesrepublik* was not just imperfect and amnesiac; it had actively conspired with its Western masters to deny the German past, to bury it in material goods and anti-Communist propaganda. ⁶⁶

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⁶⁶ Judt, 416.

⁶⁵ Eric L. Santner, *Stranded Objects: Mourning, Memory, and Film in Postwar Germany* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 2-5.

Like the youth movements in France and the United States, this generation focused on the errors of their current governments. In Germany, this meant a total rejection of what their parents and Republic stood for:

If ever there was a generation whose rebellion really was grounded in the rejection of everything their parents represented—everything: national pride, Nazism, money, the West, peace, stability, law and democracy—it was 'Hitler's children,' the West German radicals of the Sixties.⁶⁷

This total rejection came from an inability to understand their present or their past, and how these had shaped the postwar national identity. Lacking a context or understanding for what their nation had become, these radicals blamed the present administrations and world troubles retroactively for the horrors of their national past.

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⁶⁷ Ibid., 417.

Chapter II

A Struggle to Remember

According to Goethe, "Anyone who cannot give an account to oneself of the past three thousand years remains in darkness, without experience, living from day to day." In the early years after the war, a collective silence and amnesia took hold of France and Germany. A deliberate burial of the past was adopted in order to attempt recovery from the traumas of the war, but that action instead stunted mourning and healing on a national scale. They were not able to move on, "living from day to day," without an understanding of what the people had done, witnessed, and even supported.

In France, the people adopted a myth of mass resistance in order to protect themselves from the realities of life under the Occupation. Rather than remember their country divided, the people used this myth to stave off the true history. Even as this myth formed, the people entered a period of deep silence, accepting the false history while largely remaining mute on the subject. Lacking an acceptance of the past, the people reformed their memories, allowing the silence to continue compounded by the omission of true memory.

While France adopted a myth of resistance, Germany distanced themselves from the horrors of the war by focusing on its immediate effects. From 1946-1949, more than fifty "rubble films" were released, playing an important role in the reshaping of German identity. These films were not particularly interested in truthful

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⁶⁸ Goethe, in Susan Sontag, "Eye of the Storm," *The New York Review of Books* 27, no. 2 (February 21, 1980).

representations of the Third Reich, and often treated realities like the black market as an issue of equal weight to the daily presence of war criminals. Rather than deal with what had been committed in the name of a National Socialist Germany, these films focused on the daily problems that plagued the newly defeated Germany. Raised in this milieu, the younger generation became increasingly cut off from the realities of the past. As they came of age, this second generation was faced with an incomplete history. It was not until the 1970s that Germans would attempt to recapture their history in the way that Resnais had done in France. The division of Germany and the attempts to rebuild took precedence.

Jörn Rüsen talks about the Holocaust as a, "black hole of sense and meaning, it consumes every concept of historical interpretation and crushes all meaningful (narrative) relationship between time before and after." The Holocaust, and the war in general, were so incomprehensible that no relationship could be formed across the history. In order to work through this division, it must be understood as a historical, rather than mythic, event. The acknowledgment of this reality is necessary to the process of understanding and mourning. Resnais and Syberberg attempted to bridge the division, integrating the catastrophe into a greater understanding. Using film to depict the national struggle to remember, they projected a call to remember to the viewers.

⁶⁹ Robert R. Shandley, *Rubble Films: German Cinema in the Shadow of the Third Reich* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), 4.

⁷⁰ The films addressed here are all West German films. Any references to Germany (postwar Germany) pertain to the Federal Republic of Germany.

⁷¹ Jörn Rüsen, *Disturbing Remains: Memory, History, and Crisis in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Michael Roth and Charles G. Salas (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2001), 252.

When *Hiroshma Mon Amour* was released in 1959, Alain Resnais manipulated the impulse to commemorate the ill defined past, pressing instead the need to remember the truth of what had happened. Celebrating valor and victory could only further aid the French in their efforts to avoid understanding. Resnais instead used his films to compel the viewers to acknowledge the horror, and thus remember.

Nearly twenty years later, Hans-Jürgen Syberberg released his film *Hitler: A Film from Germany*, running 442 minutes. This film of epic proportions challenged viewers to recall what Germany had been before and under Hitler. So much of German culture had been contaminated by the Third Reich, and thus exorcised from public memory after the war. Syberberg attempted to reintroduce these portions of German identity, charging audiences to accept their complicated past.

Hiroshima mon amour: Untouchable Past

In the wake of the critical success of *Night and Fog (Nuit et brouillard,* 1955), Alain Resnais was commissioned to create another documentary, this time about Hiroshima. In an audio interview given in 1980 for *Le Cinéma des cinéastes*, Resnais recounted the complicated story of how the project began. According to Resnais, Anatole Dauman, Samy Halfon, and Philippe Lifschitz, the three gods of Argos Films, asked me to make a film about the atomic bomb, which seemed like it would tie in nicely with a Japanese coproduction. Originally, Chris Marker, the editor of *Night and Fog*, was attached to the project, but he quickly dropped out. Another writer approached, François Sagan, turned down the project, saying, "No, the magnitude of the subject is too great for me to write about. I can't do it." The problems seemed insurmountable, and Resnais contemplated abandoning the project. Eventually, Resnais was put in touch with Marguerite Duras. Resnais describes their initial meetings:

For the entire afternoon, the conversation revolved around the reasons why I was not making a film about the dangers of the atomic bomb, and the reasons why such a film could not be made. During the conversation, I said, "It's funny. We've spent three or four hours together, and the whole time, planes carrying atomic bombs in their holds have been endlessly circling the Earth. So these bombardiers are flying over our planet—and our conversation—ready to drop more atomic bombs, and meanwhile, we haven't altered out external behavior to any great extent. Here we are drinking tea or having a beer, and our days just roll by as before. So maybe the movie that needs to be made is not the one we had in mind, with the atomic bomb as the protagonist. On the contrary, maybe we should shoot a classic love story in which the

⁷² Alain Resnais and Claude-Jean Philippe, "1980 interview from *Le Cinéma des cineastes*," *Hiroshima mon Amour*, DVD, directed by Alain Resnais (1959; New York: Criterion, 2003).

atomic bomb would be more of a background, a backdrop behind the characters, in the distance, like a kind of landscape." We parted on that note, and two or three days later, Ms. Duras called to say, "I think I have an idea. I recorded a conversation between a French woman and a Japanese man. Would you like to come over and listen to it?" So I went over and it was, in fact, a conversation between a Japanese man and a French woman who wanted to go to a restaurant. The French women didn't want to eat raw fish for fear of it being irradiated. The Japanese mad answered that there was no risk, or there was a risk—I can't remember. But I know that was the starting point, and from there it became a film.⁷³

Resnais did not set out to create a love story to serve as a stand in for the trauma of the war in both France and Japan. Much of the early pre-production process was spent on simply working out a way to do justice to the enormity of the issue. As he had in *Night and Fog*, Resnais realized that a direct approach to the subject would limit its meaning on screen, and so he sought to find another avenue through which to engage the audience emotionally.

In *Night and Fog*, Resnais acknowledged that the trauma of the Holocaust cannot be understood, repeatedly reminding the viewer that as a filmmaker, he can only express the impossibility of showing the true horrors. Instead, he chose to confront the trauma by showing the impossibility of comprehending it. Building up the horror with increasingly haunting and dehumanizing images from the concentration camps, Resnais counters this with alternate views of the camps just ten years later, images of a barren yet hauntingly lovely countryside. Later on, Resnais reveals pictures of the dead and the almost dead. Resnais shows image after gruesome image to the point where viewing becomes almost unbearable. The narration reminds the viewers that they are not able to see the true terror; they see only representations and re-creations. To see the truth of the terror is not possible.

⁷³ *Le Cinéma des cineastes* interview

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The soothing narration, modern music, and sweeping shots of the idyllic countryside surrounding the abandoned camps raise the question of how the world can continue to move forward into a new future with such atrocities in its past. There are times the narration stops and the camera remains on the image; describing the scratches on the ceiling of the gas chamber, and the uses of the piles of bone, hair, and bodies, nothing can be said, and "words fail." Nothing can be said because words simply cannot do justice to what has happened there. The Holocaust remains incomprehensible, and Resnais refuses to attempt to integrate the trauma.

Throughout the documentary, the narrator Cayrol reminds the audience that the images are "just husk and shade of a reality which remains inaccessible." There can be no true understanding about what had happened, and Resnais asks of the audience how a society can continue with such horrors in its past, finally challenging the audiences to fight against horrors in the future. Lyotard's metaphor of the Holocaust as an earthquake that broke the Richter scale emphasizes the inability to make the tragedy comprehensible. Resnais, knowing that the Holocaust was beyond the scope of what can be accepted and integrated, asks the audience how society is capable of continuing on with such a scarred past.

In later attempting to create a documentary about Hiroshima, Resnais again acknowledged the inability to directly confront the subject. The use of the atomic bombs, and the hundreds of thousands that died, remain another mark on the human

⁷⁴ Nuit et Brouillard, DVD, directed by Alain Resnais (1955; New York: Criterion, 2003).

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Robert Fine, *Political Investigations: Hegel, Marx, Arendt* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 159.

psyche. This mass trauma too, cannot be understood by those who have not experienced the devastating events directly or by those who are trying in a future time to comprehend the Holocaust or other wartime horrors. Duras and Resnais, rather than attempt to tell the story as a documentary, created a dual story, placing an illicit love affair against the backdrop of the new Hiroshima (the unnamed lovers will be called Riva and Okada, the actor's surnames, hereafter). According to Leah Hewitt, "Of the French films from the late 1950s and early 1960s, no other film staged more forcefully, and also more self-consciously, the issue of representing World War II as collective and individual trauma than *Hiroshima mon amour*."⁷⁷ Placing the personal drama within the setting of such a mass trauma, Duras and Resnais tie the two together for the audience. The French viewers were to recall their own roles in the war and the liberation, and their joy at the end of the war. In making the audience reevaluate what had been brushed under the carpet, Duras and Resnais force the people to look again at their own pasts and remember. Like so many other films of the period, they used a personal story through which the audience could see the national, collective issue. In the 1980 Cinema interview, the interviewer notes the lasting importance of both *Night and Fog* and *Hiroshima mon amour*:

At the time, we just liked the movies and were overwhelmed by them. But with 20 to 30 years distance between then and now, you realize they had to be made for a very important reason, which [you understand] when you see other French films from that period and how they failed... to address the horrors of what happened during World War II. And how difficult it was to talk about it without either being utterly revolted on the one hand or feeling disgusted at oneself and even somehow guilty for those horrors.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Leah D. Hewitt, *Remembering the Occupation in French Film: National Identity in Postwar Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 36.

⁷⁸ Alain Resnais and François Chalais, "1961 interview for *Cinema*," *Hiroshima mon amour*.

Though many of the films were unable to get to the core of the issues surrounding WWII, Resnais used an indirect approach that made the audience ask questions of themselves. Initially leaving the audiences "overwhelmed," the films stayed with the people. These early films were the most capable of addressing the unresolved trauma of the war in a way that made audiences think about the issues. Claude Lévi-Strauss might say Resnais' films were "good to think with." Creating stories that were both personal and collective, Resnais and Duras (as well as Chris Marker and Jean Cayrol) asked the audience members to find connections and bring to mind memories of their own past:

In 1955-56, at a time when for many intellectuals and politicians of both the right and left of the French political spectrum the only hope of rebuilding a peaceful world started with the building of a unified Europe, it was a major task to face once and for all the Holocaust as the most important repressed reality of recent European history. With the Holocaust present in every memory, it was clearly impossible to dream of a better Europe without first facing what had made possible history's most horrifying genocide in the so-called "civilized" world. In this sense, applying the study of psychoanalyst Léon Grinberg on *Hiroshima mon amour* shows that *Night and Fog* accomplishes for its French and European public a necessary grieving process, finally recognizing the indelible image of the Holocaust on the European collective memory and imagination that the documentary does not allow anyone to forget while, at the same time, it makes hope possible again. ⁸⁰

In both the films, the audience must do more than watch. The audience is an active participant, asked to remember, and, ultimately, to mourn. "Your reaction is the subject of the film, and its objective. Some of us see nothing in *Hiroshima*. Nothing.

⁷⁹ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Totemism*, trans. Rodney Needham (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), 89.

⁸⁰ André Pierre Colombat, *The Holocaust in French Film* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1993), 159

Others see *everything*. *Everything*. That is the point."⁸¹ Resnais and Duras intended to make the viewers remember and think about what had happened, rather than continue to shut away personal issues involving memory of the war.

The first images of the narrative show the entwined bodies of two lovers, their bodies covered in ash. This immediately tells the audience that *Hiroshima mon amour* is a story about both love and trauma, positing that they are inseparable. Both characters are indelibly marked by the memories they carry with them. The trauma sits between them, covering them, even as they attempt to keep it at bay. "You saw nothing in Hiroshima. Nothing." These are the first words of the film. Riva insists that she has seen everything, while Okada refutes this over and over. This conversation bridges the intercut images of their bodies (no longer covered in ash) and shots of the modern city. First, she asks about the hospital, "How could I not have seen it?" as Resnais shows traditionally dressed women lying in bed, and then scalded and maimed men playing cards. Riva talks about her four times at the museum, seeing the twisted metal and charred stones, the "human flesh, suspended as if still alive, its agony still fresh," the masses of human hair, pictures of the victims—she has seen these, but, according to her lover, these are nothing.

She did not see Hiroshima. Riva and the audiences see only the rebuilt Hiroshima, the new city built on the ruins of a city razed by the bomb. The remains of what once existed can be found only in recreations, in museums, and in gaudy tourist attractions. As the old city disappeared, so too did the memory of it. The new Hiroshima takes over. Riva herself mentions seeing these representations "for lack of

⁸¹ James Monaco, quoted in Colombat, 128.

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⁸² Duras, 15.

anything else."⁸³ It is the missing evidence and remainders that make the trauma so difficult to overcome. How can viewers see what has happened where there is no evidence? The false physical representations intended to remind perpetrators and survivors of the events and to honor the history only distance the viewer from the truth, isolating the remains behind glass and distorting the true history:

It is difficult to overestimate—and before long it will be difficult to remember—the degree to which 'the stubborn fact of annihilation' darkened the imagination of the world during the decades after Hiroshima and Nagasaki."84

In France, the people thought of the bombings as the end of the war, as Riva says, on a sunny day in Paris. Okada's bitterness as he speaks with Riva about it is clear. The destruction in distant Japan meant to Frenchmen the final moment of a war they would try very hard to forget.

