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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

Film

Interconnected Memories: Left-wing Terrorism in Postmillennial German and Italian Cinema (2000-2010)

by

Elena Caoduro

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

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Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

INTERCONNECTED MEMORIES: LEFT-WING TERRORISM IN POSTMILLENNIAL GERMAN AND ITALIAN CINEMA (2000-2010)

Elena Caoduro

This thesis examines the representation of left-wing political violence in Italian and German films from 2000 to 2010 drawing on postmodernism theory, film genre, memory studies and gender theory. It considers filmic texts and paratexts, historiography and political discourses to offer a comparative analysis of the mnemonic dynamics in new millennial Italy and Germany.

This thesis looks at why the experience of revolutionary terrorism in the 1970s reappears at the turn of the new millennium in a cluster of fiction films, which innovate and sometimes challenge previous paradigms. It reads this revival in connection with industrial trends and historical events, such as the end of old ideologies, the early-release of former terrorists and 9/11. The memory of left-wing terrorism has found new lifeblood in the new millennium because there are ample resonances with contemporary social issues, such as political activism and global fears of international terrorism. Focusing on eight case studies, I argue that the memory of left-wing terrorism unfolds beyond and across temporal and spatial boundaries, reactivated by present-day occurrences and through contacts with other traumatic memories. The notion of 'interconnected memory' is fundamentally conceived as a nexus of multiple meanings, the fruit of past recollections, and movements between different socio-historical dimensions and generational memories.

Representational strategies and narrative trends are also explored to shed light on cross-national forms of memorialising political violence and its legacy. The first part analyses how postmillennial films deal with the possibility of forgiveness, here interpreted as an approach to normalise the past through narratives of pacification or exclusion. It highlights the figure of the teenager as a metaphor for the changing memory of terrorism, generational conflicts and the implications of 1970s violence for young generations. Moreover, it discusses the depiction of female terrorists and the containment strategies adopted to mitigate the anxiety for terrorist acts perpetrated by violent women. The second part of this thesis is concerned with the risks of forgetting and more precisely on an aesthetic normalisation of the terrorist discourse through popular genres and a more commercial style. It comments on the hyper-authenticity and retro aesthetics in biopics about notorious terrorist groups, and the spectacularisation of violence via the thriller and heritage film genre. It also investigates how contemporary comedies satirise the phenomenon of anarchist revolts and political kidnappings to reflect on present-day social problems.

Notes

All translations from German, Italian and French are mine if not otherwise stated.

For consistency and clarity reasons, the first time I refer to films is by their original title, followed by their English language title. On subsequent references I use the English title.

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DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Elena Caoduro

declare that the thesis entitled

Interconnected Memories: Left-wing Terrorism in Postmillennial German and Italian Cinema (2000-2010)

and the work presented in the thesis are both my own, and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research. I confirm that:

- this work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
- where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
- where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
- where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
- I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
- where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
- Parts of the Introduction and Chapter Three were published as: "Tra ricordo e oblio: memoria culturale e nostalgia in *La meglio gioventù* (Marco Tullio Giordana, 2003) e *Mio fratello è figlio unico* (Daniele Lucchetti, 2007) in William Hope, Luciana D'Arcangeli and Silvana Serra (eds.) *Un nuovo cinema politico italiano?* Vol. II (Oxford: Troubadour, 2014), 63-72.

Signed: ……Elena Caoduro……..……..

Date:……06/01/2015……

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Introduction

Echoes from the Past: Remembering 1970s Terrorism in the New Millennium

Today, when someone uses the words 'terrorism' or 'terrorist', what comes first to mind is the transnational Islamist organisation Al-Qaeda, attacks at touristic locations in South East Asia, and suicide bombers in the Middle East and the Caucasus. What is often forgotten is that terrorism is not simply a contemporary phenomenon associated with religious fundamentalism, nationalist or separatist movements, but is a major global phenomenon with many different facets. Since the late 1960s left-wing revolutionary terrorism has been the most common form of political violence. In the United States of America, the major proponents of unlawful and violent means included the Symbionese Liberation Army, the Weather Underground and the Black Liberation Army; in Latin America it was the Uruguayan *Tupamaros* and the FARC (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*), the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. But Europe was no less at the centre of this phenomenon. Italy and West Germany were the setting of a violent season of politically motivated murders, kidnappings, beatings, bombings and arson attacks. From the late 1960s through to the early 1980s, hundreds of left-wing extremists, led by terrorist organisations such as the *Brigate Rosse* (Red Brigades, BR) and the *Rote Armee Fraktion* (Red Army Faction, RAF)[1] terrorised the young democracies of Italy and West Germany.

The last fifteen years have seen the emergence of a growing interest in this historical period: journalists, survivors, but also playwrights, novelists and filmmakers have tried to make sense of revolutionary terrorism, inspired by recent events and documents, or by their own personal memories of that time. Especially since the beginning of the new millennium, a great deal of German and Italian fiction films, documentaries and TV productions have shown a nostalgic retrenchment to the student protests in the late 1960s and the ensuing violent turn. My thesis is dedicated to the

[1] Hereafter BR and RAF. The first generation of RAF terrorists was also known as The Baader-Meinhof gang, from the name of two illustrious founders. The phenomenon of terrorism was much more complex, especially in the case of Italy; different organisations from both side of the political divide, extreme left and right-wing paramilitary groups, claimed responsibilities for hundreds of attacks. I will explain the focus on left-wing terrorism in the following pages, whilst further details on the origin of revolutionary terrorism are provided in Chapter One.

study of this revival and in particular it focuses on German and Italian fiction films from 2000 to 2010 that recall left-wing terrorism. It contributes to a further understanding of the 1970s, its significance for the present and why the brief but traumatic experience of political violence in West Germany and Italy found such a long lasting echo. My thesis provides the first sustained comparative analysis of the legacy of left-wing terrorism in contemporary cinema and bridges a gulf in the scholarly literature, which has so far mainly focused on singular national contexts.[2] My cross-national approach, as well as the adoption of theories from memory and trauma studies, brings a unique focus to the connective nature of the cinematic representations of left-wing terrorism. It advances a new concept of memory: 'interconnected memory', which highlights the intertwining between memories of the 1970s, present-day issues and memories of other forms of violence.

My model of 'interconnected memories' suggests that postmillennial memories of revolutionary terrorism develop along two axes: a vertical one, which is the fruit of multiple stratifications of meanings, in other words, palimpsests of earlier interpretations; and a horizontal one, where memories are also under the influence of traumas and social problems from different parts of the world. It is important to reflect on the representation of political violence in films, not only because terrorism is such a 'hot' topic in these days, but also because the consequences of the years of contestation reach out far beyond the terrorist acts. Moreover, the long 1970s (1968 should be seen as an opening act of a long decade of protest) represent a crucial phase for Germany and Italy and the memory of those forms of terrorism has found new lifeblood in the new millennium because there are ample resonances with contemporary instances: for instance youth rebellion and activism (the no-global movement), and the international policies and practices adopted in the wake of the attacks on US soil on the 11th of September 2001.

[2] In the literature review section of this introduction I outline the major works that investigate the representation of terrorism in German or Italian cinema. The edited collection *Immagini di piombo. Cinema, storia e terrorismi in Europa* by Luca Peretti and Vanessa Roghi (Milan: Postmedia Books, 2014) groups contributions from various European scholars, but it fails to provide a comparative transnational analysis, focusing on individual texts and contexts (Northern Ireland, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain etc.) In this sense, the chapter on the representation of European terrorism of the 1970s in Ewa Mazierska's *European Cinema and Intertextuality. History, Memory and Politics* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 97-134, remains an isolated and exemplary occurrence.

My study demonstrates that although these films deal with parochial stories, national events and isolated occurances, they inscribe the memories of 1970s terrorism within similar representational strategies and generic formulae. I argue that postmillennial German and Italian fiction films about political violence share common narratives and aesthetic conventions, and hence they are symptomatic of diverse industrial trends. Moreover, my thesis lends itself to some degree of generalisation and has a wider impact on the study of other forms of terrorism and political violence, not only within European cinema. My findings on the adoption of the biopic and comedy genre have a wider significance that go beyond the borders of Germany and Italy and could be applied to different international contexts. In fact, it is sufficient to think about the boom of biographical films that romanticise notorious male outlaws, revolutionaries and terrorists, for instance the French film *Mesrine* (Jean-François Richet, 2008), Steven Soderbergh's *Che* (2008) and Olivier Assayas's *Carlos* (2010). In addition, Spanish cinema also has started laughing at its violent past, for example in the comedy *Ochos apellidos vascos/Spanish Affair* (Emilio Martínez-Làzaro, 2014). Specifically, by highlighting their different approaches to remembering and forgetting these traumatic events, my research sheds new light in the way in which communities transmit and build new memories between generations thanks to cultural artefacts.

This introductory chapter explains the selection of the case-studies, why the cross-national comparison is necessary and it identifies the research questions, the methods and sources used. It also describes the theoretical framework which informs my analysis and it summarises the scheme of the whole project. However, before elucidating the reasons for this renewed interest in revolutionary terrorism, it is important to clarify some issues of terminology.

Questions of terminology

The most violent decade in Western Europe since the end of World War II is often referred to as 'the years of lead'. The origin of this idiomatic expression, which metonymically alludes to the entire 1970s, marks the link between terrorism and cinema and in some ways Italy and Germany. Alan O'Leary clarifies that the term derives from *Anni di piombo*, the Italian translation of the title of Margarethe von

Trotta's film, *Die Bleierne Zeit*/*The German Sisters* (1981).[3] The film, which won the Golden Lion at the International Film Festival of Venice, attracted much attention from the Italian press who saw in its narrative a serious reflection on the widespread phenomenon of left-wing terrorism. As a result, critics started using the film title as a catchy phrase to refer metonymically to Italy's own history of political violence.[4]

The German Sisters, however, does not deal with the phenomenon of political violence that erupted in Italy in the 1970s, but recounts the different life choices of two sisters. Juliane (Jutta Lampe) is a feminist journalist battling women's campaigns for the right to legal abortion, and Marianne (Barbara Sukowa) is a young mother who becomes fascinated by revolutionary ideology and after abandoning her child and partner decides to join a terrorist group.[5] The film was presented at the competition with two alternative titles: *Tempi di piombo* (times of lead) and *Gli anni plumbei* (the leaden years); however, only the second one maintains the metaphorical connotation of the original German title, where *plumbei/bleierne* (leaden) stands also for hard or difficult times.[6] The original title, *Die bleierne Zeit*, comes from Friederich Hölderlin's poem *Der Gang aufs Land*[7] and according to Margarethe von Trotta, was intended to refer to the grim atmosphere of her childhood, the 1950s, when a new generation was growing up with a strong urge to lift the amnesia on Germany's Nazi past, imposed by their parents.[8]

Nonetheless, the final distribution title chosen for Italy, *Anni di piombo*, underlines instead the emphasis on the material with its ideological effect. Given that

[3] Alan O'Leary, "Italian Cinema and the 'Anni di Piombo'," *Journal of European Studies* 40: 3 (2010): 244.
[4] Ibid.
[5] While avoiding specific historical references, the screenplay draws inspiration from the true life of Christiane and Gudrun Ensslin; the latter one founded the German left-wing terrorist group, RAF with other young radicals and criminals. She eventually committed suicide in Stammheim prison in 1977 at the peak of the German Autumn.
[6] Alan O'Leary, *Tragedia all'italiana. Cinema e terrorismo tra Moro e memoria.* Tissi, Sassari: Angelica Editore, 2007, 51.
[7] 'Trüb ists heut, es schlummen die Gäng und die Gassen und fast will / Mir es scheinen, es sei, als in der bleiernen Zeit' (Today it's gloomy, the streets and paths slumber/ and it almost seems to me to be in the leaden time). Friederich Hölderlin *Odes and Elegies*, ed. Nick Hoff (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2008), 128 vv. 5-6.
[8] Lisa Di Caprio, "Baader-Meinhof Fictionalised" *Jump Cut* 29 (1984): 56.

the word 'lead' stands also for bullets in Italian,[9] O'Leary explains that the expression came to allude to left-wing terrorism alone, whose attacks were characterised by the use of fire weapons, excluding therefore the bombings, the preferred strategies of right-wing groups.[10] I will return to the complexities of this film in Chapter One and Two, when dealing with the interconnection between the memories of the Holocaust, the Vietnam War and left-wing terrorism as well as women's participation in the armed struggle. For the moment, it is sufficient to emphasise that von Trotta's film has become of crucial importance in relation to the debate about cinema and terrorism, since the film stirred a reflection on the infamous decade both in Germany and Italy.[11]

My thesis is interested in the representation of revolutionary terrorism and specifically Marxist-Leninist violent groups in fiction films. I will adopt the idiom 'years of lead' to refer to the historical period which goes from 1969 to the early 1980s in all its intricacies, thus fully acknowledging the concurrent presence of neo-fascist terrorist groups, deviated elements of the secret services and attempted military coups.[12]

Whilst Chapter One provides a broad understanding of the socio-political context of the years of lead and frames the phenomenon of left-wing terrorism within a global network of terror, it is important to give some coordinates to establish what the term 'terrorism' implies in the context of this study. My use of the words 'terrorism' and 'terrorist' is wide-ranging, entailing different forms of violence perpetrated for political aims; alternatively I use the more neutral expression 'political violence'. However, it is paramount to clarify from the very beginning that these notions are

[9] In everyday Italian language piombo (lead) stands for bullets, guns or more in general weapons, see definition in De Agostini Scuola, "piombo," *Dizionario Garzanti Online*, <http://www.garzantilinguistica.it/ricerca/?q=piombo> (accessed 1 September 2014).
[10] O'Leary, "Italian Cinema and the 'Anni di Piombo'": 244.
[11] Among the many essays on *The German Sisters* mention should be made of Ann Kaplan "Discourses of Terrorism, Feminism and the Family in von Trotta's Marianne and Juliane" *Persistence of Vision* 1:2 (Spring, 1985): 61-8; Ellen Seiter, "The Personal is Political: Margarethe von Trotta's Marianne and Juliane" *Journal of Film and Video* 37:2 (Spring 1985): 41-6; and James Skidmore, "Intellectualism and Emotionalism in Margarethe von Trotta's *Die bleierne Zeit*" *German Studies Review* 25:3 (2002): 551-67.
[12] An additional explanation is necessary. In Italy, terrorism was primarily a right-wing phenomenon, but given its more obscure origins it failed to reach an iconic status in cinematic representations, as left-wing terrorists did. As it will be evident in the following chapters, terrorist violence went beyond the temporal limits of the 1970s, the years of lead. The RAF and the BR struck isolated attacks throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Moreover, new formations, such as the new Red Brigades, murdered Italian governmental employees in 1999 and 2001.

emotionally charged and constructed within ideological structures and hence, are highly contentious. Avoiding these terms would be inconvenient given their broad circulation, so I will continue to use 'terrorism' and 'terrorist' as the scope of this thesis is not to evaluate which acts of violence fall within judicial definitions of terrorism, but what German and Italian culture perceive as terrorist acts.[13] I strongly condemn these bouts of violence, but I must acknowledge some discomfort with how the label 'terrorist' was easily applied to some forms of dissent in the 1970s, and sympathisers of left-wing radicals were stigmatised and smeared by the press. My position in relation to terrorism certainly plays a role in the interpretation of these films, however, as a film scholar, I do not believe it is necessary to find an agreement on the definition of terrorism in order to study cinematic representations of it. For this reason, I tend to agree with one of the major experts in terrorism, the political scientist Walter Laqueur, who claims that 'a comprehensive definition of terrorism does not exist nor will it be found in the foreseeable future. To argue that terrorism cannot be studied without such a definition is manifestly absurd.'[14]

The rationale of this study

I have intentionally chosen to combine the German and Italian contexts, as a result of socio-historical studies of the development of terrorist cells in the 1970s which demonstrate that the experience of political violence in both countries is more related than not.[15] For example, Donatella della Porta and Peter H. Merkl concur that left-wing terrorism was the most important political phenomenon in 1970s Europe and stress the social similarities of organisations such as the RAF and the BR.[16] Despite the undeniable cultural, political and social differences, the historical trajectory of Italy and Germany is largely similar. Generally speaking, both countries shared a

[13] For purposes of readability I will avoid using quotation marks from now on, having established the meaning of the notions years of lead and terrorism.
[14] Walter Laqueur, *The Age of Terrorism* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1987), 5.
[15] See in particular Donatella della Porta, *Social Movements, Political Violence, and the State. A comparative analysis of Italy and Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). In Chapter One I provide a more in-depth analysis of the similarities and differences of the terrorist phenomenon in Italy and West Germany and how they are mirrored in cinema.
[16] Donatella Della Porta, "Left-wing Terrorism in Italy," in *Terrorism in Context*, ed. Martha Crenshaw (University Park, PA: Pennstate University Press, 1995), 105-59 and Peter H. Merkl, "West German Left-wing Terrorism," in *Terrorism in Context*, ed. Martha Crenshaw (University Park, PA: Pennstate University Press, 1995), 160-210.

traumatic totalitarian past, which haunted subsequent generations, followed by similar patterns of modernisation and a divided Left. Both countries witnessed the Cold War on the front line and experienced at its end a tremendous changeover and political shift.

Given these basic similarities, there were, of course, some differences in the waves of political violence from the 1970s and beyond, which makes the comparison particularly interesting. The historical starting point of debates about the origin of terrorist formations lies in the social turmoil and student protests set in motion in 1968. The RAF is widely considered to be more embedded in the student movement, and the international context of anti-imperialist protest;[17] the roots of the BR lie, instead, in inner societal and political problems and are more connected with the dissatisfaction for official political institutions, such as the Italian Communist Party (*Partito Comunista Italiano*, hereafter PCI) and the trade unions. In addition, differences in the postmillennial memory of those events can be explained by looking at two main variables. First of all, the RAF officially declared their dissolution in 1998, whereas the BR still exist and kill.[18] Secondly, many acts of terrorism in Italy remain without culprits, thus impeding a full process of reconciliation. These two factors mean that Germany seems more prone to put a lid on the issue of terrorism and more open to discussions, which are provided with less emotional attachment and more serious analysis. Conversely, in the Italian case, the contrast between conservative and liberal forces is still infused with old paradigms and hence, the debate about 1970s terrorism is still fierce and ruthless. A sharable memory of the years of lead seems unattainable in Italy because of the lack of mutual understanding among the political class and growing feelings of partisanship and revenge between right- and left-wing parties.

In light of these considerations, the decision to concentrate on German and Italian films allows for the exploration of how their path towards the recovery from the trauma of terrorism presents divergences but also similarities. I have excluded cinematic representations of other forms of political violence, such as those in the Basque Countries or in Northern Ireland, because two comparable national cases over

[17] On the New Left internationalism and the relationship with terrorist groups, see Jeremy Varon, *Bringing the War Home: The Weather Underground, the Red Army Faction, and Revolutionary Violence in the Sixties and Seventies* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004).
[18] Key advisors on government labour policies, Massimo D'Antona and Marco Biagi were murdered in 1999 and 2001 by the (new) Red Brigades.

a short historical period allowed me to minimise the range of variables. My cross-national approach could lend itself to some degree of generalisation since some of my findings, especially with reference to representational strategies, could be applied to other contexts. Therefore, I agree with Ewa Mazierska regarding the opportunity of transnational and comparative approaches to the topic of history in film, given that 'the past of one's own country should be regarded as existing in conjunction or in tension with the history of other countries'.[19] As the conclusions of this thesis recognise, a transnational and cosmopolitan approach to terrorism is still an on-going prospect, but as the first cross-national study I provide a starting endeavour to consider political violence in a globalised and connected world.

The preference for feature films, rather than documentaries or TV dramas, was motivated by the greater popularity, in terms of distribution and reception, which the selected case studies received. These films were presented in festivals, screened in cinemas and distributed on DVDs and through on-line streaming and VOD platforms. According to Paul Grainge, popular films have become central to the mediation of memory in contemporary life because of their ability to capture and embody the temporality of the past.[20] Moreover, documentaries are very often associated with unofficial voices and counter memories, and because of their different function they deserve a separate study. Despite the recent popularisation of documentaries, I believe it is paramount to first explore how the memories of that period resurface in mainstream products. The choice of concentrating on films released from 2000 to 2010 was instead motivated by different reasons. On the one hand, it aims to reduce the large corpus of films on the topic that appeared in Italian and German cinemas from the late 1960s until nowadays. On the other hand, this thesis is more interested in the study of how films reflect on the *legacy* of left-wing terrorism and hence comment on more contemporary events and issues, namely the role of repentant terrorists, their reintegration into society, the end of the Cold War and, after the Al-Qaeda's attacks in 2001, international terrorism.

The choice of the eight case studies was motivated by the decision to offer a wide and heterogeneous overview of postmillennial fiction films about left-wing

[19] Mazierska, *European Cinema and Intertextuality*, 9.
[20] Paul Grainge, "Introduction," in *Memory and Popular Film*, ed. Paul Grainge (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), 1.

political violence, but also to explore under-studied works that deserve better recognition. The films of Chapter Two share a richness of intertextual references: I have chosen Christian Petzold's *Die innere Sicherheit/The State I Am In* (2000), a critically acclaimed film that shifts the focus from the terrorists to their children, and Rosalia Polizzi's *Riconciliati/Reconciled* (2000), a stylistically mediocre film which, however, originally clashes the memories of former terrorists and activists with other traumatic recollections. Both the case studies of Chapter Three focus on female perpetrators; Volker Schlöndorff's *Die Stille nach dem Schuss*/*The Legend of Rita* (2000) and Marco Tullio Giordana's *La meglio gioventù/The Best of Youth* (2003) also considers the evolution of the political credo of their female terrorists. For Chapter Four I have considered two biopics with similar features: an epic negative saga, a pool of national stars and a big budget. *Der Baader-Meinhof Komplex*/*The Baader Meinhof Komplex* (Uli Edel, 2008) and *La prima Linea/The Front Line* (Renato De Maria, 2009) created a huge media buzz and were useful for a revaluation of the heritage film. Finally, the last two case-studies are peculiar comedies, isolated occurrences in the overall production of the new millennium, which, however, might prefigure a more consistent development in the years to come. I have chosen for Chapter Five *Was tun, wenn's brennt*/*What to Do in Case of Fire* (Gregor Schnitzler, 2001) and *Figli delle stelle*/*Unlikely Revolutionaries* (Lucio Pellegrini, 2010) because they innovate more than any other works the modes of representing left-wing radicals.

I trace this new wave of films to two events in the late 1990s, which reignited the interest in left-wing terrorism. On the twentieth anniversary of the violent autumn of 1977, the so-called *Deutscher Herbst* or German Autumn, the broadcaster ARD screened the two-part docu-drama *Todesspiel/Deathgame* (Heinrich Breloer, 1997). The TV film with an enormous budget of seven million marks was marketed as 'the event of the year' and became a hit, especially among younger audiences interested in the individuals who challenged the Bonn Republic and the complex legal and institutional processes associated with the struggle against the RAF.[21] *Deathgame* covers the abduction and killing of German businessman Hanns-Martin Schleyer and the skyjacking of a Lufthansa plane in Mogadishu, alternating re-enactment sequences

[21] The complete script, production notes and some background history can be consulted in Heinrich Breloer, *Tosesspiel – Eine dokumentarische Erzählung* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer und Witsch, 1997). For a critical analysis of the film see instead Thomas Elsaesser, *Terror und Trauma: Zur Gewalt des Vergangenen in der BRD* (Berlin: Kulturverlag Kadmos, 2007), 53-60.

with archive material and new interviews, including one with former chancellor Helmut Schmidt and his crisis team. The following year, dramaturge Marco Baliani wrote and performed the innovative monologue *Corpo di stato. Il delitto Moro: una generazione divisa/State Corpse. The Moro Murder: a Divided Generation* (1998) to commemorate the finding of MP Aldo Moro's body, killed by the BR in May 1978.[22] In a manner akin to Dario Fo's narrative theatre, the performance reopened old wounds, recounting the trauma of terrorism from the perspective of left-wing activists who initially sympathised with the terrorists' ideals, but more than anything, the play interrogated the symbolic significance of that tragic event for contemporary Italy.[23]

Cultural engagement such as these paved the way for a more consistent and broad re-evaluation of the terrorist phenomenon in the new millennium, to the extent that the *Kunst-Werke* Institute for Contemporary Art in Berlin hosted an entire exhibition on the RAF in 2005 and the Italian Parliament instituted the Day of Remembrance for the victims of terrorism in 2007.[24] Therefore, it is not my intention to suggest that the obsession with religious fundamentalism and international terrorism has *directly* fuelled the revival of films on 1970s political violence; in fact, the reinvigorated interest in this period slightly precedes the more recent discourse on religious terrorism. The memory of left-wing terrorism is becoming more mainstream and popular phenomena prepared by a wider cultural appropriation of left-wing insignia. For example, the radical-chic trend that reuses terrorist propaganda material for the fashion industry emerged at the end of the 1990s.[25] In Germany, the terrorist-chic fashion was rebranded 'Prada-Meinhof' and it ranged from slogan t-shirts with a

[22] Marco Baliani, *Corpo di stato: il delitto Moro* (Milan: Rizzoli, 2003). This edition includes a DVD with the televised recording of the live performance at the Fori Romani, broadcast the same evening on RAI 2, the second channel of Italy's public network.

[23] Fo, Nobel laureate dramaturg, was a pioneer in the development of the *teatro di narrazione*, a style of theatre characterised by the sole presence of an actor-narrator, *narrattore*, with no scenography, props or costumes. He wrote himself a monologue set in the 1970s about the suspicious death of the anarchist railworker, Giuseppe Pinelli, which occurred during a police interrogation: *Morte accidentale di un anarchico/Accidental Death of an Anarchist*. Cf. the postface to Marco Baliani, *Corpo di stato* (Milan: Rizzoli, 2003), 85-89.

[24] See the catalogue edited by Klaus Biesenbach, *Zur Vorstellung des Terrors: Die RAF-Ausstellung*, 2 volumes (Göttingen: Steidl, 2005); the exhibition was co-organised by Felix Ensslin, son of Gudrun, one of the founders of the RAF. The chosen day for the Italian commemorations is the 9th May, to honour the day of Aldo Moro's death.

[25] Matt Worley, "Come the revolution, we'll all be in combats," *The Guardian*, 19 November 1999. <http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/1999/nov/19/fashion3> (accessed 20 August 2014).

black Kalashnikov imposed on a five-point star to photo-shoots with models styled as RAF members.[26]

The pop appropriation of the RAF iconography ought to be seen in connection with the process of 'normalisation'. By normalisation I consider what Paul Cooke defines as a 'nation's putative position as a now "normal" state that might move beyond its guilt for past crimes to become an equal partner in the international community of nations'.[27] As such the vast number of films about the years of lead could represent the symptom of a new phase, the post-ideological era, where younger generations recuperate old symbols emptied of any political significance. In the post-ideological era, the traditional ideologies, the opposition between liberal forces and socialist forces, evolved with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the advent of globalisation.[28] This does not indicate, however, that the post-ideological era represent the complete death of political ideas, rather the transformation of the bitter ideological debates and the clashes between deeply opposed classes, which characterised the period of the Cold War.

The reasons for the interest and fascination in this brief but turbulent period of history are multiple and are in part due to contextual factors, cultural and political reasons linked to the turn of the century. The historical events that took place in the 1990s paved the way for new forms of representation of terrorism in the new millennium. New discourses about political violence emerged, as it was evident that the old ideologies, communism and a socialist nation-state, had dated and vanished with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the following crisis of traditional parties in Italy. It should not be forgotten that in the wake of the end of the Cold War, Europe's largest communist party, the PCI, collapsed also because of the pressure of a large-scale bribery scandal called *Tangentopoli*. This led to the fragmentation of the Italian Left, the disappearance of the majority party, the conservative Christian Democracy (DC),

[26] Wiebke Brauer, "Pop-Kultur: Tanz den Baader-Meinhof!" *Spiegel Online*, 5 March 2001. <http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/gesellschaft/pop-kultur-tanz-den-baader-meinhof-a-120905.html> (accessed 20 August 2014).
[27] Paul Cooke, "The Limits of Consensual Film-Making? Representing National Socialism on the Screen and German 'Normalisation'," in *Aesthetics and Politics in Modern German Culture*, eds. Brigid Haines, Stephen Parker and Colin Riordan. (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010), 66.
[28] The post-ideological era refers to the post-Cold War period, which according to critics such as Slavoj Zizek and Jacques Rancière was characterized by rampant populism and a politics of consensus based on the victory of the capitalist market.

and eventually resulted in a new institutional structure, the Second Italian Republic.[29] In brief, the old parties that had governed the First Italian Republic collapsed because they lost their *raison-d'être* and could not function in the new post- Cold War world. The 1990s saw, therefore, a sporadic presence of cultural artefacts that dealt with the legacy of the RAF and the BR, because of other more impeding social and political issue. In other words, the political changes in Italy and the reunification of East and West Germany overshadowed any lingering memory of the terrorist past.

The dissolution of the RAF with an eight-page letter that declared the conclusion of the revolutionary project in 1998 urged a careful reflection on their legacy; in a similar fashion the emergence of new terrorist cells in Italy, the New Red Brigades, called for a new contemplation on the years of lead. More recently, the heavily debated requests for clemency or parole of former German terrorists, such as Brigitte Mohnhaupt and Christian Klar, and the on-going issue of extradition between Brazil, France and Italy of left-wing terrorist, Cesare Battisti, illustrate that the 1970s is a past that does not want to go away.[30] The new wave of novels, fiction films, documentaries and exhibitions about the RAF and the BR shows how memory is mobile and fluid; it is never fixed, but instead, is informed by various social processes that take place in the present. With the new cultural memory of the 1970s not only is the past stored from oblivion, but it is also revitalised by contemporary issues.

The explosion of interest in the years of lead coincides with present-day debates about the struggle against international terrorism and US policies and strategies of counterterrorism. Common to both the Italian and German experiences in the 1970s and the American involvement today is the spectre of torture and the special laws that limit civil liberties.[31] The memory of 1970s political violence and the

[29] Chapter One will provide a more in-depth and critical understanding of this historical process and its implication for the memory of left-wing terrorism.
[30] Justus Leicht and Wolfgang Weber, "Germany: Release of ex-Red Army Faction terrorists sparks hysterical debate," *World Socialist Web Site*, 8 March 2007. <http://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2007/03/raf-m08.html> (accessed 20 August 2014); (editorial) Il Fatto Quotidiano, "Cesare Battisti, respinto ricorso: ex terrorista rischia l'espulsione dal Brasile," *Il Fatto Quotidiano,* 28 June 2013. <http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2013/06/28/cesare-battisti-respinto-ricorso-ex-terrorista-rischia-lespulsione/640625/> (accessed 20 August 2014).
[31] For a comparison of the politics of high-security prisons in 1970s West Germany and present-day USA see Jeremy Varon, "Stammheim Forever and the Ghosts of Guantànamo: Cultural Memory and the Politics of Incarceration," in *Baader-Meinhof Returns. History and Cultural Memory of German Left-Wing Terrorism*, eds. Gerrit-Jan Berendse and Ingo Cornils (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2008), 303-25.

counterterrorist measures adopted at the time still fascinate the public, because they resonate with so many contemporary accounts of skyjacking, physical abuse of incarcerated terrorists and governmental screenings of the population. Cultural debates on the special laws that limited civil rights in Italy in the 1970s-80s (the Cossiga laws) and the status of high-security jails in Germany, such as Stammheim Prison, are prompted by the current preoccupation about the US special prison for terrorists in Guantànamo and the new online monitoring schemes. The postmillennial films which address these issues do not vindicate the terrorists' allegations of abuse, but, I believe, reinforce the doubts over the measures adopted by the Italian and German governments to fight terrorism, namely psychological methods of torture, reduced sentences for collaborators and the screening of 'dangerous' politically committed citizens. In this sense, recent films on the years of lead reignite public attention on contemporary flawed legislative measures against terrorism and evidence obtained through torture.

In reality, on a cultural and political level the caesura of 1989 had a greater impact in Germany and Italy than the millennial shift or the attacks on American soil in 2001. Because of the extraordinary situation in the first half of the 1990s (the reunification of West and East Germany, the widespread Mafia murders and bombings and the collapse of the political system in Italy) the debate about terrorism was put to one side and hence, few films about this topic appeared. Nevertheless, the vacuum, or rather the sporadic presence in the 1990s, is significant and will be taken into consideration in order to understand the themes and aesthetics developed in later films.

The reasons for the renewed interest in 1970s political violence summarised here raise several questions, which this thesis aims to answer. Through my research on the memory of left-wing terrorism in new millennial German and Italian films I attempt to analyse cinematic trends from a comparative perspective, with the hope of bridging the gap between case studies and grand theories. Only a cross-national comparison of the memory dynamics and the characteristics of the representation of terrorism will, I believe, allow us to combine the detailed information provided by the close-reading of the case studies with a broad explanation provided by cultural theories.

Research Questions and Methodology

The current fascination for the political violence of the 1970s echoes the similar interest in the topic that developed soon after the RAF and the BR reached their peak of violence. From the mid 1970s the subject of terrorism was, in fact, already largely present in cultural debates, taking shape for instance in many films of the New German Cinema or more subtly in Italian satiric comedies and cop-movies. The collective omnibus film *Deutschland im Herbst/Germany in Autumn* (1978) is regarded as a key cultural commentary on the impetus of the terrorist escalation into violence in autumn 1977. A group of directors, which included Alexander Kluge, Volker Schlöndorff, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Edgar Reitz, Hans Peter Cloos, Katja Rupé, Bernd Sinkel and Alf Brustellin, quickly produced an omnibus film to subvert the state's information system and provide a counter memory of the RAF phenomenon; they managed, in fact, to screen it just six months after the events of the earlier autumn.

In Italy, instead, the auteurs preferred to look elsewhere and the problematics of the leaden years manifested vaguely in comedies such as Dino Risi's *Mordi e fuggi*/*Dirty Weekend* (1973) and Mario Monicelli's *Un borghese piccolo piccolo*/*An Average Little Man* (1977). Instead of commenting on the evolving reality, renowned directors such as Michelangelo Antonioni or Federico Fellini turned their attention elsewhere: Antonioni was involved in foreign projects shooting abroad and in English; Fellini retreated into his oneiric world.[32] On the whole only popular genres were able to promptly respond to the situation and capture the atmosphere of tension and fear of the Italian years of lead.[33] By the mid 1980s, however, discussion about left-wing political violence had waned as the terrorist organisations became less murderous in both countries. Cultural debates quietened as the prospect of a new world order was in

[32] Fellini's *Prova d'orchestra/Orchestra Rehearsal* (1978) could be considered the only auteur film which touches upon the thematics of political violence to a small degree; see Chapter One of this thesis for further details of Fellini's engagement with the issue. Younger directors, such as Bernardo Bertolucci and Gianni Amelio address the topic later in the 1980s when the most violent season was over.

[33] O'Leary, "Italian Cinema and the 'Anni di Piombo'": 245.

sight; in addition, other preoccupations, such as mafia attacks in Italy and political changes in Germany became more prominent.

My thesis considers the new cluster of films about the years of lead that emerged in the new millennium. In particular it considers filmic texts, historiography and political discourse in a wider global context to offer a comparative analysis of how contemporary Italy and Germany remembers those events. Specifically, this thesis investigates the on-going process of renegotiation with previous clusters of films on the topic. New trends challenge the previous dominant representation of terrorism, offering a more nuanced and complex reading of the period. In this sense, the primary scope of this research is to explore which particular themes have flourished and which dominant aesthetic is adopted to retell Germany and Italy's terrorist past. A secondary focus concerns the dialogue with previous cinematic traditions; in other words, how postmillennial films reinvent previous tropes, genres and metaphors. My analysis is also informed by historical debates concerning the limits of the representation of violence. As such I will tackle issue regarding the possibility of forgiving the perpetrators and elaborate whether recent films show the right balance between reconciliation and historical truth.

In an age of globalisation and digitally mediated memories, I question whether these films still speak about local memories, especially considering that we are dealing with a phenomenon that has often crossed borders. One could wonder how production trends and commercial aspects influence the way left-wing terrorism is remembered in present-day feature films. I believe that it has become extremely difficult to isolate representations of the past and that parochial stories always respond to transnational instances. This thesis responds, therefore, to the call for attention of new comparative studies of transcultural memories.

As recent research on globalised Holocaust remembrance has underlined, modern atrocities have become international paradigms,[34] this thesis follows similar intentions and wants to explore affinities across cultures. In truth, as Joanne Garde-

[34] For a comparison of the notion of cosmopolitan memory in relation to Holocaust studies see Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age*, trans. Assenka Oksiloff (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006) and Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009).