Riva: Listen to me. Like you, I know what it is to forget.

Okada: No, you don't know what it is to forget.

Riva: Like you, I am endowed with memory. I know what it is to forget.

Okada: No, you are not endowed with memory.

Riva: Like you, I too have struggled with all my might not to forget. Like you, I forgot. Like you, I longed for a memory beyond consolation, a memory of shadows and stone. For my part, I struggled every day with all my might against the horror of no longer understanding the reason to remember. Like you, I forgot. 85

Against images of gift shops, memorials, and "Atomic Tours," Resnais shows the depth of forgetting. Though so much of the city is dedicated to the memory of the

⁸³ Duras, 18.

Naomi Greene, *Landscapes of Loss: The National Past in Postwar French Cinema* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 31.

bombing and those that died, memory has taken on a glossy, commercial feel. The scars are made invisible by turning the act of remembering into a tourist attraction. The memory of what took place is lost, belied by the hyper-modern, over-lit, and rigidly geometric new Hiroshima. As Resnais shows brief glimpses of ruins from the old city, just five brief shots of a single crumbling building, Riva asks, "Why deny the obvious necessity of remembering?" Resnais reminds the viewer of the reality and constant presence of the past. Carrying the truth and memory, he asks the audience what good can come from their suppression. The film is a call to remember, acknowledging the difficulties while stressing the importance of doing so.

Riva's character has lived a kind of half-life, blocking out the memory of her first love as a girl in Nevers, refusing to either fully remember or forget. Indeed, she and Okada create a new world: "Duras' narrations escape the traumatic core that energizes them through a discourse of inventions, lies, memory, and forgetfulness.

Duras' characters speculate as they remember, they invent the present rather than repeat the past." When Riva tells Okada the story about Nevers, she speaks to him as if he is the dead lover. She creates a new present in order to work through her past. This new lover, however, cannot actually take the place of her first love. After she leaves Okada after telling him her story, she goes into her hotel bathroom, and as she looks at her reflection, voice over narration comes in, over the Nevers musical theme (the bracketed text is said aloud, the rest is all a voice-over by Riva):

You think you know, but no. Never. In her youth in Nevers she had a German love. We'll go to Bavaria, my love, and we'll get married. She never

⁸⁶Andrew Slade, "*Hiroshima mon amour*, Trauma, and the Sublime," in *Trauma and Cinema*, ed. E.A. Kaplan and Ban Wang (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004), 177.

went to Bavaria. Let those who never went to Bavaria dare speak to her of love! You were not quite dead yet. I told our story. I cheated on you tonight with a stranger. I told our story. You see, it was there to tell. [Fourteen years since I've tasted an impossible love! Since Nevers.] Look how I'm forgetting you. Look how I've forgotten you. Look at me.⁸⁷

The two instances of "impossible love" converge for her, and she is finally able to unburden herself of the story she has neither remembered nor forgotten. In doing so, she is able to integrate the trauma into her life. The "invented" present is no longer necessary when the past trauma that necessitated such division is worked through.

Trying to keep her first love alive, Riva clings to the story, though she is not able to actively remember it. Speaking of it, she was unfaithful to his memory, because she no longer protected it by keeping it separate from the rest of her life. In telling her Japanese lover, the trauma is diminished; "even the most intense of experiences, even the traumas that seem to call out for recollection, will evaporate from one's consciousness once they are remembered in a form that can be shared."88 Though she told her traumatic story, the woman speaks to herself later in that night in her bathroom, saying out loud that she has betrayed her dead lover. In telling their story, she trivialized it, but brought it into a context of understanding; "the horror of this physical rebirth...is that it entails survival through forgetting, through the annihilation of memory."89 Both the lovers, in forcing themselves to lock away their traumatic pasts, had lost themselves. It is only after unburdening herself that Riva's character can be named. They name each other after their cities, Nevers and

⁸⁷ Duras, 73.

⁸⁸ Michael Roth, "You Must Remember This: History, Memory, and Trauma in 'Hiroshima Mon Amour.'" *The Ironists Cage: Memory, Trauma, and the Construction of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 205.
⁸⁹ Emma Wilson, *Alain Resnais* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 58.

Hiroshima, the places that shaped them and left them scarred by pasts they would not integrate. Though Riva worked to understand the trauma she had kept bottled up, she cannot escape it fully.

As with the Holocaust and concentration camps in *Night and Fog*, Resnais acknowledges that he cannot show the full truth, only representations of it. He needed to find a different way to approach the subjects of trauma through film:

In the postwar period, Resnais was the only one to understand that cinema 'had to deal with an extra person: the human species. And that person had just been denied (in the concentration camps), blown up (by the bomb), and diminished (by torture). Traditional cinema was incapable of 'portraying' that. A way had to be found. And thus Resnais.'90

Resnais tells his stories for national audiences, about national issues, but does so through the story of individuals. The "extra person," incapable of dealing with the trauma on their own, needed to be brought into the process of mourning through the reminder of their own past. As audiences watched the characters work through their trauma, and work to integrate their memory, the national audiences were forced to think of the memories they had suppressed.

While it is true that Resnais has used true archival footage, any examination of the value of the film must also look to the rhetoric of the filmmaker. These specific images, "serve as building blocks in the complex textual system that every nonfiction film develops, by which the narration selects, orders and emphasizes information."

Using the unique attributes of film, directors are able to shape the story and provide the exact information to the audience that they want presented:

⁹⁰ Greene, 31.

⁹¹ Carl Plantinga, "Moving Pictures and the Rhetoric of Nonfiction: Two Approaches." *Post-Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies*, ed. David Bordwell and Noël Carroll (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 31.

Resnais moves to make the images of his film unassimilable, ungraspable, despite their attention to matter and brute materiality. Resnais thus instills distrust in the image, illustrating for us quite literally the faults and failings of the viewing process, the manipulations that can be achieved in editing.... Whether or not the images captured are authentic or staged, Resnais edits those images together in a bid to unsettle how and what we see. 92

Though here Emma Wilson is directly concerned with *Night and Fog*, Resnais' manipulation and instilled distrust of the image carry over in his work. Consciously manipulating image and story, Resnais shapes what the audience receives in order to make the audiences think about the film. Rather than passively letting the images move before them, Resnais forces the audiences to think not only about what they see, but also about what they cannot see. Forced to think about what they watch, audiences are brought in touch with their own memories.

⁹² Emma Wilson, "Material Remains: *Night and Fog*," *October*, no.112 (2005) (Online source: MIT Journals), 102.

Hitler: A Film from Germany: Contaminated History

In 1977, Hans-Jürgen Syberberg began a twenty-day shoot for Hitler: A Film from Germany, after four years of pre-production. The film announces itself as a spectacle, a four-part "phantasmagoria." Syberberg's intent to create a "cheap spectacle," a highly crafted fantasy world, comes through in the dichotomy between the planning and execution of the film. In the introduction to the published screenplay, Syberberg lays bare his aims:

Can and should a film about Hitler and his Germany explain anything... rediscover identities, heal and save? Yet, I ask, will we ever become free of the oppressive curse of guilt it we do not get at the center of it? Yes indeed, it is only in a film—the art of our time—a film that is precisely about this Hitler within us, from Germany, that hope may come at all. In the name of our future, we have to overcome and conquer him and thereby ourselves, and only here can a new identity be found through recognizing and separating. sublimating and working through our tragic past. 94

In the film, Syberberg takes on the role of guiding the rebuilding of the nation through forcing the German people to remember and work through their past. In having forgotten their past, both in connection with Hitler and with what came before him, the true essence of what it meant to be German had been destroyed. For Syberberg, this is connected not only to Hitler but also to the intense process of Americanization and consumerism that he felt invaded Germany after the war. This was an issue that many of the young German filmmakers were deeply concerned with at the time, and will be explored again in relation to Rainer Werner Fassbinder's attitudes (see Chapter IV).

⁹³ Sontag, Eye of the Storm

⁹⁴ Hans-Jürgen Syberberg, *Hitler: A Film from Germany*, trans. Joachim Neugroschel (New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1982), 3.

Hans-Jürgen Syberberg was born in 1935 in Pomerania, which became a part of East Germany ten years later, and he then left for West Germany in 1953. In that year, he began filming 8-millimeter recordings of rehearsals for Brecht's Berlin Ensemble. His work with theater shaped his notions of the film medium. His belief that the basis of the medium lay more in theater than photography places him in the tradition of Méliès and German Expressionism. Expressionist filmmakers attempted to counter the notion of film representing the "real" and instead creating an alternative world in the studio. 95 Music also strongly influenced Syberberg's work. According to Anton Kaes, "the new magic worlds that film creates can be structured according to musical principles, which remove Syberberg's film even further from linear storytelling."96 The entwining of these arts also brings his work closer to a Gesamtkustwerk, or "total work of art," an idea championed by Wagner. Syberberg finds inspiration in both Brecht and Wagner, and attempts to balance them: "I made the aesthetically scandalous attempt of combining Brecht's doctrine of the epic theater with Richard Wagner's musical aesthetics, of linking the epic system as anti-Aristotelian cinema with the laws of the new myth."97 The polarity between Wagner

⁹⁵ In the 1920s, German filmmakers adopted the avant-garde theatrical and artistic tradition of Expressionism. Thinking that "film must become a graphic art," there was a great emphasis on a distorted graphic style, with stylized and exaggerated mise-en-scene, set design, and actor movement. The stories explored fantasy and horror, echoed in the style of the films. Narratives encouraged interpretation and social criticism, while allowing an appreciation of the art of the material. For more on the German Expressionist style, and the evolution of the film industry in Germany in the interwar years, see Siegfried Kracauer's *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of German Film*, ed. Leonardo Quaresima (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

⁹⁶ Kaes, 44.

⁹⁷ Syberberg, in Kaes, 44.

and Brecht may also be understood as a play between art-as-illusion and art-as-self-consciousness.

In combining these two radically different and yet emphatically German influences, Syberberg attempts to fight back against Hollywood's domination of the film medium, and America's creeping influence over German life. This is a major theme of the film *Hitler: A Film from Germany*, as Syberberg works through his conflicting thoughts on screen. Syberberg's own politics are not classifiable, and it is nearly impossible to place him on the conventional political spectrum. He is anticapitalist, but also rejected the Communist system of East Germany. In a similar way, he is simultaneously drawn to both the traditional and avant-garde artistic traditions. These dualities in Syberberg's thinking recur throughout the film, shaping the audience's thinking as the filmmaker works out the relationships between these theoretically opposing ideas.

Hitler: A Film from Germany is essentially four films, each part dealing with its own topic. Part I, Hitler: A Film from Germany, addresses the cult of personality surrounding Hitler; Part II, A German Dream, focuses on pre-Nazi German culture and its appropriation by the propaganda of the Third Reich; Part III, The End of a Winter's Tale, is told primarily from Himmler's point of view, addressing the ideology and thinking of the Holocaust; and Part IV, We, Children of Hell, focuses on the destruction of the German spirit and identity. The film lacks a traditional narrative, with each part working through another forgotten part of German past: "it is, basically, a trial without a courtroom. It takes place, as the film unfolds, in our

minds." Through the lack of a cohesive narrative, the audience is able to construct a personalized response to Syberberg's world.

The parts are linked together by the wandering presence of Amelie Syberberg, the filmmaker's nine-year-old daughter. The film inhabits a studio filled with "ghosts," objects, images, and caricatures of the nation's past. The child moves through these ghosts as a silent witness, and an accidental victim. She is the victim of silence: "By rejecting their part in Hitler, says Syberberg throughout his film, the Germans are rejecting their true romantic irrational selves—their real German identity—and, unless they take heed, will rob their children of their true heritage and make of Germany a dead land." It is a child's fantastical wasteland, filled with puppets, stars, and circus freaks, which Syberberg presents to the audience. The child, holding a stuffed animal, a dog with a Hitler mustache, stands in for the lost, meandering, uncertain future of Germany.

The film begins with an Edenic image; a painting of the Winter Garden built by Ludwig II on the roof of the Munich Palace. Against the prelude to Wagner's *Parsifal*, subtitles ask:

And if I had in one hand the gold of business, the full beer belly of the functionary, happiness, and all the playthings of the world, and my other hand held fairy tales and the dreams of fancy, the yearning for paradise and the music of our ideas, then everybody would blindly choose paradise, even if it was false, greedy for sacrificial blood, ready to give their best, involving our hopes with the greatest cruelties for the sake of moonstruck triumphs of the human soul. Concealing within ourselves all errors, the banality and baroque asceticism of mass rites. Long is the history of faith, its victories over us and its defeat at our hands. ¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Gitta Sereny, *The Healing Wound: Experiences and Reflections on Germany, 1938-2001* (New York, W. W. Norton, 2001), 225.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 226.

¹⁰⁰ Syberberg, 26.

This is the choice made by the Germans. When Hitler offered paradise, the people followed him. With the failure of paradise, the people blocked out the memory of their own sins, committed in the name of a future contaminated by blood and greed. The film is not about Hitler the man, but the eternal Hitler, the "Hitler-in-us". A circus barker "announces not a historical film, not a reconstruction of the Third Reich, but a circus spectacle; not a story, either invented or authentic, but a tribunal; not education, not nostalgia or sentiment, but history as theater; history as horror picture show." Like Alain Resnais, Syberberg understood the impossibility of depicting the past. *Hitler* does not use real images from the past, only the shells: "Actors play in front of photographic blow-ups that show legendary places without people—empty, almost abstract, oddly scaled views of Ludwig II's Venus Grotto at Linderhof, Wagner's villa in Bayreuth, the conference room in the Reich Chancellery in Berlin, the terrace of Hitler's villa in Berchtesgaden, the ovens at Auschwitz." ¹⁰² Hitler and his ministers are portrayed as puppets and iconic film characters, such as Chaplin's *Great Dictator* or the child murderer from M. According to Susan Sontag, "To simulate atrocity convincingly is to risk making the audience passive, reinforcing witless stereotypes, confirming distance and creating fascination." Instead of allowing the audience to relax, watching the film in an unengaged way, Syberberg creates a complete and inescapable spectacle. The old broadcasts remind the audience of the reality of the past, while the performance of the film places them in the present; "Rather than devise a spectacle in the past tense, either by attempting to

¹⁰¹ Kaes, 39.