Hansen points out 'memories are now distributed globally and networked digitally even though they are personally and locally produced'.[35] Recent films on political violence are not only in dialogue with the tradition of their respective national cinemas, but also with other global phenomena. For example, Michele Placido's *Romanzo Criminale* (2005) reinvents in a modern fashion the 1970s Italian genre of the cop-thriller, *poliziottesco*, adopting its performance style, formal elements and rhythm.[36] Nevertheless, it also winks at Hollywood mafia movies, depicting the eternal city as a Chicago in the old continent. The spectacularisation of violence present in Placido's film links it also to the current 'terrorist-chic' trend; the glamorous and trendy criminals belong to this iconography of romantic terrorist, which has been inspiring for other works such as the TV series *Carlos the Jackal* directed by Olivier Assayas in 2010.

The interdisciplinary nature of this work has required the use of a broad range of research methodologies and theories. In some instances the methods and analyses are more closely connected to a historical approach; in others, to film/media studies and sociology, therefore, within this thesis I am using a language that derives from both approaches. My method does not consider the texts as autonomous aesthetic phenomena, but as part of a cultural texture. Consequently, the main methodology adopted is that of historical cultural studies. Instead of a pure formalist analysis of the films, this project deals with an attentive and critical reading of cultural texts, taking into consideration also the historical settings of these representations, illuminating therefore both 'text' and 'context'. In treating filmic evidence, the purpose is not only to uncover the uniqueness of the representation of political violence, but also to explain it. This requires placing the text and its language within its setting in order to identify and explore the whole historical transition from the previous representations to the more recent examples. Throughout I have striven to gauge contemporary responses to the films under analysis and thus combine close reading of filmic texts with critical reviews, interviews with the filmmakers and debates surrounding their releases. Textual analysis is thus complemented by discussions of the institutional and historical context of the films to reveal, for example, difficulties in securing funds and

[35] Joanne Garde-Hansen, *Media and Memory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 46.
[36] I am referring to 1970s popular thrillers such as *La polizia ringrazia*/*The Enforcers* (Steno, 1972) or *Milano violenta/Bloody Payroll* (Mario Caiano, 1976).

locations, ostracism by authorities because of the topic treated or contestations during festivals. To this end I have scoured various reviews from daily papers such as *Il Corriere della Sera*, *La Repubblica*, *La Stampa*, *Die Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Die Zeit* and magazines such as *Der Spiegel*. Textual analysis is employed in varying degrees of detail throughout the thesis to help determinate the kind of contribution different films have made. This has included a consideration of narrative structure, mise-en-scène, soundtrack, cinematography, and editing techniques. The aims and questions elaborated in this section guided me in my methodological choices for the analysis of the case studies. I will now discuss the scholarly literature on cinema and terrorism before describing the theoretical tools, which I will adopt in my close readings.

Cinema and Political Violence: the State of the Art

My research contributes to the scholarly tradition of studies on the representation of trauma, war and violence in different media.[37] Whereas the main focus of the first works on trauma was the Holocaust, current research expands the area of analysis to the memory of other atrocities – personal as well as collective ones – including, but not limited to: rape against women, the Vietnam War, and the Rwanda genocide.[38] The comparative analysis of the German and Italian experience with terrorism and their cinematic vision of the past represent, therefore, a fresh contribution to the field of memory studies. The reasons that this thesis will appeal to different areas of study are twofold. Firstly, it targets scholars in the field of European cinema and secondly, those interested in interdisciplinary fields such as memory and trauma studies, without excluding scholars of Italian and German cultural studies.

Terrorism is researched through the lens of a variety of disciplines: political and military studies, sociology, history, psychology; more recently its relationship with media and its representation in cultural artefacts have attracted the attention of

[37] See for instance Anne E. Kaplan, *Trauma Culture: the Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature* (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005).
[38] Domick La Capra remains a pioneer with his methodology and theoretical framework for *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994). For a more contemporary overview of different approaches to trauma in films see instead Anne E. Kaplan and Ban Wang, eds. *Trauma and Cinema: Cross-cultural Explorations* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009).

scholars from communication and film studies. The intersectional relationship between cinema, terrorism and national identity is unique, but not exclusive to the German and Italian context.[39] Scholars have provided a base line of analysis regarding the intersection between media and terrorism, which manifests either as a tool of radical propaganda or as a reflection of society's anxiety and paranoia. In this regard, J. David Slocum argues that mass-produced and consumed media have magnified and complicated the relationship between technologies and forms of political violence.[40] On the one hand, he suggests that the media shape our understanding of different cultures and distant people; on the other hand, he also claims that

> the power of media to give meaning to terrorist activities and to refract the values and beliefs inscribing them is itself a seminal mark of modern life's replacement of real experiences with the representational, of the global pervasiveness of media images, and of the depersonalized and distant relations defining the political and economic order.[41]

My thesis is, therefore, informed by concerns over the saturation of the media landscape with images of violence and postmodern debates regarding nostalgic viewing of the past and the normalisation of history.

It is not surprising that the representation of left-wing political violence has attracted scholarly interest, given the large number of films about terrorism produced in the last ten years.[42] This thesis represents, however, the first comprehensive comparative study of how postmillennial German and Italian fiction films interpret the terrorist phenomenon of the years of lead. The literature in this area is growing, but consists primarily of articles on individual films or volumes considering the production of either Italy or Germany. Beside three edited collections, which gather

[39] The number of publications on the relationship between media and terrorism, including its representation on the screen, could fill entire libraries. As far as the discipline of film studies is concerned, works have focused on different contexts: the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, the Irish Civil War and the Troubles and the Tamil Tiger Liberation Army to name just a few. In my literature review I considered only works either on Italian or German cinema.

[40] J. David Slocum, "Introduction: The Recurrent Return to Algiers," in *Terrorism, Media, Liberation*, ed. J. David Slocum (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 4.

[41] Ibid. Considering the representation of the Algerian War of Liberation he also comments that media produce Orientalist stereotypes and depict a materialist and decadent West.

[42] I am thinking about the waves of films about 9/11, such as Oliver Stone's *World Trade Center* (2006) and Paul Greengrass' *United 93* (2006), but also about other terrorisms: the Troubles in Northern Ireland depicted in Steve McQueen's *Hunger* (2008) and Paul Greengrass' *Bloody Sunday* (2002), to name just a few.

contributions about the impact of 1970s terrorism on language, society and the arts,[43] monographs on the cinematic representation of terrorism have failed to properly engage with theories of memory and nostalgia or go beyond the historical contextualisation of their production.

Christian Uva's *Schermi di piombo* represents the first study of the relationship between cinema and terrorism in Italy, but despite being pioneering in providing a taxonomy of the cinematic production about various types of terrorism, this volume lacks a rigorous theoretical framework and offers just an overview and account of the various films about political violence from the late 1960s until 2006.[44]

There is only one monograph in English that deploys discussions of narrative tropes and genres in films about terrorism, but it only considers the Italian context. Alan O'Leary's *Tragedia all'italiana. Italian Cinema and Italian Terrorisms, 1970-2010* develops around three main themes: the cinematic representation of the most famous victim of terrorist attacks, former Prime Minister Aldo Moro; the role of certain genres in relation to political violence, namely satirical comedies, erotic thrillers and women's films; and the new take on political cinema in the Italian cinema of the 1990s and 2000s.[45] My thesis diverges from O'Leary's work because of a different theoretical framework, which instead privileges research in the field of cultural memory, nostalgia and postmodernism and film analysis. Moreover, I expand and revitalise certain issues touched upon in his conclusions, such as the invocation of the heritage film genre and the fascination for terrorism. Being primarily addressed to scholars and undergraduates of Italian language and culture, *Tragedia all'italiana* focuses mainly on the context rather than the filmic texts and thus, adopts a methodology that derives more from cultural studies than film studies. On the whole, O'Leary provides a consistent evaluation of the changes in the modes of representation

[43] Cf. Gerrit-Jan Berendse and Ingo Cornils, eds. *Baader-Meinhof Returns. History and Cultural Memory of German Left-Wing Terrorism* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2008); Pierpaolo Antonello and Alan O'Leary, eds. *Imagining Terrorism: The Rhetoric and Representation of Political Violence in Italy 1968-2008* (Oxford: Legenda, 2009) and Ruth Glynn, Giancarlo Lombardi and Alan O'Leary, eds. *Terrorism, Italian Style. Representation of Political Violence in Contemporary Italian Cinema* (London: IGRS Books, 2012).

[44] Christian Uva, ed. *Schermi di piombo: il terrorismo nel cinema italiano* (Soveria Mannelli, Catanzaro: Rubbettino Editore, 2007). This edited volume includes some interviews with former terrorists, as well as with directors and screenwriters.

[45] Alan O'Leary, *Tragedia all'italiana. Italian Cinema and Italian Terrorisms, 1970-2010* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2011). This is a slightly revised version of *Tragedia all'italiana. Cinema e terrorismo tra Moro e Memoria* (Tissi, Sassari: Angelica Editore, 2007) by the same author.

of terrorism from the late 1960s to the present day, but his analysis sometimes lacks an attentive close-reading of the films and a prompt intervention in general trends in European cinema.

Thomas Elsaesser's *German Cinema: Terror and Trauma. Cultural Memory Since 1945* represents an updated version of a previous monograph published in Germany, which deals with how the memory of the Holocaust appears in post-war German cinema and culture.[46] From a psychoanalytic perspective, Elsaesser revises trauma theory, tracing the presence of German guiltiness in the works of Alexander Kluge, Rainer Werner Fassbinder and Harun Farocki. The chapter "Generational Memory: The RAF Afterlife in the New Century" shares some aspects with the present study as it focuses on the generational shifts between the representation of terrorism in the films of the New German Cinema and more recent postmillennial interpretations. Drawing on Freud's notion of parapraxis (*Fehlleistung*), Elsaesser argues that cinema functions 'as a medium of conflict and of conflicted situations' and reads the periodic returns of the RAF in films as 'failed performances'.[47] My formulation of 'interconnected memories' shares some qualities that Elsaesser identifies in the German films since the 1990s, namely the function to combine different terrors and traumas. However, while his aim is to provide a new interpretation of trauma theory re-evaluating the significance of the Holocaust, mine is to reflect on the meaning of terrorism in postmillennial Italy and Germany.

Chris Homewood's PhD thesis *From Baader to Prada. The Representation of Urban Terrorism in German-language Film* should be acknowledged as it considers contemporary works that deal with the troubled 1970s.[48] Specifically, drawing upon research by scholars such as Jan and Aleida Assmann and Alison Landsberg, Homewood explores the cultural memory of the RAF in the New German Cinema, contemporary documentaries and post-unification German cinema. As in the case with

[46] Thomas Elsaesser, *German Cinema: Terror and Trauma. Cultural Memory since 1945* (New York: Routledge, 2014). This is an updated and revised version of *Terror und Trauma: Zur Gewalt des Vergangenen in der BRD* (Berlin: Kulturverlag Kadmos, 2007). Differently from the first edition, it includes analyses of post-millennial films such as Christian Petzold's *Die innere Sicherheit/The State I Am In* (2000) and Uli Edel's *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex/The Baader Meinhof Complex* (2008).
[47] Ibid., 10.
[48] Chris Homewood, "From Baader to Prada. The representation of Urban Terrorism in German-language Film" (PhD diss., University of Leeds, 2008), unpublished. Homewood's thesis does not include an analysis of *The Baader Meinhof Complex* and Gregor Schnitzler's *Was tun, wenn's brennt?/What to Do in Case of Fire* (2001).

O'Leary's book, the research is inspired by German cultural studies and hence, often privileges explorations of the socio-political context rather than the films themselves and does not consider wider cinematic implications (I am thinking about reading certain cinematic aspects in a more ample context of general production trends in European cinema).

My contribution wants to bridge the gap between these works, as it not only compares the German and Italian contexts but also reads this new wave of films in the post-Cold War and post 9/11 climates. In this sense this thesis responds to the nascent practice of cross-national readings of cinematic works,[49] which are based on the assumption that through formal and thematic correspondences between films it is possible to demonstrate the existence of a shared aesthetic of violence that transcends peculiarities. This thesis constitutes an original contribution and is distinguished from similar works because of the innovative methodology, the comparative approach and the focus on issues, for instance nostalgia and cultural memory, central in current debates in film studies.

In the following pages, I will provide an overview of theories employed in later chapters and a critique of the current debates surrounding these crucial concepts: cultural memory, nostalgia and performance of the past, since they underpin the textual analysis of the case studies. In view of this, the introduction will also trace the presence of history on films, and engage with debates relating to the amenability of memory to cross borders in the age of globalisation.

History and Memory in Film

Since a central part of my thesis lies in the representation of past events, I shall deal, though briefly, with the antinomian relationship between history and memory, which has fascinated scholars from both factions. In a nutshell, Jay Winter summarises the diatribe claiming that 'history is memory seen through and criticised with the aid of

[49] I am thinking for instance about Rebecca H. Bauman's PhD thesis, "Fascism in the Years of Lead: Italian and German Cinema Remember the Past" (Columbia University, 2010), unpublished. Bauman's thesis investigates the subgenre of fascist-themed films realised during the years of terrorism in order to understand the culture of crisis in West Germany and Italy during the 1970s.

documents of many kind – written, aural, visual. Memory is history through affect'.[50] These brief definitions underline how contemporary researchers believe in the overlapping between history and memory. However, the relationship between these two notions has not always been linear. Purists like Pierre Nora concluded that history and memory are to be considered in isolation. In particular, French historian Nora claims that in our society memory is in such a decline that it is disappearing and becoming synonymous with history.[51] He suggests that memory should be reconstructed by mapping the images, stories and myths that form collective memory.[52] I embrace a more flexible approach that considers unproductive rigid bifurcation between the two (disciplines), especially if we are dealing with performances such as films, which enhance the similarities between the two.

At the forefront of a new direction in the studies of the contrasted relationship between film, memory and history lies the work of Pierre Sorlin and Robert Rosenstone. Since some of the films discussed in later chapters belong to the cinematic genre of the historical film, it is useful to reconsider this connection. Sorlin defines the historical film as 'a dissertation about history which does not question its subject […] but which establishes relationships between the facts.'[53] The group of films I am going to analyse do not pretend to offer a global vision of the past but try to restage it, each of them through their own perspective, and provide a particular approach to a fragmented reality. According to the French scholar 'historical films are all fictional', since they have to reconstruct the past in a purely imaginative way, even though they are helped by records, photographs and testimonies of witnesses of those events.[54] Nonetheless, the historical film is not only a way of thinking about the past, but also it represents a reflection on the values and conception of the period in which it was made.

Rosenstone has tried to mitigate these criticisms by maintaining that films, not written history, have the greatest impact on the forging of modern memory and that

[50] Jay Winter, "The Performance of the Past: Memory, History, Identity," in *Performing the Past. Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe*, eds. Karin Tilmans, Frank van Vree, Jay Winter (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 12.
[51] Pierre Nora, "Between memory and history: *les lieux de mèmoire," Representations,* Vol. 26 (1989): 7.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Pierre Sorlin, *The Film in History. Restaging the Past* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), 21.
[54] Ibid.

historical films must be studied on their own terms and not in comparison to academic (written) history.[55] Moreover, Rosenstone argues that cinema has its own specific 'way of recounting the past with its own rules of representation'.[56] The past is reconstructed by employing unique codes and strategies, which are novel to written history. Anyway, when considering the reconstruction, the narration and the analysis of terrorism on film, the cinematic document becomes just another source, a part of the delicate mosaic of historical interpretation, which is always meant to be changeable. To sum up, the recent films about 1970s political violence challenge the work of the historian since they comment on already established traditions, they rethink the oral history practice of communicative memory and create a new feeling of what the past means.

The modality of reaction between history, memory and fiction is particularly relevant for my research because they reveal our imagination of the past. From the vantage point of the present, these films retell stories and events of the 1970s with the actual perception and interpretation of the present time. As a consequence, it is not my intention to evaluate the accurateness of their historical research. Their power relies in generating reflections about the reconstruction of the past and our engagement with it. In fact, we might not find answers for the origin of terrorism in cinema, but films may echo the worries and hopes of the present time. The films which will be discussed in later chapters bring back the state of mind of rebellious political activists, terrorists in action, worried citizens and by doing so, they are performing the past, recreating the atmosphere and the persistent fear. I believe that films belong more to the realm of memory, than history since as Pam Cook notes they 'explore our imaginary relationship with past events'.[57]

Cinema has always been a powerful expressive medium able to artistically capture, adapt political events, historical facts and everyday routines. According to Francesco Casetti, cinema became 'the eye of the twentieth century'; its gaze rearticulated and recombined the tensions of its time presenting itself as a testimony

[55] Robert A. Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past. The Challenge of Film to Our Idea of History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 3.
[56] Ibid, 4.
[57] Pam Cook, *Screening the Past Memory and Nostalgia in Cinema*, (New York: Routledge, 2005), 218.

and guide for contemporariness.[58] In other words, Casetti argues that cinema, as the lens of the past century, has recorded the major events while incorporating its personal gaze, a vision that negotiates the conflicts of modernity and mixes reality with imagination.[59] In this sense, he maintains 'the filmic image reflects at the same time both the world, and our elaboration of it, with all the possible distortions'.[60] Whilst Casetti refers to the cinema of the twentieth century, his theories are even more appropriate with regards to contemporary films, which look back at the past. Casetti maintains that cinema of the new millennium has lost its capacity to re-articulate the tensions and is no longer the guide in a media saturated landscape.[61] The web and mobile phones are operating in the same way as cinema and television used to do some decades ago. Nonetheless, the selected case studies are still able to render the fragmentary nature of this troubled past and raise fiery debates in the public sphere.

In order to appreciate the cross-cultural emergence of a similar formal and narrative tradition, we should therefore avoid the too-easy oppositional approach between history and memory. In addition, films and other collective forms of remembering treat memory, history and identity as performative acts. Peter Burke explains that they are 'performative statements' in the sense that they 'make something happen'.[62] History is performed in films; similarly, cultural practices that groups construct over time embed performances, which on every anniversary or occasion are renewed. Films could function as commemorative practices: they become 'rituals that "canonize" particular events, in the sense of giving them a sacred or exemplary quality'.[63] These renewed or refashioned memories frequently vary from previous versions and overlay earlier performances creating a complex dialogue between the past and the present, a nexus of meanings. Contemporary films about 1970s political violence may be viewed as statements that use the language of the past to say something about the present. As Karin Tilmans, Frank van Vree and Jay Winter concur,

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[58] Francesco Casetti, *L'occhio del Novecento. Cinema, esperienza, modernità* (Milan: Bompiani, 2005), 293.
[59] Ibid, 12.
[60] Ibid, 122.
[61] Ibid, 294.
[62] Burke follows the philosopher John Austin in his use of the term. Peter Burke, "Co-memorations. Performing the Past," in *Performing the Past. Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe*, eds. Karin Tilmans, Frank van Vree, Jay Winter (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 106.
[63] Ibid.

> re-enactment is both affirmation and renewal. It entails addressing the old, but it also engenders something new, something we have never seen before. Herein lies the excitement of performance, as well as its surprises and its distortions. Performance entails affect.[64]

In other words, films reconstruct history as a form of bricolage, by re-collecting and gathering fragments of the past in order to create a new mosaic.

From collective to cultural memory

Over the last two decades, cultural studies have paid particular attention to the concepts of memory, nostalgia and cultural heritage. The number of books, edited collections and articles on these subjects is growing every day. Different approaches have developed to provide a rigorous theoretical framework to the field and define the ambiguous notion of memory. As the 20th century was coming to an end, memory in all its declinations (exhibitions, memorials, retrospectives, documentaries) became a 'buzz-word'. According to Aleida Assmann, this memory boom

> reflects a general desire to reclaim the past as an indispensable part of the present, and to reconsider, to revalue and to reassess it as an important dimension of individual biographies and historical consciousness. It also provides a repository for group affinities, loyalties, and identity formations in a post-individualistist age.[65]

The fear of losing memory in collective amnesia is a phenomenon that a number of scholars have suspected as much. Among the advocates for a crisis in historicity, Fredric Jameson maintains that our current social system is slowly loosing its ability to preserve its own past.[66] Andreas Huyssen joins him, arguing that

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[64] Karin Tilmas, Frank van Vree and Jay Winter, "Preface," in *Performing the Past. Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe,* eds. Karin Tilmas, Frank van Vree and Jay Winter (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 7-8.

[65] Aleida Assmann, "Re-framing Memory: Between Individual and Collective Forms of Constructing the Past," in *Performing the Past. Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe*, eds. Karin Tilmans, Frank van Vree, Jay Winter (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 39.

[66] Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," in *Postmodern Culture,* ed. Hal Foster (London and Sydney: Pluto Press, 1985), 125.

> the undisputed waning of history and historical consciousness, the lament about political, social and cultural amnesia, and the various discourses, celebratory or apocalyptic, about *posthistoire* have been accompanied in the past decade and a half by a memory boom of unprecedented proportions.[67]

I embrace, however, a more positive view of the use of history and memory. Embedded in this cultural climate, the case studies, to use Pam Cook's words, 'see memory as a creative process, closely linked to fantasy'[68] as they tend to erase the unnecessary aspects of the past, re-elaborating it for the purposes of the present. In other words, memory represents the central theme of these films, which show a return to the past as a contribution to the present political debate on terrorism. In this thesis I propose, therefore, an overview of the memory of political violence, which appears both fragmentary and fluid. Although the single films reveal a different memory and interpretation of the past, behind these films there is always the search for a shared version of this controversial and traumatic past.

Generally speaking, memory is considered a unitary notion; there is much evidence that such a thing as an individual memory exists, but great scepticism still inquires the existence of a 'collective memory'. The pioneering work by Maurice Halbwachs, *La mémoire collective*, fundamentally dismisses previous studies that interpreted collective or social memory in biological terms by shifting the discourse to a cultural level.[69] At the beginning of the twentieth century Halbwachs argued that memory depends on the social environment, and does not exist outside a social context, but is instead a manifestation of social construction.[70] As a consequence, there are as many collective memories as there are human communities and we need a community, a social group, in order to remember. Moreover, he claims the past, if not wholly, is shaped by the concerns, beliefs and aspirations of the present and requires 'continuous feeding […] by social and moral props'.[71] By introducing the notion of social frameworks, the mechanisms adopted by collective memory to recollect the past,

[67] Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*, (New York: Routledge, 1995), 5
[68] Pam Cook, *Screening the Past*, 110.
[69] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, edited and translated by L.A. Coser, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992).
[70] Ibid, 38.
[71] Ibid, 34.

Halbwach completely neglected the individual and stressed overtly the collectiveness. In reality, the dimension of collective memory differs in scopes and origins but inevitably mixes with individual ones; similarly, individual memory is forged from the transmission of collective memories, resulting therefore in a dialectical exchange between the two levels.

With the rise of memory studies more sceptical reactions have focused on the viability of concepts such as 'collective memory' and 'social framework', introduced in the first instance by Halbwachs. In her book *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Susan Sontag tenaciously denies that the notion of social or collective memory has any meaning. The American scholar claims that memory cannot be distinct from a body or an organ and that every memory is tied to an individual and dies with each person.[72] Sontag maintains that 'all memory is individual, unreproducible [sic] – it dies with each person. What is called collective memory is not a remembering but a stipulating: that this is important, and this is the story about how it happened, with the pictures that lock the story in our minds'.[73] Although I agree with the common-sense notion that memory is part of a physical structure, I find her statement incomplete. As a matter of fact, if, according to Sontag, all memory is individual, it cannot be at the same time irreproducible because individual memories can also be externalised. Aleida Assmann criticises Sontag's position, arguing that language is an inter-subjective system of symbols and once memories are verbalised they are no longer a purely individual property.[74] Moreover, individual memories can be fused with material culture. Sontag understands that photographs can trigger similar reactions and feelings among an audience, but she misses that these props of memory encapsulate and tend to represent memory itself.

The introduction of the notion of cultural memory has bridged this binary opposition between the individual and the collective. Foregrounded by the eminent archeologist Jan Assmann, cultural memory refers to forms of objectified culture, such as texts, monuments, rites, films and music that recall meaningful events in the history

[72] Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 85.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Aleida Assmann, "Reframing Memory", 36.

of a society and are intended for intergenerational transmission.[75] Furthermore, Assmann makes an important differentiation between communicative and cultural memory, outlining the important role of generations in transmitting memories.[76] Whereas the former defines the object of study of oral history and thus, everyday communication with a high-degree of non-specialization, reciprocity of roles and thematic instability, the latter represents the fixity formation of these memories, crystallised into images, rituals and literary works. This distinction is particularly appealing for the scope of this thesis, because, as Gerrit-Jan Berendse and Ingo Cornils argue, at the moment we are in the presence of both communicative and cultural memories of 1970s terrorism.[77] Memoirs, novels and interviews with former terrorists coexist with fictional works by a younger generation that did not witness those events, ultimately creating new connections of memories.

The additional taxonomy proposed by Aleida Assmann is useful for understanding the various forces in action when shaping the memory of left-wing terrorism. Assmann proposes new and different specifications 'for distinguishing different frames or dimensions of memory: extension in space and time, size of group, and volatility or stability.'[78] Although it is not always possible to differentiate different kinds of memory as they overlap, interact and cross over, such as between communicative and cultural, she also suggests the existence of four formats: individual, social, political and of course cultural memory.[79] Individual memory refers to the subjective experiences that every one of us experiences during our lifetime; social memory consists in the communication of the past within communities, generations that share a common set of values and beliefs, and therefore, it disappears with the death of individuals belonging to that particular social group.[80] Political memory, instead, is unitary and fixed; it operates for the formation and maintenance of a

[75] See Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in den frühen Hochkulturen* (Munich: Beck, 1992).
[76] Jan Assmann, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," *New German Critique* 65 (1995). The author underlines the co-authorship of his wife, Aleida Assmann, in the formulation of this distinction, 126; therefore, we should interpret their theory of communicative and cultural memory as precursor of the latter classification by Aleida Assmann.
[77] Gerrit-Jan Berendse and Ingo Cornils, "Introduction: The Long Shadow of Terrorism," in *Baader-Meinhof Returns. History and Cultural Memory of German Left-Wing Terrorism*, eds. Gerrit-Jan Berendse and Ingo Cornils (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2008), 10.
[78] Aleida Assmann, "Reframing Memory", 40.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid, 40-41.

national identity and/or political action and thus, it is anchored in monuments or commemorative rituals that reinforce unity.[81] Finally, cultural memory shares with political memory the possibility of transgenerational transmission, but it is anchored in objects, texts, and images that may or may not be actively remembered. Assmann's concepts of canon (when memory is actively performed) and archive (when it is not publicly rehearsed) become fundamental for the understanding of the dynamics of the memory of political violence in contemporary cinema.[82] In fact, it explains the liquid nature of memory; memory is never fixed, but a fluid entity. It appears, therefore, that with the fall of the Iron Curtain and the unification of West and East Germany a new sharable memory was necessary to combine the remembering from both side of the Wall. As we shall see in Chapter Three, a film such as Schlöndorff's *The Legend of Rita* encompasses the memory of the West and the East, retrieving information from newly-opened GDR archives and bringing them back to the canon of circulating images of 1970s political violence.

Interconnected Memories

A growing body of work within the field of memory studies proposes a shift in the nature of cultural memory in a transnational, transmedial and global age. Marianne Hirsh has demonstrated how individuals who did not directly experience a trauma are able to emotionally connect with someone else's past.[83] Through the notion of 'postmemory', Hirsch has elaborated a theory of memory transmission to explain how individuals who did not witness an event can empathise with the belated memories of survivors:

> postmemory characterises the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated

[81] Ibid, 42.
[82] See Aleida Assmann, "Canon and Archive," in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, eds. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Walter de Gruyter: Berlin and New York, 2008), 97-108.
[83] Marianne Hirsch, "Projected Memory: Holocaust Photographs in Personal and Public Fantasy," in *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, eds. Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe, and Leo Spitzler (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1999).

> stories are displaced by the stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events that can be neither understood nor recreated.[84]

She has coined the notion of 'postmemory' to specifically design the traumatic memories developed by children of survivors of the Holocaust; nonetheless this concept offers a more general way of understanding the deterritorialised nature of memory in an age where memories travel and communicative and cultural memories coexist. This will become particularly useful in Chapter Two when dealing with the memory of children of terrorists and the connection between memories of terrorism and other traumas. In fact, the idea of postmemory relates to question of ethical relations between tragedies. Hirsch writes that this is,

> a question of adopting the traumatic experiences – and thus also the memories – of others as one's own, or more precisely, as experiences one might oneself have had, and of inscribing them into one's own life story. It is a question of conceiving oneself as a multiply interconnected with others of the same, of previous, and subsequent generations, of the same and of other – proximate and distant- cultures and subcultures. It is a question of ethical relation to the oppressed or persecuted.[85]

The question of the transformation of memory caused by new technologies is, instead, evocative of Alison Landsberg's 2004 study, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*. For Landsberg a new form of memory emerges driven by contemporary consumerism, which she calls 'prosthetic memory'; people experience an historical narrative about the past in a specific place, such as a film theatre or a museum, incorporating the feelings, the 'experiential relationship' to the event as if the individual has actually lived it.[86] Although these memories could be interpreted as 'inauthentic' – they are not predicated on actual experiences of a past event – this does not make them any less powerful. Landsberg argues that they have an utopian potential for creating positive and empathetic understandings.[87] Cultural artefacts, such as films, become an important aid for interpreting the violence that erupted in the 1970s; but as they are

[84] Ibid., 8.
[85] Ibid., 9.
[86] Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 2-9.
[87] Ibid. 9.

revitalised by contemporary events, they also present themselves as readers of the present. As a result, 'prosthetic memories' of terrorism operate as interpreters of the past, but tell us much more about the present contrasted experiential relationship that we have with them.

In recent years memory studies has travelled from the cultural to the transcultural, challenging our versions of space, time and community.[88] It is my contention that even the memories of left-wing terrorism travel and intertwine with traces of different stories. I am therefore interested in studying what happens when the local memory of political violence enters into dialogue with other memories similarly mobilised. The interconnection between memories of the years of lead with stories of other forms of violence, as well as with present-day problems related to the rich and poor divide, provides an example of the new model of memory that I introduce: 'interconnected memory'. This model bridges characteristics of Max Silverman's 'palimpsestic memory'[89] and Michael Rothberg's 'multidirectional memory',[90] who both suggest the coexistence of multiple interpretations and the reinforcement from memories of different events. Silverman and Rothberg similarly applied their notions to the French context in order to describe the interaction between the memory of the Holocaust and the memories of French colonial injustice, in particular those regarding the Algerian War of Independence. Both scholars maintain that rather than competing for attention, the memories of these traumatic events are mutually enhanced. In this thesis I follow their approach to explore the poetics of interconnected memories and the political possibility of such connectivity in encouraging mutual interest in different violent events, but also in risking the oversimplification of their differences. The postmillennial memories of left-wing terrorism are therefore the result of a nexus between palimpsestic sedimentation of previous cinematic heritage and the superimposed evocations and resonances of tragedies from other times and places.

Nostalgia and Irony: forgetting the past?

[88] Astrid Erll, "Travelling Memory," *Parallax* Vol. 17, issue 4 (2011): 4-18.
[89] Max Silverman, *Palimpsestic Memory. The Holocaust and Colonialism in French and Francophone Fiction and Film* (Oxford and New York: Berghan, 2013).
[90] Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

On an epistemological level there is also another problem with the notion of collective memory. As Paul Ricoeur observed, the Western philosophical tradition has always privileged the 'ego' side of the experience of remembering, thus focusing first on *who* is remembering (we as a society or I as an individual) rather than *how* and *what* is remembered.[91] In his phenomenological approach, the French philosopher traces the various manifestations of forgetting, more specifically the diverse forms of being obsessed with the past. One of the most recurrent modes of 'forgetting the past'– and some would argue paraphrasing Casetti, distorting memory – is nostalgia.[92]

The discourse about nostalgia has always found many critics; nostalgia was often linked with an abuse of history and the commodification of the past.[93] Generally speaking with the emergence of postmodernism the study of memory and nostalgia in film studies saw a huge increase, which could be interpreted as a new engagement with issue of history and identity. In *Yearning for Yesterday: a Sociology of Nostalgia*, Fred Davis claims that nostalgia works as a tool to preserve the self; in a period of widespread and deep social uncertainty, nostalgia filters memory avoiding the unbearable and shameful aspects, normalising marginal facets of the self and developing the cult of the past.[94] As a result, nostalgic representations of the 1970s aim at pacifying the contrasting memories about this period, seen as the time of a missed revolution, but also a time when youngsters were more politically involved in the eyes of directors that belong to that '68 generation. The scope of the recuperation of this particular memory might be interpreted as a way to control time; the nostalgic reconstruction allows us to experience a purified and regulated time, in other words this group of films proposes an under-control version.

This thesis argues that postmillennial films depict sentimental and nostalgic visions of the past, adopting in certain cases melodramatic twists to mitigate the sorrow of the traumatic experience of terrorism and the political changes of 1989. I

[91] Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History and Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 120-4.
[92] Tracing the history of this well-debated concept would go beyond the scope of this thesis, but for a succinct survey of its development from medical term to cultural notion, see Christine Sprengler, *Screening Nostalgia: Populux Props and Technicolor Aesthetics in Contemporary American Film* (London and New York: Berghan, 2009), 11-38.
[93] Among the major critics of nostalgia film, acknowledgement should be paid to Fredric Jameson's opera magna: *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991).
[94] Fred Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday. A Sociology of Nostalgia* (New York: The Free Press, 1979).

suggest that the nostalgic dimension is perceived as a way of dealing with the past and coming to terms with it, if not in full. Nostalgia, along with schizophrenia, represents for Fredric Jameson the establishing characteristics of postmodernism, which shows 'the inner truth of the newly emergent social order of late capitalism'.[95] The vast interest in the topic within cultural studies could also be partly a response to the emergence of the nostalgic so-called memory films themselves, a broad category that includes heritage films, period films, coming-of-age dramas, teen films and so on, which, according to Cook, reconstruct an idealised past as a site of pleasurable yearning.[96]

Drawing upon theories of nostalgia by Linda Hutcheon, Svetlana Boym and Pam Cook, I propose that nostalgia plays an exorcising role. In fact, it may function as the *pharmakon* of memory in the ambivalent sense of the Ancient Greek term, denoting both a remedy but also sometimes a poison. The discussion about nostalgia in relation to the memory of left-wing terrorism remains a constant in this thesis, such is the pervasive effect in contemporary German and Italian cinema. However, this nostalgia often takes an ironic form. As Hutcheon reminds us, we should not underestimate the ironic dimension of the postmodern.[97] In postmillennial Germany and Italy ironic and nostalgic retrenchments are manifestations of cultural dynamism; it appears that by looking back at the past through different lenses, it is possible to find a meaning to today's problems.

More than thirty years after the peak of violence, I suggest that the return to the comedy genre signals the desire to return to 'business as usual.' There are of course fears that this could lead to a trivialisation or banalisation of the past events; such fears are often followed by concerns that historical amnesia will set in. Comedy is a genre that challenges taboos; in this sense, the case studies analysed in Chapter Five present a productive and provocative approach to representing terrorism. Traumatic memories are sometimes glossed with comedy due to a desire to both mourn and recover. When we laugh at terrorism it need not cause more pain and disrespect; it can be, therefore, a cathartic moment and a moment for unity. What the comedies taken into consideration

[95] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, 113.
[96] Cook, *Screening the Past*, 4.
[97] Linda Hutcheon, "Irony, Nostalgia and the Postmodern" 19th January 1998 Available at <www.library.utoronto.ca/utel/criticism/hutchinp.html> (accessed 28 August 2014).

show is not a past that has been reassuringly resolved, but is potentially still looming in the present.

Plan of the thesis

The chapters in my thesis develop around two main issues: the possibility of forgiving and the risk of forgetting, which, I argue, are particularly relevant to the understanding of the legacy of left-wing terrorism in the new millennium. The contemporary films on 1970s terrorism reflect on different fears: on the one hand filmmakers belonging to the 1968 generation feel the urge to reconsider that season of protest and the role of former terrorists in society. On the other hand, younger filmmakers, who did not witness those events, consider unfinished the process of dealing with the past and it becomes important now to explore the legacy of the years of lead in the present. When addressing these problematics, the corpus of films considered here seems to follow specific tropes: the nostalgic longing for the past, and the depiction of melancholic characters still attached to old ideologies; the continuous presence of the family, as a metaphor for national conflicts but also a unifying principle; the return to popular genres, and specifically to the use of the prism of the comedy and cop-thriller genres to deal with the trauma of terrorism; and the spectacularisation of violence and the romanticisation of terrorists. These tropes emerge because the temporal lapse, alongside the changes in German and Italian politics, made it possible to come to terms with the past.

Chris Homewood, for instance, traces the origin of the revamped debate on the RAF to the formation of a new coalition government in 1998 with roots in the radical ferment of the 1960s.[98] I argue that the new cluster of films on left-wing terrorism appeared in the new millennium because of the stabilisation of the socio-political context. Once Germany was reunited and the Second Italian Republic found its political equilibrium towards the end of the 1990s, it became again possible to open

[98] Chris Homewood, "From Baader to Prada: Memory and Myth in Uli Edel's *The Baader-Meinhof Complex* (2008)," in *New Directions in German Cinema*, eds. Paul Cooke and Chris Homewood (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 131. Joschka Fischer, leader of the Green Party, became Vice-Chancellor and Minister of Foreign Affairs between 1998 and 2005. In 2001 he publicly apologized for his past as a left-wing activist due to some pictures showing him beating a policeman in a street riot. I will further expand on this episode in Chapter Two.

old wounds and engage with thorny issues, thus the many films on the sufferance of Italians and Germans, seen as victims during WWII, the life in East Germany and political violence in the 1970s and 1980s. Furthermore, these trends respond to general directions in contemporary cinema and television, which particularly thrive on biopics and historical films capitalising on the national heritage, even its tainted stories.

My thesis offers four thematic chapters introduced by a contextual framework, which will inform my subsequent readings of the films. In Chapter One I briefly describe the key events and protagonists of the terrorist organisations, highlighting their similarities as well as their differences in structure, ideology and background. This historical chapter is necessary not only to situate the context of the events narrated in the films but also to outline the different trajectory that both countries took in the struggle against terrorism, and hence understand the different dynamics of remembrance. Moreover, Chapter One frames the phenomenon of 1970s political violence within the economic crisis and global instances of generational change within society; it proposes a macro-level reading of the organisations informed by historical and political analyses of terrorism. It offers, then, a more detailed and in-focus study of the tactics and development of the RAF and BR throughout the 1970s and 1980s. It ultimately presents how films mirrored certain crucial events in the history of the RAF and BR. The chronology that closes the chapter provides a diachronic study of the representation of terrorism in German and Italian cinema.

The thesis is then divided into two parts, which develop two overarching themes in this entire investigation: forgiveness and forgetfulness. Part One (Chapter Two and Three) deals with the on-going issues of forgiveness, reconciling with the past and the possibility of reintegrating former terrorists in society, and more generally, the inclusion of this traumatic period into a coherent national history. Part Two (Chapter Four and Five) tackles, instead, the uses and abuses of forgetting, namely the attraction of nostalgia and the adoption of genre as a filter to address left-wing terrorism in the present. Here I do not see forgetting as a dysfunction or a failure, but a constructive process for the formation of a new identity.[99] I suggest that the dynamics

[99] I share Paul Connerton's position to counter the assumption that remembering is always a virtue and forgetting a necessary failure. On forgetting see his monograph *How Modernity Forgets* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) and for a categorisation of forms of forgetting his article "Seven Types of Forgetting," *Memory Studies* Vol.1, no. 1 (2008): 59-71.

of the memory of 1970s left-wing terrorism constitute a negotiation between the representation of the past and the risk of banalising it. In light of the duality between amnesty and amnesia, outlined by Paul Ricoeur,[100] I also maintain that postmillennial films on terrorism showcase a tension to maintain the boundaries between these two notions: the necessity of reconciliation (amnesty) and the risks of forgetting (amnesia) through the transmission of these memories through easily manageable narratives.

Chapter Two considers Christian Petzold's *The State I Am In* and Rosalia Polizzi's *Reconciled*, two films that are preoccupied with the implications of the legacy of terrorism for younger generations. It investigates the relationship between 'survivors' of student protests and the armed struggle in the 1970s, as well as the generational conflicts between former terrorists/activists and their children. This chapter ultimately seeks to explore the figure of the adolescent as a metaphor for the changing memory of left-wing terrorism. Chapter Three analyses Volker Schlöndorff's *The Legend of Rita* and Marco Tullio Giordana's *The Best of Youth.* I intend to investigate the return of a certain generation of directors and screenwriters to address events they previously explore in other works or they actually lived in the first person during the years of lead; specifically I am interested in strategies they adopt to engage younger audiences. The comparison will also offer the possibility of discussing the tradition of gendering the terrorist character as female. The feminisation of political violence and its representation allow the exploration of different strategies that are adopted to symbolically contain the violence perpetrated by women. These two chapters ultimately deal with the desire for a 'happy memory', using Ricoeur's term, 'a wish in the optative mood to […] state evil in a pacified mode without anger.'[101] From this perspective, Part One describes the struggle to separate agent and act, terrorists and their offences, in order to create therefore, space for reconciliation and an eventual forgiveness.

Chapter Four compares *The Baader Meinhof Komplex* and *La prima Linea*. These two films are symptomatic of certain trends in the representation of violence, where the perpetrators are romanticised as mythic heroes, hence the employment of charismatic and attractive faces, and the years of lead are treated as part of the national

[100] Ricoeur, *Memory, History and Forgetting,* 452-6.
[101] Ibid., 456.

heritage from which to draw heavily on stories and characters. Both the production and the reception of these films were characterised by strong polemics and debates regarding the ethics of constructing a mythology around brute criminals.[102] If there is the risk of abusing memory by recounting the 1970s as a terrorist-chic phenomenon, then the employment of the comedy genre can apparently suggest that postmillennial films project a tendency towards the banalisation of evil. Chapter Five problematises this issue, considering *What to Do in Case of Fire* and *Unlikely Revolutionaries.* As these films approach the legacy of political violence in a lighter tone, I explore the use of nostalgia that prevails in the current obsession with the past. This comparison aims to understand the process of historicisation and normalisation of Germany and Italy's past. In the context of contemporary Germany and Italy, the notion of normalisation functions as a useful framework to understand the nation's critical engagement with the legacy of 1970s terrorism.[103] The normalisation of the terrorist past is neither perceived as an urge to play down the crucial role of the terrorist groups, the guilt of the State for not negotiating with them and limiting civil rights, nor a desire to instill national pride. It rather promotes an effort to incorporate the experience with the urban guerrilla into a coherent national narrative and a moral lesson that had been learned and can be put behind. Whereas the films discussed in the first part of the thesis are concerned with problems related to pardon and the reintegration of former terrorists into society, Part Two comments on the limits of contemporary normalisation. In conclusion, Chapter Four and Five deal with manifestations of an 'aesthetic normalisation'[104] in contemporary German and Italian cinema, given that filmmakers move away from avant-garde and art-film sensibilities to produce mainstream narratives that appeal to younger and international audiences.

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[102] As examples of critical reviews about the starring of glamorous actors for evil terrorists, see Eckhard Fuhr, "Terror als Action," *Die Welt*, 18 September 2008. <http://www.welt.de/kultur/article2461404/Terror-als-Action.html> (accessed 28 August 2014), and Claudia Morgoglione, "Giovani, gelidi killer senza popolo è 'La prima linea' dello scandalo," *La Repubblica*, 12 November 2009. <http://www.repubblica.it/2009/10/sezioni/spettacoli_e_cultura/la-prima-linea/anteprima-12nov/anteprima-12nov.html> (accessed 28 August 2014).

[103] Normalisation has been a much-debated term in Germany since the late 1990s, denoting a revisionist desire for 'normalcy' after the re-ignition of interest in the National Socialist past. Political normalisation was fuelled by several controversies, such as the 1995-1999 travelling exhibition on the Wehrmacht (the German Army), and the debates on the victimhood of Germans and the Expellees. See Stuart Taberner and Paul Cooke, eds. *German Culture, Politics and Literature into the Twenty-First Century. Beyond Normalization* (New York: Camden House, 2006) and Bill Niven, ed. *German as Victims* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006).

[104] Paul Cooke, "The Limits of Consensual Film-Making?". 68.

Chapter One

Understanding 1970s political violence and its aftermath

This is the Hour of Lead
Remembered, if outlived,
As Freezing persons, recollect the Snow
First Chill then Stupor then the letting go.

Emily Dickinson[105]

In this chapter I will highlight the complexities and contradictions of the brief but turbulent period, when heterogeneous terrorist groups rose to public attention and challenged the young democracies of Italy and West Germany. By looking at contextual factors, as well as variables internal to these organisations, I provide a broad understanding of the socio-historical environment of the years of lead. This will be helpful for the comprehension of events and figures addressed in the films discussed in the thematic chapters. The 1970s ought to be considered within a broad context where global and local forces tried to shape events and strongly characterise its prominent figures. Therefore, I will frame the experience of political violence in Italy and West Germany within the transnational phenomena of guerrilla fighting,[106] and the global economic crisis that followed the post-war boom.

Firstly, I will illustrate the external factors that triggered the escalation into violence, considering the different relations of the illegal groups with students, factory workers and other countercultures. Secondly, I will outline the structural differences, in particular their own interpretation of the Marxist-Leninist ideology, which produced a dissimilar fighting strategy. The third issue addressed in this chapter deals with the divergent paths that the left-wing German and Italian terrorists took after their violent activities ceased. Thus, I will briefly address issues such as the repentance of former

[105] Emily Dickinson, "After Great Pain", in *The Cambridge Introduction to Emily Dickinson*, ed. Wendy Martin (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 106, lines 10-14.
[106] Although this thesis focuses on the German and Italian contexts, left-wing terrorist groups were particularly active in the same period all around the globe. Examples include the Japanese Red Army or the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), which inspired – and in the latter case also trained and supplied with weapons – the revolutionary cells in Europe.

terrorists, the end of ideologies with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the new forms of international terrorism, which are connected with the phase of survival and implosion of these illegal organisations. The conclusions provide an overview of the tropes and cinematic genres, which since the 1970s have been employed to recount characters, episodes and memories of left-wing political violence.

'The Hour of Lead' between economic crisis and social unrest

Following the end of the post-war economic boom and the cultural liveliness of the 1960s, Europeans started experiencing the consequences of stagflation, wage/price inflation and, at the same time, economic decline, whose effects were amplified by international crises, such as the Yom Kippur War between Israel, Egypt and Syria in 1973, and the subsequent oil crisis.[107] The 1970s are, therefore, rightly remembered as a period of great instability and conflict, marked by rampant inflation, high unemployment in Western Europe's economies and widespread social unrest.

Throughout that decade West European countries saw an acceleration of unemployment; the traditional industrial sectors radically transformed, mainly because of mechanisation, and thousands of immigrant workers, voluntarily or otherwise, returned to their countries of origin. Entire industrial districts were traumatised: from the mining regions in southern Belgium to the steel industries in the British West Midlands. The English historian Tony Judt reports that 'the industrial workforce in Lunenburg [sic], West Germany, fell by 42 percent in the same years [between 1973 and 1981]. When FIAT of Turin began its switch to robotisation at the end of the 1970s, 65,000 jobs (out of 165,000) were lost in just three years'.[108] Public anxiety, caused by a sense of mistrust towards political leaders, was common even among the middle classes. Compared with the student and working class protests in 1968, the social turmoil of the subsequent decade, and in particular the 1977 movements,[109]

[107] Karl Hardach quantifies that between 1973 and 1980 the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) raised the price of a barrel of not refined oil from $3 to more than $30, an increase of the cost of energy that had tremendous consequences for the entire world also in the long term, see "The Economy of the Federal Republic of Germany: Structure, Performance, and World Position," in *Contemporary Germany: Politics and Culture*, eds. Charles Burdick, Hans-Adolf Jacobsen and Winfried Kudszus (Boulder and London: Westview Press, 1984), 120-1.

[108] Tony Judt, *Postwar. A History of Europe since 1945* (London: William Heinemann, 2005), 459.

[109] In the following pages I employ the term 'movement', or better 'social movement', defined by Friedhelm Neidhardt and Dieter Rucht as 'an organised and sustained effort of a collectivity of interrelated individuals, groups and organisations to promote or to resist social change with the use of public protest activities', Friedhelm Neidhardt and Dieter Rucht, "The Analysis of Social Movements:

were grounded in a more heated climate, fuelled by the economic crisis and the disenchantment against institutions.

The memory of the 1970s is not solely restricted to stories of economic downfall and social upheaval; this decade should be more frequently associated with positive changes and new trends in politics, gender relations and social structures, which emerged and changed Europe. In the case of West Germany, the spirit of 1968 merged with euphoria for reform, which is best represented by the famous slogan: *'*mehr Demokratie wagen!*'* (Let's dare more democracy!), pronounced by the newly elected chancellor Willy Brandt in 1969. Recent studies by Anna Cento Bull and Adalgisa Giorgio on 1970s culture point out that this decade should be reconsidered for the breaking down of barriers; this is also confirmed by the work on German counterculture by Sabine von Dirke, who maintains that the same period witnessed the blossoming of new artistic phenomena in the Federal Republic.[110] Although the images conveyed by the press and television showed stories of violence, technocratic politics and social lacerations, Stephen Gundle rightly affirms that throughout that decade 'a variety of new groups gained recognition as active participants in the political process'.[111] Among them, university students, trade unions and feminist movements.

Generational tensions typical of turning events, like 1968, were followed by gender conflicts: the second wave of feminism[112] found its propulsive strength during the 1970s, advancing female participation in politics. The feminist movements emerged at the same time as left-wing terrorists started committing their first political assassinations. Within the German women's movements small collectives developed into violent protests, sometimes with terrorist intentions, bombing porn cinemas and kneecapping gynaecologists.[113] The link between the second wave of feminism and

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The State of the Art and Some Perspective for Further Research," in *Research on Social Movements: The State of the Art in Western Europe and the USA*, ed. Dieter Rucht (Frankfurt am Main: Campus and Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), 450.

[110] See Anna Cento Bull and Adalgisa Giorgio, eds, *Speaking out and Silencing. Culture, Society and Politics in Italy in the 1970s* (Oxford: Legenda, 2006) and Sabine von Dirke, *"All Power to the Imagination!" The West German Counterculture from the Student Movement to the Greens* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997).

[111] Stephen Gundle, *Between Hollywood and Moscow. The Italian Communists and the Challenge of Mass Culture, 1943-1991* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000), 138.

[112] The second wave of feminist movement refers to a period of women's rights activities from the end of the 1950s and the late 1970s; it follows the earlier feminist movements in the late XIX century.

[113] Donatella della Porta*, Social Movements, Political Violence, and the State. A Comparative Analysis of Italy and Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 33. The militant feminist group

Italian left-wing terrorism has generally been neglected, although several members of PL were previously involved in militant feminism. Nonetheless, the greater female participation in revolutionary groups was facilitated by their participation in extra-parliamentary politics.[114] Despite the weak relations between women in feminist movements and women in terrorist organisations, this tension was already articulated in the very earliest films about the years of lead,[115] such as in Luciano Salce's comedy *Il… Belpaese* (1977), where the love interest of the male protagonist, Guido (Paolo Villaggio), swiftly changes from hippie to student activist, then terrorist and finally feminist campaigner, and in Margarethe von Trotta's debut solo film *Das zweite Erwachen der Christa Klages/The Second Awakening of Crista Klages* (1980), which depicts the turn to violence of a young mother, played by Tina Engel, who robs a bank for securing money for her children's nursery.

But it is the pivotal film on this era, Margarethe von Trotta's *The German Sisters,* which clearly pictures the intertwined relations between feminist political demands and armed struggle through the recounting of the two sisters' different life choices: Juliane, politically committed journalism and Marianne, the armed struggle. It is significant that the British distribution title (*The German Sisters*), but also its American version (i.e. *Marianne and Juliane*) shifts the emphasis to the sisterly relationships and the feminist issues, rather than maintaining the focus on the repressed upbringing of the two sisters, traumatised by the viewing of documentaries on the horror of the Holocaust and the Vietnam war. In the introduction I have explained the connection between this film, the expression 'years of lead' and the metaphorical consequences of its adoption in journalistic language following the film's release at the Venice Film Festival in 1981.

Here, however, I would like to point out that in its complexity, von Trotta's film is foremost a personal investigation into the origin of left-wing terrorism and the attitude towards the Nazi past in 1970s West Germany. Such an interpretation is also

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Rote Zora was active in West Germany between 1977-95 and was responsible for numerous bombings and arson attacks.

[114] Ruth Glynn, *Women, Terrorism, and Trauma in Italian Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), 7.

[115] Before joining the armed struggle, female terrorists were often involved in women's rights movements, as in the case of Ulrike Meinhof, a journalist particularly interested in women's issues. Prior to becoming a member of the RAF, she wrote many articles on the female condition and also the screenplay of the TV film *Bambule* (Eberhard Itzenplitz, 1970), which investigates girls' re-education facilities in West Germany.

proposed by Thomas Elsaesser, who argues that the film 'depicts the working laws of a family as the motivational core of terrorism'.[116] Moreover, *The German Sisters* is of crucial importance in relation to the debate about New German Cinema and the legacy of National Socialism, but mostly in the investigation of the post-war amnesia about the Nazi past, an issue so dear to the filmmakers and intellectuals of that generation. As such, it could function well as a further example of Michael Rothberg's notion of 'multidirectional memory',[117] given that von Trotta's film juxtaposes the traumatic memory of National Socialism with another disturbing history: the West German experience of left-wing revolutionary terrorism. The film, in fact, portrays how the trauma of the Holocaust, and German guiltiness, contributed to the development of violent groups. In Chapter Three I will briefly return to *The German Sisters* and other German and Italian films depicting women's participation in the armed struggle in order to understand representational gender politics in films from the new millennium. For the moment, it is worth mentioning that nowadays the interconnections between feminist movements and women terrorists are rarely explored on the screen, although the female perpetrator still endures great appeal on the screen. I will contend that the cinematic figure of the female terrorist, which emerges in contemporary examples, shows an anxiety toward the challenge that 1970s feminism and women's armed struggle posed to society.

The 1970s also saw radical changes in the media landscape. While in the United Kingdom the phenomenon of pirate radios had its peak in the 1960s, in Italy, France, West Germany and the Netherlands it developed some time later.[118] Cheaper and user-friendly technologies allowed European youngsters to turn bottom-up the flow of information, challenging the monopoly of public broadcasters and spreading alternative cultures and ideas. Guido Chiesa's film *Lavorare con lentezza/Work Slowly Radio Alice* (2004) captures the complex situation of Italy in the mid 1970s. While

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[116] Thomas Elsaesser, *New German Cinema* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1989), 235.

[117] Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2009). Rothberg's framework is briefly applied to describe the dynamics between German fascism, Holocaust and RAF history in Svea Bräunert, "Ghostly Sisters: Feminist Legacies in Second-Generation Perspective on West German Terrorism; Judith Kuckart's *Wahl der Waffen* (1990) and *Kaiserstraße* (2006)", in *Generational Shifts in Contemporary German Culture*, eds. Susanne Vees-Gulani and Laurel Cohen-Pfister (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2010), 166.

[118] For a complete overview of the phenomenon of pirate radios in Europe, the United States of America and elsewhere see Andrew Yoder, *Pirate Radio Stations: Tuning In to the Underground Broadcasts in the Air and Online* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002).

recounting the brief adventure of Radio Alice, one of the first Italian pirate radios, the film offers at the same time a portrait of the cultural avant-garde movement, the *Indiani Metropolitani* (Metropolitan Indians),[119] the effects of the economic crisis in Bologna, and the development of violent groups. On the whole, it is noteworthy that concurrent to the liberalisation of the radio and television frequencies, terrorist groups exploited mass media's dependence on spectacular news to convey their propagandistic and threatening messages. The communicative strategy of terrorists depended upon the media both to transmit and to amplify their ideology. Postmillennial films dealing with 1970s political violence cannot neglect the powerful use of mass media espoused by terrorists and the memorable images of those traumatic events supplemented by broadcasters and photographers; thus, contemporary historical films and documentaries about the years of lead often present re-enactments of those iconic snapshots and montage sequences with archive film material, paying due respect to the memorialising role of 1970s news.

Despite the importance of revisionist studies in exploring neglected aspects of this decade, the focus on political violence, which has mostly dominated analyses of the 1970s, should remain the focal point of such analysis. Regardless of the extent of the reformist forces, we ought to remember that soon after the oil crisis governments adopted drastic measures to preserve internal security. For example, in the Bonn Republic 'Helmut Schmidt [who succeeded the resigning Brandt in May 1974] switched swiftly from reform politics to crisis management'.[120] Similarly in Italy, after an early period of reforms, the new fiscal system and the institution of local regional governments, the austerity measures undertaken to fight the crisis silenced every possible form of social reform and change. It is, therefore, understandable why in the early 1980s commentators started referring to this era as the years of lead, a decade characterised by violence and social conflicts.

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[119] The *Indiani Metropolitani* constituted the creative wing of the 1977 protest movement, which was loosely associated with an anarchist group called Autonomia (Autonomy). They were characterised by hippy clothing, face-paint like the Native Americans and a keen interest in arts, squatting and commune living. For an English language account see Giorgio Mariani (1999) "Was Anybody More of an Indian than Karl Marx?': The 'Indiani Metropolitani' and the 1977 Movement," in *Indians and Europe: an Interdisciplinary Collection of Essays,* ed. Christian F. Feest (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 585-97.

[120] Hans-Georg Betz, *Postmodern Politics in Germany* (Basingstoke and London: MacMillan, 1991), 20.

Nonetheless, in West Germany and Italy, as elsewhere, political violence was not a homogenous problem and it would be more appropriate to talk about terrorisms in the plural, because as the American historian Walter Laqueur claims, 'there is not a terrorism *per se*, if maybe not at an abstract level, but several terrorisms'.[121] Terrorism was arguably the greatest challenge faced by Western Europe in the 1970s, but as I will point out in the following section, it presented under multiple facets.

Terrorisms in 1970s Western Europe

Despite being one of the most widely discussed terms of our time, Terrorism is also one of the least understood; its definition is itself a fascinating terrain of controversy among sociologists, psychologists and political scientists. As explained in the introduction when dealing with choices of terminology, terrorism represents a thorny subject to delineate, whose intrinsic complicity with power and its interests makes it problematic in its use. In his analysis of political violence in post-war Italy Richard Drake brilliantly identifies the ambiguity of the term, stating that,

> terrorism – more than most things in history – depends on point of view. There is a measure of truth in the claim that in Italy, as elsewhere, one man's terrorist is another man's political hero, or put another way, men of political violence who are defeated go down in modern history as terrorists, whereas men of political violence who are victorious become founding fathers and role models for succeeding generations.[122]

During the 1970s Western Europe was shaken by old resentments turned into violent revolt: Corsican separatists in France, German-speaking minorities in Italy's Alto Adige/South Tyrol, and Flemish nationalists in Belgium. Although these insurgencies were quickly resolved, more problematic situations developed and escalated in Northern Ireland, the so-called Troubles, between the loyalists – the Protestant majority who generally want Northern Ireland to remain part of the United Kingdom, and the republicans – Irish nationalists mostly Catholic who wanted a reunited Ireland. It is in this decade that the two armed branches of these factions, the

[121] Walter Laqueur, *The Age of Terrorism,* 9.
[122] Richard Drake, "The Red and the Black: Terrorism in Contemporary Italy" *International Political Science Review / Revue internationale de sciences politiques* 5.3 (1984), 285.

UVF (Ulster Volunteer Force), UDA (Ulster Defence Army) and the provisional IRA (Irish Republican Army), recruited large numbers of sympathisers, intimidating communities with targeted killings, bombing campaigns and kidnappings. At around the same time, another ethno-nationalist conflict erupted this time in Northern Spain, specifically in the Basque region. The armed struggle for the independence of the Basque Countries through the actions of the ETA (*Euskadi Ta Askatasuna*, literally Basquia and Freedom), the military branch of the separatist party, culminated in the terrorist assassination of dictator Franco's Prime Minister, Admiral Luis Carrero Blanco, on 20th December 1973 in Madrid.[123]

The interest of this thesis lies, however, in the forms of terrorism linked with extreme left-wing political movements, which aimed at a revolutionary change of the state in the Marxist sense of the word, instead of proposing separatist or nationalist instances, as in the examples described above. This does not disprove that some separatist movements assimilated socialist ideology, given that postcolonial sentiments are often caused by socio-economic inequalities. The origin of left-wing terrorism ought to be traced in the anarchist riots of the late 19th century and early 20th, but it mainly developed in the context of the Cold War, more precisely around the political unrest of 1968.[124] Modern and well-organised groups grew in Western Europe, including the French *Action Directe*, the Belgian Communist Combatant Cells, the Maoist Spanish cell First of October Anti-Fascist Resistance Group (GRAPO) and the Portuguese Popular Forces 25 April (FP-25). It is worth specifying that the resulting violent upheaval did not produce the same effects in every country; the French and Belgian clandestine groups, as well as those active in the Iberian Peninsula, operated on a smaller case than those in Italy and West Germany.

The origins of revolutionary left-wing terrorism have been the subject of much debate among historians. In particular, the relationship between the student movements of the late 1960s and the turn to violence of the 1970s is open to multiple interpretations. The left-wing Italian journalist Rossana Rossanda, for instance, described members of terrorists groups as the 'unwanted children of 1968'.[125] Judt,

[123] The episode is at the base of *Operatión Ogro/Ogro* (Gillo Pontecorvo, 1979), an Italian-Spanish co-production, whose release was postponed due to the terrorist emergency in Italy. There were political speculations about the ethics of comparing Basque and Italian terrorists.
[124] Judt, *Postwar*, 469
[125] Quoted in Donatella Della Porta, *Social Movements, Political Violence, and the State*, 23.

instead, connects more directly the harmless student movements to the 'revolutionary terror' phenomenon, arguing that,

> [i]n most of Western Europe, the airy radical theorems of the 1960s dissipated harmlessly enough. But in two countries in particular they metamorphosed into a psychosis of self-justifying aggression. A small minority of erstwhile student radicals, intoxicated by their own adaptation of Marxist dialectics, set about 'revealing' the 'true face' of repressive tolerance in Western democracies. […] It was not by chance, therefore, that 'revolutionary terror' took its most menacing form in Germany and Italy.[126]

Although I tend to agree with Judt regarding the destructive power of German and Italian terrorisms, compared with similar groups in Europe, I find more questionable designing as founders of these illegal groups, a tiny number of youngsters involved in student protests. The connection with the waves of revolt in the late 1960s is not adequately problematised, nor the relationship with the working class. To challenge this self-evident consideration, I doubt that the 1970s terrorists were the direct descendants of the student movement, in other words the direct consequence of those social revolts, but rather they were the symptoms of the crisis of extra-parliamentary politics. In order to address this concern, I will briefly outline the origin and developments of the two major left-wing terrorist organisations in West Germany and Italy in the 1970s: the RAF, a.k.a. the Baader-Meinhof gang and the Red Brigades.

From political participation to political violence: a macro-level comparison

The wave of political violence that characterised the 1970s ought to be understood neither as a direct consequence of student demonstrations and occupations, nor as a clear rupture from them. External variables to the organisations paid an important role in the passage from generally innocuous student activism to political violence and even to deadly acts of terrorism. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the phenomenon of left-wing terrorism should be contextualised within the economic stagflation of the 1970s. Gian Carlo Caselli and Donatella della Porta support this

[126] Judt, *Postwar*, 469-70.

interpretation, arguing that the oil crisis in 1973 and the subsequent politics of austerity represent possible triggers of aggressive contestation in the 1970s.[127] The economic crisis hit both Italy and West Germany, giving rise to new problems: unsuccessful dialogues between trade unions, industrialists and institutions and a great number of unemployed people. The loss of faith in traditional parties or legal forms of protest generated a widespread sense of resentment and was the possible base of recruitment of ex-militants for the creation of underground groups. In other words, the economic situation may have created a favourable network of support in the initial phase of the illegal organisations. This is particularly relevant for Italy, where student protesters joined forces with factory workers and extra-parliamentary groups, such as *Potere operaio* and *Lotta continua* (Workers' Power and Constant Struggle), persevering targets abandoned by trade unions and the PCI.

The second line of interpretation emphasises the nurturing role of contestation movements in reinforcing revolutionary and violent ideas that in the end led to criminal actions. In her comparative analysis of Italy and Germany, della Porta embraces this position and notes how the two countries experienced not only the same movements of protests, but also their 'timing' coincided: first between 1967-69 with the student movement, which peaked in 1968 (similarly in the USA, Czechoslovakia and France); then the women's movements developed in the middle 1970s, and finally anti-nuclear and ecological groups which instead emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s.[128] In addition, both the RAF and the BR reached their peak towards the end of the 1970s (the second generation of RAF terrorists were the protagonists of the infamous events in autumn 1977) and by the early 1980s the unity and spirit of both groups were undermined, leading eventually to their dissolution, or a split into even smaller cells.[129]

Political violence followed similar patterns in both countries: in the beginning it was used by movements occasionally as a defence or a response to attacks by

[127] Gian Carlo Caselli and Donatella della Porta, "The History of the Red Brigades: Organizational Structures and Strategies of Action (1970-82)," in *The Red Brigades & Left-wing Terrorism in Italy*, ed. Raimondo Catanzaro (London: Pinter Publishers, 1991), 86.
[128] della Porta, *Social Movements, Political Violence, and the State,* 47.
[129] The timing of the development of the RAF and the BR is also similar. For instance, when the groups escalated their violence in the mid 1970s with their murderous activities the first generation of the RAF were already incarcerated in high-security prisons, including the founders Andreas Baader, Ulrike Meinhof and Gudrun Ensslin; BR leaders like Renato Curcio and Alberto Franceschini were already imprisonded, as well.

perceived enemies, then it was perpetrated by autonomous individuals, finally it evolved into real acts of terrorism carried out by organised groups.[130] In effect, as Elsaesser reports, 'the RAF always argued that their actions were reactions, necessary responses to unacknowledged, hidden or other invisible forms of violence'.[131] Following the death of Benno Ohnesorg, a university student killed by a policeman during the protests against the official visit of the Iranian Shah to West Berlin in 1967, Marxist and anarchist movements radicalised.[132] Gudrun Ensslin, one of the founders of the RAF, incited the armed struggle, allegedly proclaiming: 'they'll kill us all. […] They have weapons and we haven't. We must arm ourselves!'.[133] Violent reactions from the student movement followed Rudi Dutschke's assassination attempt, one of their leaders, at the hands of an anti-communist young man, Josef Bachmann. The conservative publishing empire of the Axel Springer group, which owned the newspaper *Bild* for instance, was blamed for the violence against Dutschke. The Springer press, in fact, launched a fierce defamatory campaign against him and the student movement in general.[134]

Despite these general similarities some more observations should be made regarding the role of the student movement in the terrorist experience. I have previously noted how problematic the cause-effect relation between these two phenomena is; in reality, most individuals did not travel along a path leading to terrorism, but were absorbed into legal politics. A final and universal answer to this question is impossible; only individual life-stories of the protagonists and oral history interviews can shed some light on this passage.[135]

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[130] della Porta, *Social Movements, Political Violence, and the State*, 83-100.
[131] Thomas Elsaesser, *German Cinema – Terror and Trauma. Cultural Memory since 1945* (New York and London: Routledge, 2014), 39
[132] The German anarchist group *Bewegung 2. Juni* (Movement 2 June, hereafter B2J) was named after the day of Benno Ohnesorg's death. Active between 1971 and 1980, it was the West Berlin ally of the RAF.
[133] Quoted in Dominic Fox, *Cold World: The Aesthetics of Dejection and the Politics of Militant Dysphoria* (Ropley, Hants: John Hunt Publishing, 2009), 66.
[134] Nick Thomas, *Protest Movements in 1960s West Germany* (Oxford: Berg, 2003). Later, the Springer press, and in particular its tabloids, built a vitriolic campaigns against Heinrich Böll, and other left-wing intellectuals considered sympathizers of the RAF.
[135] The largest collection of transcripts and tapes of interviews with Italian activists and terrorists is kept at the Istituto di studi e ricerche Carlo Cattaneo of Bologna. The interviews, collected by a team of scholars including Donatella della Porta, Claudio Novaro and Luisa Passerini, were part of a research project on political militancy sponsored by the regional government of Emilia-Romagna. Donatella della Porta also holds copies of a large number of interviews with former members of RAF and other minor German illegal organisations; these were obtained from the archival fund of the Asölte-Project, sponsored by the German Federal Interior Minister.

As it turns out in the case of Germany, the link with 1968 is, however, much more apparent. The revolutionary discourse associated with the student movement in Germany waned more quickly than in Italy, whose confrontational phase also lasted through the 1970s, suggesting that the German terrorists were more a transformation of the movements rather than their spin-off. The founders of the RAF, Andreas Baader and Gudrun Ensslin, were more deeply involved in the events surrounding the student protests of 1967/8; in April 1968 they were found guilty of one of their first actions: an arson attack on two department stores in Frankfurt. The first generation of Italian terrorists were of course involved at some stage in student protests – the leaders Renato Curcio and Margherita (Mara) Cogol were known in the circle of the social sciences faculty at the University of Trent – but they had more points in common with the protesters in the factories, an aspect to which I will return when outlining ideological distinctions between RAF and BR.

Beside the role of the economic crisis and the student movement as contributory causes to the turn to violence in Italy and West Germany, the third variable considers terrorism as the by-product of the Cold War and, in particular, the result of the intervention of foreign forces. Judt claims that, 'the Red Brigades and the Red Army Fraktion […] were financed in part with money supplied by the Soviet secret services'.[136] Within the strategy of opposing spheres, the terrorist groups were considered friends rather than enemies by Moscow, and they were paid on the principle of destabilising Western democracies. Following the reunification of West and East Germany in the early 1990s and the subsequent disclosure of documents in the Stasi archives, the secret services of the German Democratic Republic, it turned out that there were frequent contacts between the East German authorities, the RAF and other international terrorist organisations. The Stasi helped the terrorists with funds, transfers to other locations and with smuggling arms, but more importantly, when the phenomenon of terrorism was declining, they offered new documents and identities to whoever wanted to start a new life in the GDR.[137]

[136] Judt, *Postwar,* 477.
[137] See Michael Müller and Andreas Kanonenberg, *Die RAF-Stasi Connection* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 1992). A cinematic portrait of Stasi involvement in the protection of exiled terrorists is provided by Schlöndorff's *The Legend of Rita*, where the rebel Rita builds up multiple identities in East Germany, following her flight from the armed struggle. The film will be analysed in depth in Chapter Three.

The Cold War climate fuelled conspiracy theories and films tried to grasp the slippery reality of the facts and to fill the interpretations with fiction. In this respect, *Die dritte Generation*/*The Third Generation* (1979) by Rainer Werner Fassbinder insinuates the presence of a greater power behind the fictional terrorists, showing a rich industrialist manipulating a group of activists and drug addicts in order to generate panic and force the government into buying more surveillance technologies, which his American computer company is producing. In a similarly paranoid tone, *Il caso Moro/The Moro case* (1986) by Giuseppe Ferrara rewrites the most emblematic episode in the Italian history of terrorism: the murder of Aldo Moro, president of *Democrazia Cristiana*, the major party at that time, who was kidnapped by the Red Brigades in Rome. In this investigative film, the authorship of the national tragedy is attributed to the Masonic lodge *Propaganda 2* (P2) and the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), who wanted to eliminate the man responsible for the agreement between the conservative Christian Democrats and the communists.[138]

Despite these contextual similarities between Germany and Italy (the economic crisis, the student movement and external powers), there are also some significant differences at the macro level. While the RAF and other smaller underground organisations overshadowed West German 1970s society and politics,[139] the terrorist experience in Italy is not limited to left-wing violence alone, but it was a much more complex phenomenon. In terms of the number of attacks and victims, terrorism was a mainly right-wing phenomenon in Italy. Donatella della Porta and Maurizio Rossi underline how the violent season of left-wing terrorism was anticipated and followed by episodes of neo-fascist violence and unsolved bombings.[140] Following their three-phase taxonomy of the 1970s Drake explains the chronology of the years of lead as follows:

> First, from 1969 to 1974 terrorism in Italy was an overwhelmingly right-wing phenomenon, beginning with the Piazza Fontana massacre of

[138] The so called *compromesso storico*, historical compromise, was pushed forward by Moro in order to create a government of national solidarity between communist and Christian-democrat forces; the former prime minister was however kidnapped by the BR on his way to vote the trust to this new cabinet. The conspiracy theory embraced by Ferrara's film was investigated by authorities and parliamentary commissions, but found little evidence.
[139] Von Dirke, *"All Power to the Immagination!",* 70.
[140] Donatella della Porta and Maurizio Rossi, *I Terrorismi in Italia tra il 1969 e il 1982* (Bologna: Istituto di Studi e Ricerche Carlo Cattaneo, 1983).