¹⁰² Sontag, Eye of the Storm

¹⁰³ Sontag, Under the Sign of Saturn, 139.

simulate 'unrepeatable reality' (Syberberg's phrase) or by showing it in photographic document, Syberberg has created a spectacle in the present tense—'adventures in the head." The audience must do the work of mourning; Syberberg can only lead them to it. Though it is unclear if Syberberg was influenced by the work of Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich, he uses the term "inability to mourn," the title of their 1967 psychoanalytical study of postwar Germany, though he never explicitly addresses the book. His film is a "work of mourning" (*Trauerarbeit*), using a cannon of images and objects to make the audiences think about, and remember, their nation's past.

Over the opening images of paradise come the words "The Grail," the original title of the film, repeated in German, French, and English. This idea of a promise lost illustrates the German search for paradise, redemption, life free from the influence of Hitler and the past. The barker says, "Our goal is to find the world culprit, and what would Hitler be without us?" This is openly a film about the German relationship to Hitler, and the role that the people played in his rise. The silence about their past has not aided Germany, and so they must search for a new way to understand. Wagner's Parsifal is the story of a Grail quest; the film connects this historical quest, instead creating a search for German past. In order to regain all those aspects contaminated by Hitler, Syberberg asks the audiences to reexamine them within the Nazi context. In order to overcome the corrupted history, the people must first understand their memories, working though and mourning the loss of Hitler, utopia, and an innocent Germany.

¹⁰⁴ Sontag, Eve of the Storm

A central issue for Syberberg is the erosion of German culture by Hitler. In the end of the third part of the film, against the music of *Götterdämmerung*, the Hitler puppet speaks of his legacy around the world, and in Germany, to the actor Harry Baer:

HITLER PUPPET: So long as Wagner's music is played, I will not be forgotten. I've made sure of that. Branded forever in the history of Wagnerian music. The source of our, the source of my strength. Everything is going according to plan after all. And we did win, on all fronts and everywhere, in a finer way. Only in a different costume. Just recall the new words: "society" instead of "Fatherland," "national ideology" not "philosophy," "functionary" instead of "human being," "conviction" instead of "conscience," "objective constraints" instead of "quality," "political" instead of "just," "display" instead of "fairness," "education politics" and "leisure industry" instead of "culture," "satisfaction of needs" instead of "happiness." Germany as the schoolteacher for the world.... A somewhat gentler world domination than my methods, a bitter knowledge. Everyone fights with any means! Only I am the bogeyman of the world. And so I took it upon myself, if only the ideas survive in us. Everyone bears guilt. But who is closer to God that the guilty man? And what about the time without God? When we ourselves have deposed him.

HARRY BAER: Thus spake the devil. In the end cynical and moral? Or rather, on the contrary, quite human. Living as the Grand Inquisitor in the world of the present. Full of praise on all sides. His legacy has long since been taken over in other ways, in the most various ways.

HITLER PUPPET: And yet, in their banality, finding no homeland anymore, either in the divine or in the devil. Long live mediocrity, freedom, and equality for the international average. Among third-class people interested only in the annual profit increase or a higher salary, destroying themselves, relentlessly, ruthlessly, moving toward their end and what an end. Without me! Bravo. They are liquidating themselves, only slower, right? Thus spake the cynic, and he is always right. ¹⁰⁵

This moment illustrates the dichotomy that Syberberg is exploring throughout the film. Hitler had inescapably corroded German culture—Wagner, the Fatherland, even God. The world packed these things away with Hitler and the memory of their

¹⁰⁵ Syberberg, 206-208.

own guilt. But this, for Syberberg, is the great victory of the "the devil;" in denying themselves their past and true identity, the people can never overcome it. Without memory, the world is degraded to the mindless, consumerist, "mediocre," and essentially American situation that Syberberg detested. Deprived of the world and culture that existed before, Hitler's power and legacy are affirmed. Syberberg attempts to undo this: "Syberberg's grandest conceit is that with his film he may have 'defeated' Hitler—exorcised him." In attacking this tradition of pushing aside the infected past, Syberberg works to reintegrate it. Only through acknowledging and accepting their past can the German people move on from Hitler.

Hitler's haunting of the past is made literal when, in Part II, Hitler rises from Wagner's grave as *Rienzi* plays, and says:

Here the spiritual sword with which we won our victory. After all, there was no one else who would, who could take over my desired role. And so they called upon me. First the bourgeoisie, then the military, rubbing their hands in bliss and dirt, and also to defend their honor—do you imagine I did not notice? Then, industry, to drive out Bolshevism, from whose Lenin I learned so much and whose Stalin could be venerated secretly. Then the petty bourgeoisie, the workers, for whom I could bring forth so much, and youth, to whom I gave a goal, and the students, who needed me, and the intellectuals. who were now liberated from the Jewish Mafia of their friends and foes, yes, and other countries, who were glad to have a pacified Europe again, strength and solemnity. And one should consider to how many people I gave something worth being against. And just compare the lives of so many people—listless, empty. I gave them what they put into me, what they wanted to hear, wanted to do, things they were afraid to do. I made and commanded for them, for it was all for them, not for me. Germany, yes, which I really love, in my own way, of course...

I am a man, with two eyes and ears like you, and when you prick me, do I not bleed? I too. I too am one of you.

I was and am the end of your most secret wishes, the legend and reality of your dreams, so we have to get through. 107

¹⁰⁶ Sontag, Eye of the Storm

¹⁰⁷ Syberberg, 127; emphasis mine.

Syberberg shows the audiences the many roles Hitler filled. As Jesus, called upon by his people, Hitler tried to save the nation he loved, and will forever bear the guilt and sins of the people. He is also the Jew, repeating Shylock's words from *Merchant of Venice*, reminding the audience that having once stripped the humanity from so many people, they now do the same to their former leader. Hitler, a man after all, reminds the audiences of their part in his rise. The film does not argue that what passed could have happened without Hitler, but that it could not have happened without the support of the masses. He embodies the "secret wishes" of Germany, and is "our" Hitler. No matter how atrocious these wishes were, they were a part of the German past. Like Wagner, "kulture," and nationalism, the past must be embraced and understood in order to provide a future for the country and the people.

Keller and Baer unite the film, serving as a reminder to the audience of the present Germany. They are not puppeteers or somnambulistic representations of the future, but of the present, true Germany tormented by grief and mourning. They represent the stage that the German audiences have forfeited in their recovery—sorrow and mourning. Sontag says, "It takes time—and much hyperbole—to work through grief." This is the aim of the film, but these men are necessary to guide the viewers through the process. The words of the German poet Heinrich Heine serve as bookends for the film, "I think of Germany in the night and sleep leaves me, I can

¹⁰⁸ Sontag, Eye of the Storm

It must be noted that Heine was Jewish, though he converted to Lutheranism at the age of 27 in order to be able to enter the academic profession, from which Jews were barred at the time.

no longer close my eyes, I weep hot tears." The film is a project in mourning, presided over by the grieving Keller and Baer, and the lost witness of Amelie.

This is a history told through references, not chronology: "Instead of a 'horizontal' development of a story, we have a vertical structure in which various levels of meaning and association coexist and resonate polyphonically." In dealing with a 'history' that was never integrated into a greater historical understanding, Syberberg is freed from telling a causally based narrative and from grounding the film in reality. In this way, all aspects of German history and life can come together, explored a single national narrative. Living in a divided Germany, a common past becomes all the more important. With the mass consumer culture and invasion of American tendencies, Syberberg's main concern is the question of what will become of Germany. What is a country without its past? The collective amnesia did not erase only the Nazi years, but all that had been touched by them. The great concern is the progeny of such a nation, orphaned and distanced from their history.

¹¹⁰ Syberberg, 31. ¹¹¹ Kaes, 45.

Recovering Memory

As the war's immediate results faded from the forefront of national issues, collective amnesia and false memory solidified.

France was able to begin a recovery of the past at a much earlier stage than Germany. Beginning in the 1950s, Resnais' films asked the audiences to remember what had happened, to understand that a splintered understanding of the past could not help rebuild the country. Resnais also asks questions about the truth of the accepted understanding of the Occupation. His characters have to deal with remembering the past as well as sorting out the fact from fiction. There is an ambiguity to the tales Riva tells, with no clear promise of truth. 112 Resnais not only asks the viewer to recall their own past, but also to ask questions of it. Though the Gaullist myth of a resisting France would remain nearly intact for another decade, Resnais begins to sew the seeds of questioning. As Riva sits catatonic while her head is shaved before the angry mob of Nevers, Resnais points to the sheer chaos of the Liberation. In this scene, he asks who is truly insane: the lovesick young girl or the uncontrolled mob seeking revenge against her. These realizations could not yet be directly applied in France, and the setting in Japan helped the people to keep some distance. The film is about the inability to remember and represent, not necessarily providing the audience with a particular truth to remember.

Syberberg, on the other hand, is directly concerned with reminding the people of "the Hitler-in-us." For him, actively recalling and watching the bizarre recreations

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¹¹² Kent Jones, "Time Indefinite," *Hiroshima*.

of history is necessary to understand the past. Like Resnais, he accepts that these representations can only offer an indirect means into mourning; reality and memory can be found through the audience's attempts to understand what they see. Guided by representations of the present (Keller and Baer) and the future (Amelie Syberberg), the viewers are forced to come to terms with their past. By using these distancing tactics, the viewer thinks about the German relationship to Hitler. The onslaught of images and information break down the constructed barriers to memory, leaving the audience examining their own memories. Understanding that Hitler's power came from the people was essential to this; the audiences must remember what had been and then accept their role in it.

Resnais and Duras adopt a personal story in order to allow the audience a greater emotional access to the issue. In watching Riva struggle to remember, the audiences must work through their own hidden memories. It is not enough to pay tribute to the past, as with the failed representations of Hiroshima, or to deny it, as Riva had attempted to do with the memory of her dead lover; neither approach allows for remembrance or recovery. Syberberg, on the other hand, uses his work of art to play through the process of mourning; his, "confidence that his art is adequate to his great subject derives from his idea of cinema as a way of knowing that incites speculation to take a self-reflexive turn.¹¹³ It is only through the visceral, emotional response to film that the people can understand this relationship. Both Resnais and Syberberg use cinematic representations to trigger for the audience their own process

¹¹³ Sontag, Eye of the Storm.

of remembering. The films provide, "space to ruminate in," opportunities to self-reflexively examine the past.

The way that Resnais and Syberberg structure their films allows the audiences to connect emotionally, guided towards a line of thinking. Brought to a certain vulnerable point, the filmmakers then call upon them to remember, to think critically as well as emotionally about their pasts. Told that they are living a lie, lacking a past and denying themselves the process of mourning, the people are forced to confront what they had done. For the perpetrators, bystanders, and even for those too young to have had to choose this realization and acceptance of history is necessary for the process of mourning.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

Chapter III

Unclaimed Guilt

Both Resnais' and Syberberg's films began a process of examining the guilt of the nation that would later come to the fore. In *Lacombe, Lucien* and *The Tin Drum*, Louis Malle and Volker Schlöndorff used wartime settings to place the audience within the context of war, allowing a reexamination of who was guilty.

In *Lacombe, Lucien*, Malle follows a young boy from the country as he falls into working for the Gestapo. In the years after the war, the notion that collaborators had all been upper class had proliferated, and the director sought to recognize a greater complexity. The likeable, baby-faced protagonist is neither hero nor villain, because it was the notion of easily defined guilt that Malle took issue with.

Günter Grass' controversial 1959 novel *The Tin Drum* was adapted for him in 1979 by Volker Schlöndorff. The book had been quite sensational at the time of its release, and remained somewhat taboo. However, as the second generation came into its own, they needed to reexamine what had shaped their divided society. Schlöndorff then updated the material for his own generation, using a common but emotionally charged source to remove the viewer from their preexisting notions and so engage emotionally.

Though set during the war, both of these films were essentially about postwar understandings of guilt. By putting the stories in the context of war, the audiences had to re-evaluate their notions formed afterward.

Lacombe, Lucien: Questioning the Nature of Collaboration

As De Gaulle's power base solidified after the war, so too did the idea of a France unified in Resistance during the Occupation. Pétainism and homegrown fascism were dismissed as isolated instances of fringe politics. Many of those who had been in power were removed from office and stigmatized as the other, having worked against France and the French people. The events of May 1968, the resignation of de Gaulle and his death shortly after paved the way for the challenging of these ideas. In 1969, the documentary *The Sorrow and the Pity* served to "break the mirror" of the Gaullist myth of resistance. The intent and effects of this film will be examined in the following chapter.

In *The Vichy Syndrome*, Henry Rousso terms the explosion of 1970s films dealing with the Vichy period and Occupation as the "forties revival," sparked by *The Sorrow and the Pity*. He identifies four categories of films: "prosecutors", "chroniclers", "opportunists," and "aesthetes". The "prosecutors" followed *Sorrow* most closely, working to discredit and bring light to the facts of Vichy and collaboration. The "chroniclers" used personal stories to examine and explore the realities of the Occupation. In addition to a group of "opportunists," which used the Occupation as a setting while doing little to explore the issues, Rousso identifies a group of "aesthetes." These films, *Lacombe, Lucien* among them, move away from actual historical representations and favor scandal. It is interesting to note that

¹¹⁵ Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991)
¹¹⁶ Ibid., 233-235.

Rousso identifies these films by the intent of the filmmaker. All influenced by the "broken mirror" of the 1960s and the release of *Sorrow*, Rousso notes the drive of numerous filmmakers to introduce some new message and information to their audiences. This points to the particular use of the medium as an arena for a new reevaluation of the past.