> December 12, 1969, and culminating with the Italicus and Brescia massacres of 1974 – all, most experts contend, part of the neofascist strategy of tension. From 1975 to 1979, however right-wing terrorism yielded the headlines to such left-wing terrorist groups as the Red Brigades, the Nuclei Armati Proletari, and Prima Linea. The Bologna train station massacre of August 2 1980 signalled yet a third phase, characterised by a resurgence of right-wing terrorism.[141]

In Italy neo-fascist attacks manifested themselves in different forms: paramilitary groups, such as *Ordine Nuovo* (New Order) and *Nuclei Armati Rivoluzionari* (Armed Revolutionary Nuclei), became responsible for arsons, kneecapping and murders. A further tactic of this faction is evident in the phenomenon of *stragismo*, the persistent use of large-scale bombings, which at the time seemed to announce a military coup.[142]

It is worth mentioning, however, that the Bonn Republic also experienced right-wing terrorism, but the German right-wing extremist groups were not contemporary to the first waves of RAF attacks in the 1970s. They did not pose a serious challenge to democracy because neo-fascist violence was an isolated phenomenon in West Germany. As Jürgen Weber points out, the victims of attacks by German extreme right movements in the 1980s exceeded the number of victims of the RAF.[143] The most significant assault, for instance, took place during the Munich Oktoberfest in 1980 when a bomb attack killed 13 people and wounded 219. This issue remained circumscribed to crime news and occupied the agendas of some politicians; it thus failed to acquire its own cultural imagery in the media, because of the more secretive nature of these organisations. Nonetheless, neo-Nazi violence still remains a very contemporary phenomenon since the upsurge of xenophobic violence in the first half of the 2000s, by the hands of members of the *Nationalsozialistischer Untergrund* (National Socialist Underground, NSU).[144] This far-right terrorist group is

[141] Drake, "The Red and the Black: Terrorism in Contemporary Italy", 281.
[142] *Stragismo* refers to the use of bombings, large-scale massacres like the Bologna's railstation bomb in 1980, operated by neo-fascist terrorists. These bombs were considered part of a *strategia della tensione* (strategy of tension), an underground campaign to unsettle the democratic Italian political system in order to facilitate a military coup and a far right presidential government, similar to that present in Greece.
[143] Jürgen Weber, *Germany, 1945-1990: a Parallel History* (Budapest: CEU, 2004), 130.
[144] Individuals associated with the NSU committed a series of xenophobic murders between 2000 and 2006, attacking primarily Turkish shopkeepers. On this new neo-Nazi phenomenon see Christian Fuchs and John Goetz, *Die Zelle. Rechter Terror in Deutschland* (Reinbeck: Rowohlt, 2012).

responsible for fourteen bank robberies, a series of murders of Turkish immigrants and demonstrative bombings. Regrettably, a state parliamentary investigation and the on-going trial in Munich against the main defendant are not shedding any light on the radicalisation process within the NSU and any police failings.[145]

The origins of left-wing terrorism, while remaining a terrain of fierce debate among historians, have become the major interest of a large corpus of cultural products: novels, performances and films.[146] The causes of the development of groups like the RAF or the BR are multifaceted: social, political and psychological, but as Stephen Vertigans explains, a belief that retaliatory violence was the only response against an unjust state became a common denominator in both countries.[147] This is particularly evident in the cinematic adaptation of Stefan Aust's book,[148] *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex*/*The Baader Meinhof Complex*, directed by Uli Edel in 2008, which retells the story of the RAF founders and the subsequent generation of terrorists, and in *Wer wenn nicht wir?/If Not Us, Who?* (Andres Veiel, 2011), which instead traces the love story between university students Bernward Vesper and Gudrun Ensslin. In both biopics the escalation into violence of the RAF leaders is contextualised within the student movement, a culture of civil rights oppression and attacks against left-wing intellectuals.

The metamorphosis from student protests to violent struggle is also at the core of many contemporary Italian dramas about the years of lead. Based on autobiographical experiences and written by '68 activists, among them Stefano Rulli, Sandro Petraglia and Angelo Pasquini, these films show how the genesis of terrorism can be understood from the exhaustion of the student movement and from the ineffectiveness of their non-violent methods. This feeling emerges in *Mio fratello è figlio unico*/*My Brother Is an Only Child* (Daniele Lucchetti, 2007) and *Il grande sogno*/*The Big Dream* (Michele Placido, 2009), which recount the explosion of the student movement and its trajectory in different environments, the proletarian Latina

[145] Marcel Fürstenau, "Few answers one year into the NSU trial," *Deutsche Welle*, 6 May 2014. <http://dw.de/p/1BuFc> (accessed 28 August 2014).
[146] For an overview of recent German literary production by 68-generation writers about the passage from student protest to political violence see Ingo Cornils, "Joined at the Hip? The Representation of the German Student Movement and the Left-Wing Terrorism in Recent Literature," in *Baader-Meinhof Returns. History and Cultural Memory of German Left-Wing Terrorism*, eds. Gerrit-Jan Berendse and Ingo Cornils (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2008), 137-55.
[147] Stephen Vertigans, *Terrorism and Societies* (London: Ashgate, 2000).
[148] Stefan Aust, *Der Baader-Meinhof Komplex* (Hamburg: Hoffman und Campe Verlag, 2008).

and the bourgeois Rome. Both the character of Manrico in *My Brother Is an Only Child*, and Libero in *The Big Dream* abandon futile discussions in the university's lecture theatres for more 'persuasive' methods, articulating their motivation to join the armed struggle in similar words: 'it is not enough, we must do something more'.[149] This attention of filmmakers towards the link between student protests and more violent movements is noteworthy because much of Germany's and Italy's political and cultural elites come from that generation. As such, these attempts can be connected to the intention of the filmmakers/producers/scriptwriters to mark the distance from their fellow comrades who instead took a different path, that of the armed struggle.

The Baader-Meinhof gang and the Red Brigades: a micro-level comparison

While accepting the influence of contextual variables, a full understanding of the evolution of the RAF and BR could not be possible without a reconstruction of their organisation, history and ideology. As previously mentioned, the panorama of illegal organisations in Italy was complex: extreme-left groups like the BR and *Prima Linea*, neo-fascist gangs and small anarchist formations. While in Italy the number of affiliates totalled less than two thousands, in Germany there were only a dozen underground organisations with a few hundred members.[150]

Differences, therefore, can be observed in the number of participants involved and, as a consequence, in the number of violent actions. On 5th July 1989 *Il Manifesto*, a New Left daily paper, reported that 6000 people had been charged with subversive association, 464 were in prison for political crimes, and 60 of them were serving life sentences in Italy.[151] On the whole, from 1969 until 1982 left-wing terrorists were responsible in Italy for 1173 episodes of mass violence, 1792 unclaimed bombings against property, 2188 claimed attacks, of which 196 injured and 164 killed.[152] Although Italian left-wing terrorism was constituted by a myriad of small or local organisations (Marco Galleni counts 484 different names),[153] the oldest of these

[149] This line is pronounced by Libero (Luca Argentero), exhausted after a university occupation which did not lead to any concrete change in policies. In *My Brother Is an Only Child*, Manrico (Riccardo Scamarcio) is a factory worker, but because of his charisma, he incites and leads the occupation of the music conservatory.
[150] della Porta, *Social Movements, Political Violence, and the State*, 17.
[151] Quoted in della Porta, Ibid.
[152] della Porta and Rossi, *I Terrorismi in Italia tra il 1969 e il 1982*, 18-19 and 60-65.
[153] Mauro Galleni, *Rapporto sul terrorismo. Le stragi, gli agguati, I sequestri, le sigle. 1969-1980* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1981), 175.

underground groups had a national reach: the Red Brigades, founded in 1970 in Milan by activists from trade unions and other radical metropolitan groups.[154] After an initial period of 'double militancy', where a clandestine cell was supported by an official political organisation, the BR decided to go underground and reorganise with a central board and several detached cells, called *colonne*. The BR never officially dismantled, and their history is characterised by constant splits and incorporations of smaller groups. The second largest terrorist organisation, *Prima Linea* (Front Line, PL), was in fact born in 1976 as a splinter group;[155] thanks to the military skills of former BR members the rebel group gradually started increasing their use of violence.

In Germany the number of attacks was much lower: 57 people died, and the RAF alone was responsible for wounding 93, taking 162 hostages and robbing 35 banks.[156] These data contradict the misleading conclusion of Arthur Marwick, who defines the left-wing terrorism in Italy as a minor phenomenon in comparison with the German case, claiming that 'red terrorism in Italy, though deadly enough, was never quite so sophisticated or dangerous [as it was in Germany]'.[157] The Italian terrorists were more murderous than their German counterparts and reached with their attacks high government officials, university professors, industrialists, lawyers, policemen, judges, journalists and union leaders. On the other hand, the actions of German terrorists were certainly more sensational, in the sense that RAF attacks seemed scripted and directed to maximise newsworthiness and media spectacle.[158] Elsaesser, for instance, defines these choreographed violent interventions as 'takes' and 'rushes',

[154] Gianfranco Pannone's documentary *Il sol dell'avvenire/Red Sunrise* (2008) narrates the reunion of a group of old friends who founded a communist commune L'Appartamento (the Flat) in 1969. Among the wannabe revolutionaries, Alberto Franceschini, Roberto Ognibene and Prospero Gallinari chose the armed struggle and became the diehard core of the BR in Milan.

[155] See the memoir Sergio Segio, *Una vita in Prima Linea* (Milan: Rizzoli, 2006) for a chronicle of the birth of this illegal terrorist group. Chapter Four will deal with the representation of the violent attacks of Prima Linea in *The Front Line* (Renato De Maria, 2009).

[156] Aust, *Der Baader-Meinhof Komplex,* cover sleeve.

[157] Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy and the United States, c.1958-c.1974* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 746.

[158] RAF memoirs and commentators, such as Aust, report how cinematic the RAF attacks were. Inspired by the famous Odessa's steps scene from *Bronyenosyets Potyomkin*/*The Battleship Potemkin*, Sergei Eisenstein, 1925) the terrorists pushed a blue pram in the middle of a street in order to attack the cars in which Hanns Martin Schleyer, president of the German Employers' Association and board member of Daimler-Benz, and his body guards were travelling. Through this stratagem, on 5th September 1977 a RAF commando kidnapped the industrialist and murdered the policemen that were protecting him terrorists.

underlining how the revolutionary movement mixed reality with celebrity dreams and cinema.[159]

Moreover, these actions often disregarded national borders; given their international contacts with other underground groups, the RAF attacked in the Netherlands, Sweden, and even Somalia.[160] The final act of their campaign against the Bonn Republic during the German autumn involved a group of Palestinian terrorists hijacking a Lufthansa aircraft in Mogadishu; their objective was the liberation of RAF terrorists imprisoned in German jails. It is worth noting that this violent phase of German terrorism was characterised by criminal actions committed by second-generation members of the RAF, given that Ulrike Meinhof hanged herself in prison on 9th May 1976 and Raspe, Baader and Ensslin were secluded in Stammheim maximum-security prison, near Stuttgart. After the failure of the Mogadishu hijack on 18th October 1977 and the discovery of the body of Hanns Martin Schleyer, the industrialist kidnapped weeks earlier, the founders and historical leaders of the RAF took their lives, marking if not the end of the terrorist season, certainly its decline.

Overall, the evolution of the major terrorist organisation in Germany is similar to the experience of the BR and consists of a series of mergers and splits. The RAF network, about 12 individuals, was officially formed in late spring 1970; however, as mentioned previously, two of their leaders, Baader and Ensslin, were already active in violent episodes during the protests against the Vietnam War, and others, like the journalist Ulrike Meinhof and the lawyer Horst Mahler were prominent supporters of the student protesters. The first generation of terrorists, the Baader-Meinhof gang, chose to train in Palestinian camps and decided on a clandestine guerrilla tactic after increasing pressure from the authorities and the first arrests.[161] For della Porta, the issue of the prison conditions of the arrested RAF members fuelled the process of radicalisation of some other small networks of activists; they eventually brought about the rise of two underground organisations: *Bewegung 2. Juni* (Movement of the Second of June, B2J) and *Revolutionäre Zellen* (Revolutionary Cells, RZ).[162] Born as a

[159] Elsaesser, *German Cinema. Terror and Trauma*, 42.
[160] The *Kommando Holger Meins* organised the violent occupation of the German Embassy in Sweden on 24 April 1975.
[161] While the RAF was primarily instructed by Palestinian terrorists, the BR got inspired by Latin American forms of guerrilla fighting and by the experience of the Resistance fighting during WWII.
[162] della Porta, *Social Movements, Political Violence, and the State,* 100.

critique against the militarism of the RAF, these new organisations proposed less violent tactics, initially avoiding the use of guns against civilians and explosives.[163]

Apart from these statistical differences, what distinguishes these two phenomena is their ideological framework, in other words, the narratives adopted by the terrorists groups to justify their violence. In Italy BR and PL adopted a Marxist-Leninist ideology in which the working class was the revolutionary subject to conquer the bourgeois state. The terrorists felt, therefore, compelled to react against the violence perpetrated by fascist institutions and initially launched a campaign in the factories. Differently from their German counterparts, the BR always sought the approval of the factory workers and found a fertile terrain among those unsatisfied by the trade unions' activities. The German organisations, though remaining attached to Marxist concepts, were more inclined towards anti-imperialist ideals: their aim consisted in liberating the German people from the interests of multinational companies.

The RAF struggle against injustices in Third World countries reverberates in postmillennial films, where 1970s terrorist methods mingle with anti-globalisation rhetoric. This is evident in Hans Weingartner's *Die fetten Jahre sind vorbei*/*The Edukators* (2004), where a language reminiscent of Naomi Klein's *No Logo* and Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Empire*[164] is mixed with RAF's ideology and actions. The film, in fact, recounts the incursions of a group of rebellious youngsters in rich villas in a manner similar to the first RAF attacks, which however has dangerous consequences.

After a first attempt to mobilise the working class, then defined as 'a new aristocracy', the RAF moved to a more delusional level arguing for a liberation of the Third World from imperialism and encouraging the anti-Zionist struggle.[165] With the support of German extremists, the Palestinian organisation Black September killed twelve people attacking the Israeli team at the Munich Olympics in 1972, an episode exhaustively reconstructed in the Academy-Award-winning documentary *One Day in*

[163] In truth, the international branch of the RZ was involved in several bloody acts of terrorism despite this initial choice of avoiding arms. In exchange for funds the members offered assistance to Palestinian terrorists in their murderous activities in Europe.
[164] Naomi Klein, *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies* (New York: Picador, 1999) and Michael Hardt and Toni Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).
[165] Klaus Wasmund, "The Political Socialization of West German Terrorists," in *Political Violence and Terror: Motifs and Motivations*, ed. Peter H. Merkl (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986), 221.

September (Kevin Macdonald, 1999) and in Steven Spielberg's *Munich* (2005). A few years later, in 1976, an Air France plane was hijacked in Entebbe, Uganda, and the two Germans that were part of the terrorist commando separated the Jewish passengers from the rest.[166] These two episodes are representative of the RAF's ideological inconsistencies, which resulted from the changes in leaderships and the natural evolution of their political credo. In the beginning Baader, Ensslin and Meinhof were targeting their rage against the generation of their parents, who did not properly confront the Nazi past, but eventually the RAF fell victim of the same nationalist legacy, selecting Jewish victims for their allies, the Palestinian terrorists.

The receding of the terrorist wave

The kidnapping and murder of high-profile figures, namely the German industrialist Schleyer and the Italian politician Moro, represent the nadir for terrorist groups and at the same time the point of no return for the state. With these attacks the RAF and the BR demonstrated the ability to master large-scale operations and attack 'the heart of the state', creating panic, mobilising institutions and blocking the activities of governments. Neither terrorist organisation succeeded in their blackmail; German and Italian authorities did not release incarcerated terrorists and civil insurrection in support of the armed struggle never took place. West Germany and Italy endured with their democracies defended and even strengthened. It is worth mentioning, however, that whereas the Federal Republic's government was united in its fight against terrorism and the majority of the German population supported Chancellor Schmidt's determination not to comply with the terrorists' demands,[167] the Italian political class and its citizens were torn by opposing positions. On the one hand, the Christian Democrats (DC), Moro's party fellows, the members of the PCI and the Pope, Paul VI, agreed to not concede anything to the terrorists and demanded Moro's liberation without strings. On the other hand, the *Partito Socialista Italiano* (Italian Socialist Party, PSI), led by Bettino Craxi, and a large part of the population were wiling to exchange prisoners. Nevertheless, as the British historian Paul Ginsborg summarises 'had Moro not been killed but exchanged for one or more imprisoned terrorists, the

[166] Judt, *Postwar*, 473.
[167] Weber, *Germany, 1945-1990: a Parallel History,* 130.

Red Brigades would have appeared both invulnerable and willing to compromise, with the result that their appeal would almost certainly have widened'.[168]

These sensational terrorist attacks eventually resulted in more incomprehension within the illegal organisations, since several terrorists dissociated from the decision to kill the illustrious prisoners. With increasingly violent methods, then, further splits emerged within the groups. Stefan Aust remarks that the consequences of the German Autumn, and in particular the suicide of Baader, Ensslin and Jan-Carl Raspe in Stammheim prison, went deep among the surviving members of the RAF.[169] For instance, Peter Jürgen Boock, leader of the second-generation terrorists, was sick and severely addicted to drugs, needing continuous medications, which eventually led to his flight from the group.[170] At the end of 1979 eight German terrorists decided to withdraw from the armed struggle: they handed in their guns, received 3,000 Deutschmarks from the RAF and B2J funds and waited in a holiday house in Brittany for a safe place and a new identity in the tolerant German Democratic Republic or in a socialist Third World country.[171] The same is also true for Italy; the decision to kill Moro completely detached some terrorist cells and the few sympathisers outside the armed struggle. According to Ginsborg, 'the crisis of Italian terrorism, as is generally recognized, dates from the death of Moro' since outside the ranks of the Roman cell profound dissent emerged and much dissatisfaction among factory workers made clear that 'the murderous ambushes and kidnappings were [not] a solution to Italy's problems'.[172]

The bloody epilogue of the German Autumn and Moro's murder did not signal the conclusion of the terrorist season, which extended well into the 1980s. Della Porta schematises the cessation of left-wing terrorisms into three phases: a series of frequent violent attacks took place until 1980 ('years of despair' 1977-80), then these actions changed in more sporadic forms of underground violence ('anti-cruise campaign' 1980-1984) and finally terrorists negotiated an exit strategy with virtually no violence ('pragmatic years' 1984-90).[173] The RAF continued in their anti-imperialist struggle

[168] Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy 1943-1980* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 385.
[169] Aust, *The Baader-Meinhof Complex,* 433.
[170] Ibid.
[171] Ibid., 434.
[172] Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy 1943-1980,* 385-6.
[173] Compare timelines in Tables 2.2 and 2.2 in della Porta, *Social Movements, Political Violence, and the State,* 35 and 47.

attacking NATO general Alexander Haig in 1979 and killing a US soldier based in Hamburg, Edward Pimental in 1985.[174] The BR increased their violence killing 29 people in 1978, 22 in 1979 and 30 in 1980, murdering among others Guido Rossa, a trade unionist and member of the PCI, and Vittorio Bachelet, journalist for the *Corriere della Sera*.[175] However, the occasional attacks of the 1980s were symptomatic of the 'sunset phase' of the terrorist organisations, due not only to the disaffection of its members but also to the increased pressure imposed by the police.

If the two most famous politically-motivated murders of the years of lead generated disagreements within the groups, they also determined a greater will by the authorities to win the struggle against left-wing terrorism. As a result, German and Italian police forces shared similar results in their fight, but thanks to different approaches. According to Herbert Reiter and Klaus Weinhauer,

> in Germany the use of computer technology, electronic data collection and police coordination had already begun in the early 1970s. Introduced at a later stage in Italy, these innovations did not play an important role in the fight against terrorism until the 1980s. Rather, police action rested on more traditional forms (special investigative police units; collaboration of captured militant activists)[176]

Whilst technical modernisation and enhanced centralisation helped German authorities, the BR and other minor formations were dismantled primarily because of the cooperation of individuals,[177] who dissociated from the armed struggle and collaborated with the investigators. The value and moral implication of granting reduced sentences, and forms of semi-liberty, to collaborators of justice became a serious concern in Italy.

When assessing the success of this operation, Ginsborg is therefore correct to ascertain the triumph of law enforcers in eradicating terrorist cells, but he equally

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[174] Aust, *The Baader-Meinhof Complex,* 436.
[175] Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy 1943-1980,* 386.
[176] Herbert Reiter and Klaus Weinhauer, "Police and Political Violence in the 1960s and 1970s: Germany and Italy in a Comparative Perspective" *European Review of History: Revue europeenne d'histoire* 14:3 (2007): 388.
[177] The first *pentito* was Patrizio Peci who chose to help general Carlo Alberto Dalla Chiesa after his arrest in 1980. His brother was killed in retaliation by left-wing terrorists. This episode is reconstructed in Luigi Maria Perotti's documentary *The Villain and his Brother* (2008)

underlines that this practice allowed some terrorist murderers to escape with 'ludicrously light sentences'.[178] In fact, reduced sentences were granted even to those who simply refuted the ideology of the armed struggle, they did not have necessarily to repent. Nonetheless, it is impossible to draw direct comparison between the Italian phenomenon of *pentitismo* (repentance) and the German variety, because the German *Bundestag* only passed the *Kronzeugenregelung* of sentences very late, in 1989. In other words, the commutation to time served was granted to former RAF terrorists who actually collaborated with the justice authorities, but it did not provide a reduction of prison terms for those who merely dissociated themselves.[179]

It is not surprising, therefore, that great debates developed in the German national media in conjunction with the exit from prison of second-generation terrorists. In particular, the release of former RAF leader Brigitte Mohnhaupt in March 2007, who had been convicted to five life sentences, generated fierce controversy. According to judges she did not represent any 'security risk' and since she had served a 24-year mandatory sentence, she could thus walk free.[180] Cinema incessantly comes back to this aspect: the reintegration of former terrorists into society. In new millennial cinema this issue emerges in films such as *Es kommt der Tag/The Day Will Come* (Susanne Schneider, 2009) where a young woman tracks down her natural mother who abandoned her to join the armed struggle. I will briefly return to the discourse of granting state pardon to imprisoned terrorists, and more importantly to the new tendency of humanising imprisoned and repented terrorists, at the end of this chapter.

It is also important to remember that the success of police forces was possible due to significant violations of democratic rights. In both countries cinema was an attentive testimony of the climate of witch-hunts and hurried sentences. Schlöndorff and von Trotta's *Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum/The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum* (1975) shows how the widespread sense of hysteria in the mid 1970s led to the brutalisation of the image of a naive young woman by the press and police. Based on the eponymous novel by Nobel-prize writer Heinrich Böll, the film narrates how Katharina, played by Angela Winkler, has a one-night stand with an army

[178] Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy 1943-1980,* 386.
[179] Luisella De Cataldo Neuburger and Tiziana Valentini, *Women and Terrorism* (New York: Palgrave and Macmillan, 1996), 9.
[180] Michael Sontheimer, "Mohnhaupt kommt nach 24 Jahren frei," *Spiegel Online*, 12 February 2007. <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/0,1518,465782,00.html> (accessed 1 September 2014).

deserter, an act that is read by the authorities as having contact and protecting a wanted anarchist. Katharina's reputation is shattered and eventually she decides to shoot the journalist who has been stalking her. As Hans-Bernhard Moeller and George Lellis claim, *The Lost Honour of Katherina Blum* can only be understood within its historical context of heavy-handed police, stigma towards sympathisers of the radical Left and smear tabloid campaigns,[181] such as that mounted by the Stern press in the 1970s. Although the two scholars compare this early film on urban terrorism with other European political thrillers such as Francesco Rosi's *Il caso Mattei* /*The Mattei Affair* (1972) and Elio Petri's *Indagine su un cittadino al di sopra di ogni sospetto*/*Investigation of a Citizen above Suspicion* (1970),[182] Schlöndorff and von Trotta's film bears more similarities with Marco Bellocchio's *Sbatti il mostro in prima pagina*/*Smash the Monster on the Front-page* (1972). The Italian film narrates how the editorial staff of a conservative newspaper manipulate pieces of news to stir public opinion towards more right-wing positions, an action in line with the climate of the 'strategy of tension'.

In this context of campaigns against unorthodox views, it is noteworthy how Italian fiction cinema has not yet been able to recount the large-scale arrests on 7th April 1979.[183] On that occasion a magistrate from Padua, Pietro Calogero, initiated a proceeding, which would last for more than a decade, against various left-wing intellectuals, university lecturers and activists close to the *Autonomia* group, among them the political philosopher Antonio Negri. Convicted for being part of armed organisations against the State and the moral responsibility for terrorist acts on the basis of their writings, they eventually spent more years in jail than some murderers of the BR.[184]

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[181] Hans-Bernhard Moeller and George Lellis, *Volker Schlöndorff's Cinema: Adaptation, Politics, and the "Movie-Appropriate"* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois Press, 2002), 128-45.
[182] Ibid., 133.
[183] The recent documentary *Sfiorando il muro/Brush against the Wall* (Silvia Giralucci and Luca Ricciardi, 2012) reconstructs the gloomy political atmosphere of the university town of Padua in the mid 1970s.
[184] The vicissitudes of the 7th April group is further described by oral historian Alessandro Portelli in "Oral Testimony, the Law and the Making of History: the 'April 7' Murder Trial," *History Workshop*, n. 20, (Autumn 1985): 5-35, and in the memoir book by Negri's daughter, Anna, *Con un piede impigliato nella storia* (Bologna: Feltrinelli, 2009). In brief, Negri was exonerated from Aldo Moro's kidnapping, but charged for being the instigator of a politically-motivated murder. While in prison awaiting trial, he was elected MP for the Radical Party in 1983; he escaped to France during a temporary release and started teaching at the University Paris VIII (St. Denys). Negri eventually returned to Italy in 1997 to finish his sentence; he was finally released from prison in 2003.

This episode underlines distinctive problems that emerged in the 1980s and that Italy and Germany shared to different extends. On the one hand, the waning of left-wing terrorism was characterised by the hunt for of dissociated terrorists who found refuge in friendly countries, such as East Germany, France, Yugoslavia or Latin America, ultimately exacerbating diplomatic relations and the process of international extradition. On the other hand, growing concerns develop about the situation of high-security prisons (with acoustic isolation, constant searches and inspections and limitations to visits and consultations with lawyers) and the use of 'special laws' that limited civil liberties. I have already mentioned in the course of this chapter how German terrorists, who rejected their means of struggle, escaped with the help of the Stasi to East Germany. Similarly former BR terrorists fled to France, thanks to the policy established in 1985, the '*doctrine Mitterand'*, which did not allow extradition to those convicted for political violence in Italy who rejected their old violent methods.[185] French president François Mitterand opposed certain aspects of the special anti-terrorist laws, especially the *legge Cossiga* approved in 1980, which increased the power of police and extended the sentences for violent crimes related to terrorism. As a result, dissociated terrorists became political refugees in France until 2002, when for the first time extradition was granted to a political prisoner.[186]

The Aftermath of Terror

Without forgetting the attacks and killings of the third generation of RAF terrorists and those carried out by splinter groups of the original BR core, the collapse of the Soviet Union and more broadly the end of the communist ideology irrevocably delivered the *coup de grâce* to the identity of left-wing terrorism. The armed struggle seemed therefore anachronistic in the early 1990s. With the fall of the Berlin Wall and the wrecking of the iron curtain it was no longer possible to distinguish ideological allies and safe havens. What happened on the night of 9th November 1989 was of

[185] Preceded by the Gaullist 'doctrine of sanctuary' for Palestinian terrorists, the doctrine Mitterand allowed terrorists from the BR and ETA to find political asylum in France. Jörg Friedrichs, *Fighting Terrorism and Drugs: Europe and International Police Cooperation* (London: Routledge, 2008), 104.

[186] In 2002 former BR terrorist, Paolo Persichetti, at the time a sociology lecturer in France, was extradited to Italy after a long judicial battle. The doctrine came back in vogue more recently, when France and then Brazil renounced to return to Italian authorities Cesare Battisti. Battisti, a former member of the Armed Proletarians for Communism, a small left-wing terrorist group, is a fugitive sentenced to life imprisonment for four murders committed during the years of lead. See Giuseppe Cruciani, *Gli amici del terrorista. Chi protegge Cesare Battisti?* (Milan, Sperling & Kupfer, 2010).

course the result of the already-present crisis of the Soviet regime, but eventually, it triggered a series of transformations in the whole of Europe.

Italy, for instance, went through an institutional crisis in the early 1990s: the so-called passage from the First to the Second Republic.[187] In brief, between 1991 and 1994 a series of events radically changed the Italian political landscape: traditional parties, such as the DC and PSI, disappeared and new figures emerged, like the separatist *Lega Nord* (North League), which entered the Italian Parliament in 1992 and Silvio Berlusconi with his *Forza Italia* party launched in 1994. Moreover, the PCI, the largest European communist party outside the Soviet countries, went through a bitter transition phase from communism to democratic socialism; the *Partito della Rifondazione Comunista* (Communist Refoundation Party, PRC) eventually split from the *Partito Democratico della Sinistra* (Democratic Party of the Left).[188]

In addition to the collapse of old parties and the emergence of new ones, Mafia attacks and the bribery scandal *Tangentopoli* (Kickback City) overshadowed the process of implosion and segmentation of the last terrorist organisations in the early 1990s.[189] Paolo Virno does not interpret the fall of the Berlin Wall as the cause of the following Italian institutional crisis, but rather he describes it as 'the extrinsic occasion in which it appeared to flourish and in which it became obvious to every observer'.[190] The decline of communism in Italy did not result in an official disbandment of the BR, which in the mid 1990s started being called *Brigate Rosse Nuclei Comunisti Combattenti* (Red Brigades Fighting Communist Nuclei). A new tragic chapter of this terrorist organisation began in the new millennium; the new BR killed two statesmen working on governmental reforms of trade and labour policies: Massimo D'Antona in

[187] For a complete understanding of the political earthquake occurred in Italy in the early 1990s see Stephen Gundle and Simon Parker, eds., *The New Italian Republic: From the Fall of the Berlin Wall to Berlusconi* (London: Routledge, 1996).

[188] Since the political elections in 2012, *Rifondazione* is no longer present in the Italian Parliament. The social-democratic coalition went through various transformations merging left-wing and centre-left forces, founding first the *Ulivo* (Olive Tree), then the *Democratici di Sinistra* (Democrats of the Left, DS) and finally in 2007 it took the actual denomination of *Partito Democratico* (Democratic Party, PD). The actual Prime Minister, Matteo Renzi, is the first left-wing party leader without a background in the Communist Party.

[189] In the early 1990s media were monopolised by stories of Mafia massacres and murders, such as the killings of judges Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino in 1991 and 1992 respectively. Furthermore, prominent space was given to *Manipulite,* the investigations of a pool of young judges in Milan who started uncovering large-scale corruption in public life. Eventually the political system collapsed and a whole political class was condemned.

[190] Paolo Virno, "Do you Remember Counterrevolution?" in *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, eds. Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 254.

1999 and Marco Biagi in 2002.[191] Several arrests followed, including a tragic shootout in 2003 where a terrorist murdered a railway police agent, but these do not seem to have stopped the creation of new cells.

As far as Germany is concerned, the initial post-89 euphoria and the subsequent reunification outshined the last high-profile assassinations committed by the RAF. In 1989 third-generation terrorists killed Alfred Herrhausen, chairman of the Deutsche Bank, with an explosive device and in 1991 Detlev Karsten Rohwedder, the manager responsible for the privatisation of former GDR assets, was murdered by three rifle shots. After a tentative ceasefire in 1992, it was clear that the experience of urban terrorism had reached its natural end; eventually in spring 1998 the RAF formally disbanded. With an eight-page letter the RAF declared the conclusion of their project, quoting Rosa Luxemburg's words 'the revolution says: I was, I am, I will be'.[192] Nevertheless, police authorities are drawing parallels between 1970s left-wing terrorism and a new anarchist group primarily active in Berlin: the *Hekla-Gruppe*.[193] The days of RAF urban terror might be gone but in 2011 more than 600 luxury cars were torched by anarchists and bottles with flammable liquids were found in railways tunnels, suggesting that new waves of violence are still possible.[194]

The end of the Cold War and subsequent facts had huge consequences for the two countries under examination. These events paved the way for the unification of the two German Republics and the dissolution of the old Italian political system. The neo-liberal political scientist Francis Fukuyama controversially defined the epilogue of the socialist experience as 'the end of history', foreseeing the cultural impasse of 'living without alternative.'[195] He further predicted that, 'the end of history will be a very sad time... the willingness to risk one's life for purely abstract goal, the

[191] These two murders are at the base of a 2-part TV film *Attacco allo stato/Political Target* (Michele Soavi, 2006). For a brief analysis of its themes and reception see Giancarlo Lombardi "Primetime Terror: Representations of the Armed Struggle in TV Drama," in *Terrorism, Italian Style. Representations of Political Violence in Contemporary Italian Cinema*, eds. Ruth Glynn, Giancarlo Lombardi and Alan O'Leary (London: IGRS Books, 2012): 74-9. The film *Il vento, di sera/ The Wind in the Evening* (Andrea Adriatico, 2004) is dedicated to Marco Biagi. Drawing on the circumstances of his murder, the film explores how a gay man reacts to his partner's political assassination attempt.
[192] Aust, *The Baader-Meinhof Complex*, 437.
[193] Dominik Ehrentraut, "Polizeigewerkschaft sieht Parallelen zu RAF-Terror," *Die Welt*, 10 October 2011 <http://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article13652948/Polizeigewerkschaft-sieht-Parallelen-zu-RAF-Terror.html> (accessed 20 August 2014).
[194] Allan Hall, "Germans fear rise in left-wing terrorism after seven petrol bombs found in Berlin rail tunnel," *Daily Mail*, 11 October 2011 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2047791/Germans-fear-rise-left-wing-terrorism-seven-petrol-bombs-Berlin-rail-tunnel.html> (accessed 20 August 2014).
[195] Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (London: Penguin, 1992).

worldwide struggle that called forth daring, courage, imagination, and idealism, will be replaced by economic calculation, the endless solving of technical problems.'[196] Certainly recent events, such as the anti globalisation protests at G8 meetings or the Occupy Wall Street, are evidence of the possibility of new idealism and political engagement especially within young generations. As the old ideologies disappeared, the history of 1970s terrorism moved towards its own historicisation and normalisation. While Germany witnessed a general lack of interest in this issue throughout the 1990s, Italy's concerns for the armed struggle were only slightly lessened. The fascination for this phenomenon resurfaced just before the turn of the new millennium because it was finally possible to tackle terrorism, diverging it from sentiments and old ideologies.

The resurgence of interest in 1970s political violence is not a direct corollary of 9/11, but just a side-effect of wider preoccupations with global terrorism. With Al-Qaeda's offensives first in the US, then in Madrid and in London, the western world has been living in a general frenzy state with regard to international terrorism. As such, I do not believe that post 9/11 fears and counterterrorist actions constitute the exact cause of the revival of stories about the years of lead in the new millennium. Italy and Germany were not specific targets of Al-Qaeda's attacks. However, in light of international terrorism, it is possible that the memory of left-wing political violence functions as a shielding mechanism, a defensive obsession against unknown enemies and a more intimidating form of radicalism in the new millennium. The violence of the RAF and the BR was easily understandable and politically clear, whereas 9/11 and the recent ISIS offences remain less graspable. As a result, global terrorism might explain only in part the renewed attention in Italy and Germany towards the years of lead; but overall, this revival might simply be the natural consequence of reactivating old memories.

Furthermore, the fact that the resurgence of interest in left-wing terrorism acts as protective filter against much worse violence might also indicate a certain nostalgia for a past where political ideologies ruled and distinguishing enemies and allies was clear. Left-wing terrorism is reassessed in the new millennium also concomitantly with debates about the new global economic crisis and the divide between poor and rich. As such, stories about youth rebellion and social injustices reflect present-day preoccupations and mingle with different episodes from the past in a mutual effort. In

[196] Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?," *National Interest* (Summer 1989), 18.

other words, memories of 1970s political violence interconnect with present-day scenes of social inequality and reverberate in contemporary films about diverse traumatic histories.

Cinema and Left-wing Terrorism: a brief chronology

The following chapters will address representational strategies in fiction films from the 2000s that invoke left-wing terrorism; core issues such as dealing with the possibility of forgiving, the glamorisation of violence and the normalisation of history will be covered. Here I briefly summarise tendencies in the representation of left-wing terrorism throughout the preceding decades, as many postmillennial films are in continuous dialogue with previous clusters of films.

1970s

In West Germany the *Autoren* (Fassbinder, Schlöndorff and von Trotta) were the first ones to deal with the issue of urban guerrilla and through their films created counter-histories of the RAF 'even at the peak of terrorism'.[197] In the wake of the events of the German Autumn, a generation of filmmakers intertwined narratives about student protests, political activism and National Socialism's legacy in the Federal Republic in films such as the omnibus film *Germany in Autumn* and Reinhard Hauff's *Messer im Kopf/Knife in the Head* (1978). Common interpretations followed the contour of tragedy, reworking the myths of Hamlet, Oedipus and Antigone in order to understand the armed struggle of the RAF and, more broadly, Germany's postwar political history.[198] Conversely, in Italy the first authorial films on this topic only emerged in the 1980s, when the armed struggle, from left and right, started waning. In the preceding decade, many directors were reluctant to address the issue because of an ideological embarrassment, or maybe because of belonging to an older generation, so no particularly interested in the contestation waves of the 1970s.[199]

As an example, Federico Fellini preferred to use a metaphorical language rather than giving directly his personal view on the years of lead. In *Prova*

[197] Olaf Hoerschelmann, "'*Memoria Dextera Est'*: Film and Public Memory in Postwar Germany" *Cinema Journal* 40, no. 2 (Winter 2001): 78-97.
[198] For a short analysis of the relationship between New German Cinema and left-wing terrorism, see Thomas Elsaesser, "Antigone Agonistes: Urban Guerrilla or Guerrilla Urbanism?," *Rouge* n. 4 (2004) <http://www.rouge.com.au/4/antigone.html> (accessed 20 August 2014).
[199] Christian Uva, "Introduzione", in *Schermi di piombo*, 11.

d'orchestra/*Orchestra Rehearsal* (1978), probably the most politically engaged film of his oeuvre, the rebellion of a group of musicians against their authoritarian director becomes an allegory of Italian society. Fellini's reflection of this turbulent decade transpires from these lines written in his notebook in 1978:

> And what if I were to start with a convulsive, fragmented montage of sound, horrible violent excerpts from the newsreels over the last few years? A chaotic, terrifying soundtrack of gunshots, machine-gun fire, screams, and the demented drone of slogans being loudly chanted, punctuated with the wail of sirens, reverberating loud-speakers, the clash and roar of Molotov cocktails. […] The title on the screen will read *Prova d'orchestra*.[200]

Despite such timid attempts, during the late 1960s and 1970s popular genres were the only filter to grasp such a dim and violent reality; westerns, comedies and cop movies elaborated an imagery that could reflect the Italian socio-historical context of the years of lead. In particular, it is the *sottofilone* of the spaghetti western set in revolutionary Mexico, which tackles for the first time anti-imperialist and radical ideas in Italy.[201] Austin Fisher argues that titles such as *Quien sabe?*/*A Bullet for the General* (Damiano Damiani, 1967) and *Che c'entriamo noi con la rivoluzione*/*What Am I Doing in the Middle of the Revolution?* (Sergio Corbucci, 1972) expose 'domestic concerns of the Italian New Left' and reflect on the motivations of the student movement and the first waves of the armed struggle.[202] Later, the preferred genres to deal with contemporary instances became the cop-thriller movie, the *poliziottesco* and the satirical comedy, or *commedia all'italiana.* While the former tended to focus on conspiracy theories and activities of the neo-fascist radicals, as seen for example in *La polizia ringrazia*/*Execution Squad* (Stefano Vanzina, 1972), the latter - particularly evident in Dino Risis's *Dirty Weekend* - showed in a grotesque and polemical fashion how Italian society was changing under the gun-shots and bomb explosions.[203]

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[200] Qtd. in Tullio Kezich, *Federico Fellini: his Life and Work,* trans. Minna Proctor (Bristol: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 330.
[201] See Austin Fisher, *Radical Frontiers in the Spaghetti Western: Politics, Violence and Popular Italian Cinema* (London: IB Tauris, 2011).
[202] Ibid., 74.
[203] O'Leary, *Tragedia all'italiana*, 93. Much research is still needed to study the filtering role played by popular genres in 1970s Italy, in particular with reference to the sexy comedies of the late 1970s. For an

1980s

West German filmmakers treated the phenomenon of terrorism in the 1980s as an attempt to come to terms with this difficult period and to understand its complexity. These films position themselves in an area between official and critical discourses, presenting alternative views on the bloody decade and attempting to resist historicisation. During the twilight years of the New German Cinema, *Stammheim - Die Baader-Meinhof Gruppe vor Gericht*/*Stammheim - the Baader Meinhof Gang On Trial* (Reinhard Hauff, 1986) reengages with the topic of urban terrorism and offers a comprehensive documentation of the trial against the first RAF generation, thanks to Stefan Aust's contribution to the screenplay. This German-Swiss production focuses on the revolutionary romanticism of Baader and his gang, but also on the killings and robberies that the terrorists perpetrated. In its objectivity to present both perspectives it also outlines the state's response to terrorism which, as Stefan Wolff remarks, 'on several occasion traversed the line between legality and illegality'.[204] The film was accompanied by heavy disputes: first, there were death threats at a premiere in Hamburg and then, at the 1986 Berlin International Film Festival, butyric acid was thrown, rendering the screening unbearable due to the rancid stench.[205] The scandal reached greater proportions when Gina Lollobrigida, who was the Jury President at that year *Berlinale*, publicly voiced her opposition to awarding *Stammheim* the Golden Bear. She disputed the decision of the majority of the jury threatening to abandon the ceremony, because she found Hauff's film an abhorrent 'terrorist concoction'.[206]

In the same year the RAF reached visibility with another film: Markus Imhoof's *Die Reise/The Journey* (1986), an adaptation of the homonymous novel by

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overview see Andrea Pergolari, "La fisionomia del terrorismo nero nel cinema poliziesco italiano degli anni '70", in *Schermi di piombo: Il terrorismo nel cinema italiano*, ed. Christian Uva, (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2007), 159-72; and for an detailed case-study of the cop-thriller genre, Austin Fisher, "Il braccio violento della legge: Revelation, Conspiracy and the Politics of Violence in the poliziottesco," *Journal of Italian Cinema and Media Studies* 2, no. 2 (2014): 167-81.

[204] Stefan Wolff, "The Fictionalisation of Terrorism", in *100 years of European Cinema. Entertainment or Ideology?*, eds. Diana Holmes and Alison Smith (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), 126.

[205] Herbert Spaich, "Berlinale Legenden: 'Stammheim & Lollo'" *Filmspaicher Blog SWR*, 18 February 2010. <http://www.swr.de/blog/filmspaicher/2010/02/18/berlinale-legenden-stammheim-lollo/> (accessed 30 August 2014).

[206] Ibid. See also the interview with Gina Lollobrigida appeared in *Der Spiegel* on 3 March 1986, 137-8. "Das Votum war vorfabriziert" <http://magazin.spiegel.de/EpubDelivery/spiegel/pdf/13516702> (accessed 30 August 2014).

Gudrun Ensslin's former partner, Bernward Vesper.[207] Imhoof tried to understand the roots of terrorism in a similar fashion to von Trotta's film *The German Sisters,* linking the personal to the political. Sabine Hake reads this effort as 'the labour of mourning that connected the "German Autumn" to the unresolved legacies of the Third Reich and the failed utopias of the student movement'.[208] *The Journey* recounts, in fact, two childhood stories: the first one deals with Vesper himself as a son of a famous Nazi poet; the second one narrates how this child becomes involved in revolutionary groups, having a son with one of the RAF founders.

In Italy, the issue of repentant terrorists, the condition of high-security prisons and the means used by the authorities to survey and then capture members of the BR or other illegal organisations are silenced and do not emerge in public debates until the 1990s. Also because of the length of the court cases, a more profound reflection on these instances developed at a later stage, when the first incarcerated terrorists started receiving work permits.[209] Only the efforts of a small number of filmmakers countered the prevailing public debates on terrorism in the 1980s. These authorial attempts portray intimate and personal stories, which lack the universal vision of films such as those by von Trotta and Imhoof. In the Italian case the proximity to the rampage of violence encouraged a psychoanalytical interpretation of the events, something interpreted by Alan O'Leary in terms of an Oedipal conflict.[210] *La tragedia di un uomo ridicolo*/*The Tragedy of a Ridiculous Man* (1981) by Bernardo Bertolucci and *Colpire al cuore*/*A Blow to the Heart* (1982) by Gianni Amelio fit this model.

The latter, a low-budget production supported by state television, represents the directorial debut of Amelio and is dedicated to a fictional episode set during the years of lead. Emilio, the son of a university lecturer, is an adolescent with a difficult relationship with his father and his left-wing friends and former students. Following the accidental killing of one of these youngsters at a police checkpoint, Emilio decides to denounce his father to the authorities for protecting radicals and terrorists. *Blow to*

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[207] In 2012 a new film draws on the same source and investigates the relationship between Vesper and Ensslin, Andres Veiel's *If Not Us, Who?*.
[208] Sabine Hake, *German National Cinema* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 168.
[209] See for instance *La seconda volta*/*The Second Time* (Mimmo Calopresti, 1995), loosely based on the autobiographical book *Colpo alla nuca* by Sergio Lenci. The film recounts how Alberto Sajevo (Nanni Moretti) meets by chance Lisa (Valeria Bruni Tedeschi), the terrorist who shot him twelve years earlier. The man tries to make contact with his female attacker during her permits outside the prison, but he cannot find pacification with the past. For a complete analysis, Giancarlo Lombardi, "Unforgiven: revisiting Political Terrorism in *La seconda volta*," *Italica,* Vol. 77, No. 2 (Summer 2000): 199-213.
[210] O'Leary, "Italian Cinema and the 'Anni di Piombo'": 248.

the Heart unveils the generational conflict within Italian society, but rather than figuring a father who suspects his son of terrorist activity, it reverses the traditional imagery by letting Emilio defeat his paternal figure. Whereas Alan O'Leary suggests that 'the Oedipal characterization of conflict may well be a useful insight into the origins of Italian terrorism',[211] I argue that in this case it may simply reveal Amelio's attack against the gerontocracy of Italian institutions. As his debut feature, *A Blow to the Heart* displays the intolerance of a young man towards older generations controlling different aspects of society. In an interview included in the DVD extras, the director retells the difficult production of the film and the subsequent battles for its distribution, as RAI postponed its screening on television for five years.

1990s

West German society largely forgot the RAF by the mid 1980s, despite occasional attacks by third generation terrorists. As a film topic, the RAF disappeared until 1997 when a certain temporal detachment from the cruellest events allowed post-unification Germany to further investigate the nature of political violence with the TV film *Deathgame*.[212] As mentioned in the introduction, Breloer's work reignited the interest in this troubled historical period on the twentieth anniversary of Hanns Martin Schleyer's kidnapping; but it remains an isolated occurrence overshadowed by more contemporary concerns about German reunification. The late 1990s constituted, however, the cradle of cultural phenomena, which would become evident only in film production of the 2000s.

In Italy, for instance, a series of films made during the mid 1990s showed an effort to consign the terrorist past to history, though sometimes disclosing the prematurity of this attempt. Cristina Comencini's *La fine è nota/The End Is Known* (1992), Mimmo Calopresti's *La seconda volta/The Second Time* (1995) and Wilma Labate's *La mia generazione/My Generation* (1996) belong to this group and are probably the most representative examples of the concerns about terrorism in the

[211] Ibid, 247.

[212] In 1992, the year of a first tentative ceasefire, a comedy about political violence was realized: *Die Terroristen!/The Terrorists!* (Philip Gröning). This is an exceptional film: it is a comedy set in the Berlin Republic which has as protagonists a group of failed revolutionaries who plan on attacking the new chancellor. Very often it is overlooked in studies on terrorism and cinema, despite being in competition at the 1993 Sundance Film Festival. I will briefly address it in Chapter Five, comparing it with new millennium comedies.

1990s. I refrain from going through each of the titles listed, and instead indicate some of the commonalities of this cluster: the humanisation of the figure of the terrorist, the turn to the victim in Italian culture and the legacy of reduced sentences and pardon.[213] The same concerns emerge in productions at the turn of the new millennium, as filmmakers believe that the process of dealing with the past was an unfinished business, and hence I will briefly return to this dialogue in the following chapter.

2000s

The following chapters outline the variety of tropes and genres adopted by filmmakers in the first decade of the new millennium to reflect on the legacy of 1970s political violence in the present. This thesis of course does not provide a complete and exclusive list of motifs related to political violence present in contemporary German and Italian cinema. For instance, I did not include films such as Silvio Bandinelli's *Anni di piombo/Emprise Sexuelle* (1999) and Bruce LaBruce's *The Raspberry Reich* (2004), which links left-wing terrorism with pornography, but constitute isolated experimentations.[214]

I would like to dedicate a few words on two different media products that have paid particular attention to the issue of terrorism: documentaries and TV dramas. Since the turn of the century, a large number of non-fiction films have started dealing with the afterlife of the RAF and the BR; they would deserve a distinct discussion, but they represent a heterogeneous group where similar patters are difficult to discern. Titles include Andres Veiel's *Black Box BRD* (2001),[215] Gerd Conradt's *Starbuck Holger Meins* (2001) and Alexander Oey's *Mein Leben als Terrorist: Hans-Joachim Klein/My Life as a Terrorist: Hans-Joachim Klein* (2006). Despite their differences in style, content and aim, I interpret this new wave of documentaries as an attempt to reveal the partialness of every recollection and the role of sentiments in forging memories. These

[213] Giancarlo Lombardi categorises these films as 'cinema of indulto', given that this cluster maintains the early-release of political prisoners, qtd in O'Leary, *Tragedia all'italiana*, 187. See also Lombardi, "Virgil, Dante, Blade Runner, and Italian terrorism. The Concept of *Pietas* in *La seconda volta* and *La mia generazione*" *Romance Languages Annual*, Vol. XI (2000): 191-6.

[214] In the latter the fetishisation of terrorist symbols becomes literal: Kalashnikov and grenades are used as sex toys. I suggest that this turn to pornography is a further proof of the normalisation of the history of the armed struggle.

[215] Chris Homewood considers this documentary in relation to the conflicts between generational and cultural memory, see his article "Challenging the Taboo: the Memory of West Germany's Terrorist Past in Andres Veiel's *Black Box BRD* (2001)," *New Cinemas: Journal of Contemporary Film*, Vol. 5, no. 2 (2007): 115-26.

efforts represent the starting points of new memorialisation practices that will be more widely evident in the years to come.

Shane O'Sullivan *Children of The Revolution* (2010), but also the Italian-German coproduction Luigi Maria Perotti's *L'infame e suo fratello/The Villain and his Brother* (2008), Giovanna Gagliardo's *Vittime/Victims* (2008) and Pippo Del Bono's *Sangue/Blood* (2013) are particularly interested in exploring the notion of 'victims of terrorism', and its shifting interpretation towards 'survivors of terrorism',[216] hence including children and relatives of terrorists and targets. Fiction films have been at the vanguard of this phenomenon, as we will see in the following chapter, and continue to challenge previous paradigms of sufferance.

Moreover, the issue of 1970s political violence has become the subject of prime-time TV entertainment; broadcasters have, produced a variety of docu-films set during the years of lead, including ARD's *Mogadishu* (Roland Suso Richter, 2008) and *In den besten Jahren/In the Best Years* (Hartmut Schoen, 2011), and the recent RAI 1's trilogy *Gli anni spezzati/The Broken Years* (Graziano Diana, 2014). Attention is drawn to them to signal new directions in the memorialisation of the years of lead. However, these productions seem quite conservative; by targeting large audiences they showcase the popularisation of the terrorist discourse through generic formulae and consensual narratives.

In the following chapters we shall see how, fictional accounts alternate between exploring unheard stories and reinforcing or challenging previous models.

[216] Elsaesser, *German Cinema: Terror and Trauma*, 146.

Chapter Two

The Presentness of Terrorism: Crisis and Impossible Reconciliation in *The State I Am In* (Christian Petzold, 2000) and *Reconciled* (Rosalia Polizzi, 2000)

> And when you realise it's all about children, there can be neither victims nor perpetrators; we are all children traumatised by a History, which we did not choose for ourselves and did not belong to us. And I discovered a harsh truth: every child carries on his shoulders the guilt of the parents, and sooner or later this shame must be confronted.
>
> Anna Negri[217]

The first part of the thesis explores the process of reconciliation with the terrorist past, which Italy and Germany are currently endeavouring. In particular, I am interested in how postmillennial films address the issue of forgiveness, here intended as the effect of dissociating the agent of a fault from his/her action.[218] In light of Paul Ricoeur's theory on 'the impossibility of genuine political institutions of forgiveness',[219] cultural artefacts, and specifically fiction films, call for vigilance against staged scenes of confessing and repenting and thus, the banalisation of the act of forgiveness. At the same time, recent examples proffer the possibility of this 'gift', as an exceptional and extraordinary act.[220] As such, many postmillennial films concern this struggle between the request for and the offer of forgiveness between perpetrators, victims and the state,

[217] Negri, *Con un piede impigliato nella storia,* 267. In this memoir Anna recounts her experience of the years of lead as the daughter of Antonio Negri, a university professor associated with the extra-parliamentary left-wing group *Autonomia* (Autonomy). He was sentenced to thirty years prison for being the instigator and ideologue of a murder committed by a BR terrorist. While out of prison, he escaped to France and remained in exile for several years before returning to Italy and finishing his sentence.

[218] Here I follow Paul Ricoeur's argument in *Memory, History and Forgetting,* 490. Forgiveness is a much-debated philosophical notion. Hannah Arendt and Jacques Derrida take different positions, cf. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 236-47; Jacques Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, transl. by Mark Dooley and Michael Hughes (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 27-60.

[219] Ricoeur, *Memory, History and Forgetting*, 459.

[220] Ibid., 480. Ricoeur points out that the etymology and semantics of many languages encourage this comparison: gift-forgiving, *dono-perdono*, *Geben-Vergeben*, *don-pardon*.

in order to move on and consign this period to history; ultimately they invite us to reconsider the limits of reconciliation and the risks of forgetting to achieve this project.

This chapter in particular considers two different films set at the turn of the new millennium: Christian Petzold's *The State I Am In* and Rosalia Polizzi's *Reconciled.* Whereas the former focuses on a couple of unrepentant terrorists on the run and the latter investigates the reintegration into society of an ex-terrorist who extinguished his prison sentence, they both consider the point of view of teenagers, the offspring of terrorists and political activists. Although these examples do not include the perspective of relatives of victims of terrorist attacks, they signal a change in representational modes and are useful to reveal the process of reconciliation in these countries and how society is transitioning to a post-conflict environment.

Since the mid-1990s both filmmakers had been researching ideas for films on terrorism,[221] but eventually *The State I Am In* and *Reconciled* were released in theatres in 2001 and 2002 respectively. These films, therefore, inaugurate a new cluster of works that is in dialogue with previous cinematic traditions, such as the heritage of the New German Cinema and the Italian 'cinema of *indulto*',[222] but is also symptomatic of new concerns, namely the new divide between rich and poor. Certainly Gerrit-Jan Berendse and Ingo Cornils are correct when they claim that the new millennium does not constitute a *real* caesura when it comes to the cultural memory of terrorism[223] – certain characteristic features of films from the 2000s, such as the family trope, can be traced in earlier productions. However, I also believe that the ramifications of the years of lead resurfaced with more force *only* following events at the turn of the new millennium, since as I have explained in the previous chapter, national and international preoccupations sided the process of coming to terms with left-wing terrorism. This time filmmakers return to the issue of political violence, responding to more immediate and contemporary implications. *The State I Am In* and *Reconciled*

[221] Cf. the interview between Christian Petzold and Barbara Auer in the Region 1 DVD extras of *The State I Am In* and Rosalia Polizzi's interview by Beatrice Rutiloni held in Berlin on 2 February 2001, <http://www.film.it/articolo/polizzi> (accessed 20 August 2014).
[222] Films such as *The Second Time* by Mimmo Calopresti and *My Generation* by Wilma Labate are often categorised under Giancarlo Lombardi's notion of 'cinema of *indulto'*. See the brief categorisation of the films from the 1990s in the previous chapter.
[223] My emphasis. Gerrit-Jan Berendse and Ingo Cornils, "Introduction: The Long Shadow of Terrorism," 17.

demonstrate that at the beginning of the new millennium the working through of those traumatic memories was still incomplete, but there was a clear need for updating representational strategies when addressing political violence.

This chapter has, therefore, two central concerns. Firstly, I consider the filmmakers' adoption of the figure of the adolescent as point of view for the exploration of the terrorist discourse in the present. Specifically, Petzold chooses as a protagonist a fifteen-year old girl, daughter of terrorist fugitives, whereas Polizzi makes a group of Italian teenagers observe the reunion of a former terrorist with his old friends. Adolescence represents an important rite of passage, as it centres on the experience of transition, physical and psychological change, becoming-other, adult, but also crisis with the original family.[224] I suggest, therefore, that this trope functions as a metaphor for channelling new memories about the years of lead, showing how previous discourses reached a turning point and now necessitate new paradigms. In other words, these films foreground how the recollection of events and individuals associated with 1970s political violence must evolve.

By shifting the attention to children and adolescents, *The State I Am In* and *Reconciled* are indicative and at the forefront of a recent change in memory dynamics. The 2000s saw the emergence of autobiographical memoirs by the children of victims of terrorist attacks, among them Mario Calabresi's *Spingendo la notte più in là* (2007), published in English as *Pushing Past the Night* (2009) and Benedetta Tobagi's *Come mi batte forte il cuore (When my Heart Pounds Fast. The Story of my Father*, 2009).[225] At the same time, the offspring of high-profile terrorists raised their voice – the opening quote from Negri's book supports this – and through different forms attested their will to mourn the loss of their parents and a 'normal' childhood, inscribing them

[224] For further investigation on the notion of adolescence, particularly girlhood, in relation to popular culture see Catherine Driscoll, *Girls. Feminine Adolescence in Popular Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

[225] Mario Calabresi is the current editor-in-chief of the national newspaper *La Stampa*; he is the son of police commissioner Luigi, assassinated in 1972 by a commando of *Lotta Continua,* after a smear campaign linking him to the death of the anarchist Giuseppe Pinelli. Benedetta Tobagi followed the steps of his father Walter, a journalist of the *Corriere della Sera* murdered by the BR in 1980. Associations which group families of victims of terrorism loudly protested against many postmillennial films centered on the perpetrators. This is an aspect to which I will return in Chapter Four, when dealing with the glamorisation of the armed struggle in Uli Edel's *The Baader Meinhof Complex* and Renato De Maria's *The Front Line*.

among the victims of the years of lead.[226] Although *The State I Am In* and *Reconciled* still follow terrorist centred-narratives, by introducing the perspective of two teenage girls they prelude to what Ruth Glynn identifies as 'the turn to the victim', the emergence of counter-memories in the public sphere, developed by relatives of victims of terrorism in order to balance the account of this historical period.[227]

When addressing issues related to political violence, films that centre on moments of transition and crisis, such as the passage from childhood to adulthood, are not rare. It is sufficient to think about how in Daniele Lucchetti's *My Brother Is an Only Child* the physical maturity of the younger sibling, Accio, goes hand in hand with his political involvement in extra-parliamentary politics.[228] Film seems, therefore, the ideal medium to channel the strong feelings associated with moments of transformation. The kind of cinema addressed here revolves around the legacy of 1970s political violence at the beginning of the new millennium; left-wing terrorism occupies a liminal state given the changed social and political context and is bound to a process of metamorphosis or implosion. In the following pages I explore how Petzold and Polizzi deploy the figure of the teenager to investigate the crisis of ideological terrorism, making these texts film of and in crisis.[229] I argue that in their ambiguous finales these films foreground the difficulty, or even impossibility, of progression and reconciliation with such a difficult past; as such, they also foreground an impasse in the process of forgiving and the precarious nature of making sense of political violence in the present.

Secondly, this chapter considers the way in which the selected case studies Petzold and Polizzi dialogue with other traumatic memories and problematic situations. Much scholarship has drawn parallels between *The State I Am In* and West German film history, specifically with Margarethe von Trotta's *The German Sisters* in their

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[226] For example, Bettina Röhl, one of the twin daughters of *konkret*'s founder Klaus Rainer Röhl and Ulrike Meinhof, voiced her anger, publishing her family's biography *So macht Kommunismus spass! Ulrike Meinhof, Klaus Rainer Röhl und die Akte konkret* (Hamburg: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 2007).
[227] Ruth Glynn, "The 'Turn to the Victim' in Italian Culture: Victim-centred Narratives of the anni di piombo," *Modern Italy* vol. 18 (2013): 373-90.
[228] In his pubescent years Accio is shown close to new-fascist ideology, then in his late teens he espouses radical left-wing politics and finally reaches maturity when he abandons political idealism and chooses to take care of his family.
[229] This could also prefigure a crisis in representational strategies. As briefly mentioned in the previous chapter the new millennium shows a particular interest in stories about victims (not solely the illustrious ones, i.e. Aldo Moro), thus the crisis of films focused solely on terrorists.

common depiction of a school screening of Alain Resnais' *Nuit et brouillard*/*Night and Fog* (1955).[230] The screening of the documentary in Petzold's film constitutes the most explicit reference to the history of the representation of German urban guerrilla and as such, it functions as a form of 'media archaeology'.[231] However, such a focus on this deliberate reference, and the Nazi past as the historical source of left-wing terrorism, seems to conceal contemporary preoccupations, such as the negative consequences associated with consumerism and globalisation, which are an equally important part of the film. As far as *Reconciled* is concerned, critics have mainly concentrated on the character of Roberto, the former terrorist, playing down, instead, Polizzi's attempts to investigate the incommunicability between generations: between adolescents and their parents belonging to the '68 generation.[232] Moreover, by linking the experience of state terrorism during the military dictatorship in Argentina with the armed struggle in 1970s Italy through the characters of Malena and her teenage daughters, *Reconciled* breaks traditional discursive boundaries. I thus believe that it is necessary to reconsider the present-ness of these films, rather than solely the metaphors of haunting history they invoke or the way they reinvent past traditions. Broader cultural implications suggest that these films are very much rooted in issues at the turn of the millennium, as they reflect on new victims of oppression and the consequences of the end of old political ideologies.

The interconnection between memories of the years of lead with stories of other forms of violence, as well as with present-day problems related to globalisation, provide a first example of the new model of memory that I described in the

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[230] Compare the readings of Frank van Vree, "The Echo-Chamber of History," in *Mind the Screen: Media Concepts according to Thomas Elsaesser*, eds. Jaap Kooijman, Patricia Pisters and Wanda Strauven (Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP, 2008), 310-21, with Chris Homewood's two essays, "The Return of the 'Undead' History: The West German Terrorist as Vampire and the Problem of 'Normalizing' the Past in Margarethe von Trotta's *Die bleierne Zeit* (1981) and Christian Petzold's *Die innere Sicherheit* (2001)," in *German Culture, Politics, and Literature into the Twenty-First Century: Beyond Normalization*, edited by Stuart Taberner and Paul Cooke (Boston: Camden House, 2006), 121-35 and "Von Trotta's *The German Sisters* and Petzold's *The State I am In*: Discoursive Boundaries in the Film of the New German Cinema to the Present day," *Studies in European Cinema* 2.2 (2005): 93-102.

[231] "It is a scene which contains a kind of archeology of terrorism" (eine Szene […] die eine Art Archäologie des Terrorismus enthält) in Merten Worthmann, "Leben nach dem Terror. Christian Petzolds Film 'Die innere Sicherheit'," *Die Zeit,* 1 February 2001, n.6 <http://www.zeit.de/2001/06/Leben_nach_dem_Terror> (accessed 20 August 2014).

[232] See for instance the analysis of the film in Maurizio Fantoni Minella, *Paradise Now! Sulle barricate con la macchina da presa. Cinema e rivoluzione negli anni sessanta e settanta* (Venice: Marsilio, 2010), 144-5.

introduction: interconnected memory. The connective turn of memory, theorised first by Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider and then further refined by Max Silverman and Michael Rotheberg among others, suggests that rather than competing for attention, memories of traumatic events are mutually enhanced and encourage public interest in their own atrocities.[233] The interconnected memories present in *The State I Am In* and *Reconciled* visualise a network of past recollections, mediated souvenirs and intertextual references which are rhizomatic[234] rather than linear. But most importantly, these examples will demonstrate two major aspects of what I call interconnected memory: the diachronic accumulation of images belonging to past cinematic traditions, and the transformation of these memories under the influence of present-day issue and recollections from different places. In the following I will argue that both films reactivate the topic of left-wing terrorism by invoking different traces from the past and from different locations. In these films memories about 1970s political violence, the Holocaust, the Argentinian *desaparesidos* and present-day social injustices interact, creating new memory dynamics: interconnected memories. I will also make distinctions between these exchanges across nations and histories, because memories can be in competition between each other and not necessarily work in mutual help. Before turning to the analysis of the adolescence trope I will first introduce the films' plots, their filmmakers and the context of production.

The State I Am In: the story of an anachronistic terrorist couple.

Premiered at the 2000 Venice Film Festival, *The State I Am In* hit theatres in January 2001, when a controversy involving the then Vice Chancellor and Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, Hans-Joachim Klein, a former terrorist of the *Rote Zellen*, and Bettina Röhl, a journalist and daughter of the RAF-leader Ulrike Meinhof erupted.[235]

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[233] Cf. the notions of cosmopolitan, palimpsestic and multidirectional memory in Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, "Memory Unbound: The Holocaust and the Formation of Cosmopolitan Memory," *European Journal of Social Theory* 5.1 (2002): 87-106, Max Silverman's *Palimpsestic Memory* and Michael Rothberg's *Multidirectional Memory*.

[234] I use the term 'rhyzomatic' following Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's theorisation in *A Thousand Plateaux,* transl. Brian Massumi (London and New York: Continuum, 2004). For Deleuze and Guattari the ideal form of memory is the one that 'include forgetting as a process' (17).

[235] While working on a critical biography of the Green Party politician, Röhl discovered some old pictures showing Fischer and his radical friends, including Klein, beating a policeman during a demonstration. Although the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* had published these photographs in 1973,

The media coverage of the film coincided with the minister's testimony at a legal proceeding for parole of the former terrorist. Petzold could not have wished a better launch for the film. *The State I Am In* was ther right film at the right time: terrorism was once again an increasingly hot issue. The film represents a pessimistic study of the downfall of a couple of former left-wing terrorists. For Ilka Rasch, this is a film that questions the motives of the ideological struggle, its legacy in the present and the impact on unified Germany.[236] At the same time, however, this is a work which reflects on what it means being adolescent in the new millennium. Petzold offers a bleak look at future generations, who without ideologies, role models and submerged by consumerism have an unclear future in front of them.

The film narrates how a couple of left-wing terrorists,[237] Hans (Ricky Müller) and Clara (Barbara Auer), return to Germany with their teenage daughter Jeanne (Julia Hummer) after more than fifteen years on the run across Europe. Following a burglary in their Portuguese apartment, Hans and Clara travel north, as their funds and fake passports, which allowed them to maintain an apparently normal familiar life, are all gone. As they try to contact former comrades and secure some resources for their final destination, Brazil, Hans and Clara discovers a different country, where the ideology they still cling to is now dead. Finding little support from their previous allies, they decide to pull one last bank robbery, which, however, has tragic consequences: Hans is seriously injured during the assault. Jeanne, in an attempt to liberate herself from the oppressive secretive family's lifestyle, reveals their true identities to Heinrich (Bilge Bingul), a boy she got to know in Portugal and later meets again in Germany, who decides to denounce the family to the police. In a final confrontation, the Volvo in which the family travels capsizes after a car chase with an anti-terrorism squad. Jeanne seems the only survivor of the crash.

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she sold them as new to magazines *Stern* and *Bild*, severely discrediting his image, but also loosing her credibility as a journalist.

[236] Ilka Rasch, "The Generation Gap: The Reappropriation of the Red Army Faction in Contemporary German Film," in *Generational Shifts in Contemporary German Cuture*, eds. Laurel Cohen-Pfister and Susanne Vees-Gulani (New York: Camden House, 2010), 188.

[237] In the DVD audio commentary to the film Petzold affirms that he intentionally did not mention the RAF, or other splinter terrorist group of the 1970s, as he wanted to create a universal story, rather than a precise reflection on the legacy of the RAF. In an interview with Christiane Peitz that appeared on *Der Tagesspiegel* on 25 January 2001, Petzold also mentioned that pressure from TV networks supporting his production (Arte/WDR and the Hessischer Rundfunk) partially forced him to deliberately avoid historical clues. There are, however, valid hints that associate the family with the RAF: for instance the reading of Melville's *Moby Dick*, which the real imprisoned RAF terrorists used as a code book in Stammheim.

The media buzz and the events surrounding the release of the film contributed to its earning the German Film Prize in 2001 and turned it into a box-office success, considering its status as a small-scale art film.[238] I decided to include Petzold's *The State I Am In* in my analysis of politically motivated violence not only because it received much attention by critics and scholarship, but precisely because, unlike any of its new millennial successors, the film is unique in capturing the harsh reality of left-wing terrorism without romanticising or mythically constructing the RAF. Moreover, this is an interesting case study, which explores the generational confrontation between parents belonging to the '68 generation and children raised in a post-Cold War Europe. It also reflects on the relationship between political activists who managed to gain political and economical power and terrorists, who were unable to be reintegrated into society; in other words this is an analysis between winners and losers.

The State I Am In is a unique case study also because, differently from other films this thesis considers, it is the least aesthetically conventional. Christian Petzold is the most prolific and renowned director associated with the Berlin School, a term which initially identified a group of artistically innovative filmmakers – among them Angela Schanelec and Thomas Arslan – who graduated from the *Deutschen Film und Fernsehakademie Berlin* under the mentorship of the late Harun Farocki.[239] According to Paul Cooke the point of connection between these directors is 'their exploration of cinematic realism in both the form and content of the work produced'.[240] In fact, *The State I Am In* is well rooted in the reality of post-unification German society, exploring at the same time the legacy of 1970s armed struggle and the difficulties associated with globalisation and the changed labour market in the new millennium. From a stylistic point of view, this realism, however, does not produce a documentary-style

[238] Roughly 120,000 tickets sold. See box office data in <http://insidekino.com/DJahr/D2001B.html> (accessed 1 September 2014). To this day, *The State I Am In* is the most successful 'Berlin School' film production. Marco Abel confirms that the majority of these art films attracts around 30,000 theatrical viewers, but reaches larger audiences during their TV screenings. For details see his essay "Imagining Germany: The (Political) Cinema of Christian Petzold," in *The Collapse of the Conventional German Films and its Politics at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Jaimey Fisher and Brad Prager (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2010), 279-80.

[239] The label is now used to described the work of a number of filmmakers graduated from different film schools in the German-speaking world: Valeska Griseback from Wien, Benjamin Heisenberg from Münich and Maria Speth from HFF 'Konrad Wolf' in Potsdam-Babelsberg to name a few. For a complete overview of the movement see Marco Abel, *The Counter-Cinema of the Berlin School* (Boston: Camden House, 2013).