Rousso pays particular attention in his discussion to *Lucien*, noting its reception as nearly heretical:

What was problematic about the film was its philosophy: whereas previous films had portrayed the period as a conflict between good and evil, Malle created a murky, ambiguous atmosphere by following the uncertain fortunes of a young French aide to the Gestapo, a character who, of all the types of French collaborationist, is the most difficult to understand and the hardest to excuse because it is unmotivated by ideological misconception. 117

The main character in the film, the young peasant boy Lucien Lacombe, proved so distressing as a collaborator for audiences because of his total lack of ideology on any side. Lucien joined the Gestapo not because of anti-Semitism, Pétainism, or even fear of the future. He attempts to join the Resistance first, but is rejected for being too young, and then joins the Gestapo after they give him a few drinks and make him feel important. The French people were only just coming to terms with the uncomfortable realities of national collaborators and fascists, and the introduction of a new kind of collaborator shocked audiences. In introducing this new collaborator, Malle implies that commitment to the Resistance may have been just as ideologically vacant.

The film works to personalize the issue of collaboration, and the guilt that accompanies it. *Lacombe, Lucien* was released in a period of intense interest in the subject; the issue of collaboration was variously taken up by the Left and Right,

¹¹⁷ Rousso, 234.

historically faithful and sensationalist alike. Louis Malle, telling the fictional story of a young Gestapo member, illustrates for the audience the ambiguity of guilt, and the "banality of evil." Malle makes the audiences question their own conceptions of who was guilty, who deserved justice, and what made these people so different from those who (actively or passively) resisted.

Early in the film, Lucien returns on vacation from his job to the farm where his family works. His father is a prisoner of war, another family of sharecroppers has moved into his house, and his mother is living with Mr. Laborit, the owner of the farm. At breakfast the first morning, Laborit tells Lucien that his son has joined the Resistance ("He's gone off and joined the underground, that good-for-nothing has! My son's a patriot, now what do you think of that?" 119). Shortly afterward, Lucien also decides to join the Resistance, and goes to ask the schoolteacher Peyssac, who is the leader of the local Resistance. Peyssac refuses to allow him to join, saying he is too young, recognizing that Lucien only seeks danger, violence, power, and an escape from his boredom and frustration with his life. Later, back in the town where he works, chance guides Lucien to the Hôtel des Grottes, as he follows a car driven by a man surrounded by women. Once inside the hotel, Lucien watches as the Gestapo members drink and joke, and he is delighted by the presence of a famous bicycle racer. Lucien is treated with interest by the Gestapo, as they give him drinks and crowd around him, recognizing his potential assistance while treating him as a new

¹¹⁸ Hannah Arendt, quoted in Leah Hewitt, *Remembering the Occupation in French Film: National Identity in Postwar Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 72.

<sup>72.
&</sup>lt;sup>119</sup> Louis Malle and Patrick Modiano, *Lacombe, Lucien* (New York: Viking Press, 1974), 8.

toy. He gives up Peyssac's name in what seems like a drunken mistake, but his lack of remorse when confronted with the man undercuts this. Lucien joins the Gestapo because they treated him as an adult and gave him attention, and he actively, even joyously, works with them, stealing, beating, and killing.

When Lucien first seeks to join the Resistance, he does this not out of patriotism, but out of desperation; this is the same drive that allows him to be pulled in to the Gestapo. Though the film is set in 1944, Lucien seems largely ignorant to the facts of war, and this is made clear in the first scene of the film. The audience is introduced to Lucien in the retirement home where he works, as he cleans a convalescent's picture of Pétain, with a Vichy radio broadcast on in the background. As Philippe Henriot, the voice of Radio Paris, refutes the "propaganda" of Radio London and the Resistance, Lucien pays no attention. Instead, he uses a slingshot to take aim at and kill a songbird. The boy pays no attention to politics and has no interest in the propaganda surrounding him. This first introduction to the boy shows us not only this ambivalence to the war setting, but also his violent impulses. At the time the film was released, it was thought that collaboration had primarily been a middle-class action; Sartre said, "All the workers and almost all the peasants were resisters; most collaborators, it's a fact, came from the bourgeois." Even Sorrow and the Pity seems to endorse this thinking, showing an upper-class collaborator and peasant resister, though the film begins a move towards a realization of class-wide collaboration and support for Pétain. Malle presses this idea, showing that any Frenchman could be a collaborator. In fact, recent scholarship suggests there was no

¹²⁰ Paul Jankowski, "In Defense of Fiction: Resistance, Collaboration, and *Lacombe, Lucien*," *The Journal of Modern History* 63, no. 3 (Sept. 1991): 457.

simple class breakdown of collaborators and resisters. Paul Jankowski's study of collaborators and resisters suggests that the motives for joining either side may not have been that different, noting in particular fears of the Service du Travail Obligatoire and "boredom and frustration, wretched material conditions." ¹²¹ He notes the largely identical reasons for joining either faction, swayed in one direction or another almost by chance. The main difference between the two was "the daily pursuit of remote rather than immediate satisfactions, distinguished the resister from the collaborator." ¹²² Indeed, Lucien's fellow Gestapo members are draw together only in service of the Nazi cause, though their involvement is largely out of selfinterest, though the boy could as easily have joined one as the other. One contemporary critic wrote, "I knew some Lucien Lacombes. They were not in the Gestapo but in the *maquis*: and the weapons they brandished brought them the same compensation (the taste of power, the will to be important, easy women and money at hand)."123 Lucien could have been anyone, and could have joined and cause, because there were many similarities. His lack of ideology in any way makes him no different from the masses of fighters on either side.

Lucien's character complicates the issue of guilt as well. The film offers no insight into the thoughts of the main character, and the camera often cuts away from Lucien, showing the way people react to him but not allowing the audience access to his reactions and emotions. The casting of Pierre Blaise, himself an uneducated country boy with no acting experience, compounds this. Blaise "possessed a certain

¹²¹ Ibid., 461, 466. ¹²² Ibid., 479.

¹²³ Richard Marienstras, quoted in Idib., 269.

understanding of Lucien's psychology. He knew the character did bad things, but understood how he thought." Not particularly expressive, he does not allow the audience to share his understanding of the character. Though Lucien may understand the reasons for his actions, no one else can. His habits and behaviors make little sense to the audience, making them intent upon the charming boy they cannot understand.

Lucien begins regularly visiting a Jewish family in hiding in the town, imposing himself on them. He is first brought by the aristocratic Gestapo man Jean-Bernard, who wants Lucien to have a suit made. Once it is finished, Lucien returns again and again to visit the family. Knowing he is in power, he takes control of the situation, giving orders to the family in their own house. The daughter, France, is the epitome of Parisian elegance and sophistication, in addition to looking quite "Aryan." This is quite significant. Lucien clearly does not know many Jews, if any, and he is clearly conflicted about how France and her family fit the anti-Semitic propaganda. He is immediately taken with her, trying to impress her at every turn. This again tackles the question of identity in the film: "The viewing public is forced to think through the relationships between the individual and type, between a marked ethnic identity and an assimilated national one." Albert Horn and his daughter France cannot escape their "Jewish identity," thought they are thoroughly assimilated (though the presence of Horn's Yiddish speaking mother reminds the audience of their past).

¹²⁴ Hewitt, 82.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 89.

Lucien himself is a very likeable character. When Lucien asks the father, Albert Horn, what he would say to Lucien marrying France, Horn replies, "It's strange, somehow I can't bring myself to loathe you completely." Despite their fear of Lucien, and his continued menacing of the family, something about him remains sympathetic. His ignorance and naïveté make him charming in spite of his actions. The struggle that the Horn family goes through to accept Lucien is identical to that of the audience. In discussing issues that critics had with the film, Leah Hewitt suggests:

It is the fear of a gullible or guilty public that is at issue here, one that would identify with, and then exonerate, the character. Critics on the Left were particularly concerned that the public might not sense strongly enough the necessity of condemning Lucien's actions.... Modiano's choice of making Lucien an auxiliary to the German police rather than a member of the *Milice* intensifies the ambiguity of the character. Lucien retains more his civilian status and is thus associated with the general population more than a specific organization of collaboration." ¹²⁶

Lucien is so seemingly innocuous that his faults and misdeeds are almost forgotten by the audiences. However, the film does not make this a simple issue. While endearing viewers to the character, Malle and Modiano remind them that this boy has committed terrible crimes.

Regardless of his lacking ideology and undeniable charm, he is guilty of collaboration. But the film asks what this "guilt" means:

In the case of *Lacombe, Lucien*, the burden of interpreting actions is particularly heavy on the spectator, who is compelled to ask questions about the nature of collaboration without a reassuring voice-over or political message to confirm the 'proper' way to read the film.¹²⁷

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¹²⁶ Pierre Billard, *Louis Malle: Le Rebelle solitaire* (Paris: Plon, 2003), quoted in Hewitt, 78.

¹²⁷ Hewitt. 74.

Malle offers no sure explanation for the film, no clear reading of the main character. The "opaque" characterizations of Lucien allow the audience to form their own opinions about him, which may change throughout the film. In saving France and her grandmother from the German officer who comes to take them away, Lucien seems in some way redeemed. However, he does not save them out of love, but because the officer takes a pocket watch Lucien had given to Albert Horn after Lucien tries to take it back. This heroic action then is only because of a self-serving and infantile interruption of Lucien's desire.

Lucien and the women find an abandoned farmhouse as they aimlessly make their way out of the town. Lucien vaguely suggests heading to Spain, but has no real plan for survival. In this bucolic setting, he seems at ease, and his hardness begins to melt away. However, as a final denial of Lucien's goodness, superimposed text reads, "Lucien Lacombe was arrested on October 12, 1944. Tried by a military court of the Resistance, he was sentenced to death and executed." Though the story is fictional, in informing the viewers of Lucien's sentence, Malle asks what justice truly is. Do Lucien's lack of ideological commitment and his final act of "redemption" cancel out his collaboration and heinous crimes?

If the film is an enactment of collaboration in the past that triggers strong reactions in the present, it is because the camera in effect calls upon the spectator to perform the role of the witness-judge who will decide upon the extent of Lucien's political guilt in the war. Our function is to weight what the character lives on a personal level in terms of ethical or public responsibility.... There is a sort of flattening or leveling of experience in Lucien's framework that makes all action and all people dangerously equivalent in ethical terms. 129

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¹²⁸ Malle, 122.

¹²⁹ Hewitt, 77.

Introducing a new kind of collaborator, Malle makes Lucien as similar as possible to the average French citizen. He could have as easily joined the Resistance, or simple not taken a side; Lucien's decision to work with the Gestapo does not determine his guilt. A nearly contemporary article on the film, from 1976, notes the laughter from the audience while watching the film:

The key to this subtly rhetorical film is that moment when the spectator realizes that laughter makes him too a collaborator, that only active resistance can forestall the natural propensity to fill one's own desires at the expense of another.¹³⁰

Aligning the audience with Lucien through laughter works a means of relieving tension and suggesting domination. Given the opportunity to relate to the collaborator, judgment is not the simple process of collaboration versus resistance.

Rousso calls the film, "more provocative than thought provoking," because of Malle's conscious play on existing sensitivities. However, as Malle puts an angelic young face to the issues of guilt and collaboration, the film extends beyond mere provocation. Malle asks the audiences to seriously contemplate the intricacies of who can be held accountable. So many had collaborated in some way, and the reasons for collaboration may have had little to do with ideology. How then, are these people guilty? Watching Lucien, the audience is drawn in to his story, and there can be no simple judgment of his guilt.

¹³⁰ Charles F. Altman, "Lacombe, Lucien: Laughter as Collaboration," The French Review 49, no. 4 (Mar., 1976): 549.

¹³¹ Rousso, 235.

Tin Drum: Examining the World from Below

May 8, 1945 did not signal an end to the war for Germany. Instead, it left a destroyed country with questions about what the nation had become, and how they had been led astray. Saul Friedländer points to three issues that dominate the way Germans remember the war:

The nature of the crimes committed; the methods used to perpetrate those crimes; the growing awareness among the Germans of that time of the criminal nature of the Nazi regime together with the fact that the majority of the population supported it into the very last months. May 8, 1945 was not the toppling of a tyranny but the defeat of a nation that fought to the bitter end. ¹³²

Following the war, Germans were not able to easily distinguish the guilty from the innocent. This led to a period of silence, in which the perpetrator generation refused to mourn, let alone discuss, their nation's past, and their individual roles in it. In the Sixties, with the publicity from the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem and the Auschwitz trial in Frankfurt, the atrocious facts again came to light. As youths around the world began to react and act out against their elders, filmmakers echoed this burgeoning interest with a wave of films about the Nazi era.

In tackling *Tin Drum*, the 1959 novel by Günter Grass, German film director Volker Schlöndorff brought to the screen one of the most important and successful works of literature about the Nazi era. Though the novel met with initial resistance, as time progressed it became immensely popular, gaining critical acclaim around the world. Many had attempted to adapt it into film, though each failed in various ways.

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¹³² Saul Friedländer, *Memory, history, and the extermination of the Jews of Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 2.

Franz Seitz gained the rights from Grass after writing an initial screenplay, and contacted Volker Schlöndorff to direct the film, who accepted the "provocation" in 1977 (Seitz had produced *Young Törless*, Volker Schlöndorff's first feature film). 133 The script was written by Schlöndorff, Seitz, Carrière and Grass from the first two sections of the book. Rather than continue to follow Oskar into the postwar years, the film ends with the conclusion of the war and the search for a better life in the West. The book is narrated by a thirty year old Oskar in a mental asylum, looking back on his life. In eliminating the final third of the book, Schlöndorff places the emphasis on Oskar's life as he lives it. Oskar is the narrator as well as protagonist, but he continues throughout the film to think in his childish way, without the benefit of the hindsight created in the book. The film makes use of the direct input of a postwar narrator, allowing the audiences to see the war years from Oskar's perspective. Though the viewers themselves knew what would come about, Oskar's narration lacks this hindsight. The audiences then had to form their own opinions about the nation's guilt.

Born with more than unusual intelligence, Oskar decides on his third birthday to stop growing. Played by David Bennet, a stunted eleven year old, Oskar is not a dwarf, but rather a permanent child. He represents the stunted nature of postwar Germany, unable to move forward. An effort was made throughout the nation to ignore the past, and in doing so, the nation remained as stunted and naïve as Oskar. In the 1970s, Schlöndorff and the New German filmmakers stopped avoiding the

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¹³³ Christian-Albrecht Gollub, "Volker Schlöndorff and Margarathe von Trotta: Transcending the Genres." In *New German Filmmakers: From Oberhausen through the 1970s*, ed. Klaus Phillips (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1984), 287.

issue of German history and instead tackled it head on. This film addresses the collusion of average Germans with the Nazis, asking who can be guilty in a nation of (passive or active) collaborators.