[240] Paul Cooke, *Contemporary German Cinema* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2013), 72

naturalism – there are no hand-held shaky camera shots like in the Dogme movement – but rather static long takes, long and wide shots, as well as beautifully accurate framing. The slow pace and the limited use of music and extra-diegetic sound are further manifestations of what Marco Abel defines as 'an aesthetic of reduction', a new sensibility towards reality that associates Petzold's work with those of the Dardenne brothers, Michael Haneke and Abbas Kiarostami.[241]

Analysing in depth the cinematic style of *The State I Am In* – and what it shares with the aesthetics of other cinematic movements like slow cinema – would go beyond the scope of this chapter. It is, nevertheless, important to situate this text within the aesthetics of the Berlin School because, as the filmmaker himself has often remarked, political resistance is foremost '*refusing* to make explicitly political films', given that political resistance 'lies in its specific aesthetic nature'.[242] The severe but minimalist aesthetic of *The State I Am In* is functional to the depiction of an out-of-time couple, who still inhabit the past. Without going into further detail about Petzold and the Berlin School, we shall see how, through different stylistic choices, similar issues are addressed by Rosalia Polizzi's work. Petzold would be dismissive of films like *Reconciled*, because of their over-narrated style, but I decided to include it in this comparison, since Polizzi' film shares the focus on the experience of the middle class, so dear to the Berlin school, and more importantly, the attention toward what happened to the '68 generation.[243]

Riconciliati or the Past that does not Pass

Presented at the 2000 Berlinale, but distributed in 2002, *Reconciled* is the second feature film of the Italian-Argentinian filmmaker Rosalia Polizzi, who received the prestigious Amidei award at the Venice International Film Festival for her debut fiction film *Anni ribelli/Laura: The Rebel Years* (1994).[244] Polizzi was born in 1934

[241] Marco Abel, "Imagining Germany: The (Political) Cinema of Christian Petzold," 260.
[242] Ibid, 258.
[243] Both filmmakers share also a peculiar attention towards the adolescence world, as *The State I Am In* and *Reconciled* respectively constitute the basis and continuation of further exploration of teenage dynamics.
[244] Set in Buenos Aires, the film narrates the turbulent relationship between a teenage girl and her possessive father in the early 1950s.

and moved to Italy in 1961 in order to study at the *Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia* and stayed in Italy until shortly before her sudden death, which occurred in Buenos Aires in October 2011. Described as a 'rebel, feminist and communist',[245] she primarily worked for the Italian public broadcaster RAI, writing and producing docufiction and reportages, as well as directing documentaries, about abortion, civil rights and education since the 1970s.[246] *Reconciled* did not live up to the expectations of Polizzi's first feature, a historical drama about a teenage girl set on the background of the Argentinian coup against Peron. Critics quickly attacked the melodramatic dialogues and televisual aesthetics of *Reconciled*, condemning the fact that it received state funding – the script was judged worth of cultural merit by the national film commission.[247] Despite the box-office fiasco and its stylistic weaknesses, this is a work worth exploring, particularly for the depiction of the melancholia that surrounds those who have put their days of protest behind. Moreover, this is probably the only contemporary film that addresses the legacy of left-wing terrorism from the perspective of younger generations, and specifically teenagers.[248]

Set over an early September weekend at the beginning of the new millennium, the film narrates the private and political conflicts of a group of former '68 activists, and their children, who meet again after many years, in order to celebrate the release from prison of an old friend: Roberto Ferro (Franco Castellano). Roberto, after spending eighteen years in jail for murdering judge Urbano Gandolfi in 1981, embarks on a mission to discover who gave away his hideout, but also tries to make the most of his situation, negotiating interviews with his old friends, now become entrepreneurs, journalists and psychologists. Among them, Malena (Beatriz Spelzini), the former lover of Roberto, leads a more modest life, retaining her youthful ideals, but struggling to come to terms with a personal trauma: her escape from the Argentinian Dirty

[245] Roberto Silvestri, "La «tanghera» femminista del cinema italiano," *Il Manifesto* 27 October 2011. <http://www.ilmanifesto.it/attualita/notizie/mricN/5638/> (accessed 1 September 2014)
[246] Involved with female movements since 1977, Polizzi realises several documentaries thanks to the support of Unitelefilm, the production company of the PCI; among them it is worth mentioning *La donna è cambiata*, *L'Italia deve cambiare/The Woman Has Changed, so Italy Must Change* (1977) and *Madre ma come?/Mother, but How?* (1979)
[247] Gabriella Gallozzi, "Esce «Riconciliati» su una rivoluzione mai avvenuta," *L'Unità*, 12 Marzo 2002, 23.
[248] In the vast corpus of Italian films about the years of lead there are several historical dramas which showcase young students, often during the passage from high school to university, such as the aforementioned *My Brother Is an Only Child* and *The Big Dream*, but, to my knowledge, younger teenagers or children are rarely considered.

War.[249] Arriving pregnant in Italy in the early 1980s after running away from torture, she was saved by Roberto and his friends but now faces bouts of rebellion from her teenage daughters: Eva (Ana Valeria Dini) and Vichi (Veronica Visentin). Enjoying the last few days of holiday before the start of the school year, the sisters and their group of friends provide a vantage point to the understanding of the adults' discussion in a very politicised home.

Riconciliati is a claustrophobic drama, which recalls a recent German production, Nina Grosse's *Das Wochenende/The Weekend* (2012), where old suspicions and accusations emerge when relatives and friends of an ex RAF terrorist meet on the occasion of his release from prison. Probably because of the director's background, Polizzi's film addresses a very specific audience: a left-wing constituency that travelled through the perils of that season of violent contestation. Overall, Polizzi is, however, quite pessimistic towards the '68 generation she observes, showing a self-absorbed group of former radicals who nostalgically long for their youth. As one of the former radicals, now a TV newsreader, explains, his generation perceives: 'the discomfort of what we were and the sorrow of not being it any longer'. The reconciliation, the title suggests, refers to the efforts of the adult protagonists to accept and make peace with the losses of their youth.[250] This is a film which confirms that 1968 and the following waves of protests are not consigned to history, but the burden of false utopias weights down those who took part in them.

Critics interpret this nostalgic longing in opposing ways. According to Alan O'Leary, *Reconciled* is 'a late film in that it responds to films made in the previous decade – especially Calopresti's *The Second Time*, which shows the victim's exasperation at the fact that the terrorists had become respected voices, celebrity authors'.[251] *Riconciliati* gives voice to a certain uneasiness towards the reintroduction of former terrorists into society, the granting of reduction of sentences or early parole, and in particular, their over-exposition on mass media throughout the late 1990s. In

[249] The term *guerra sucia* encompasses various forms of urban and rural warfare performed by military forces against Peronist guerrilla, political dissidents and leftwing activists including students and journalists. Although its chronology is still debated, forms of state terrorism started in Argentina in 1969 before expanding from 1976 to 1983.
[250] Adele De Gennaro, "Riconciliati," *Film.it Il canale cinema de La stampa.it,* 14 March 2003, <http://www.film.it/news/film/dettaglio/art/riconciliati-15791/> (accessed 30 August 2014).
[251] O'Leary, *Tragedia all'italiana*, 206.

effect, Roberto, the ex-convict, announces that he will tell his story maybe in a TV interview or in a memoir. This creates some uneasiness among the younger collaborators in the local TV station; nonetheless, he is warmly welcomed by his friends 'as the homecoming of the "best of us"',[252] despite his narcissistic outburst. The film explicitly reveals its political scope, reopening the discussion about amnesty and pardon for former terrorists, by having a journalist introduce Roberto with these words:

> We would like that this interview could be an opportunity to talk about those, who renounced the armed struggle, but are still in jail after fifteen or even twenty years. In a democratic society like ours, the parliament must find a solution for them. The *indulto* which is so much debated these days, is a proceeding which to be passed needs the most ample majority of political forces.[253]

O'Leary is correct when he argues that the film is indeed an exploration of political problems, which developed in the 1990s, parole concessions and former terrorists selling their stories to journalists and publishing houses, but *Reconciled* is equally interested in the present-ness of terrorism. Christian Uva maintains that the film reflects the spirit of the new millennium, and its interest in the 'generational question', developing the motif 'how we were and how we have become'.[254] And as such, *Reconciled* preludes a series of works centred on the vicissitudes of the members of the '68 generation, such as the controversial documentary *Red Sunrise* by Gianfranco Pannone, which reunites the founders of the BR in the places of their first meetings. Nevertheless, by colliding different memories and shifting the focus on the teenager characters, I shall further confirm how the film breaks with the past and looks forward to the new generations and how they make sense of their parents' history.

As I will show in the second part of this chapter, *Reconciled* is a failed attempt to link the experience of military dictatorship with the urban guerrilla during the years of lead. The film is to be praised for giving voice to the memories of Italian left-wing

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[252] Ibid.
[253] *Indulto* should be distinguished by similar legal notions such as amnesty or pardon, which imply, instead, the forgiveness of a crime *and* the cancellation of a penalty. *Indulto* applies to the whole incarcerated population and refers to a procedure granted by a large parliamentary majority whereby the remainder of a prison's term is rescinded.
[254] Christian Uva, *Schermi di Piombo*, 87.

sympathisers harassed by the police for information in the long 1970s, but when it compares the memory of the Argentinian tortured and the Italian left-wing activists Polizzi goes into a dangerous territory. The competition of these two distinct memories is problematic because they are put on the same level, while the use of violence against the state by extra-parliamentary Italian groups is belittled. Polizzi does not seem to fully condemn the character of Roberto, the former terrorist who does show only a minimal sense of contrition but is instead exalted by his friends.

From a leaden childhood to a reactionary adolescence: the teenager as a figure of transition

A crucial trend within post-war European cinema has been the preoccupation with children. In Italian Neorealism, for instance, children function both as a warning for the crisis of social institutions and symbols of utopian hope for the future. In her work *The Child in Film*, Karen Lury maintains that children are liminal but powerful agents, which allow filmmakers to play with cinematic temporal and spatial conventions.[255] Most importantly, children in films provide a different point of view, as they 'manage not their apparent strangeness, but how they can reveal the strangeness of the world in which they live.'[256] As a result, the children's gaze has often been adopted to investigate historical changes, including revolutions and political upheavals in order to provide a different perspective from the adult gaze. *La faute à Fidel/Blame it on Fidel* (Julie Gavras, 2006), for instance, recounts through the eyes of a 9-year-old girl the radical changes taking place in her household, as her parents are inspired by political activism in 1970s Paris. Although images of children, often daughters and sons of terrorists or victims, appear in cinematic representations of the years of lead,[257] their point of view is seldom considered and even more rarely adolescents are examined.

Jeanne and the two sisters Vichi and Eva are, therefore, peculiar characters who struggle to find their place and are set apart from the (ab)normal world that adults inhabit. I prefer to consider these characters as teenagers, rather than simply children

[255] Karen Lury, *The Child in Film. Tears, Fears and Fairy Tales* (London: I.B. Taris, 2010).
[256] Ibid., 14
[257] Considering only post millennial films, children feature in biopics and historical films about terrorist groups, for instance Ulrike Meinhof's twins appear in *The Baader Meinhof Complex* and Gudrun Enslinn's son in *If not Us, Who?*. These however are not speaking roles.

of fifteen and sixteen-years old respectively, since this connotation underlines better their transition into adulthood and their in-between status. Indeed, Lury's interpretation is very apt also for the analysis of *The State I Am In* and *Reconciled*, as, the gaze of the teenage girls in these films sheds new light on terrorism and the '68 generation.

Although a significant literature about children in film exists,[258] representations of adolescents are rarely a part of the theoretical landscape of European cinema analysis. When thinking about adolescence as a rite of passage the poetics of American Independent cinema comes first to mind. Within American Independent Cinema, but also within Hollywood studios, the 'teen-pic' has become the genre par excellence for dealing with crisis.[259] Narratives of adolescent changes, which characterise for instance the *oeuvre* of Sophia Coppola, are well suited to explore the themes of crisis that characterise the passage from childhood to adulthood.[260] Although the case studies considered here are not films specifically targeted at teenagers, nor exactly 'teen-film', they share similar preoccupations and strategies, since the adolescents become a privileged point of view on the vicissitudes of the adults. In the context of my argumentation, I will borrow Anna Backman-Rogers' anthropological interpretation of the notion of crisis. She argues:

> Crisis […] has a very specific meaning and while the more common notion of the term as a period of heightened tension and angst is apt, as an anthropological concept it also has a more complex implication that denotes a period of becoming-other.[261]

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[258] See Debbie C. Olson and Andrew Scahill, eds. *Lost and Othered Children in Contemporary Cinema* (Plymouth: *Lexington Books, 2012*); Vicky Lebeau, *Childhood and Cinema* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008) and Emma Wilson, *Cinema's Missing Children* (London: Wallflower Press, 2003).

[259] In *Teen Film: a Critical Introduction* (London: Berg, 2011) Catherine Driscoll explores the historical development of the 'teen film' genre and counters disparaging connotations to these works. Thomas Docherty, instead, claims that the history of 'teen films' begins in the 1950s along with the decline of Hollywood studios; see his *Teenagers and Teenpics* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2002).

[260] The connection between adolescence, crisis and the works by Coppola is foregrounded in this biographical article, Anna Rogers, "Sofia Coppola," *Senses of Cinema* Issue 45 (November 2007) <http://sensesofcinema.com/2007/great-directors/sofia-coppola/> (accessed 15 August 2014).

[261] Anna Backman-Rogers, "Ephemeral bodies and threshold creatures: The crisis of the adolescent rite of passage in Sofia Coppola's 'The Virgin Suicides' and Gus Van Sant's 'Elephant'," *Necsus European Journal of Media Studies* Vol. 1, no. 1 Spring (2012): 149. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5117/NECSUS2012.1.ROGE> (accessed 15 August 2014).

It is my contention that *The State I Am In* and *Reconciled* are representative of different forms of crisis: the crisis of left-wing terrorism after the end of the Cold War, the crisis of a group of teenage girls and finally a crisis of cinema's representational strategies. I will pay particular attention to the markers of this critical point specifically I will consider the elements that hint at the metamorphosis of the adolescents in these films and the crisis of political ideologies.

The State I Am In embraces the idea that the personal is political in the sense that the film deals with the micro-politics of a family as a metaphor of greater changes occurring in post-unification Germany. Hans and Clara are unable to inhabit the present; through a complex system of strict moral rules they deny their own daughter a 'normal' childhood and adolescence.[262] Jeanne is home taught; she has no friends and minimal contact with the exterior world. She is forced to follow her parents' ideological tenets, making their underground lifestyle the cause of Jeanne's disjunction from reality. David Clarke interprets *The State I Am In* as critique of the generation of Jeanne's parents for their selfishness in imposing their ideology, and their lifestyle.[263] As such, Petzold seems to picture a bleak portrayal of that generation, as the adolescent Jeanne is torn by her parent's violent past and their anachronistic ideology.



Fig. 2.1 In Portugal Jeanne meets Heinrich in a bar by the sea.

[262] Interestingly also the second film of Petzold's 'ghost trilogy', *Gespenster/Ghosts* (2005) has as a protagonist a teenager, Nina a young offender in Berlin, played again by Julia Hummer.
[263] David Clarke, "'Capitalism Has No More Natural Enemies': The Berlin School," in *A Companion to German Cinema*, eds. Terri Ginsberg and Andrea Mensch (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 142.

Jeanne longs to break the oppressive and restrictive familiar bond; this is made explicit from the very first two minutes of the film. We see a young blond girl getting some change from a seaside bar in Portugal and selecting a song from an old jukebox: the chosen title is 'How Can We Hang On to a Dream' by Tim Hardin. As the singer pronounces the first few lines of the lyrics ('What can I say/ She's walking away…'), the camera lingers on Jeanne staring at the horizon and some surfers, probably wishing to finally connect with the outside world. She silently sits on an empty chair smoking a cigarette, dreaming of the banality of a normal life. Petzold presents his protagonist as a figure who is deprived of any typical juvenile characterisations: she cannot go to school, hang out with friends, buy clothes and other commodities.

Her lack of identity and personality emerges again when her parents visit a former comrade, Achim. Disgusted by Achim's luxorious villa, Hans argues with his old friend, while Jeanne goes upstairs attracted by some music coming from Paulina, Achim's teenage daughter. Peeking from behind the door, Jeanne observes Paulina smoking a cigarette and mumbling some tunes. As such, Paulina embodies what Jeanne so desperately desire: a room where to hang posters and photographs of her favourite idols, fashionable clothes, some friends. For a moment Jeanne is able to experience a taste of normality, the two girls exchange a few words, listen to some music and laugh together at their parents' discussion.







Fig. 2.2 The terrorist family visits a former associate in *The State I Am In*.

Chris Homewood considers this scene significant not only because it marks the alterity of Jeanne from other teenagers, but specifically because it codes her in terms of the 'vampiric tradition'.[264] Shot at such an angle, Jeanne has no reflection on a full-length mirror she is standing in front of, and as a vampire, 'whose inability to cast its own image signifies its separation from the living', the viewer becomes aware how she 'is completely devoid of self-image'.[265] Homewood argues that inspired by Kathryn Bigelow's vampire film *Near Dark* (1987), Petzold imbues the family with the attributes of apparitions and evokes the image of the vampire to reinvigorate in the new century the dead genre of films about terrorism.[266] However, the vampire trope, which Homewood traces in many narrative and formal elements of the film, feels sometimes an excessive overreading – in effect Petzold defines his character more as *Gespenster*, ghosts. It is definitively an apt trope to emphasise the exhaustion of the role now played by the terrorist ideology, and Petzold's cinephilia, but it serves better to describe the out-laws parents, rather than Jeanne. The mother, for instance, who appears unexpectedly in the middle of a wood to interrogate the whereabouts of the daughter, is the real ghost, who clings to the past and threatens the 'normal' progression of Jeanne into adulthood and lawfulness. Petzold ascribes transitional traits to his young protagonist: she is not yet fully appropriated by the terrorist underground, and fights off the shadows of her parents in order to gain her own identity. She is still a very much 'alive' character.

[264] Homewood, "The Return of 'Undead' History," 129.
[265] Ibid.,132.
[266] Ibid., 129.

The adolescent Jeanne is caught in an in-between status, not only because as a teenager she is changing physically and psychologically, we see her growing up and exploring her sexuality for the first time, but also because she must decide whether to follow her parents' path of illegal living in Brazil or break the chains of her family's prison. Writing about Gus van Sant's *Elephant* (2003), Backman-Rogers affirms that in terms of the adolescent rite of passage, figures of crisis are shown as 'dislocated bodies, quite literally in transition – wandering aimlessly and, seemingly, endlessly'.[267] Jeanne's continual perambulation into the 'normal' world links her with the state of liminality, as she visits shops, a school and tries to socialise outside the family's nest. Moreover, her displacement is further marked by the unfashionable clothes she has to wear. She complains about it and finally grabs her parents' attention when she mentions that people stare at her for her lack of conformity to consumerist trends. Because of the robbery and the limited resources of the terrorist family, her clothes come from discount stores; we see Jeanne forced to wear ill-fitted garments in a colour-clash ensemble. Her suspect behaviour alarms Heinrich, the boy she met in Portugal, who interrogates Jeanne turning his desk lamp at her face and enquiring whether she belongs to a religious cult. Jeanne's arduous search for identity and normality has nothing to do with politics: she craves for the latest 'Maradonna' T-shirt rather than the end of social inequalities.



[267] Backman-Rogers, "Ephemeral bodies and threshold creatures,"159.



Fig 2.3 Jeanne brings home a loot of clothes and is later interrogated by her boyfriend.

To sum up, Hans and Clara's past has become a heavy burden. They flew off the handle by keeping their daughter Jeanne while leaving underground. They negate her any possibility to carve her own identity and metamorphose into an adult by blocking her in a past inhabited by dangerous political tenets and old ideologies. It is not only their ideology, which is in crisis, but primarily their daughter. Petzold's terrorist family returns to post-unification Germany at the eve of the Euro currency introduction and finds a completely different country to their 'old' Federal Republic against which they violently fought. The public sphere is no longer obsessed by debates about the legacy of the Nazi regime, but rather by questions of German victimhood. Hans and Clara rebelled against a social landscape that does no longer exist and hence their political struggle seems completely anachronistic in the new Berlin Republic, which is instead moving towards 'normalisation'.[268]

As far as *Reconciled* is concerned, the teenage characters do not play a prominent role in the narrative like Jeanne; however, they are crucial figures for delivering the message of the film and thus, function as a litmus test to show the malaise of their parents' generation. In particular, the supporting roles of Vichi and Eva provide a counter-balance perspective on the legacy of terrorism in Italy at the turn of the new millennium. The film interestingly opens with a scene in which a child recites a nursery rhyme in Spanish while walking in a park. The absence of subtitles creates an unsettling backdrop, denoting that something unfamiliar is taking place. The

[268] This anachronism is further made explicit when Hans digs out some money hidden from a previous assault under an overpass. The old Deutschmarks with the effigy of Albrecht Dürer that emerge from the security metal box have become out of date.

camera then moves to an area with thick bushes where we see an adolescent wearing a balaclava being chased and apparently shot by other teenagers. As we realise it has been a children's game with a toy gun, the twelve-year old Vichi comments, 'what a silly game! I'm going to report it to mum!'. Her older sister, Eva, replies 'My sister is a prig, but in truth she is a tell-tale,' a dialogue which prefigures the interrogation at their parents' flat, where former terrorist Roberto Ferro violently questions his old friends regarding the identity of a mole.



Fig. 2.4 Adolescents playing dangerous games in *Reconciled.*

This quite theatrical opening immediately reveals the filmmaker's attitude towards the phenomenon of left-wing terrorism. Polizzi interprets the armed struggle as a children's game, a 'generally collective insanity'[269] as one former radical argues, which could take place again – given that the younger generations seem to handle carelessly the weapons and play silly games. This naïve judgement can be understood via the background of the politically engaged director, who was involved in civil rights struggles in the late 1970s. This position seems typical of a generation who cannot clearly take the distance from those who took up the armed struggle, and it marks a strong difference from the approach of younger directors like Petzold. The gun will appear several times throughout the film, both its toy version and the real old P38 belonging to Roberto, but secretly kept by Malena during his imprisonment.

During a climactic scene the replica gun reappears in the hand of Vichi, who threatens her parents, their friends reunited in Malena's livingroom to celebrate Roberto's release from prison. 'Raise your hand!' she yells, expressing all the frustration of the group of teenagers towards their parents completely absorbed in the

[269] In Chapter Three I will further expand on the trope of mental insanity, something often associated with the years of lead and in particular with female terrorists.

past. The disorienting scenes where this gun appears, and it is not really clear sometimes whether it is the toy version or the real one kept for many years in a drawer, are the most potent example of the way in which *Reconciled* approaches the issue of political violence. By depicting the group of teenagers haphazardly playing cops and robbers, the filmmaker might cast some doubts on these new generations, highlighting the shallowness of certain behaviours and the fact that children can repeat the errors of their parents. Both sisters dangerously play with the toy gun, but at the same time, complain and shrug their shoulders when their parents and friends occupy the living room to discuss old times. It certainly cast some doubts also on the parents who are unaware of their children's problems and whereabouts. On the whole, Polizzi is ambivalent towards the generation of Vichi and Eva, shifting judgemental criticism and optimism. In effect, despite the disturbing opening scene and the sisters' apparent lack of interest in anything political, Polizzi seems to genuinely sympathise with the younger generations.

Previously, I have shown how the socially isolated Jeanne is a character in crisis, caught in a metamorphic phase in order to develop her own identity. In *Reconciled* the two Italian girls are caught in a less extreme environment, but are, nevertheless, caught in a transitional phase. They could be considered part of what in Germany is called *Spassgesellschaft*, society of amusement,[270] as they enjoy the last day of holidays before the start of the school year by driving around Rome in motorcycles and going to nightclubs and shopping centres; their identity combines consumerist desires with politically committed actions. Vichi and Eva are, in fact, shown to be very active in volunteering in the community centre of their neighbourhood, helping with the preparation of the end of summer party. The soundtrack of the film, which mixes hip-hop songs, tango melodies and music by politically-committed folk songwriters, underlines the duality of this generation. Furthermore, posters of Leonardo Di Caprio are hung on their bedroom walls alongside images of Che Guevara and a picture of Eva's biological father, an Argentinian *desaparecido*. This concoction of references perfectly illuminates the 'in-between status' of these teen-agers; these objects are the precise characterisation of the

[270] The *Spassgesellschaft* (society of amusement) refers to the derogatory term which emerged in the 1990s to describe the consumer spending and hedonistic lifestyle of young generations in the new Berlin Republic.

liminal entity, which is adolescence. As anthropologists Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner argue about rites of passage, their inherent ambiguity is due to being 'betwixt and between the position assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention and ceremonial.'[271] As a result of this ambiguity, Polizzi does not seem to be too condemnatory of this new millennial youth, she imagines future generations continuing the fight against social inequalities, and that status symbols can freely cohabit with political engagement.



Fig. 2.5 Che Guevara and Leonardo Di Caprio posters with a framed picture of Eva's father, an Argentinian disappeared.

This is particularly evident in an emotional scene, where Eva finds some old VHSs containing archival material about the military coup in Argentina and interviews that her mother gave upon her arrival in Italy. Malena recounts the tortures in her native land while pregnant and the difficulties she overcame thanks to Roberto, who was an underground terrorist and her lover. While the Argentinian émigré is still fighting her own demons and recovering from a suicide attempt, her older daughter Eva is in crisis and tries to understand her own personal story, as a daughter of a disappeared Argentinian student, rescued by an Italian terrorist and then raised by an artist, Nanni the biological father of her younger sister Vichi. By relating to her mother's struggle and other forms of political violence, Eva gains a better understanding of the past, suggesting that through what Alison Landsberg calls 'prosthetic memories', future generations can make sense and learn from the mistakes of the past.

Landsberg formulates a model for new forms of cultural memory: 'prosthetic memories', which develop 'at the interface between a person and a historical narrative

[271] Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1995), 95.

about the past, at an experiential site such as a movie theatre or museum. In this moment of contact, an experience occurs through which the person sutures himself or herself into a larger history'.[272] The transmission of memories through media technologies makes possible the acquisition of memories of events not witnessed in first person by younger generations. This process can be visualised in the scene where Eva watches some recordings of an old TV show about political violence, including an interview that her mother gave in the early 1980s. Not able to fall asleep, Eva finds some tapes that her mother dug out from old boxes – Malena regularly watches the videos of her first years in Italy with Roberto and his group of left-wing radicals. The grainy tapes enable her, and her sister Vichi who later joins the nocturnal screening, to create a new possibility. The images of violence in Argentina and in the Italian streets during the years of lead become 'prosthetic memories' for the two teenagers. In this case, the videos represent a legacy of their parents' lives and make them feel a sense of kinship. Landsberg, in fact, affirms that prosthetic memories function as the basis for 'unexpected alliances across chasms of difference'.[273] They enable people to take on memories of the past and to empathise with the sufferers in the present. As the sisters embrace and cry for their mother's hardship and Roberto's foolishness for abandoning her for the BR, they also find a way to inhabit other people's memories, respecting and recognising differences when dealing with political violence.






[272] Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory*, 2.
[273] Ibid., 3.

Fig. 2.6 Eva's 'prosthetic' postmemories.

The scene confirms therefore the favourable position of Polizzi towards younger generations. The director is confident that through new forms of memory, even more commercial versions, it is possible to awaken the potential for increased social responsibility. On the other hand, Petzold would seem to take an ambivalent position with regard to aspects of this shift: the cohabitation of consumerism and political ideologies. When Jeanne steals CDs, clothes and trainers, the spectator sympathises with her cry for normality: her shoplifting and attraction for fast food chains is understandable within the politically charged context she lives in. The director seems, therefore, to support the teenage's hunger for consumerism, but at the same time he disproves the vacuous 'pop' appropriation of terrorist symbols at the turn of the new millennium.[274] Petzold never directly refers to the RAF, nor does he mention the radical-chic fashion phenomenon Prada-Meinhof. Nonetheless, it appears that he wants to remove any potential to fight social injustices from Jeanne's generation. As we shall see in the following section, Petzold predicts a rather bleak future for Jeanne, in contrast to the rosier prospects predicted to Eva and Vichi by Polizzi.

Impossible reconciliation

The figure of the teenager as a symbol of transition and metamorphosis leads us to a reflection on the issue of reconciliation. As Jeanne breaks the chains with her terrorist family, and Eva connects with her Argentinian parents' tragedy, understanding at the same time the failure of Roberto's struggle, one could wonder whether these films foresee a sort of reconciliation in postmillennial Germany and Italy.

Generally speaking, there are significant disagreements over the definition, scope and application of the vexed term: reconciliation.[275] In his overview of

[274] In 2001 the Hamburg boutiques Maegde und Knechte sold a collection of hipster clothes, drawing from logos and slogans of urban guerrilla. The 'Prada-Meinhof" phenomenon exploded when models posed as RAF terrorists appeared in a photoshoot published by magazines such as *Tussi Deluxe* and *Max*.

[275] For an overview of different approaches to the notion of reconciliation see Will Kymlicka and Bashir Bashir, eds. *The Politics of Reconciliation in Multicultural Societies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

normative accounts of reconciliation in post-conflict societies, Ernesto Verdeja classifies the spectrum of post-violence relations between former enemies in two broad approaches: minimalist and maximalist.[276] Minimalist accounts of reconciliation are concerned with pacification, the cessation of violence, rather than the prospect of mutual forgiveness. For Verdeja 'minimalist approaches understand reconciliation as simple coexistence, between former enemies, premised on a rejection of violence'.[277] Maximalist approaches to reconciliation are characterised, instead, by public recognition and acknowledgment of victims, for instance through reparations.[278] This second approach generates programs that 'call on perpetrators to acknowledge responsibility, repent and ultimately be forgiven by their victims'.[279] In the current situation, where the victims of terrorism often feel abandoned by the institutions and protest at the spotlight given by the media to murderers, arsonists and criminals, it is apparent that any form of maximalist reconciliation would be premature.[280] Making peace with the past remains a constant trope within the cluster of films that tackles left-wing terrorism in the new millennium. Petzold and Polizzi long for this moment of reconciliation, but ultimately they seem to postpone it. Moreover, Verdeja's categorisation seems to underline the partial and incomplete nature of reconciliation after terrorism in Italy and Germany, a process which has often left out the victim's needs and wider truth-telling. In truth, the public debate over political reconciliation in these two countries has often been focused on reforms of the prison system, the social-reintegration of former terrorists and the harmonisation of the relationship between the state and political identities.

The State I Am In addresses the legacy of 1970s revolutionary terrorism in the Berlin Republic, an issue which has been silenced since the mid 1980s and was thus

[276] Ernesto Verdeja, "The elements of political reconciliation" in *Theorizing Post-conflict Reconciliation*, ed. A. Keller Hirsch, (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 167-81.
[277] Ibid., 168.
[278] Ibid., 169.
[279] Ibid.
[280] This consideration is also relevant for other contexts. In Northern Ireland, for instance, victim groups criticized government officials for suggesting that there should be an end to investigations into killings before the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. See Vincent Kearney, "NI attorney general John Larkin calls for end to Troubles prosecutions," *BBC News Northern Ireland*, 20 November 2013. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-24999051> (accessed 1 September 2014).

perceived as an unfinished business.[281] Jeanne finally reaches adulthood when she reveals her family's identity to Heinrich, a boyfriend she met during one of her outings, thus breaking her oppressive parental bind. Alerted by Heinrich's telephone call, the police initiate a final hunt for the terrorists, suggesting that the state cannot allow a second wave of terrorism and is willing to close this chapter. The family Volvo is pushed off the road and capsizes in a field; the car crash thus symbolises that there is no longer space for ideological (left-wing) terrorism. Probably catapulted from the wreckage, Jeanne seems to be the only survivor: one can assume that her parents died in the crash, along with their anachronistic political doctrine. As the camera close-ups on the girl's face, Petzold leaves us pondering over her uncertain destiny.[282] With no real link to society and no formal education, and probably a future in foster care, her prospects are discouraging.

As the credits scroll we are left with no clear resolution. What is certain is that terrorism is also a postmillennial phenomenon, which was not sufficiently and adequately dealt with in the previous decade. Petzold considers it a problem in itself, not merely the result of the repression culture in the 1970s, a thesis embraced by filmmakers associated with the New German Cinema. The political thought of Hans and Clara certainly appear anachronistic in the present-day consumerist society, dominated by the pop culture symbols that Jeanne so desperately longs for. The time of left-wing revolutionary terrorists might have truly exhausted itself; they find no space in the new Berlin Republic. The filmmaker casts some doubts on the former comrades who renounced the armed struggle: one sold his publishing house to a multinational company and is now an alcoholic and the other leads a comfortable but empty life. Yet, in the post-idelogical era there is the strong need to make peace with this past. Petzold clearly affirms that there is no space for that ideology in the new millennium, no reconciliation, here intended as restoration of friendly relations between former enemies, is possible unless a firm rejection of violence is performed.

[281] The twentieth anniversary of the German Autumn (1997) reignited interest in this period, for instance with the docudrama *Deathgame*. However, it is only in the new millennium that the RAF regained momentum for the reasons explained in the introduction and Chapter One.
[282] Whether Jeanne's parents are dead or seriously injured remains an open question. Petzold suspends his judgement as the camera ponders in a close-up of the teenager's face and then fades to black.

Reconciliation is the main theme running through Polizzi's film, given that the title literally translates as 'reconciled'. *The Oxford English Dictionary* gives several definitions of the term, which span from reunion, agreement, resolution and harmonisation;[283] these diverse declinations of the notion can be seen at play in the film. Firstly, the narrative of the film centres around a reunion, a reconcilement of old comrades who want to overcome the melancholy associated with their lost youth battles. Secondly, Roberto, the former terrorist, has to finally find peace and forgive his friend who revealed his hideout during tough interrogations to the limits of torture. More importantly the reconciliation, which the title alludes to, is between generational breaks, between the parents, those belonging to the '68 generation, and their teenage children. The group's reunion concludes with an unexpected summer rainstorm, which interrupts the party and the quarrels between the adults. As the rain might symbolise the cleaning of past sins and the new beginning, one might infer that Polizzi foresees some generational reconciliation. The finale contains an element of utopian potential; Malena and her daughters reunite and overcome their difficulties. As I highlighted in the previous section, through 'prosthetic memories' it is possible that this past, even a traumatic one, can be re-contextualised so it cannot haunt future generations.

Nonetheless, no reconciliation with Italy's terrorist past is seen to be likely in Polizzi's film. For example, in light of Roberto's question to Malena and her mournful response, 'How can we escape from the past?' 'You can never escape it', *Reconciled* seems to establish that the past does not pass. However, I would argue that the past *cannot* pass, it cannot be let to rest, as memories are not indefinitely consigned to oblivion, but are activated according to the necessity of the present. In light of this, the final sequence of the film is particularly interesting. The montage sequence includes different images of sufferance: Italian students and workers on strike, the fall of the Berlin wall, the Vietnam war, malnourished African children, corpses of Argentinian disappeared and child soldiers in a training camp in the Middle-east. Before the credits scroll, we are presented with a close-up image of a child pointing a rifle towards the camera. This disturbing picture is open to multiple interpretations. According to O'Leary, these portrayals of sufferance and revolutionary inspiration bear a striking

[283] "Definition of Reconciliation," *Oxford Dictionaries*, <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/reconciliation?q=reconciliation> (accessed 1 September 2014).

difference from 'the tranquil handing down of reformist aspiration from older to younger generations that closes Marco Tullio Giordana's *La meglio gioventù'*,[284] an aspect to which I will return in the next chapter. He interprets them as an invitation for younger Italian generations to take up arms against imperial power and the new challenges brought forward by globalisation.[285] I suggest that these images are a reminder of the burden of the past, which might haunt future generations or, conversely, ignite civic consciousness. Polizzi's intention is probably to reflect on the positive effects of establishing connections, because through mutual acknowledgement it is possible to work through and overcome difficult pasts.

What *The State I Am In* and *Reconciled* share is a common preoccupation with the role of terrorism in the new millennium, nonetheless they reach divergent conclusions. A real maximalist reconciliation is probably further postponed because *Riconciliati* excludes any reflection from the point of view of the victims of terrorism and seems to ponder on the potential romanticisation of the armed struggle. Roberto is presented, even in the news reportage written by his old friends, as the son of two World War II resistance fighters.[286] The BR terrorists are mythologised and paralleled to partisans, keeping alive the dangerous image of the left-wing radicals as the 1970s resistance fighters against the enemies of the working class. In *Riconciliati* generational conflicts are overcome, but the limits imposed by the romanticisation of the terrorist figure impede a real reconciliation between victims and perpetrators.

On the other hand, probably because Petzold belongs to a different generation than Polizzi, *The State I Am In* liberates the German terrorists of any fascinating aura. A severe mise-en-scène and a cold coloured palette neutralise any possibility of glamorising the armed struggle; the runaway couple, so self-absorbed in their crumbling world of paranoia and poverty, is emptied of any revolutionary romanticism. The banality of life on the run becomes noticeable during one of their flights from one location to another. The terrorist spouses become victims of their paranoid state when

[284] O'Leary, *Tragedia all'italiana*, 207. In this film, the teenager Andrea travels to Cape North, completing the journey started by his late father and uncle in the late 1960s.
[285] Ibid.
[286] In a montage sequence, photographs of Roberto are followed by archival images of the Resistance and Liberation War (1943-45), including pictures of his mother who volunteered as a dispatch rider for the partisans. A similar parallelism appears also in Marco Bellocchio's *Good Morning Night*, where footage from Roberto Rossellini's *Paisà/Paisan* (1946) is undercut with images of left-wing terrorists.

at a junction just before a bridge, Hans invites his wife and daughter to crouch on the floor of the car, before surrendering himself with his hand in the air. As the driver behind him starts flanking, the family realise they were not being followed by a police car. Moreover, in the bank robbery sequence, the hardness of underground life becomes evident as Hans and Clara wear anonymous blue raincoats and nude stocking to shade their identities. In their practical but unfashionable disguises, they emerge as the caricature of the Bonnie and Clyde imagery, often associated with 1970s terrorists and in particular with Andreas Baader and Gudrun Ensslin.[287]

Intertwining memories

In these films the past returns and clouds the present, reactivated by contemporary concerns. In defining the notion of 'palipsestic memory' Max Silverman maintains that the interaction between past and present progresses through the 'superimposition' and reciprocal influence of 'different temporal traces'.[288] The returning history of left-wing terrorism appears therefore as a non-linear history, but one that condenses different historical events. In light of Silverman's theorisation of hybrid and dynamic memories of extreme terror, in his case the *Shoah* and the French colonial legacy, the two case studies analysed here are primary examples of the new sensibility towards less compartmentalised approaches to memory. Differently from previous formulations of dynamic, travelling and transnational memories, my interpretation of 'interconnected memory' takes into account two axes: a horizontal one, marked by dialogue between different communities, experiences and locations; and a vertical one characterised by intertextual borrowings, interactions between different cinematic traditions, auteurs and production trends. In *Riconciliati*, for example, memory's 'connected' structure results in a network of not simply two historical periods (the years of lead and postmillennial Italy) but also distinct locations and contexts (political violence in different countries: Argentina, Palestine and Italy), as well as the overlapping and updating of the previous 'cinema of *indulto*'.

[287] This sequence differs completely from the similar episode in Volker Schlöndorff's *The Legend of Rita*, where instead the terrorists with their Ray-Ban sunglasses and leather jackets raid a bank accompanied by the *Internationale* hymn.
[288] Silverman, *Palimpsestic Memory*, 3

It is my contention, however, that interconnected memories do not necessarily produce positive effects. The montage sequence with images of protest in Argentina, Italy and Palestine does not directly invite younger generations to rebel against social injustices. Landsberg is correct when she claims that through imaginative and emotional investments new generations may create new solidarities with witnesses of past traumas.[289] Nonetheless, there is always the risk of banalising violence and effacing some aspects. Sufferance becomes the only link between the events mentioned in Polizzi's film; the danger for Eva and her sister consists in vicariously living the pain of their mother and thus making it cliché. Overall, I think that Polizzi's film highlights both the possibility and limits of transmitting, transforming and circulating memories in the globalised age of information technology. The clash of images and stories she proposes can help us recognise, challenge and properly understand other catastrophes. Because of her ambiguous position towards the '68 generation and their children, the risk remains: new generations might participate in a banal culture of empathy, more 'self- than other-oriented' as Silverman would say,[290] or reinvent new forms of political commitment.

The State I Am In, instead, suggests that, history repeats itself. In the 1970s the Nazi legacy became a burden for the young left-wing revolutionaries as they felt it had not been properly dealt with. In the new millennium, Petzold indicates that the same circumstances can reoccur again: the legacy of the German years of lead might still result in a suffocating history for the generation of Jeanne. Marianne Hirsch's conception of 'postmemory' is useful here to comprehend the experience of 1970s terrorism as remembered by the second generation of eyewitnesses, in this case the children of terrorists, who grew up within highly politicised families.[291]

As explained in the introduction, postmemory deals primarily with the transmission of memories within the families of Holocaust survivors. However, Rachel Palfreyman suggests that it might also function to 'describe other second-

[289] Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory*, 2.
[290] Silverman, *Palimpsestic Memory*, 174
[291] Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1997).

generation memories of cultural or collective traumatic events and experiences'.[292] Palfreyman interprets the dynamics of Petzold's terrorist family according to processes related to postmemory, where the family functions as a junction between personal and collective history.[293] Postmemory plays a crucial role, and positions itself as a bridge for knowledge between history and eye-witnessed memory; in fact for Marianne Hirsch it is separate 'from memory by generational distance', but also 'from history by deep personal connection'.[294] Above all, Hirsch underlines that 'postmemory is a powerful and very particular form of memory precisely because it is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation'.[295] The risk of this model is that the connection to such a traumatic past can be so overwhelming that a young person be blocked by these postmemories, and thus rendered incapable of creating and pursuing his/her own stories.

Such description perfectly applies to Jeanne. Not only have I shown how the girl is going through an identity crisis, she is also unable to express a personal opinion, merely regurgitating her parents' beliefs.[296] If we think about her relationship with Heinrich, we realise that also their young love is shadowed by (false) past memories and they share a life made of fake appearances and lies. Heinrich lies about his past, imagining himself as an orphan of a wealthy family, whereas Jeanne secretly steals clothes and CDs in order to conforms to teenage models. However, Heinrich's lies seem even darker compared to the ones Jeanne has to profess; he tells Jeanne that his mother committed suicide by drowning in the swimming pool of the villa where they have their furtive encounters. In truth, Heinrich does not posses the right diploma to work as a heating technician and makes ends meet by working at a Pizza Hut. For Palfreyman, Petzold's film does not solely investigate the legacy of left-wing terrorism, but it equally explores 'the gulf between the haves and have-nots in post-unification Germany'.[297] The lies that the two teenagers live make us reflect on the social

[292] Rachel Palfreyman, "The Fourth Generation: Legacies of Violence as Quest for Identity in Post-Unification Terrorism Films," in *German Cinema since Unification*, David Clarke, ed. (London and New York: Continuum, 2006), 19-30.
[293] Ibid.
[294] Hirsch, *Family Frames,* 22.
[295] Ibid.
[296] During a conversation with Heinrich, her secret boyfriend, Jeanne explains the reasons of being home-schooled by articulating her parents' opinion of German school. Similarly when interrogated in a German class, she is not able to reply to the teacher and remains in silence.
[297] Palfreyman, "The Fourth Generation," 21.

consequences of the rapid German economic development, the dominance of consumerism and the power of globalisation. According to David Clarke, the film mostly criticises 'the inherent social inequity and materialism of the Federal Republic of the late 1990s', [298] which is in part the fruit of policies pushed forward by the political and economical elites formed in the 1970s. As a result, *The State I Am In* is very much about the presentness of terrorism.

The interconnected memories in Petzold's film are particularly interesting. Specifically, *The State I am In* synchronises different generational 'postmemories': the postmemories of the generation of Hans and Clara who grew up with narratives about the Nazi past and Jeanne's postmemories of left-wing terrorism. The junction between different postmemories appears in the scene in which Jeanne attends a film screening in a classroom. During one of her outings in Bergedorf, a neighbourhood in Hamburg, Jeanne ends up in a school where Resnais's documentary on concentration camps is being screened. The excerpt from *Night and Fog* represents another sign of Petzold's cinephilia, being very explicit allusion to Von Trotta's *The German Sisters*, where a similar scene becomes a turning point in the life of the protagonists, Marianne and Juliane.

In Von Trotta's award-winning film, the viewing of the shocking images from the Auschwitz and Majadanek camps awakens the political consciousness of the younger sister, Marianne, who changes from daddy's girl into a radicalised young woman and then a terrorist. For Frank van Vree the presence of such a long sequence from *Night and Fog* (it lasts over three-and-a-half minutes) is not a mere quote and it is crucial for the overall message of the film.[299] The excerpt in *The State I Am In* is, instead, shorter and does not include the horrible images of corpses and skulls, which prompted a sickening reaction during the screening in *The German Sisters*. Jeanne's reaction is more subdued; at the end of the screening the teacher complains about student attendance during the rest of the week and then tries to interrogate the 'new' girl, Jeanne, who stays silent and then leaves the room. The effort of the teacher to interact with the younger generations differs from what happens in Von Trotta's film, where Pastor Klein does not comment the events screened to his daughters.

[298] Clarke, "Capitalism Has No More Natural Enemies", 142.
[299] van Vree, "The Echo Chamber of History," 314.

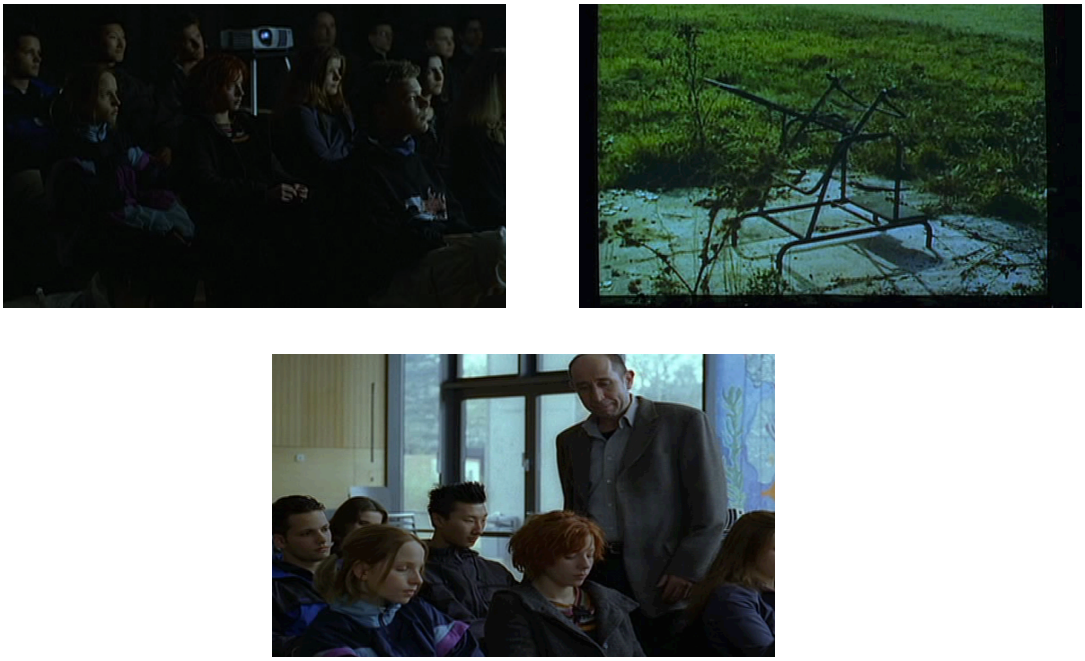


Fig. 2.7 Jeanne watches Alain Resnais's *Night and Fog*.

According to Chris Homewood the inclusion of the sisters' reaction in Von Trotta's film underlines the idea of the inescapable burden of the past and the serious consequences of suppressing traumatic memories.[300] By choosing to show us only the most abstract parts of *Night and Fog*, specifically the tracking shots of the barracks and the railroads, Petzold prevents the class of adolescents from seeing the real horror of the Holocaust captured by Resnais' documentary. With Jeanne's silent response, we understand that new strategies ought to be adopted in order to preserve the overwhelming and petrifying quality of the original images. Without explicitly exposing the images of annihilation, one may wonder whether Petzold's choice may be effective for younger generations.

In conclusion, I argue that in *The State I Am In* and *Reconciled* interconnected memories challenge the idea of memory's autonomy and the assumption that it is always connected to a singular specific community and temporality. Memory becomes transformed not only through generational transmission (postmemory) but also through different media (prosthetic memory). However, clashing different memories, and specifically lived and vicarious experiences, could have negative consequence: the simplification and normalisation of horror. Nonetheless, by exposing the strategies of

[300] Chris Homewood, "Von Trotta's *The German Sisters* and Petzold's *The State I Am In*," 94.

these dynamics a dialogue can take place and this allows us to question the links and differences between singular histories.

Conclusions

Like teenagers who go through extensive changes during their puberty and adolescence, the memory of the years of lead is caught in a necessary turning point following the fall of the Berlin wall, the end of old political ideologies and the events at the turn of the new millennium. By focusing on adolescents going through personal crises the case studies presented in this chapter epitomise the moment of transition that Italy and Germany are undergoing now that the terrorist threat has waned. Moreover, by shifting the discourse from the terrorists to other younger figures, in particular their children, these films inaugurate a new cluster of victim-centric narratives. The focus is still on the perpetrators but at least these works take into account the new generations and other subjects afflicted by the trauma of terrorism. This paradigmatic change underlines once more that memory is fluid and does not belong to a single subject; at the very least, it overlaps different generations and connects distant and different traumas in today's commemorative culture.

The State I Am In centres on an adolescent in transition in which the passage from childhood into adulthood is marked by the separation and denial of the original family, and by the passage from lack of identity to life, though with bleak prospects. The open ending does not offer a clear resolution whether Jeanne is free from the burden of her parents' crimes and more broadly whether a form of reconciliation with the terrorist past is possible in present-day Germany. *Reconciled* deals with a situation of crisis and transition, both for the community of friends of a former terrorist, and the teenagers who witness this encounter. The reintegration of Roberto poses challenges both to Malena's family and Italy. Although the film depicts the simple coexisistance between the former terrorist and society, reconciliation is complicated by the romanticisation of the armed struggle, and the media attention towards the perpetrators. Nonetheless, by retrieving the traumatic past of the Argentinian *desaparesido*s Polizzi's film reveals a complex intertwining of memories, which can allow some sense of solidarity and understanding between generations and cultures. Eva and her

younger teenage sister overcome their family crisis by acknowledging the different responsibilities in different contexts of political violence.

My analysis of films about the legacy of left-wing terrorism in the present through the lens of 'interconnected memories' indicates that the intertwining might be ambivalent. On the one hand, this operation might be dangerous as it condenses different historical contexts; it could reduce differences, allow partial loss of memories and commodify past violent events, not experienced and not well-understood by younger generations. It is not simply a problem of authenticity and peculiarity of violent stories; it is also a question inherent to the discrepancy between testimony (communicative memory) and cultural memory. On the other hand, the works I have discussed here open up a dialogue between different traumas; they challenge the uniqueness of the terrorist narratives including new subjects. In the new millennium it is only through a less compartmentalised approach of intertextual references and distant stories and representations, that memory ought to be understood.

In the following chapter, I will primarily examine the representational strategies adopted when dealing with female terrorists on the screen, as well as the socio-political implications of nostalgic narratives developed by male directors and scriptwriters belonging to the so-called '68 generation. I will demonstrate how political radicalism is domesticated by depicting the female extremist as either naïve, sexually free and emotionally dependant from her male companion, or as a degenerate mother and psychologically unstable person. The compassionate gaze towards the characters of Rita and Giulia and the resolution of *The Legend of Rita* and *The Best of Youth* will, however, call for a reflection on the possibility of a shared memory of the long 1970s. For Schlöndorff it means creating a film that included the role of the German Democratic Republic in a mainly west German matter. For Giordana, instead, it relates to the necessity of pacifying a troubled and divisive memory within Italian society, creating a reconciliatory narrative, which included repentant terrorists, victims and political activists who did not choose the armed struggle.

Chapter Three

Angels of Death: Nostalgia and the Female Terrorist in *The Legend of Rita* (Volker Schlöndorff, 2000) and *The Best of Youth* (Marco Tullio Giordana, 2003).

I'm involved politically.
Do you expect me to speak about fashion?
Leila Khaled[301]



Fig. 3.1 Leila Khaled graffiti on the Israeli West Bank barrier near Bethlehem. (CC BY-SA Bluewind).

Several German and Italian postmillennial films set in the 1960s or 1970s depict political activism and violence in terms of a generational struggle; the terrorist is very often a young man, fighting old institutions for a new social order. This attention towards generational change mirrors the reach of maturity of two young democracies reborn after years of fascist dictatorship, the trauma of the Second War World and its distressing aftermath. Coming-of-age narratives are a constant presence in this new cluster of period features: films such as *My Brother Is an Only Child* and *If Not Us,*

[301] Leila Khaled is a member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, who took part in two sensational hijacks in 1969 and 1970. Her picture holding an AK-47 rifle and wearing a keffiyeh became one of the most iconic images of female revolutionaries. For an account of her story and position towards terrorist women and motherhood, see Eileen MacDonald, *Shoot the Women First* (London: Fourth Estate Limited, 1991), 97-132.

Who? associate the passage into adulthood with the awakening of a political consciousness. Personal conflicts easily turn into a social clash in light of the cultural changes brought about by the economic boom of the early 1960s, the successive crisis and the student and worker protests in 1968-9. Simona Bondavalli correctly affirms that Italian films about the years of contestation 'foreground the protagonists' youth and celebrate it as a historically new condition', but present radicalism 'either in terms of youthful idealism or youthful error'.[302] However, I call into question the role of gender in framing these events. When young women embody the role of the radical, the acts of violence are not justified on account of mere irresponsibility and youthful naiveté: stereotypes are imposed on female terrorists in order to contain and render more bearable their disruption of social order.

This chapter analyses the figure of the female terrorist in contemporary German and Italian films in order to understand gendered representational strategies and the legacy of female involvement in the armed struggle. It considers how Italy and Germany's period of political violence tends to be feminised, specifically through allegories or archetypes. In particular, I explore how the female terrorist is represented in Volker Schlöndorff's *The Legend of Rita* and Marco Tullio Giordana's *The Best of Youth*.[303] I trace different strategies that are put in place to shield the shock caused by the violent female body, namely labeling these women as promiscuous or mad. Female terrorists are a frequent constant in the iconography of terror because femininity can become terrorism's most lethal weapon. This is clearly evident in *La battaglia di Algieri/The Battle of Algiers* (Gillo Pontecorvo, 1966), where we see three young women using their pretty modern clothes and powdered faces as an advantage to fool the French army and smuggle bombs. It is important to question gender constructions in relation to violence, especially now when female suicide bombers in Russia still provoke anxiety and sensation whenever they are featured in the media. This is

[302] Simona Bondavalli, "Rebels without a Cause: Youth and Terrorism In Contemporary Italian Film," Paper presented at the *Revisioning Terrorism Conference*, Purdue University, 10 September 2011. <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1024&context=revisioning> (accessed 25 August 2014)

[303] The film was distributed in the USA and Great Britain under alternative titles: *The Legend of Rita* and *The Legends of Rita*. The English title of Giordana's film, *The Best of Youth,* misses some connotations present in the original version; a better translation would have been 'The Best Generation'. On the relationship between generational change and Italian cinema and culture see Marco Cupolo, "Other Youth: Italian Cultural Changes Through Pasolini, Giordana, Petraglia and Rulli," *Studies in European Cinema* 6, n. 2&3 (2009): 127-40.

because, as Achille Mbembe defines it, 'the spectacular putting to death' of female perpetrators goes against the tradition, which codes violence as masculine, and giving life and peace as feminine.[304] Terrorist women overturn this assumption and break stereotypical cultural perceptions of the female nature seen as passive and prone to nurturing.

The scope of this chapter is not only to confirm already existing evidence of media stereotypes, but to problematise the rigid applications of these characterisations on the female protagonists of the films analysed. It is my contention that Schlöndorff and Giordana's portrayal of German and Italian terrorists is highly gendered, given the adoption of narratives supportive of patriarchy and gender subordination – violent women are seen as failures as wives and mothers. But this discursive framework remains, nonetheless, extremely nuanced and complex. *The Legend of Rita* and *The Best of Youth* challenge dominant expectations: albeit formulaic in certain instances, the picture that emerges is far from representing the typical merciless terrorist, the murderous *femme fatale, or* the gullible young rebel. Overall, the portrait of female terrorists in the new millennium is the fruit of layers upon layers of cultural meaning accumulated after a long tradition of violent female imagery.

Moreover, this comparative analysis allows us to think more historically about inner fears toward the image of female terrorists, the moral principles of hunting radicals and the various forms of imprisonment. The two case studies are situated at opposing degrees of the reconciliation spectrum. While Schlöndorff offers a quite compassionate portrait to his female terrorist, but with no possibility of redemption, Giordana is far more unsympathetic, but ultimately gives an utopian potential to his convicted protagonist. I situate these representational strategies in the context of new allegorising paradigms that question the mythology around left-wing terrorists, and challenge the black-and-white model of either perpetrator or victim.

Films for the new millennium

[304] Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," *Public Culture* 15, 1 (2003): 38.

Similar to the case studies presented in the previous chapter, *The Legend of Rita* and *The Best of Youth* showcase elements of continuity with previous cinematic traditions, as well as distinct features typical of the new millennium production. Before going into depth with these characteristics and the analysis of their female protagonists, a brief consideration of the films' plots will contribute to understanding the filmmakers' return to the topic of political violence.

The Legend of Rita recounts the survival strategies adopted by Rita Vogt (Bibiana Beglau), a West Berlin member of the 2nd June Movement (B2J), who flees to East Germany with her gang after attracting the attention of French and West German police forces with terrorist attacks, bank robberies and murders. The East German *Ministerium für Staatssicherheit* (MfS), or Stasi, helps them by offering new identities; Rita chooses to remain in the German Democratic Republic, the 'better German state' as she maintains, working in a clothing factory and experiencing a real socialist lifestyle. Encountering bemusement for her naïve political beliefs from her co-workers, Rita finds sympathy from Tatjana (Nadia Uhl), a young woman with alcohol issues, with whom she develops a brief sexual relationship. After Tatjana discovers her past, Rita flees, finding again help from her 'carer', Erwin (Martin Wuttke), a Stasi officer. Transferred to a children's care centre, Rita starts afresh, this time falling in love with a student, Jochen (Alexander Beyer). Her true identities and her criminal acts haunt her again and the imminent collapse of communism puts an end to the couple's plans to move to the Soviet Union. Rita has nowhere else to go, as the West and East German police are on the hunt for former terrorists. She discovers from the media that her fellow comrades have either been killed or arrested, such as, for example, Friederike (Jenny Schily) who built up a family in the East with a new identity but was eventually recognised and caught.[305] Rita then rejects her boyfriend, steals a motorcycle on the motorway and flees again towards the border. As she forces to pass through a checkpoint, a policeman guns her down.

[305] There is an interesting parallel between the actress' life and the character of Friederike, loosely based on Susanne Albrecht, a bourgeois young woman who joined the armed struggle. In 1977 she was involved in the failed kidnapping and then murder of her sister's godfather, Jürgen Ponto, chairman of the Dresdner Bank. The actress, Jenny Schily, is instead the daughter of former Minister of Internal Affairs and SPD politician, Otto Schily, a RAF defence lawyer between 1975 and 1977. Her personal background contributed to the performance of a girl from a good family who descended into the armed struggle.

The Best of Youth is a multi narrative drama, which does not solely focus on the vicissitudes of a terrorist, but provides an overview of a whole generation from the late 1960s to the present day, focusing in particular on two brothers Nicola (Luigi Lo Cascio) and Matteo Carati (Alessio Boni).[306] After choosing different paths, Nicola travelling to Sweden and Matteo joining the army, the two brothers re-join in Florence during the 1966 flood where they try to save antiques and old books. On that occasion, Nicola meets and falls in love with another volunteer, Giulia (Sonia Bergamasco), who is a talented pianist and a university student reading mathematics. They move in together and transfer to Turin University, becoming more and more involved in the student movement. Nicola and Giulia do not marry, but have a daughter, Sara. As Nicola becomes an innovative psychiatrist, Giulia detaches from the family and soon becomes engaged in the BR. She eventually abandons her daughter and goes underground, though always keeping track of Sara's upbringing. After Matteo's suicide, Nicola is afraid of loosing Giulia forever, as he reveals to his sister the guilt for not understanding their malaise. Having some doubts about the violent methods of her terrorist cell, Giulia tries to gain time as she receives the order to kill Carlo Tommasi (Fabrizio Gifuni), a leading economist in the Bank of Italy and long-time friend of Nicola. She then tips off Carlo's wife, Francesca, who is also Nicola's youngest sister, warning that her husband is on the hit list. The police eventually captures Giulia in an ambush arranged by Nicola and his sister. During her incarceration, Nicola tries to nurture a difficult relationship between Sara and her mother, without much success. After many years, Sara (Camilla Filippi) finds the courage to face Giulia, now released from prison and employed in the National Archive in Florence. Despite the attempt to start afresh, Giulia's past blocks her from fully participating in her daughter's life; she, in fact, kindly refuses the invitation to her daughter's wedding and vaguely promises to visit when her grandchild is born.

Both directors revisit the issue of left-wing terrorism, which had dominated the public discourse in the 1970s and early 1980s. *The Legend of Rita* marks the return of Schlöndorff to the issue of political violence after directing with Margarethe von

[306] Here I summarise the story lines concerning the issue of left-wing terrorism and its legacy after the years of lead. The film explores many other stories: Matteo's romantic relationships, the life of the two Carati's sisters and Nicola's male friends. The personal events are always entwined with historical facts: national strikes, Italy's victory at the 1982 Football World Cup, the mafia's massacres in the early 1990s etc.

Trotta *The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum* in 1975 and a segment in the collective work *Germany in Autumn* in 1977. After his experience abroad, particularly in the USA, the film also signals the return to political cinema and small-budget productions without stars.[307] Giordana, instead, goes back to question the consequences of political violence on interpersonal relationships after his first full-length work *Maledetti vi amerò/To Love the Damned* (1980) and the following *La caduta degli angeli ribelli* (1981).[308] *The Legend of Rita* and *The Best of Youth* ought to be read in relation to the previous works of their politically engaged directors, contextualising their renewed interest within discourses about the role of the '68 generation and leftist political commitment in the present.[309] On the whole, these films reflect on the wider legacy of '68, the armed struggle and, more specifically, how this traumatic period is integrated into a new cohesive national narrative. In their effort to close a chapter of Germany and Italy's history, both films present the fight against left-wing terrorism as a founding moment or myth for the new nations, namely the re-united Germany and Italy's Second Republic. In other words, the traumatic events experienced during the Cold War are shown as difficult occurrences shared by both sides, which ultimately led to a new democratic state, free from previous ideologies.

This reading certainly confirms Ernest Renan's theory that common suffering unifies more than joyful moments.[310] It would be incorrect to consider violence as the base of democratic nations; it is the suppression of violence that gives legitimacy to nations. *The Legend of Rita* and *The Best of Youth* rework the traumatic past to heal generational wounds. In exploring the tragic events of the 1970s, these filmmakers commemorate Germany and Italy's coming-of-age as nations and democracies against terrorism. They celebrate youthful idealism, which emerged in 1968, but they firmly

[307] For an extensive analysis of Schlöndorff's career up to *The Legend of Rita* see Hans-Bernhard Moeller and George Lellis, *Volker Schlöndorff's Cinema* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002).

[308] Giordana continued working on the troubled years of lead, directing *Romanzo di una strage*/*Piazza Fontana: The Italian Conspiracy* in 2012. This middlebrow drama reconstructs the events leading to the Piazza Fontana's bomb explosion in 1969, and the subsequent investigations. Generally speaking, the massacre, attributed to right-wing terrorists, marks the beginning of this trouble decade.

[309] At the moment a monographic study in English on Giordana's oeuvre does not exist, but for a precise interpretation of Giordana's cinematic political engagement see Alan O'Leary, "Marco Tullio Giordana, or the Persistence of *Impegno*," in *Postmodern Impegno: Ethics and Commitment in Contemporary Italian Culture*, eds. Pierpaolo Antonello and Florian Mussgnug (Bern: Peter Lang, 2009), 213-32

[310] Ernest Renan, "What is a Nation?" in *Becoming National: A Reader*, eds. Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 52.

condemn the violent turn which developed from those instances. As such, I believe Schlöndorff and Giordana return to the issue of terrorism because they see in the rebelliousness of that time the founding moment of their generation. The late 1960s were in fact a moment of fracture, the student protests were also a manifestation of the rupture with older generation in search of a new identity and political renewal. However, by feminising the armed struggle they distance themselves from that experience. In this sense, Schlöndorff and Giordana revisit the past, celebrating those who renounced the terrorist trajectory and articulating the fight against left-wing terrorism as a necessary path towards the adulthood and maturity of the nation.

According to Moeller and Lellis, Schlöndorff's film works as 'a cross-cultural enterprise bridging the two Germanys',[311] outlining the conflicts and ambiguities of the terrorist experience in West and East Germany. Giordana's film emerges, instead, as an attempt to mitigate conflicting memories about the years of lead; the protagonists of *The Best of Youth* become metaphors for the politicised '68 generation, which survived the season of armed struggle and brought 'together both sides of the troubled recent decades in consensual engagement'.[312] The coupling of nostalgic recollection and lament for the perceived loss of idealism and clear ideologies constitutes the novelty of these works. *The Legend of Rita* and *The Best of Youth* showcase particular features recurrent in many postmillennial films about the years of lead, for example, the aestheticisation of violence and the fascination with beautiful landscapes and cityscapes. *The Legend of Rita*, especially in its first part, depicts a clear fascination for the adventurous and stylish lives of the B2J terrorists.[313] *The Best of Youth* presents, instead, a visual celebration of Italian landmarks through a tourist gaze, from Rome's cityscape to the Aeolian Islands' coastline. In light of this, the case studies clearly represent a new take on the issue of political violence, updating the critical paradigm for the new millennium.

Nonetheless, there are elements of continuity with previous cinematic traditions. For instance, Giordana's film renews the subgenre of the family epic, where

[311] Moeller and Lellis, *Volker Schlöndorff's Cinema*, 311.
[312] Catherine O'Rawe, "The Best of Youth," in *Directory of World Cinema: Italy*, ed. Louis Bayman (Bristol and Chicago: Intellect, 2011), 260.
[313] This contrast between the cool radicals and the grey and dull Bonn Republic will evolve in later films such as Christopher Roth's *Baader* (2002) and Uli Edel's *The Baader Meinhof Complex,* which will be further explored in Chapter Four.

characters' vicissitudes intertwine with the main social and political events in Italian history, in this case the economic crisis with its strikes and widespread redundancies in the mid 1970s, the years of lead and the Mafia emergency in the early 1990s.[314] Terrorism is often described as a family conflict in many Italian movies. However, unlike predecessors from the 1980s, such as Gianni Amelio's *Blow to the Heart,* portrayals of terrorism in the new millennium do not highlight political violence as a consequence of rational political decisions, but rather reduce the significance of those events to the protagonists' biological or psychological attributes.

Sharable Memories: healing the wound of terrorism

The Legend of Rita and *The Best of Youth* are both the product of powerful collaborative work between directors and scriptwriters, sustained by detailed interviews with terrorists and political activists active in the 1970s. Schlöndorff's film was presented in the official competition at the 2000 Berlin Film festival, where it was awarded the Blue Angel for Best European Film and the Silver Bear for best actresses for the performances of Bibiana Beglau and Nadja Uhl. The film signals the embrace of the realist tradition of the *Deutsche Film-Aktiengesellschaft* (DEFA), [315] the public-owned film studio in East Germany, as it sees the collaboration of West German filmmaker Volker Schlöndorff with Wolfgang Kohlhaase,[316] a veteran scriptwriter from the former East Germany. In an interview, Schöndorff admitted that the preparation for *The Legend of Rita* took eight years; the screenplay was even turned down by producers in 1997, as they did not want any longer to invest in the project given the competition of Heinrich Breloer's *Deathgame*.[317] As Moeller and Lellis recount, the first screenplay dates back to the early 1990s when Schlöndorff and Kohlhaase consulted with Inge Viett, a former member of B2J, to use material from

[314] *The Best of Youth* inserts in the long Italian tradition of family sagas, which comprises films such as *Rocco e i suoi fratelli*/*Rocco and his Brothers* (Luchino Visconti, 1960) and *Novecento*/*1900* (Bernardo Bertolucci, 1976). The practice is continued by Daniele Lucchetti's *My Brother Is an Only Child*.
[315] On DEFA's history see Séan Allan and John Sanford, *DEFA: East German Cinema, 1946-1992* (New York & Oxford: Berghan, 1999) and Daniela Berghahn, *Hollywood Behind the Wall: The Cinema of East Germany* (Manchester University Press, 2005).
[316] Kohlhaase was one of the most prolific scriptwriters of DEFA, and long-time collaborator of Konrad Wolf, with whom he co-directed *Solo Sunny* (1980).
[317] Siegfried Tesche, "Volker Schlöndorff: Terrorists and Tolerence," *Spiegel OnLine* 10 February 2000. <http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/gesellschaft/0,1518,63614,00.html>, (accessed 3 August 2014).

her autobiography *Nie war ich furchtloser* (I was never brave), where she recounts her real escape to the GDR and the new incognito life there.[318]

The Legend of Rita is often discussed for its accurate period reconstruction and for avoiding clichéd representations of East Germany from a West-German perspective. Rachel Palfreyman, for instance, argues that 'the film does not use the restricted colour palette of von Trotta's *The German Sisters*', but instead produces an authentic 1970s style thanks to the clever use of lighting by Andreas Höfer, director of photography.[319] Conversely, Roger Cook finds that *The Legend of Rita*, along with Petzold's *The State I Am In*, is stylistically reminiscent of those New German Cinema films made around 1977 with those washed-out tones.[320] He refers to the 'pervasive heavy atmosphere' that envelops the films, the 'depressive pall over the story' and the 'trance-like state' of the main characters.[321] The film benefitted from the involvement of Kohlhaase, whose personal background in East Germany and professional experience at DEFA provided a further dimension of authenticity. In an interview, Schlöndorff confirmed how beneficial it was working at Babelsberg studios,[322] with their 700 East German employees, who provided suggestions to enhance the genuineness, especially in the costume and production design department.[323]

Beside these positive comments about the shabby realism of the film, *The Legend of Rita* was welcomed with negative criticism. In particular, the former B2J terrorist, Inge Viett, voiced her concerned for the lack of contextualisation of the violent upheaval. Although her biography served as the main historical source for the film, Viett publicly objected to the final result: she criticised the romanticisation of the armed struggle and the lack of political ethos in the portrayal of Rita.[324] She even

[318] Moeller and Lellis, *Volker Schlöndorff's Cinema*, 311. Viett later accused the screenwriters of having used portions of her story without permission; the case was settled out of court. Cf. Inge Viett, *Nie war ich furchtloser* (Hamburg: Nautilus, 1997).
[319] Rachel Palfreyman, "The Fourth Generation", 24.
[320] Roger F. Cook, "Die fetten Jahre sind vorbei: Edukating the Post-Left Generation, " in *The Collapse of the Conventional. German Film and its Politics at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Jaimey Fischer and Brad Prager (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2010), 325.
[321] Ibid.
[322] From 1992 until 1997 Volker Schlöndorff was chief executive of Babelsberg Studios, part of the old DEFA, which underwent a deep renovation of infrastructure thanks to its privatisation.
[323] Information retrieved from the DVD commentary of *The Legend of Rita*.
[324] Anonymous, "Ärger um Urheberrecht. Ex-Terroristin will Schlöndorff verklagen," *Spiegel OnLine*, 16 February 2000.< http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/kino/0,1518,64670,00.html> (accessed 15 August 2014).

brought the matter to court, suing Schlöndorff and Kohlhaase for plagiarism, a dispute which was privately settled out of court between the parties.[325]

Schlöndorff was accused of being too harsh or, sometimes on the contrary, too gentle towards the terrorists. For example, Thomas Klingenmeier wrote on the *Stuttgarter Zeitung* that Schlöndorff did not want to draw attention to the origins of the RAF in the anti-authoritarian movement of the late Sixties.[326] The filmmaker glossed the depiction of the radical and politicised youth in order to attract new generations, the hedonistic *Spassgesellschaft*. Schlöndorff's nostalgic revisitation in the first part of the film is a clear example of the so-called *Westalgie*, the nostalgia for the old German Federal Republic.[327] The nostalgic celebration of the terrorist lifestyle in the Kreuzberg district is highly problematic, but I suggest that it represents a reaction to post-unification fears that political engagement was on the verge of being shattered.

The Best of Youth had a problematic gestation, as well; originally shot as a TV mini-series for RAI, the Italian state broadcaster, it was then refused by the company and sent to festival circuits as a 6-hour film. After unexpectedly winning the prestigious award *Un Certain Regard* at Cannes in 2003, it was released in theatres in two parts and finally shown on Rai1 in four episodes.[328] The film marked the collaboration between powerhouse scriptwriting duo, Stefano Rulli and Sandro Petraglia[329] with director Marco Tullio Giordana, who collected material on Italian youth through their own experience as political activists or from stories told by friends. Specifically, the character of Giulia, which will be later analysed, was inspired by the story of Adriana Faranda, who left a young daughter to become a fully clandestine

[325] For a comment on the details of the controversy see, Uwe Wittstock, "Stille nach dem Terror," *Welt Online*, 18 February 2002. <http://www.welt.de/print-welt/article503012/Stille_nach_dem_Terror.html> (accessed 15 August 2014).
[326] Thomas Klingenmaier, "Die Stille nach dem Schuss. Herbst der Desperados," *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, 11 September 2001, page unavailable. Copy retrieved at the Bibliothek und Textarchiv des Deutschen Filminstituts (Frankfurt am Main).
[327] See for instance Andrew Plowman, "'Was will ich den als Westdeutscher erzählen?': The 'old' West and Globalisation in recent German Prose," in *German Literature in the Age of Globalisation*, edited by Stuart Taberner (Birmingham: Birmingham University Press, 2004), 47-66. I will further investigate this notion in Chapter Five.
[328] The theatrical version lasts 383 minutes; the TV version is 400 minutes long, whereas the Cannes Film Festival's version was 358. I based my analysis on the RAI-Trade DVD edition, which follows the theatrical version.
[329] Petraglia and Rulli are long-time collaborators and writers of some of the most successful dramas of Italian cinema and television: the tv series *La Piovra/The Octopus* (1987-92), Daniele Lucchetti's *Il portaborse/The Yes Man* (1991), Gianni Amelio's *Il ladro di bambini/Stolen Children* (1992) and Michele Placido's *Romanzo Criminale* to cite a few.

member of the BR, eventually being involved in the most serious terrorist attack: the kidnapping of former prime minister Aldo Moro.