Representations of Oskar proved the most difficult task in adapting the novel. Schlöndorff in the DVD commentary discusses the realization that Oskar should not be presented as a midget, but a child. When they found the eleven-year-old David Bennet, with his bizarre voice and stunted stature, Schlöndorff knew he was their Oskar. His unreal quality and indeterminate age complicates his character for the audience, as they try to determine if he is, "innocent or evil, sincere or duplicitous, naïve or wise." At the same time, it is the stunted child's perspective that draws the viewer in: "each one of us has a childhood that we miss and would like to have been able to prolong." These contradictions serve a purpose, offering the audience several ways to understand the character, as well as the period. At least three can be distilled:

- 1. It is a protest against his sociopolitical environment and as such is a passive protest against fascism. He is so angry at the adult world that he decides to become a midget. It is Oskar, the purposefully rebellious child.
- 2. It is a part of Nazi Germany, that is, a freakish but willful deformation of Germany's own nature. Hitler was also known as the "drummer." It is Oskar, the infantile, self-gratifying child.
- 3. It is a product of strained German-Polish relations and the resultant alienation. It is Oskar, the hurt, powerless child. 136

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¹³⁴ Hans-Bernard Moeller and George Lellis, *Volker Schlöndorff's Cinema: Adaptation, Politics, and the "Movie-Appropriate,"* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002), 171.

¹³⁵ Günter Grass, "Interview," *The Tin Drum*, DVD, directed by Volker Schlöndorff (1979; New York: Criterion, 2004).

¹³⁶ Ibid., 171.

The ambiguity of the character, and the multiple ways in which he can be read allow the audiences to see Oskar in significantly different ways at different times. His physical distinctions allow his chameleon like ability to adapt to the moment, taking on new meaning with each setting. He is tolerated by the audience because of his differences and the uncertainty about who he truly is. In this way, Oskar guides the viewers through the rise and fall of Nazism, placing them in the world of the lower middle-class that had fallen for the promised Nazi utopia, while keeping them removed from it. The film is a, "world history from below;" audiences see his world through his childlike point of view, kept apart from the world as they examine it.

In a way, Oskar represents an alternative to Nazism, an idea that Volker Schlöndorff addresses on the DVD commentary. He explains that Oskar's aspirations to power retain their childlike, innocent quality, while Hitler's unquenchable thirst for power moved beyond a childhood dream and led to unimaginable atrocities. After Oskar discovers his "power," a scream capable of breaking glass, he attempts to extend his domination outside the home. He is seen leading a band of children through the streets as he drums. A procession of SS men turns onto the street, a glorified mockery of Oskar's gang, and must stop to allow Oskar and his friends to pass. In his small child's body, Oskar's power attempts have some validity, while they become silly, frivolous, and eventually atrocious from the Nazis.

This alternation of child's play and Nazi regulation is seen again in the film shortly after, as a few years have passed and the Nazis have gained power. When

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¹³⁷ Rentschler, *Tin Drum*.

Oskar is twelve, he goes with his family to the circus, where he meets the Lilliputian Bebra, who asks him to join their performing troupe. Oskar refuses, saying he prefers to remain in the audience and to let his "little art flower for itself." To this, Bebra replies:

Our kind must never sit in the audience. Our kind must perform and run the show, or it's the others that will run us. And the others are coming. They will take over the fairgrounds. They will stage torchlight parades. They will build platforms and fill them, and from those platforms preach our destruction. 138

Bebra here augments the association of spectacle and National Socialists; the Nazis are a coming danger, a competitive force capable of changing the lives of these people. The next scene shows Oskar at a Nazi rally, hiding under scaffolding. As a Nazi officer comes forward and a march begins, Oskar drums a three-quarter beat. He becomes a sort of Pied Piper, gradually drawing the participants to his tune as the march transforms into the *Blue Danube Waltz*. In the commentary, Schlöndorff mentions how the memory of his childhood is still haunted by memories of rallies like this one, noting the seductive nature they had over crowds. Like the circus, the Nazis present a spectacle to draw an audience. They offer flowery words mixed with absolute order. As the young Nazi musicians get drawn off tune, Schlöndorff shows each group adjusting to Oskar's waltz. Those holding their arms up in the Hitler salute begin swaying back and forth, and soon break off into couples to dance. The Nazi officials falter in their march, and pick up again on Oskar's beat. Oskar, an "active anarchist," creates a spectacle of his own: "As Bebra suggested, Oskar has

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¹³⁸ "53," Tin Drum.

¹³⁹ Schlöndorff, "Commentary," Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid

played a role in determining events."¹⁴¹ The rally itself recalls Leni Riefenstahl's Nazi propaganda film *Triumph of the Will*, and the march was written by a former Nazi composer. This veneer of authenticity highlights the childishness of the Nazi spectacle. Bebra's "others," they have taken over the harmless circus and created something sinister. Oskar is both the "rebellious" and "self-gratifying" child in these moments of domination.

In the years before World War II, Danzig¹⁴² functioned as an almost international city. Oskar's family reflects this, as a love triangle between the German Alfred Matzerath, the Kashubian¹⁴³ Agnes Matzerath (née Koljaiczek), and the Polish Jan Bronski. Early in the film, as the trio comes together, Matzerath says to Bronski, "Germans, Poles, Kashubians, we all live together in peace." This peace does not last, and Oskar's possible fathers represent extreme possibilities, each dying for their cause.

On September 1, 1939, Oskar drags his uncle into the Polish post office, bringing Bronski to his death and committing his "second crime." The battle over the Polish Post Office on that day was the first of the Second World War. Oskar stands in the office while the Poles are being bombed, apart from the chaos even

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¹⁴¹ Gollub, 291.

¹⁴² Both the novel and film, set between the wars, call it the Free City of Danzig, as established by the Versailles Treaty.

¹⁴³ The Kashubians are an ethnic group of Baltonic Slavs (largely Catholic) that occupy north central Poland, with large populations in Danzig. The Nazi regime considered the group "capable of Germanization" and placed them in the third category of the *Deutsche Volksliste*, but the people largely sided with the Poles. Norbert Maczulis, "Kashubians and their culture." http://www.muzeum-kaszubskie.gda.pl/eng.html

^{144 &}quot;Free State," *Tin Drum*

^{145 &}quot;A Grand Hand," Tin Drum

while he still demands attention. The young boy stands in the midst of war, carried out of the destroyed building in the arms of a SS man. This first battle of World War II brings the loss of another parent for Oskar, at the moment war breaks out. Oskar drags Jan into the office in order to find their friend who was repairing his drum; it is Oskar's selfishness and determination to keep drumming that bring Bronski to his death.

The war then ends with the death of Oskar's other father, Alfred. As the family hides in a cellar and the Russian soldiers invade, Oskar pushes his father's Nazi Party pin into Alfred's hand. Desperate to hide it from the soldiers, he tries to swallow the pin and begins to choke. The Russians open fire, and he dies. Oskar claims responsibility for the death of all three of his parents. Aside from the clearly Oedipal implications of this, there is a national sentiment to this. Each parent represents a different national tradition, and none can survive Oskar. The unchanging child, Oskar directs their lives, representing the present; according to Grass, Oskar is a "figure of today." ¹⁴⁶ As Germany had since the war, Oskar refuses responsibility for the majority of his story. At Alfred's burial, however, Oskar throws his drum into the grave and determines that he will once again grow (at which point his brother Kurt throws a stone at Oskar's head, and he falls into the grave seriously injured). This decision to finally change is an appeal to the audience. Stunted and unwilling as they had been to work through their past when the film began, the process of watching Oskar was intended to trigger the nation lacking a past, itself something of an orphan, to accept responsibility and finally begin to move on.

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¹⁴⁶ Grass, "Interview," Ibid.

As Oskar lies bandaged in bed, his grandmother says she will not go West with the family. Kashubians, neither Polish nor German enough, are left behind. The film begins and ends with the image of a Kashubian woman at work in the potato fields, concluding the film as Oskar and his family takes a train to the West:

Schlöndorff's cutoff point for the picture highlights that the Poles are the new rulers, the Kashubians the old underlings, and the Germans the departing losers. The film's history lesson thus establishes an ongoing obligation for the Poles, and no less for the German audiences of *The Tin Drum*, to remain aware of the Kashubes, the victims of their strife. 147

Oskar leaves his home an orphan, having led each parent, and so each nationality, to their death. The novel was an early step towards German-Polish reconciliation, and the film continued on that track. Attempting to alert audiences to the wrongs of the past, *The Tin Drum* works to honor the history while urging a new unity.

At the same time, the film focuses on the small, ordinary world of a boy who is anything but normal. However, the petit bourgeois setting is very important; according to Schlöndorff, "Oskar Mazerath is the revenge of the lower middle classes, just as the Nazis were the revenge of the lower middle classes." The National Socialist program was particularly appealing to the petit bourgeois, to which Oskar and his family belonged. Marginalized by both the aristocracy and proletariat, these middling sorts were drawn in by the promise of a classless society, the German utopia that awaited them. Oskar decides to stop growing in order to escape the mundane world around him. He is an outsider in this world, but offers the audience a view into the lives of those so captivated by Hitler's promises. Preparing for the Nazi rally, Alfred Matzerath replaces a photo of Beethoven with one of Hitler as he unveils

¹⁴⁷ Moeller, 169.

^{148 &}quot;Commentary," Tin Drum.

a new radio (a *Volksempfänger* or People's receiver released as part of the Nazi program of *Volksgemeinschaft*). In an interview, Schlöndorff said:

Grass shows Nazism deriving from the banality of middle-class life aspiring to become something else. For Grass, these people aren't very innocent. They wanted to feel important, to feel like generals in control of history. And this is a very dangerous energy because it has certain legitimacy. That's what fascism is built on: making everybody in the street feel important... They claimed to be controlling history when in reality they left all the decisions in the hands of their Führer. ¹⁴⁹

It was not only Hitler who was able to manipulate these middle class desires for his own gain. Oskar, too, was able to take a form of control, determining the lives of others through his actions. He leads his Uncle Jan into the Polish Post Office, essentially bringing him to his death. The film is a look into the lives of those who were guilty of following an empty promise. After Oskar's mother dies, the Second World War begins with a shot of Danzig at night. Grass joins Oskar's personal loss with the outbreak of war. The next scene shows the Nazis destroying the city on Kristallknact, as Oskar goes to see the Jewish toy merchant who provided him with his drums. Oskar narrates as he walks through the city:

There was once a drummer. His name was Oskar. He lost his poor mama, who had eaten too much fish. There once was a gullible people who believed in Santa Claus. But Santa Claus was really the gas man! There once was a toy merchant. His name was Sigismund Markus, and he sold tin drums lacquered red and white. There once was a drummer. His name was Oskar. There once was a toy merchant whose name was Markus and he took all the toys in the world away with him. 150

The destruction of the toyshop has dual meanings. The Nazis shatter a world in miniature, mirroring the destruction they will reap as the years continue. For Oskar,

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¹⁴⁹ John Hughes, "'The Tin Drum': Volker Schlöndorff's 'Dream of Childhood'" *Film Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (Spring, 1981), 5.

^{150 &}quot;Kristallnacht," Tin Drum.

the loss is in the destruction of the toys, his own world further destroyed. The toy merchant Markus had loved Agnes, and offered to take her and Oskar to London. Earlier in the film, Markus warned her to stay away from Bronski, saying that the Poles had already lost, and, knowing this, he had been baptized. On Kristallknact, he realizes this means nothing, and Oskar finds him dead in the destroyed shop next to a bottle of poison. The world as Oskar understood it was gone, and would continue to erode as tensions between the Germans and Poles in the city grew. The narration offers a childish point of view mixed with incredible foresight, and deep understanding of the trick played on the masses. Oskar does not blame the Santa Claus/gas man, but rather the "gullible people." These people, his father included, bring about the destruction of Oskar's world.

Updating the novel for 1970s audiences, the film expands the metaphor of social refusal as Schlöndorff reinterprets the apolitical attitudes of the pre-Nazi era and the 1950s for the more active and analytical milieu. Schlöndorff points to Oskar's contemporary nature, and the insertion of such a character into the Nazi past. Bringing together the failed Nazi utopia, the "silent generation," 151 and post-1968 mentalities, Schlöndorff establishes a "political public countersphere, an arena in which a mass audience can address intelligently important issues." ¹⁵² It is an attempt to come to terms with the past and the present. The film offers the viewer a look into the past through Oskar's eyes, simultaneously an outsider and a leader. This allows the national audiences an avenue into understanding. By looking through Oskar's view, childish and even mean spirited as it is, Schlöndorff offers an opportunity to

¹⁵¹ Moeller, 179. ¹⁵² Ibid., 181.

address the past issues as they continued into the 1970s. In the third section of the novel, omitted from the film, Oskar works in an Onion Cellar, where people would pay to peel onions, and cry. This was not needed in the film, which itself acts as the Onion Cellar, offering German audiences a cathartic process of realization and understanding of their guilt. As people were beginning to talk about the German past, they no longer needed the Cellar as an excuse to cry.

Towards an Acceptance of National Responsibility

Though both France and Germany purged their governments and institutions after the war, they were not able to rid themselves of the even more disturbing and greater issues of collaboration. Both nations adopted a policy of silence in order to attempt to move on, but the issue of guilt lingered. Knowing that the French and German states had been the greatest collaborators it was unclear how to classify the guilty.

In the decade after the war, very few French films were made that dealt with the war and Occupation; those that did focused on the daily lives of ordinary Frenchmen. These films led to the creation of an, "image of a nation preoccupied with its own survival and more intent on killing hogs that Germans." ¹⁵³ These films focused on the average citizen trying to survive the war. On the other hand, "the collabo had become a familiar, even commonplace figure." ¹⁵⁴ Though the French acknowledged the role of collaborators during the war, these films depicted only certain types of these villains. When these characters appeared, it was not in the same context as the average Frenchmen, but rather as something kind of fascist politician, wealthy nobleman, or promiscuous woman. The world of collaboration was shown as markedly separate from that of the French masses, who had survived the war through work and determination. These films, and their audiences, were not yet willing to examine the more complicated reality.

¹⁵³ Rousso, 229. ¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 229.

In Lacombe, Lucien, this issue was addressed and challenged by showing that anyone could be a guilty party. The young French peasant, in his naiveté, ignorance, and brutality, commits horrible crimes. Even saving the woman he loved could not wipe away these crimes. Lucien saved France, retreated to a pastoral setting, and yet was not free from his past actions (though, when stated as such, the metaphor perhaps becomes a bit heavy handed). It was not enough for Lucien to change his mind, the facts of his guilt remained. The film, "tries not to dramatize and not to comment," 155 but rather present a more complex view of collaboration, showing how a young country boy could be drawn in. Malle's film was released in the midst of an explosion of films about French collaboration, largely sparked by the 1971 release of The Sorrow and the Pity. These filmmakers conversed with each other on screen, using different approaches and various political messages (this was a period of retrospection for both the Left and Right). As one of the most commercially successful of these films, Lacombe, Lucien was hugely influential, as the notion of this new collaborator was introduced.

From 1946-1949, more than fifty "rubble films" were released in Germany, together playing an important role in the reshaping of German identity. These films were not particularly interested in truthful representations of the Third Reich, and often treated realities like the black market as an issue of equal weight to the daily presence of war criminals.¹⁵⁶ The first of these, Wolfgang Staudte's *Murderers*

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¹⁵⁵ Pauline Kael, "Lacombe, Lucien," *The New Yorker*, (September 30, 1974), reproduced in *Lacombe, Lucien*, DVD, directed by Louis Malle (1974; New York: Criterion, 2006).

¹⁵⁶ Robert R. Shandley, *Rubble Films: German Cinema in the Shadow of the Third Reich* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), 4.

Among Us, was released in 1946. The film tells of the return of a Nazi soldier who plots the murder of his former captain, who had ordered the massacre of over one hundred Polish civilians. At the last minute, the protagonist is convinced that it is better to put his old captain on trial. This is exemplary of the way these films focused on the issue of an individual's guilt, rather than that of the nation. The state itself had been totally corrupted by the Nazi system, and the people clung to a displacement of guilt in order to attempt recovery. The idea of an identifiable villain being held responsible for wartime crimes was certainly appealing to the people.

By the 1970s, however, many Germans moved away from this focused idea of guilt, addressing the need of the nation to accept their role in the war. It was in response to this that filmmakers such as Schlöndorff flooded the German cinemas with films examining history; "the Nazi past haunted the nation's screens." *Tin Drum* figured into a significant moment of realization of the heritage of violence, guilt, and forgetting. *Tin Drum* illustrates the ease with which the people had abandoned their old values in favor of a promised utopia. Without thinking of the consequences, they had eagerly sought retribution and glory. In the 1970s in Germany, this trend seemed like it was being repeated as the Germans once again accepted a new tradition (through Americanization of the nation and consumerism on a new scale). Without first taking responsibility for the remaining guilt of the war years, the people had not really learned from their experiences. In 1979, both *Tin Drum* and *The Marriage of Maria Braun* were released to massive critical and popular success, in Germany and abroad, becoming New German Cinema's greatest

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¹⁵⁷ Eric Rentschler, "Schlöndorff's German Fresco," *Tin Drum*.

box office successes. They examined what was becoming of Germany in the postwar years through a direct look at how the country was reshaping itself. The failures to remember and cope immediately had allowed a false start to rebuilding, creating a Germany that had lost an understanding of its true identity.

These films attempted to bring about some measure of national understanding of about the lingering failures after the war. It was not enough to purge the leading perpetrators, as ordinary people continued to carry their guilt with them, and so could not move on. Even when the memory of the war could be reintegrated into the national narratives, no mourning process had occurred. These films acted as an arena for such a process. In a collective experience, the audiences watched together as their guilt was put on screen, providing a sort of exorcism for the remaining demons. The films thus act as a trial for the national audiences, presenting evidence in the form of personalized stories in order to come to terms with a guilt that went beyond what a court could contain.

Chapter IV

Incomplete Nations

As the second generation attempted to work through and understand what had occurred in their countries, this search looked at the larger picture of redefining the nation. In the decades after the war, there came changes to the physical boundaries, demographic makeups, social divisions, and political institutions of both France and Germany. In the midst of these changes, rapid and creeping Americanization challenged the autonomy of the nations. It was largely in response to these changes that the second generation began a search to recapture, understand, and integrate their greater national historical narratives.

In 1971, Marcel Ophüls released his documentary *The Sorrow and the Pity*, chronicling the war years in a Southern French town though interviews and archival footage. The project began during the unrest of 1968, as the youth movement against the existing order reached its peak. The film, while an indictment of the Gaullist myth, largely focused on how the French remembered the war years. Much of what these interviews revealed could not be reconciled with the accepted understanding of France's recovery. Ophüls then shaped the film to reflect these inconsistencies, opening a conversation about postwar France. In an interview with two former teachers who cannot recall what happened to their students who joined the Resistance, Ophüls asks them, "How can you forget?" The film is a call to

¹⁵⁸ Marcel Ophüls, *The Sorrow and the Pity*, trans. Mireille Johnston (New York: Outerbridge & Lazard, Inc., 1969), 87.

remember, to face the realities of the Occupation and national (in)action, and to then accept this past. In order to reform contemporary France, the past must be revise.

The Marriage of Maria Braun, released in 1979, also examined the postwar years. Fassbinder was not concerned with how these years were remembered, but rather with what the country had become. Following the woman Maria Braun through her social and economic rise created a personal story that could stand in for greater German issues. She spends her years accumulating wealth and power, with the intention of creating a perfect life for herself and her husband, once he is released from prison. This active working towards perfection, sacrificing the present, is frighteningly similar to the Nazi past. Fassbinder connects the two, showing that they are in fact manifestations of the same problem. This film was one of the most successful of New German Cinema releases, finding audiences around the world. Fassbinder, in questioning the hyper-modernity of postwar Germany, found a message haunting people across the globe.

Sorrow and the Pity: Breaking Down the Myth

Following the Liberation of France, and de Gaulle's subsequent rise to political power, Frenchmen took comfort in their conviction that the vast majority of the nation had resisted the Nazi occupation, and only a few traitors like Laval had aided in collaboration. This myth of a cohesive force, working under de Gaulle, continued until the 1960s. As the next generation grew to adulthood, they began asking questions of their nation's past, and of the roles their parents had played. Realizations that the myth did not conform to reality quickly followed.

It was in this milieu that Marcel Ophüls made the documentary *The Sorrow* and the Pity. The film is compiled largely of interviews along with some archival footage, telling the story of the war in Clermont-Ferrand, a city in the Auvergne region near Vichy (in the Southern zone, the city was unoccupied until 1942). The first part of the film, "The Collapse," details the early years of the war, showing extensive interviews with Pierre Mendès-France as he explains the radicalization of the war years. Other interviews reveal how people felt about the defeat (Clermont was not Occupied until the second half of the war, but there was still a feeling of relief and humiliation in the face of defeat). The second half, "The Choice," focuses on interviews with Resistance members, speaking about what the Resistance was like on a local, daily level, as well how it was run and tensions within various factions.

Ophüls had a very difficult time getting the 251 minute film released in France. Originally commissioned by the state run television station ORTF as part of a series on recent French history, the film's producers André Harris and Alain de

Sédouy were dismissed from the station for their participation in the political unrest of May 1968; the three men were particularly distressed by de Gaulle's call for a media blackout on coverage of the student barricades. Ophüls then turned to a German television company to complete the film's financing. Two years after the film was completed on April 5, 1971, The Sorrow and the Pity premiered in a small Left Bank cinema, where it would play twice daily for the next eighty seven weeks. Situated near the Sorbonne, the Studio Saint-Séverin held 200 occupants at once, averaging 190 seats filled for each showing. A larger cinema began showing the film within two weeks of its premier, and between the two theaters, 600,000 people had seen it by the end of its run. 159 The controversy that the film immediately sparked undoubtedly fueled its tremendous box office success, and it was clear that Ophüls had struck a chord in the charged political-cultural context. The emotional responses on all sides of the debate about the film illustrate the deep impact that the film had on the public. By examining the Occupation on such a small scale and with intense personal detail, Ophüls sought to break the simplistic myth accepted by the French, thus awakening a deep level of questioning on all sides. Ophüls asked the perpetrator generation and the rising younger generation what it meant to be French. The Gaullist myth could no longer define the nation, and so a new understanding of French identity had to be formed.

The film establishes that the Resistance was not the colossal and nation-wide effort that the people had come to think it was. But *The Sorrow and the Pity* also establishes that the anti-Nazi forces that did exist during the war were not a cohesive

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¹⁵⁹ Giacomo Lichtner, *Film and the Shoah in France and Italy* (Portland: Vallentine Mitchell, 2008), 110.

movement under the absolute control of de Gaulle. The film itself makes little reference to the man who ran the Fifth Republic. His resignation in 1969 and his death in 1970 allowed for the "broken mirror" that Henry Rousso discusses, 160 once de Gaulle's power was diminished and a new generation began shaping national thinking. It was only after the breakdown in this myth of a universally resisting France that the issues of France's true history could be approached.

During the liberation, the French began a hunt for justice against those they felt had sold out their country. During the defeat and Occupation, the majority of the nation had been willing to blame the Popular Front. Setting the defeat on the shoulders of foreigners, Jews, and communists, Pétain and his regime strove to become an emphatically French force that would save the nation's honor. At the Liberation, the people reacted once again by creating a scapegoat, the collaborators, and placed the blame firmly on those shoulders, erasing the more complicated issues of who had actually participated in the Nazi crimes against the nation and against humanity.

The title of the film comes from an interview with Marcel Verdier, the Clermont-Ferrand pharmacist, as he sits talking about the war with his large family around him. When his daughter asks if there was anything other than courage in the Resistance, he explains that the two emotions he experienced the most were sorrow and pity. The deep sense of loss that permeated even the Resistance is a very important issue. The Occupation did not spark a great moment of national fervor,

¹⁶⁰ Rousso, 100.

bringing a small number of humiliated and angry Frenchmen into the continued fight again the German forces.

The masses, on the other hand, turned to Pétain to protect them. The hero of Verdun, in his first address to the people as leader of the nation, said, "I give France the gift of myself." The old gentleman who had saved France once before thus offered himself to his nation. He said that, though the army had fought valiantly and had fulfilled their duty to the nation's allies, "My heart is heavy as I tell you today that the fight must end." The people looked to him not only to "stop this massacre," 162 as Verdier says, but also to regain some of the nation's honor. A Vichy poster propaganda, over an image of the Marshall, asked, "Are you more French than he?" Pétain convinced the people that he stood for France, and would save them. The film shows footage of Pétain's visit to Clermont-Ferrand, where he was surrounded by enthusiastic crowds.

Propaganda also worked to convince the people that it was the Popular Front who had lost the war. Against the liberal, foreign, disorganized, and unproductive Popular Front, the Vichy regime represented a hope for the French people. In the film, Jacques Duclos, the former secretary of the clandestine Communist Party, explains that Pétain was extremely popular for some time:

I don't know if he came up with it himself, but it was quite good. The people could say: "He can't hurt anyone, that old man, he can only serve the cause of France. At his age, what can he hope for beyond that?",163

¹⁶¹ Philippe Pétain, quoted in Ophüls, 20.

¹⁶² Ophüls, 20.

¹⁶³ Ibid.. 32.

Those who joined the Resistance thought Pétain posed no real threat, while the rest of the country entrusted him with absolute power. As Hitler was in Germany, Pétain was protected from the failures of the administration due to his status as a charismatic and likeable leader. Any wrongs committed by Vichy were to be blamed on others. Pierre Mendes-France's defense lawyer, Henri Rochat, tells the story of D'Estaing coming to see him after Mendes-France's trial and exclaiming that "Pétain must not be aware" of the wrongs of the administration.

Collaboration was sparked by many individual reasons, though many who collaborated did so out of fear of Bolshevism; the thinking of "better Hitler than Blum" was not unheard of. After the experiments of the Popular Front, and the perceived threat of the Bolshevik menace, the people were easily swayed to rally against this single enemy. The Germans offered a more middle class, familial, European ideal that comforted many Frenchmen, especially in their growing victory: "There's no denying that the German army made quite an impression." This is said by Christian de la Mazière, "an aristocratic French Nazi," who goes on to call them an "ideal army." Searching for renewed honor, many Frenchmen accepted the new

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¹⁶⁷ Ophüls, 151.

¹⁶⁴According to Detlev Peukert, a "Fuhrer cult" developed in Germany. Absolute devotion to the leader led the people to believe he would always do what was best for Germany. His elevation above the normal political leader allowed for him to be credited with all successes and shielded from all failures. Though in France this was not institutionalized or as absolute when applied to Pétain, his status as a hero and paternalistic figure protected him. Even when approval of the Vichy government began to fail, people remained relatively certain about Pétain, and continued to support him.

Valéry Giscard d'Estaing was Minister of Economy and Finance at the time the film was made and released, and was elected the 20th President of France in 1974. Julian Jackson, *The Popular Front in France: Defending Democracy, 1934-38* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 250.

German influence.¹⁶⁸ In the face of their humiliating defeat, the order and purpose of the army became appealing.

The second part of the film, "The Choice," revolves largely around interviews with de la Mazière. He says that, for the youth of that time and of his social standing, fascism was the only possible rebellious ideology. For him, there were two ideologies that could change the world. Bolshevism had already had its time, and National Socialism was the only other option. De la Mazière in fact ended up joining the Waffen SS and fighting in German uniform on the Eastern front, awarded the Iron Cross, First and Second Class. Asked if he really understood Fascism, de la Mazière replies, "Only vaguely, I must admit, vaguely." Without understanding the ideology, let alone what was being carried out in its name, these men joined the Nazi cause out of fascination and rebellion:

Ophüls: Has everything you learned from the last war, especially about National-Socialism, which as you said you held a certain fascination for you at the time, has all this led you to revise your judgment of the alternatives of those days?

de la Mazière: Yes, of course. Only fools never modify or change their opinions. I take the responsibility for myself only, of course. I have changed, but that's another story....Young people ask me what I think about commitment today. It's always attractive, commitment, fascinating because it is a change, but sometimes it also has dramatic consequences. So I must admit...I advise caution.

De la Mazière is able to understand, in retrospect, the folly of his actions. In accepting some kind of responsibility, he takes on more than the majority of France, acknowledging his role in the horrors of the war.

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¹⁶⁸ A further instance of this sentiment can be seen in *Lacombe, Lucien*, when the French Gestapo women Lucienne says of the Germans, "They are most obliging. And punctual. If we had been like them, we would have won the war." Malle, 23. ¹⁶⁹ Ophüls, 151.

Though Pétain remained quite popular through the majority of the Occupation, ¹⁷⁰de Gaulle never gained a similar level of support within the Resistance. In *The Sorrow and the Pity*, de Gaulle is largely absent, as he was for the duration of the Occupation (his Free French operations were based in London and then Algiers). The film focuses on the realities of life during the Occupation in Clermont-Ferrand, and de Gaulle meant little to the resisters there. The Grave brothers, ordinary members of the Auvergne Maquis without leadership roles, never discuss de Gaulle. Emmanuel D'Astier de la Vigerie, the founder of the Liberation group, and Jacques Duclos both discuss the realization that it was necessary to be in the country in order to fight. Duclos notes the differences between the fighters and the talkers, those who actively resisted and those who went on about the need to resist. While de Gaulle cannot be called an empty talker, he was not in France physically fighting for liberation, but on other fronts.

While de Gaulle did not take part in the guerilla fighting that occurred in the country, he attempted to coordinate the Resistance from abroad. However, many factions of the Resistance were not strictly under de Gaulle's command. Colonel R. du Jonchay, when talking about his anti-communist beliefs, explains that, as regional leader in Limoges, he would not follow orders to work with the Communist, and never made contact with them though he was ordered to by London. Many of those fighting within the country were not particularly impressed or concerned with the somewhat arbitrary orders from de Gaulle.

¹⁷⁰ Paxton, 234.

Recounting his first meeting with de Gaulle, d'Astier says he was astounded by the man who was "already the king of France," though he admits he was, "a king without subjects." Removed from the action, he was able to preach over the British airwaves, but barely managed to unify the Resistance under the Free French Forces (it was not until the final years of the war that a meeting of all the faction heads took place). In his interview, d'Astier suggests that France at the time of the Occupation was unified by Pétain, not de Gaulle:

The proof of this is that de Gaulle began his life, his political life, by a breach of trust. This breach of trust was rather odd. I think that if in 1940 we had had the same referendum we had a few days ago, on April 27, 172 some 90% of the French population would have voted for Pétain and a quiet German occupation. So he was at complete odds with history. 173

Though de Gaulle may have already believed in his role as, "king of France," he did not yet have the following to support this, and thus had to retroactively create the appearance of mass support once the war was over. De Gaulle's career after the Liberation was dependent on his legacy as the hero of the French Resistance. While Pétain had entered office supported by his legacy as a war hero, de Gaulle's heroism was not as clear. It had to be created and bolstered by a myth of a united France resisting the Nazis under de Gaulle's command. He was the public face of the Resistance, and so he was able to secure a devout following.

In many ways, this is similar to Pétain's trajectory. As the saviors of France during the two wars, these two men were paternalistic heroes, standing for the honor

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¹⁷¹ Ophüls, 127.

¹⁷² On April 27, 1969, de Gaulle's referendum failed. Because the issue was fairly unimportant, dealing with issues of state and local power, this failure was essentially a vote against de Gaulle.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 125

and bravery of France. This impulse to find a strong leader can be traced back at least as far as Napoleon, as many French citizens seemed to desire a single authority figure to protect them. Georges Bidault explains that, "the French like a peaceful regime, a regime which has authority, and is preferably humane. In any case, they feel the need to be protected. They are quite paternalistic." ¹⁷⁴ Both Pétain and de Gaulle were protected by their own myths, paternal heroes of France who were able to keep order when called upon (with the 1940 invasion for Pétain, and in 1958 with the collapse of the Fourth Republic for de Gaulle). Despite his WWI record, the Liberation and trial destroyed Pétain's standing as a permanent hero. With the reversal of fortunes that came with the defeat of the Nazis, his actions were re-coded as crimes and a betrayal of France that ran too deep for him to remain a hero. De Gaulle, though he lost his popular support in the country at the end of the 1960s as the younger generation began to ask questions about France's past, still remains a hero for the majority of the nation. However, the mythic de Gaulle, an image that continued to grow for twentyfive years after the war, was coming into question. Though he is still a national hero, de Gaulle's political career subsumed the importance of his war career. As his political power waned, so too did the strength of the myth that had garnered support.

The many political and pragmatic divisions in the Resistance cannot be simply traced to a fault of de Gaulle's. During the war, the Resistance was unable to act as a unified effort largely because of the wide-ranging motivations people had for becoming involved. As discussed in the previous chapter in relation to *Lacombe*, *Lucien*, historians have realized that people joined the Resistance for many, though

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 31.

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often self-serving, reasons and these conflicting interests often complicated interaction between factions. ¹⁷⁵ Whether due to boredom, selfish anger at the Germans, or an ideological opposition to Nazism, the fighters had no real ties other than the fact of their active fight for France.

In *Sorrow*, the Grave brothers and their fellow Resisters are asked if they were anti-Nazi or anti-German. They came to no conclusion, though there was a general feeling that any distinction between the two melted away as the war continued. Fighting Nazism allows French identity to be defined by national ideology, and the central idea of the Republic. Fighting Germans, on the other hand, suggests that French identity was based in opposition to other peoples. In this case, politics and ideology receded. As the war dragged on, it would seem that the ideological basis for fighting became less important, possibly coinciding with the further push of German occupation. France was fully occupied by the end of the war, and the people wanted to resurrect their nation and freedom. Politics and the Republic then worked in service of this new goal.

Madame Grave offers the fact that, "The Krauts didn't denounce, bad French people did." This comment was quick stirring at the time, reminding the audiences of the active role that ordinary Frenchmen had in betraying their nation and countrymen, again often for self-interest. Louis Grave mentions says he knew who denounced him to the Germans. Asked how they live together, resisters and

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¹⁷⁵ Paul Jankowski, "In Defense of Fiction: Resistance, Collaboration, and *Lacombe, Lucien,*" *The Journal of Modern History* 63, no. 3 (Sept. 1991): 457. ¹⁷⁶ Ophüls, 115.

informers, Grave replies, "You can't forget, but you can't do anything." With the realization of mass collaboration to various degrees across France, this issue came to the fore again. The perpetrator generation had lived with their actions for decades, but particularly after the political explosions of May 1968, the nation was confronted with the issue of a national consciousness in constant conflict.

The documentary nature of the film allows for insight into how the period is remembered. Ophüls is able to play the interviewees off each other, countering their remembrances with conflicting notions. He uses the techniques of film, such as close shots, intercutting, and the inclusion of archival footage to call attention to particularly poignant statements or to highlight questionable stories. In the second half of the film, Ophüls interviews Madame Solange as she recounts the details of her post-Liberation trial, having been tried for denouncing a local captain of the Resistance. She emphatically repeats that she was innocent and that the charges were due to petty jealousy, but Ophüls cuts in to close ups of her fidgeting hands periodically, making the viewer question if she is as innocent as she claims. In an interview early on, with two teachers from Clermont, Ophüls plays the men off each other and questions their seeming lack of memory about their students who had joined the Resistance. Ophüls and de la Mazière walk through Sigmaringen Castle, ¹⁷⁸ as de la Mazière talks about his decision to join the Charlemagne division of the German army. This is intercut with a tour of the castle, which ignores the building's role in the collaboration, instead only addressing it as the home of the Hohenzollern

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¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 169.

¹⁷⁸ The hereditary estate of a branch of the Hohenzollern family, the castle was briefly the seat of the Vichy government, following the Allied invasion of France.

family, with a brief mention that the family was removed overnight to make room for the Vichy government. These are all instances (to varying degrees) of the history of the facts of the war being erased from private and public memory. The unsavory details have been forgotten in favor of happier stories.

D'Astier says he was not surprised when de Gaulle said, "we must pay tribute to the Marshal of Verdun.' After all, it's a part of France's history, whether we like it or not." Though much of the history of the period was amended or ignored in service of a myth of a single French front fighting against the Germans, the realities of collaboration remained. The French people could ignore or forget their individual roles in it, but not the fact of national collaboration. Even when committed to the idea of a resisting France, the people were faced with the knowledge that theirs was the only country to enthusiastically collaborate on such a scale.

The film gives precedence to the interviews, with occasional use of archival footage. According to Rousso:

The dramatic power of the film depends on the distance between the objective image of the event, of the news, and the subjective version of the actors. Each person's testimony is thus punctuated by a kind of call to order, a constantly repeated imperative: 'Remember!', 180

Ophüls thus created an alternation between memory and history, using each to point out the flaws in the other. His political agenda cannot be overlooked, but that does not discredit the film. There has been much debate about the fairness of certain representations, or the possible over importance of Resistance members (the film interviewed or discusses many prominent members who later became involved in

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 168.

¹⁸⁰ Rousso, 102.

politics). However, Ophüls was quite clear that his target was not the resistance but *resistancialism*. His interest then, was not on linear representations of history, but rather how history was remembered.

Anthony Eden, British Foreign Secretary during the war and eventually a Prime Minister, explains that he has no right to pronounce judgment on the possible excess of justice sought during the Liberation (when hundreds of thousands were arrested or killed during rapid "trials") because he had not lived through it. This judgment, however, is essentially the point of the film. As the realities of both the Occupation and Liberation came to light, the younger generation began demanding how they would be defined as a country in the face of this. When discussing the Pétain supporters who claim to have been in the Resistance, Grave notes, "history doesn't lie." In order to move forward as a nation, the younger degeneration had to reach a new sense of national identity through an understanding of their past.

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¹⁸¹ Ophüls, 109.

Marriage of Maria Braun: Empty Euphoria

In Bertolt Brecht's 1928 play *The Threepenny Opera*, the main character Macheath proclaims in song, "First comes a full stomach, then comes ethics." This idea, critical to Brecht's anti-capitalist message in the show, has significant lasting meaning for understanding postwar Germany. When finding food is an issue, all else loses importance. The need to survive takes precedence over issues of morality, happiness, identity, and even love. Less than twenty years after Brecht wrote these lines, Germany was plunged into a state where the people were to live by this standard, fighting to survive by any means.

In Rainer Werner Fassbinder's 1979 film *The Marriage of Maria Braun*, this struggle permeates the early scenes of the film. The story of Maria Braun stands in for the story of Germany after the war. Like Brecht, Fassbinder criticizes the intensely capitalist era that follows the defeat and division of Germany into the communist East and capitalist West. In attempting to recover from the war, Germany had lost its identity. Through the story of one woman's attempts to survive and flourish, Fassbinder explores the story of the rise of Germany on false pretenses, thus telling a story to make the national audiences realize their true identity and past. In an interview, when asked about the BRD trilogy, three "sad films" during a period of "hopeful euphoria," Fassbinder replied:

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¹⁸² Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill, *The Threepenny Opera*, trans. Ralph Manheim and John Willet (London: Methuen, 2005)

I happen to think there was no real euphoria; I think people kept themselves going with all sorts of external things, but didn't actually live those times. Or somehow they got through them by keeping busy, but they didn't—how shall I put it?—really experience them intellectually and psychically. 183

This is what Maria does in the film, waiting for her husband's return while making herself a wealthy, elegant, successful woman. She was living a half-life, as did the nation traumatized by the failed utopia of the Nazi party, the physical destruction of their country, and the division into separate communist and capitalist states.

Fassbinder suggests that, whatever hopeful veneer shone through in this period, it was only on the surface. The people had lost themselves, and kept moving forward out of necessity, a blind need for something, though it was unclear even to them what that was. Fassbinder used his films to make the people recollect what they had once been, and realize that there was something beyond the shell of a life that they had created.

The film begins with a marriage in the midst of war and chaos, suggesting the attempts to continue life during war and the difficulties of doing so. These early scenes, particularly those between Maria and her mother, and those at the train station, illustrate the desperation of the times. Deprived of basic goods and a normal life, these moments show how the people had been reduced to an almost animalistic state. Maria's mother stands in the corner of her kitchen, hunched over her small hunk of food, and devours it, tensed and starved. Maimed men jump at the butt of a cigarette discarded by an American soldier, fighting for whatever small satisfaction it may bring. At the train station, a handheld camera in the middle of a pushing crowd literally places the audience in the midst of the action. These scenes, set immediately

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¹⁸³ Michael Töteberg and Leo A. Lensing, ed. *The Anarchy of Imagination: Interviews, Essays, Notes*, trans. Krishna Winston (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 67.

after the war, are meant to bring viewers back to their own memories. Made for a German audience, Fassbinder forces those who can remember to do so, while he begs those of the younger generation to understand what it was like when one had to strive for even the basic necessities.

When Maria waits at the train station with a sign searching for her husband Hermann Braun, a nurse brings Maria to the soup kitchen and talks about her own husband's death. She describes the painting she was sent when her husband died, which said, "They died that Germany might live." Fassbinder here acknowledges the fervor with which the people entered the war, willing to die for the Fatherland, even while showing how this changed as the war dragged on. The radio broadcasts listing the names of missing soldiers becomes a virtual background to their lives, as do the blown out ruins of the city. They live with in the midst of a destroyed nation, attempting the rebuild it, but with no control over what happens. One radio broadcast details U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morganthau Jr. idea that Germany should have been broken up into farm land. These radio broadcasts throughout the film illustrate the inability of the people to decide for themselves what is happening to them, as they instead allow the Allies and new government to determine the rebuilding of Germany.

The history of the nation and the war loses its importance in the desperation following the war. When Maria walks down the street where people sell black market goods, a man offers to play the national anthem. As he does, it is clear that it has no more meaning than any of the goods sold there. The bitterness of defeat is

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¹⁸⁴ Rainer Werner Fassbinder, *The Marriage of Maria Braun*, ed. Joyce Rheuban (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1986), 43.

present in the film, but is subordinated to the immediate needs of the characters. Occupation and defeat can only mean so much without food, warmth, clothing, or company. Maria's friend at the bar encourages her to go to Bill, telling her, "You need a full belly and someone who's here." Love and emotion take a back seat to survival. For Maria, the American occupation is not the source of fear and anger that it might have been. Maria, in her practicality and drive, takes advantage of it. The American soldiers in the train station give her cigarettes. She gains from her time with Bill, learning English and realizing her potential to take her fate in her hands. Though the translator does not understand the difference, at the trial for Bill's murder, she explains that she was "very fond" of Bill, but she "loves" her husband. The interpreter does not understand the difference, mistaking both for "love." ¹⁸⁶ In the false, efficient bureaucracy of the court proceedings, the intimacy and culture embodied in the German language is lost. Maria's new skills echo the Americanization of Germany, as she moved further away from who she once was.

Issues of guilt are almost absent from the film. "Nazi" is used as a vague insult, but simply serves as an obscenity rather than a term of real weight. In one scene, Maria and Betti walk past a destroyed building with their signs asking if anyone has seen their husbands. Against this, a man attempts to steal a plank of wood from a fence, but children playing in the rubble set off firecrackers, scaring the man off as he exclaims, "Bunch of Nazis!" For Fassbinder, the National Socialists were hooligans who had hijacked the country for their own interest. Germans and Nazis

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 62. ¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 78.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 49.

were not the same, but had been co-opted and used for Hitler's purposes, and so the city and people were destroyed for a dream that had not been theirs.

Rather than address a wider German role in the war, or even continue with the idea of Germans as victims that was in common, Fassbinder focuses on the attempts to rebuild the country, and the drive for survival. He is not particularly interested in the realities of the war, and what Germany became during it. It is the reconstruction of postwar Germany that concerns him, and the continued destruction of German identity through Americanization. Maria's story, like Germany's, was not one of mourning and memory, but rather one of survival, even as it turns into a story of advancement. The war affected her, as it did much of the nation, not as a perpetrator of atrocities but as a bystander and victim. Her search for survival mirrors that of the country trying to rebuild itself, or as Santner says, a search for Germany's "scattered objects." It was not guilt or an inability to mourn that shapes the story of the film, but rather an indictment of the loss of German identity to an American fantasy.

As Maria moves out of her mother's home before she begins working for Oswald, Maria admits that she has changed. Her friend Betti replies, "Looking at you, nobody could tell what you've been through." This is the story of Germany as the country rebuilds, heard against a radio broadcast in which rearmament efforts are denied because too many have already died. Whatever the people do to rebuilt and recover, the past remains with them. The ruins remain in the city, a physical reminder of what happened, and Germany remains divided and lacking true autonomy.

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¹⁸⁹ Fassbinder, 95.

Eric Santner, Stranded Objects: Mourning, Memory, and Film in Postwar Germany (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990)

Maria divides her life, telling Hermann when she visits him in jail that their real life will begin when they are together. She focuses on success rather than happiness as she waits. Once she is with Oswald, the elderly French industrialist who she works for and sleeps with, she explains that she keeps the two separate. Hermann asks, "Is that how is it between people outside? So cold?" She responds, "It's a hard time now for feelings, I think." As Fassbinder said in his interview, the euphoria of economic success was not real, and never became true emotion. The cold realities of capitalism stunt the emotional growth (and rehabilitation) of the country.

Even in Maria's and Germany's successes, the scars remain. Maria spends time with Betti and Willy in the remains of their old school. Maria is able to change, become wealthy and powerful, but she is never able to forget her past or give up on Hermann. Germany, too, could rebuild and reinvent itself, but that does not erase what happened. She spends her life preparing for a future with Hermann:

The Marriage of Maria Braun is constructed around the memory of a marriage that lasted one night and half a day. This marriage is the secret center and at the same time the vanishing point of Maria's story. It legitimates her ambition, her accumulation of wealth, and her obsessive planning for the future. A growing tension between past and future that devalues the present makes her distracted and forgetful.¹⁹¹

Maria lives in preparation for the future, with little thought to the present or past, as it seemed Germany was doing at the time. With the rapid accumulation of wealth and prosperity following the war, there was a hollow appearance of happiness. Kaes says, "Fassbinder gives up a portrait of the reconstruction of the Federal Republic, when the decline in human values is shown to correspond directly to the increase in profit

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¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 108.

¹⁹¹ Anton Kaes, *From Hitler to Heimat: The Return of History as Film* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 89.

rates." 192 Maria dedicates herself to amassing as much as possible in order to create what she imagines will be a perfect future for her and Hermann. When Betti and Maria see each other again, Maria begins crying, though she is surprised by it. Her emotions have been so dampened by then that this true expression is foreign to her. The film ends with Hermann's return to Maria. She hardly knows what to do now that her "real life" has begun. She runs around the house, explaining that they will have to get to know each other. It is in this scene, when Oswald's will is read, that she learns that the control she thought she had over her life was an illusion. Hermann and Oswald had made a deal behind her back, which kept her husband away in return for his being awarded the company. In this moment, Maria's control is gone. She had waited her life for her utopia, a world that she had created, and she won and lost it within minutes. Though Maria is remarkably determined and largely able to control her life, this leaves the audience with the realization that she actually has no part in determining her destiny. She is denied a life with Hermann even in the end, and her own fantasy is lost. The German fantasy, possibly of the promised Nazi utopia or of a country untainted by war and destruction, remains unfulfilled and out of the control of the people.

After Hermann is given the company, Maria goes to light a cigarette for herself, and having forgotten to turn off the gas stove previously, the house explodes. During this, the radio blares the 1954 Soccer World Cup, a momentous win for Germany representing their return to power and prominence. In using this broadcast as the background for the final explosion, and final denial of Maria's dreams,

¹⁹² Kaes, 85.

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Fassbinder undercuts this return. As the house explodes, the sports announcer proclaims Germany's victory, saying, "Germany is something again!" This Germany was built on a lie, on false memory and denied emotion. The denial of Maria's happiness illustrates the impossible utopia that the Germans thought they had created after the war. Fassbinder asks them to understand who they truly are, thinking about the past, present, and future, and redefine themselves accordingly.

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¹⁹³ Fassbinder, 161.

Refashioning a National Identity

In both France and Germany, their poisoned pasts made relevant national histories unavailable for a long time. Once these could be incorporated, and a national narrative could be redefined, the issue of rebuilding a national identity had to be tackled. Ophüls and Fassbinder used their films to open this conversation, one which still continues today. These men were not concerned with the immediate and profound effects of the war, but rather with how their countries had been shaped in response to it. Each country embarked on a process of modernization (Americanization), aided by the burial of these past misdeeds.

Though *The Sorrow and the Pity* was released in Paris theaters in 1971, the film was not shown on French television until 1981 (when it was seen by nearly fifteen million viewers), meaning it was not seen by the majority of the nation until after the wide release of many other films that it had inspired. When refusing to show the film, the ORFT head (himself a former resister) explained that the film "destroys myths that the people of France still need." However, even in refusing to allow the mass television audiences access to the film, Ophüls was able to enter into the political discussion. Clinging to the *resistancialist* notion of France, the older generation refused to acknowledge the next generation's questions.

The film raised emotions across the political spectrum, with a noticeable division along generational lines in terms of positive or negative reception. It aroused strong emotional reactions from audiences, examining not the war itself but rather the

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¹⁹⁴ Rousso, 110.

contemporary culture that had evolved from the broader impact of the war. Ophüls explained, "the interesting thing was to compare the historical reality—and all its ambiguity—with the memory of people today." The film, then, focused on the prior generation's shaped national understanding, and the failures of such a concept. As Ophüls and his "generation of sixty-eight" reacted against this myth, leading to a period of obsession with the past.

Fassbinder's political and ideological thinking shaped his concept of a national identity. The German adoption of an ideal, consumer-oriented way of life was for him a betrayal of the true German soul. Fassbinder sees the dive into modernity as inherently clashing with, and eventually overpowering, German identity. Maria Braun becomes a stand in for this false Germany. In the beginning of the film, during the immediate aftermath of the war, she desperately awaits her husband's return, but her vulnerability and mourning only last until more pragmatic concerns take over. While she remains "faithful" to her husband, she begins a process of accumulation—of money, of men, of power, of things. This mirrors the evolution of the German nation, from a defeated and unstable nation to one of incredible modernity.

The film remains relatively unconcerned with the war and its horrors, beginning after the war has ended. Fassbinder does not show what these characters were like under Hitler; the audience has no knowledge of Hermann's wartime activities and "Nazi" is a vague insult. Fassbinder does not intend to explore Germany under the Third Reich because, for him, that was no more the true Germany

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 112.

than that of the Seventies. He did not need to illustrate both, as each was a denial of German identity; "they were the old defects, in a new guise." This was not an attempt to recover an identity based in German past, nor was it to chastise the new order. Fassbinder, and many of the second generation, questioned both as false conceptions of German-ness.

Ophüls and Fassbinder shaped their films to expose the faults of their modern countries, questioning the validity of an identity based on fundamental violations of the national spirit. Both films engaged the audiences in this questioning, furthering a growing divisions between generational conceptions of national identity.

¹⁹⁶ Judt, 277.

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CONCLUSION

These films are not the only ones to have engaged history on screen for national audiences, nor did they provide definite answers to the problems plaguing France and Germany in the second-half of the twentieth century. I use them to examine evolving questions about this complicated past because the filmmakers crafted them to do so. They are exemplary heuristic tools; the films do not offer solutions, but open conversations. The collective engagement of audiences turned these films into a space in which to explore the lingering problems. In response, the process of mourning could move beyond the cinema, and into mainstream culture.

Resnais, Syberberg, Malle, Schlöndorff, Ophüls, and Fassbinder were all part of a generation distrustful of both the past and present (if not in age, then at least in politics, cultural values, and aesthetics). Though radically different, both the war and postwar years in France and Germany were similarly marked by an alarming mass acceptance of an alien tradition. These filmmakers looked to restore a deeper national understanding, replacing the false identities of the older generation with a new concept of nationality and modernity.

I have structured my argument according to a thematic progression, examining the process that these filmmakers engaged in. However, chronology must be noted as well, whereby a realization of a different process in France and Germany can be revealed.

The early release of *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, and thus a call to memory, occurred quite early after the war, in 1959. At this time, the French began to work to

recover memory, though Resnais did not suggest what they needed to remember. This allowed for the continuation of the Gaullist myth, as the French remained committed to the idealized notion of their resistance. According to the "perpetrator" generation, this myth was still necessary, a vital part of France' rehabilitation. Already at that time, there was a tension between those who wanted to truly understand, and those desperate to avoid the truth.

This division would continue to grow, exploding in politics in 1968. However, this unrest did not solve the issues of how each generation remembered the past. In his discussion of the divided opinion of *The Sorrow and the Pity*, Rousso notes:

Those born after the war recognized their own questions in *Sorrow* and thus applauded, regardless of their political tendency, when the mirror was broken. Those who lived through the war found themselves ensnared in memories of their own and instinctively reacted against the film. 197

The older generation continued to cling to the Gaullist myth in order to avoid coming to terms with and integrating their own memories, generally content with the way the nation had recovered. However, the second generation was denied both active memory and an understanding of what had shaped the nation. The vacant past proved increasingly untenable, and so they sought to destroy it.

After many critics railed against *Sorrow* for partiality, Ophüls responded by acknowledging that Sorrow was not intended to be a single, all encompassing look at the Occupation. Rather, it served to open an examination, to be taken up by others. The film challenged the myth and "broke the mirror," entering into public and

¹⁹⁷ Rousso, 113-114.

scholarly debates. These two venues were linked through the many films inspired by this new challenging of accepted myth, as many questions still remained.

In 1977, *Lacombe, Lucien* was released in the midst of a flurry of films building off of want Ophüls had begun. Malle's central notion was to complicate and extend Ophüls' argument, pointing to the oversimplifications of the earlier film. The conflict was no longer strictly generational, as increased understanding allowed for more nuanced argument.

Though *The Sorrow and the Pity* was not shown on French television until 1981, it was released in Germany in 1969. Almost a decade before German filmmakers would begin to examine their own trauma on film, German audiences were interested in how France engaged in this process. Several years later, Syberberg used the medium as a self-conscious art. Assailing the German audiences with allegory and memory, he sought to force a self-reflective process like the one begun by *Sorrow*.

1979 was then a watershed moment for contemplating and reclaiming German identity. *The Marriage of Maria Braun* and *The Tin Drum* were released within three months of each other, in the midst of a flurry of films examining the past. They looked closely at what Germany had become, and the betrayal of the German soul through the acceptance of Nazification and then Americanization. This young generation was intensely distrustful, and intended to examine the failures of modernity.

When France had moved beyond the necessity of film explore remaining trauma after the war, Germany had barely begun the process. Of course, the countries

had to come to terms with radically different issues, but both could be understood as nations that had abandoned their existing identity during the war. As the countries began to recover, and it seemed that this whole-scale rejection was happening again, the second generation brought an examination of these betrayals to the screen.

Rousso's notion of the "broken mirror" is deeply tied to film, even beyond the role of *Sorrow* in the actual dissolution of the myth. The metaphor itself applies to the medium, as audiences are able to watch reflections of themselves on screen. In seeing the issues plaguing the country worked out in front of them, viewers were able to begin a process of personal mourning, which would allow for a public acceptance of the past. The filmmakers engaged history in a public arena, using the visceral, cathartic nature of film to force audience's to work through their amnesia, guilt, and identity.

In my study, I have focused on national narratives, which forced several other issues to the way side, leaving much opportunity for further study. Of course, the place of the Holocaust in film can be deeply explored. Initially, both French and German films largely ignored the issues of the Holocaust and anti-Semitism, but these have more recently emerged as major topics. Perhaps it was only once these countries came to terms with their own identities that they could understand and accept the true atrocities committed during the war.

Also, almost all of the films addressed make heavy use of women and children, raising questions about how the nation is represented, how best to access an audience (emotion, personal stories or grander narratives), and how characters can change the message of a film.

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