The title of the film originates from a collection of poems in the Friulian language, a North-eastern dialect, by Pier Paolo Pasolini published in 1954 as *La meglio gioventù: poesie friulane* (The Best Youth: Friulian Poems). The Italian filmmaker and intellectual, whose mysterious death is the focus of Giordana, Rulli and Petraglia's film *Pasolini: un delitto italiano*/*Pasolini: An Italian Crime* (2005), praises in these poems the simple lifestyle of his native homeland, condemning at the same time increasing consumerism. In light of this, Giordana's film follows these rather conservative precepts, celebrating old values, male bonds and those who channelled their radicalism into official politics.

Moreover, this conservatism emerges also at a stylistic level, especially in the collection of 'postcard landscapes' that intercut the various fragments of the six-hour-long saga. The film, in fact, rediscovers the years of lead through an escapist formula filled with long shots of urban panoramas and landscapes, iconic fashion and design objects. Popular songs ('The House of The Rising Sun' by The Animals, 'A chi' by Fausto Leali) as well as Vespas and FIAT cars function as temporal and generational markers, even before sit-ins, rallies and strikes are invoked. As we shall see in Chapter Four, Giordana's film inaugurates a new trend and transforms Italian post-war history, even its more dramatic aspects, in a site of pleasurable yearning and an object of exportability.[330] The Italian press, still recognising the artistic limits of the drama, praised the efforts to concentrate so many issues in a contemporary epic saga, and celebrated the Italian success with special editions, exhibitions and collections of pictures from the set.[331] Natalia Aspesi from *La Repubblica* underlines how *The Best of Youth* brought back to the Italians in their fifties the memory of when being young meant going against old rules and fighting for civil rights.[332]

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[330] I will expand on this aspect in the next chapter when I deal with the notion of heritage cinema. The link between *The Best of Youth* and the idea of a cultural heritage to be saved is foregrounded by O'Leary, *Tragedia all'italiana,* 219 (footnote 36).

[331] Cf. Tullio Kezich, "Un viaggio appassionato nell'Italia in cui credere," *Corriere della Sera*, 28 June 2003, 36 and Sandra Cesarale, "Giordana: in 6 ore vi racconto l'Italia," *Corriere della Sera*, 8 December 2003, 54.

[332] Natalia Aspesi, "Giordana: noi, ex ragazzi in cerca di un'Italia migliore," *La Repubblica*, 21 May 2003, 46.

The nostalgia for the failed revolution and lost youth is mediated primarily through the soundtrack of the film and through original photographs that appear in the opening title sequences of the two parts. Reliving an experience through visual or aural props means reliving a social practice, therefore regaining a sense of belonging to a group. Alan O'Leary argues that *The Best of Youth* addresses the left-wing electorate in a sort of post ideological celebration, unifying the various memories of the generations who experienced that turbulent decade.[333] However, I would like to underline that the film does not solely serve the older generations, direct eyewitnesses to those events, but also younger generations. Through the archival intertexts, the folk songs and the film's narratives youngsters can discover that past and search for models. The nostalgic memories of *The Best of Youth* may also be employed by younger generations, who were not even born in the 1970s but who look to that precise period for the creation of a political and collective identity.

The film is not simply an appraisal of modern heroes, the anti-terrorism policeman, the prosecutor against the bribery of political parties and the psychiatrist against invasive methods. *The Best of Youth* aims to reconnect civic society, those who went through the dramatic events of the 1970s and younger generations, 'the no-logo' and 'anti-globalisation' protests who look back at the experience of their fathers. It should not be forgotten that the G8 summit in Genoa in 2001 saw the re-awakening of left-wing activism, by the 'old guard' and new lines.[334] I interpret Giordana's choices in the broader context of the diminishing hegemonic power of the left in Italy at the beginning of the new millennium. *The Best of Youth* could be seen as an early reaction to the culture of *berlusconismo* (Berlusconism is a neologism defining the values and polices pushed forward by Silvio Berlusconi during his governments), a response to the threats of their political identity. The film aims at creating a sharable national memory and heals the wound of the years of lead by reaffirming the values of that generation against the sweep of historical revisionism taking place at the turn of the new millennium. By depicting a sentimental and nostalgic vision of the past and adopting the genre of melodrama, probably the most popular and operatic form of national culture in the country of Giuseppe Verdi, *The Best of Youth* aims to mitigate

[333] Alan O'Leary, *Tragedia all'italiana.* 220-1.
[334] For an analysis of how the memory of the protest movements in 1977 Bologna are appropriated by younger generations see Andrea Hajek, *Negotiating Memories of Protest in Western Europe: The Case of Italy* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

the sorrow from those traumatic events, specifically the 1970s which remain a fracture in the country's history. In this celebration of the '68 generation, there is no space for any Giulias, the character that represents all those who left the student movement for the armed struggle. Although it is clear that Giulia did not commit any murder, she fails to be part of the 'the best generation', composed almost exclusively of Nicola's (male) friends, since she does not join them at a party in a Tuscan villa, nor does she participate in her daughter's wedding.

Nostalgia works here as a progressive and future-oriented desire, which may provide empowerment for younger generations. However, for certain groups and older generations it tends to be a backward-looking longing, a remedy to filter the conflicting memories of the past. The filmmakers' view on the authoritarian state, the socio-economic condition and the inner divisions are sometimes undercut with enthusiasm and excitement for youthful, although often violent, rebellion that occurred in those years. Nostalgia is adopted in these films to reflect critically both on the past and the present, and is the primary strategy adopted to contain the violence of the armed struggle. If for Svetlana Boym, nostalgia in Post-Soviet Russia 'became a mechanism against the accelerated rhythm of change and the economic shock therapy,'[335] I suggest that the nostalgia in *The Legend of Rita* and *The Best of Youth* works as a palliative medicine against the fears of post-1989 Germany and Italy. However, given that Schlöndorff and Giordana return to this topic, it could be argued that the nostalgia of their films is also a way to reflect on cinema itself. Their melancholic engagement with social issues constitutes what Emiliano Morreale defines as 'nostalgia for commitment'.[336] The yearning for a particular historical period is associated with a feeling of loss, not only for clear and strong ideologies, but for a politically committed cinema, as well. I read the filmmakers' metacinematic nostalgia as a reflection on the decline of avant-guard forms and socially engaged films, and an observation of the necessity to find new forms to reactivate political consciousness in new generations.

It is worth stressing that nostalgia is not the only strategy adopted to efface shameful aspects. The archetypes applied to figure of the female terrorist work in a

[335] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 64.
[336] Emiliano Morreale, *L'invenzione della nostalgia. Il vintage nel cinema italiano e dintorni* (Rome: Donzelli, 2009), 15.

similar way; patriarchal narratives are used to render more bearable and understandable the idea of violent women. Bondavelli maintains that the armed struggle was a product of the change that these films celebrate,[337] however, these films also exclude and refuse radicalism and violence. By reading these films as texts about nostalgia for old ideologies or about the upheaval of the German unification, one risks concealing the problematic portrayal of female terrorists. A feminist reading of the case studies may help to transcend the critics' reviews and other academic analyses on these two films. In the following we shall see how the complex representation of female terrorists functions as another corrective strategy, like nostalgia, to deal with the 1970s crisis.

Understanding female violence

This chapter stems from a reflection on the cinematic representation of violent women and the media obsession over terrorism in the new millennium. Whereas many German commentators have remarked upon the authenticity of Schlöndorff's film and his attempt to overcome the oppositional paradigm of terrorists as either monster or myth, very little interest, critical and academic, has emerged on the actual representational strategies of the protagonist.[338] Similarly, the Italian press has underlined the encompassing value of Giordana's work for tracing almost forty years of Italian history and the limits of its sentimentalism and narrative omissions.[339] However, an evaluation of the treatment of the character of Giulia and Rita, as well as of other key figures in these films, is still missing. It is my contention that both in the German and Italian contexts stereotypes and allegories are put in place in order to dissociate the current (left-wing) political and cultural elites, and to a certain extent the filmmakers, from a turbulent past. The anxiety towards female members of left-wing terrorist groups reveals a discomfort towards non-normative female behaviours, but the narrative development of the films' protagonists could also reveal new trajectories

[337] Bondavalli, "Rebels without a cause".
[338] The material I have researched for this chapter include reviews appeared in regional more conservative papers such as *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, the national conservative paper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zietung*, the centre-left *Die Ziet*, the liberal *Tagesspiegel* and the news magazine *Der Spiegel*.
[339] I have considered reviews in the major Italian dailies, *Il Corriere della Sera*, *La Repubblica* and more local ones such as *Il Messaggero* (Rome) and *La Stampa* (Turin).

regarding the possibility of reconciliation between former terrorists and the larger society.

The scholarly literature on women terrorists is extensive and diverse; it mainly covers two categories of studies: social, historical and psychological analyses of the phenomenon of female terrorism, through the use of archival documents, interviews and memoirs;[340] and analyses of media reports and representations of accused or convicted terrorists.[341] In the approach to my reading, I follow studies of media portrayal of women terrorists that have adopted a constructivist framework and a discourse analysis methodology. Specifically, I test the results of previous research on the representations of female terrorists in print media within the context of fictional cinema. For example, Ulrike Hanna Meinhof has considered German and British press reports on the RAF and the women of Greeham Common, a feminist peace group which occupied the terrains near an American military base in Newbury in protest against nuclear cruise missiles housed there.[342] Meinhof traces the development of the myth of the terrorist woman and analyses popular press to prove how the spectacularisation of political and sexual rebellion succeeded in supporting repressive state actions.[343] Similarly, Clare Bielby has examined the representation of violent women in 1960s and 1970s German print media defining the 'hysterical feminine', the 'abject mother' and the 'feminine grotesque' as the dominant narratives in the discourse of German terrorism.[344] Through my close reading, I shall argue that the cinematic representations of female terrorists are still haunted by the irrational myth of the violent woman; however, they reveal at the same time all its contradictions presenting a more nuanced and paradoxical image, suggesting even some sympathy or compassion.

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[340] For example Deborah M. Galvin, "The Female Terrorist: A Socio-Psychological Perspective," *Behavioural Science and the Law* 1 (1983): 19-32 and Luisella De Cataldo-Neuburger and Tiziana Valentini *Women and Terrorism* (London: Macmillan, 1996).

[341] See Bronwyn Nacos, "The Portrayal of Female Terrorists in the Media: Similar Framing in the News Coverage of Women in Politics and in Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* Vol. 28, No. 5 (2005): 435-51 and Rhiannon Talbot, "Myths in the Representation of Women Terrorists," *Eire-Ireland* 35 (2001): 165-86.

[342] Ulrike Hanna Meinhof, "Revolting Women: Subversion and its Media Representation in West Germany and Britain," in *Women, State and Revolution*, ed. Siân Reynolds (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), 141-60.

[343] Ibid., 141.

[344] Clare Bielby, "Violent Women in Print: Representations in the West German Print Media of the 1960s and 1970s" (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 2008).

Terrorism is a challenge to society, but female terrorism is a challenge also to patriarchal norms. Specifically it is a challenge to the genderedness of violence, which after centuries of literary and artistic tradition sees women as the defenders of peace as opposed to men, who tend to be associated with belligerent behaviour. Tamar Mayer rightly affirms that nationalism, gender and sexuality are all intertwined, as they are socially and culturally constructed, representing the aspiration of the elites.[345] She maintains that,

> in these narratives the nation is virtually always feminized and characterized as in need of protection; women are figured as the biological and cultural reproducers of the nation and as 'pure' and 'modest', and men defend the national image and protect the nation's territory, women's 'purity' and 'modesty', and the 'moral code.' Thus women are represented as the nation's social and biological womb and the men as its protectors.[346]

Nira Yuval-Davis concurs with this argument and explains that the female figure functions as both the literal and cultural reproducer and representation of the nation.[347] This idea combined with the fact that the feminine ideals of 'mother, wife or lover' form the bedrock of patriarchal cultural narratives, accounts for the mass hysteria surrounding female terrorists, since they go against such pervasive imagery. Given that Yuval-Davis claims that, 'it is women who reproduce nations, biologically, culturally and symbolically',[348] I argue that it is precisely because of women's role as reproducer and representation of the nation that the storylines of many films on terrorism portray female radicals as the most extreme, degenerate and uncompromising challenge to the status quo.

Recent feminist scholarship from different disciplines has tried to categorise the various narratives in the media that are imposed on female terrorists when recounting their experiences. At the 2007 conference of the International Communication Association in San Francisco, Miglena Mantcheva Sternadori presented the results of a five-year-long survey on English-language publications

[345] Tamar Mayer, "Gender Ironies of Nationalism: Setting the Stage," in *Gender Ironies of Nationalism: Sexing the Nation*, ed. Tamar Mayer (London: Routledge, 2000), 10.
[346] Ibid.
[347] Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (London: Sage, 1997), 26.
[348] Ibid, 2.

about women terrorists. She found out that five stereotypical categories are explored: the unskilled suicide bomber, the revenge seeker, the failed mother, the brainwashed victim and the sexy babe with psychological issues.[349] Similarly, Rhiannon Talbot outlines several categories attributed to Irish freedom fighters:

> The average depiction of women terrorists draws on notions that they are (a) extremist feminists; (b) only bound into terrorism via a man; (c) only acting in supporting roles within terrorist organizations; (d) mentally inept; (e) unfeminine in some ways; or any combination of the above.[350]

The Legend of Rita and *The Best of Youth* complicate these rigid schemata; they do adopt some of these stereotypes but their overall portrayal is multifaceted. The treatment of gender in these films maintains patriarchal stereotypes of women and contrasts the idea that women are able to make their own decisions. I suggest that the overlapping of different narratives, the politically naïve and sexually available terrorist for Rita and the unstable, hysterical mother for Giulia, are adopted to contain the violence perpetrated by terrorist women. Two different and opposing strategies are in action in the films, however, with the same ultimate scope. On the one hand, German violent women are highly sexualized, so their actions are undermined by showing how far their sexuality is from the feminine ideal. On the other hand, the Italian terrorist goes through a process of defeminisation, or 'uglification'; Giulia's abnormality is shown as incompatible as possible with motherhood and thus with 'normal' womanhood.

This vision could be the result of a male point of view. As previously argued, male characters and homosocial dynamics drive *The Best of Youth's* narrative. For Catherine O'Rawe, the focus on homosocial and fraternal bonds, where masculine stardom dominates the performances, constitutes a typical occurrence in Petraglia and Rulli's screenplays, writers of male-centric melodramas such as *Romanzo Criminale*

[349] Miglena Mantcheva Sternadori, "Sexy, Tough or Inept? Depictions of Women terrorists in the News" (paper presented at the annual conference of the International Communication Association, San Francisco, 24 May 2007), 1. <http://citation.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/1/7/2/0/9/pages172098/p172098-1.php> (accessed 10 August 2014).
[350] Talbot, "Myths in the Representation of Women Terrorists": 168.

and *My Brother Is an Only Child*.[351] In all these films female characters are either sidelined, or relegated to traditional stereotypes; Giulia plays an important role in the story, but she is a supporting character and becomes victim of the 'madwoman' archetype, relegated offscreen for large parts of the second half of the film. As far as Schlöndorff is concerned, I tend to agree with E. Ann Kaplan's view that a sincere concern with women's issues is not particularly evident in the films that he made alone after his collaboration with Margarethe Von Trotta.[352] The two films that he made with her, at the time his wife, *Strohfeuer/A Free Woman* (1972)[353] and *The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum* shows a more intimate take on the complexities of female characters. The tendency to align the character of Rita to traditional images of female terrorists, without investigating her true motivations, could thus be read in light of his dimming engagement with gender politics.

Rita Vogt: a flawed but sympathetic terrorist

In cinematic representations of German terrorists, it is striking how often the perpetrator's gender and sexual identity is placed in the foreground. *The Legend of Rita* is no exemption. The originality of Schlöndorff's film lies in the fact that it entwines concerns about the phenomenon of terrorism and the reunification of West and East Germany with the coercion of female rebellious behaviour. This preoccupation can be traced back to the representation of women terrorists in 1970s print media, where according to Clare Bielby 'the violent woman terrorist was deemed a provocative and paradoxical figure because rather than giving life she takes it'.[354] The smear campaign of conservative papers against RAF sympathisers and the vilification of female terrorists become the central element of Schlöndorff's first film on the issue, *The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum*. In Schlöndorff's adaptation of Heinrich Böll's novella, the protagonist spends a night with Ludwig Götte (Jürgen

[351] Catherine O'Rawe, "Contemporary Cinema," in *Directory of World Cinema: Italy*, ed. Louis Bayman (Bristol and Chicago: Intellect, 2011), 255-6.
[352] E. Ann Kaplan, *Women and Film. Both Sides of the Camera* (London and New York: Routledge, 1983), 106-107.
[353] Von Trotta is credited as a co-author of the script and she stars in the leading role, portraying Elizabeth Junker, a divorcee struggling against her rich husband.
[354] Clare Bielby, "Remembering the Red Army Faction," *Memory Studies* Vol. 3 No. 2 April (2010): 141.

Prochnow), a suspected terrorist for the authorities, and is subsequently harassed by the yellow press, particularly by the leading reporter of the fictional *Die Zeitung*, followed by a similar treatment by the police.[355] The media image of Katharina, as a promiscuous divorcée and a morally corrupt and fervent socialist, causes a violent reaction. The relatively shy and politically naïve secretary shoots the invasive journalist out of desperation after working off her rage against the furniture of her flat.

Schlöndorf and Kohlhaase do not construct such a straightforward character, playing instead with the various images of female terrorists constructed by the media. However, certain stereotypes are hard to shift; Rita follows in part the model suggested by Bielby, and adheres to a certain extent to the image of Katharina driven by the sensational press. I identify three main tropes: the immature and in-love terrorist, the lesbian and emasculating woman and the Amazon fighter. Through the course of the film Rita shifts her image of young naïve radical to sexually free woman, all epitomes adopted to describe Katharina in the fictional book/film or the female members of the RAF in the press. As a result, the motivations of Rita are ascribed once again to biological reasons and rarely deal with her cognitive ability to make decisions. Compared to *The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum*, where, according to Stefan Wolff, there is 'an obvious tendency to polarize strictly between good and evil', *The Legend of Rita* represents as a further development of Schlöndorff's political commitment, as it reinforces the grey areas in between.[356] Although stereotypical, it is in these grey areas that the portrayal of Rita appears more complex than older depictions of female terrorists; nevertheless, the new characterisation deprives again the violent woman of agency and maintains subordinating stereotypes. It is important to challenge media-constructed images of terrorists, because as Schlöndorff argue in an interview contained in the DVD extras of the 2003 Criterion Collection of *The Last Honour of Katharina Blum,* the media hype over left-wing terrorists in the 1970s resonates with post 9/11 terrorist panic.

In the beginning of *The Legend of Rita* the depiction of our protagonist draws on the notion that she is only bound into the armed struggle via a man, hence

[355] The filmmaker inserted a disclaimer text at the end of the film – it appears on the opening of Böll's book as well – acknowledging the unavoidable resemblance between the fictional *Die Zeitung* and the factual tabloid *Bild.* In 1972 Böll was brutally defamed by Der Spiegel as a sympathisers of terrorists.
[356] Stefan Wolff, "The Fictionalisation of Terrorism in Western German Cinema," 121.

suggesting that women are emotional and dependant. The film opens with a bank robbery to the sound of an extra-diegetic music-box with its childish tones, which Moeller and Lellis identify as the communist anthem, *Internazionale*.[357] The styling of Rita, in terms of costume, hairstyle and make-up, could be described as seductively hippie. Rita enters the bank waving her flowing strawberry blond hair, as a bimbo would do, and shading her eyes behind some dark aviator Ray-bans. At the same time, her clothes appear more associated with the hippie subculture rather than the typical 1970s revolutionary uniform of leather or military jackets and the Palestinian keffiyeh, adopted instead by her male partners in crime. Her flashing pendant, the bright red jeans jacket and the purple bell-bottom trousers recall the flower children's attire, suggesting perhaps Rita's political naivety and her non-violent intentions despite holding a gun.

The childish nature of the robbery is neatly exemplified by the distribution of *Schokoküsse*,[358] as recompense for the troubled bank customers, the reverie towards an old lady, who arrives slightly too late to witness the whole act, and the donation of a bag of stolen coins to a homeless man passing by the crime scene. The music and these fairy-tale episodes, on the one hand, erode the violent threat posed by the guns and the myth of the RAF, depoliticising therefore the motivation of the armed struggle. On the other hand, these elements contribute to the apologetic portrayal of urban terrorism. Moreover, by presenting Rita in a supporting and nurturing role, the orders are given by the male terrorists and her involvment is limited to the collection of small change, she is shown to be rather less threatening. Rita is still a revolutionary, but a domesticated terrorist, emotionally attached to Andreas Klein, the leader of the fictional terrorist group.[359]

According to Ulrike Hanna Meinhof, the German magazine *Der Spiegel* pictured the female RAF members as 'gangster babies', 'female supermen', 'men

[357] Moeller and Lellis, *Volker Schlöndorff's Cinema*, 315. It is noteworthy how the international trailer of the film uses on the same edited images 'Street Fighting Man' by the Rolling Stones, which in the full-length film accompanies, instead, the sequence at the Kreuzberg flat, an area in West Berlin famous for its alternative lifestyle and anarchist communes.

[358] A popular children's sweet made of chocolate-coated marshmallow or egg-white meringue. They were first known as *Mohrenkopf*, a term now commonly used only in Switzerland and in the South of Germany.

[359] Clearly the character of Andi is based on the figure of Andreas Baader, founding member of the RAF. The film re-enacts in a different context his escape from prison thanks to female members of the terrorist cell.

enough to act decisively', in other words *femmes fatales* who used their feminine character to disguise their criminal intentions.[360] In the film Rita is initially presented as a gullible young woman who robs banks in aid of her man, and then, generously gives away a bag full of coins. Subsequently, a different narrative is imposed to explain her violence, but again to deny her political agency and more generally I would say, condemning her femininity. Rita placates her anxiety by filling her sexual appetite, for instance passionately kissing Andi after the bank robbery and his setting-free from prison, or making love with him as soon as the Stasi agree to hide them in the GDR. Laura Sjoberg and Carol Gentry define the framework, which vilifies violent women because of their perceived sexual depravity, as the 'whore narrative'.[361] One of their hypotheses argues that

> violent women are often characterised by their capacity (or lack thereof) to have sex with men; women's involvement in sexual activity is somehow always closely linked to women's violence. Women either commit violence because of their insatiable need for sex with men, men's control and ownership of their bodies, or their inability to have sex with men.[362]

The irrational sexual desire of Rita, which emerges after having committed criminal actions, is not associated with the image of a predatory and emasculating female terrorist, as it happens for instance in Edel's *The Baader Meinhof Complex* with the character of Gudrun Ensslin. Nonetheless, this suggests an image of a less authentic militant who needs the love of her companion in order to continue the fight. Rita is not hypersexualised, however, by foregrounding her sexual desire the film obscures the real reasons for being involved in the movement. In light of this, Rita's decision to remain in the GDR, instead of going abroad with the other members, could be interpreted not only as the retreat from armed struggle caused by the guilt from murdering a French policeman – and the associated loss of all revolutionary illusions – but also as a retreat motivated by the discovery that Andi is now romantically involved

[360] Meinhof, "Revolting Women: Subversion and its Media Representation in West Germany and Britain," 147.
[361] Laura Sjoberg and Carol E. Gentry, *Mothers, Monsters, Whores: Women's Violence in Global Politics* (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 45.
[362] Ibid, 46.

with another terrorist.[363] The final image that emerges is not the canonical femme fatale of film noirs and thrillers. Rita is not even shown waving in a triumphal mode a gun or a rifle, classic phallic symbols adopted by many female revolutionaries in their photographic portraits.[364]

The fact that for Rita political engagement is always associated with emotional attachment leads us to a reflection on female participation in terrorist movements. The issue is of course not a simple one. When Rita confides in Friederike, a fellow radical, that she got involved in the group because of a crush on Andi,[365] the film denounces the inner contradiction of these supposedly liberating movements, which instead reproduce patriarchal systems. According to Sjoberg and Gentry, 'women's integration into spheres of power and violence threatens patriarchy,' until they are domesticated into nurturing roles or dehumanised through hypersexualisation.[366] This confirms the hypothesis put forward by Robin Morgan in her book *The Demon Lover: On the Sexualities of Terrorism*, where she argues that terrorist groups embody a traditional cultural system in which women are subordinated to their male companions.[367] Based on her personal experience as a radical feminist activist linked to members of the American terrorist group The Weather Underground, Morgan argues that for the most part women are recruited through their links with male terrorists and hence are trapped by love and attachment to their partners.[368] The lack of investigation into Rita's political motivation in the first part of the film seems to point in this direction; she embraces the guerrilla fighting more to follow her lover than for utopia, a sentiment which will emerge later when living in the GDR without Andi.

This contradicts in part the explanation given by the director for choosing to have a female protagonist. In the audio commentary to the Kino International DVD

[363] The relationship with Andi is shown as a wild romance. As Schlöndorff underlined in an interview, it was intended as a Robin Hood or Bonnie and Clyde romance, see Oliver Hüttmann, "Mollies zu werfen war okay," *Spiegel OnLine*, 11 September 2000.
<http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/kino/0,1518,92844,00.html> (accessed 1 September 2014).
[364] See for instance the picture mentioned at the beginning of the chapter showing Leila Khaled holding a rifle.
[365] In the DVD commentary, however, Schlöndorff admits that this statement was a tongue-and-cheek to reflect on Friederike's motivations, who joins the armed struggle out of boredom for her upper middle class lifestyle.
[366]Laura Sjoberg and Carol E. Gentry, *Mothers, Monsters, Whores*, 45.
[367] Robin Morgan, *The Demon Lover: the Roots of Terrorism* (New York: Washington Square Press, 2001).
[368] Ibid., 422-3.

edition, Schlöndorff discusses the reasons for having a woman as a lead character. Apart from his preference for working with female actors, he believes that 'their conviction must be stronger [than the one of male revolutionaries] to overcome the natural inclination against violence'. In this sense the director's idea coincides with Tamar Mayer's analysis, which defines the abnormality of the female terrorist in going against a tradition of non-belligerence.[369] Nonetheless, this strong conviction fails to emerge when Rita is involved in terrorist activities, but instead becomes more prominent when she retreats to East Germany. In other words, her political belief becomes stronger only when she faces the backwardness of the socialist system, as if she had to justify the evident economic and social problems there.

Over the course of the film, several other narrative strategies defuse the threat that the body of the violent female imposes. Terrorist women have to be demonised and hence, Rita is shown as manipulative and conscious of her sexual power especially when her 'legends' are in danger. In general, violent women are 'othered' and rendered non-human through the sexualisation of their existence and their actions. In her analysis of print images of female terrorists on the 30th anniversary of the German Autumn, Bielby points out the recurrent distortion to their images, which are even made pornographic showing, for example, a naked Gudrun Ensslin as femme fatale and phallic woman.[370] Even the cinematic representation of Ensslin in *The Baader-Meinhof Complex* clearly employs the 'whore narrative' to describe women's proscribed violence. By keeping her breast exposed during strategy meetings and in Middle-Eastern training camps the fictional Gudrun uses her sexuality to tie the male supporters.[371] The sexualisation of Rita is, instead, subtler; first of all, because as Moeller and Lellis argue she is ironically pushed into an increasingly conformist lifestyle,[372] secondly because she has allegedly renounced violence. Rita uses her sexual power, without making her body an object for the male gaze. The 'revolutionary' and 'liberating' German Democratic Republic pushes Rita to become a child-minder and in the end to have a heterosexual relationship and to desire a

[369] Mayer, "Gender Ironies of Nationalism", 10.
[370] Bielby, "Remembering the Army Faction": 144.
[371] It is interesting to know how the sexualisation of female members of the RAF becomes even pornographic in Bruce LaBruce's *The Raspberry Reich*.
[372] Moeller and Lellis, *Volker Schlöndorff's Cinema*, 312

marriage.[373] Her physical appearance reflects this trajectory, especially towards the end when she wears long ample skirts. Rachel Palfreyman notices that her hairstyle, when she wears her hair straight in a brunette bob, bears a resemblance to the on-the-whole conservative Katharina Blum.[374] In her intimacy Rita is shown as a dominant woman, even emasculating on different occasions. In fact, she seduces her partner in order to distract him from the emerging truth about her past. This occurs when her boyfriend in the GDR, Jochen, discovers that she is wearing fake eyeglasses; she flirtatiously plays with him, explaining that it is part of her vanity, before leading him to the bedroom.

Similarly, her sexual encounter with Tatjana stems from doubts about her past. In order to protect her fake identity, Rita kisses Tatjana and spends the night with her. Although it could be said that her attachment to the troubled woman originates from her inner nature, which always leads her to help others (the Marxist revolution, the Third World in Lebanon, or the Communist party in the GDR), I read this intimacy as another way to signal her alterity and radicalism, and an episode of gratuitous sexuality. For Sjober and Gentry lesbianism could be a cause and at the same time an effect of women's engagement with the armed struggle; for them, violence is associated with women's inability to fulfil their biological destiny, hence the abundance of narratives of lesbians and women unable to have or rear children.[375] Although the episode is treated with no malice, the camera just captures a passionate kiss between the women and skips to the morning after, the tendency to sexualise female terrorists persists, as well as the notion that she must be culpable of initiating the affair. The lesbian love scene is not spectacularised, it does not feature any nudity, but nonetheless is an expression of the sexualising tendency in the representations of female terrorists.

[373] Ibid.
[374] Palfreyman, "The Fourth Generation", 24.
[375] Sjoberg and Gentry, *Mothers, Monsters, Whores*, 48.



Fig. 3.1 Rita and Tatjana

Rita's sexuality is subtle, yet threatening; certainly she does not follow the stereotype of the voracious and murderous terrorist but she embodies a figure of a woman that threatens and deprives other male characters of power. This further emerges in one scene, where Rita reveals her past as a terrorist to her East German boyfriend, while he is taking a bath. After loosing Tatjana, because of her suspicions of her previous life in the West, Rita decides to be fully honest with her new partner, especially since the couple has started making projects for the future. Rita's boyfriend is naked, immersed in the bathtub, whereas she is standing in front of him with a shirt on. The spatial disposition of the characters and the fact that Jochen is defenceless, immersed in the water and without clothes, renders the relationship imbalanced and Rita's disclosure a powerful weapon.[376] Jochen receives the unexpected news with shock and immediately tries to re-establish an equilibrium by standing up, covering himself with a towel and raising his voice. A further example of Rita's dominance and virility appears during her first day of work as a party representative in a factory. Rita enters the manager's office with a bundle of folders and documents listing all the people to contact in order to better reorganise the service. The man listens silently overwhelmed by her enthusiasm and zealousness before dismissing her and sending her to a children's summer camp. Rita's pre-eminence always appears alongside an initially submissive man, who later tries to reverse his passive role; this image seems, therefore, to be inextricably linked to the struggles of a threatened masculinity to

[376] A similar scene can be found in *The Baader-Meinhof Complex*, where Gudrun Ensslin is shown as a phallic woman, intimidating and at the same time luring the young Peter Jürgen Boock.

contain the violent woman. Jochen's repulsion at Rita's life choices and the manager's discharge could hint to the patriarchal system's attempts to assert control over rebellious femininity and delegitimise their politics.

As I have argued *The Legend of Rita* feminises German terrorism, through the models of the ingenuous radical or the sexually available woman. The third model embodied by Rita Vogt is that of the Amazon, a symbol of wildness and mystery. The word 'amazon' etymologically means without breast and in fact, it indicates the mythic population of female warriors who cauterised the right breast of baby girls to block the growth and thus, become better archers.[377] The Amazon is an ambiguous figure in ancient Greek mythology; she does not represent a heroine like Atalanta for instance,[378] but a monster or an enemy to be defeated. The mythological figure was developed as a defuse strategy to explain unsocial feminine behaviours. Rikke Schubart points out that the myth of the Amazons originates from male fantasies and that the civilisation of women warriors comes from the inner fears of a very patriarchal society such as the Athenian one, as the Amazon inverts the social order that usually sees men at war.[379] In this sense, the figure of the female terrorist represents a threat to the patriarchal order of the state. Ancient Greeks believed that the world would immediately collapse if matriarchy were ever to triumph over patriarchy. From a feminist point of view, instead, the mythological figure remains a figure of women's empowerment, hence the contemporary more positive connotation associated with the term. According to the traditional myth, however, the Amazons 'hated men', 'loved war' and 'bred once a year';[380] they resulted in being sexual hybrid, androgynous figures where male and female attributes collided.

However, in contemporary popular cinema, Schubart indicates two possible versions of the Amazon myth: the good Amazon, young, beautiful, heterosexual, lover of war but supportive of patriarchy, and the evil Amazon, often a lesbian, older than

[377] Kathleen N. Daly, "Amazons," in *Greek and Roman Mythology from A to Z* (New York: Chelsea House, 2009), 10.
[378] According to Greek mythology Atalanta was a virgin huntress grown up in the wilderness who promised to marry whoever could beat her at a run chase. Eventually she was beaten by a suitor with a stratagem.
[379] Rikke Schubart, *Super Bitches and Action Babes: The Female Hero in Popular Cinema*, 1970-2006 (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2007), 221.
[380] Ibid. 35.

the heroine, greedy and asocial.[381] It is interesting to note how the character of Rita adheres to this mythological iconography in both the connotations of the figure; the Amazon image alludes both to an idea of female rebellion against nature's rule and female liberation at the same time. Rita is certainly Amazonian, but she escapes the simplistic characterisation, traced by Shubart primarily in male-centric genre films. This figure appears in crucial moments of Rita's existence: the passage from idealist revolutionary to brutal terrorist, when she kills a French policeman chasing after her, and when she speeds up at a checkpoint, understanding that only death can liberate her from her past. In these two episodes Rita is shown with traits associated with the mythological figure, or at least a modern version of it since she is riding a motorbike instead of a horse. Differently from previous scenes, Rita is shown wearing more militaristic clothes, or a more male attire, covering her face with a scarf as a way to blur identities with gender masquerade. In the Parisian sequence, there are no male terrorists and Rita is seen in the company of only Friederike, alluding perhaps to an all-female terrorist cell and hence to women's rule.[382] Their power is shown as dangerous and lawless; they do in fact ride around the city without helmets and against the flow of traffic. After a hard motor chase, Rita shoots at the French policeman, who was trying to fine them for those infractions. The distance between victim and shooter and the fact that she carefully takes the aim suggests this image of the Amazon hunter.



[381] Ibid. 36.
[382] As Stefan Aust recounts, it was no unusual having within the RAF female-only groups that lived in the same flat, such as for example the 'Hamburg Aunties', constituted by Susanne Albrecht, Sigrid Sternebeck and Silke Maier-Witt. *The Baader-Meinhof Complex,* transl. Anthea Bell (London: Bodley Head, 2008), 192.

Fig. 3.3 Rita as an Amazon terrorist.

The Amazon figure is here adopted to allow men to create a bearable space for the concept of female violence and women's authority. Sjoberg and Gentry maintain that in Ancient Greece stories of Amazons were used to outline the roles of women in society; they represented warnings of possible chaos if women transgressed their expected gender roles.[383] In *The Legend of Rita*, the female terrorist is othered as terrorist, because she is a freak, not only because of her warrior status, but because she has her own lifestyle. In the contemporary context the adoption of the Amazon archetype could also be reconnected to Schlöndorff's sympathetic view towards East German history and the 1970s radicals. According to the legend, male Greek heroes had to always defeat the Amazons, victims of a patriarchal society and its system. Rita instead is a victim of the progress; she is killed because of the failure of socialism.

Rita's death is staged therefore as a heroic shootout with border police, resulting in her falling from the motorbike in the manner of a desperado, arms in the air. The sequence begins when Erwin announces that the Stasi cannot protect Rita any longer: the West and East police have agreed to join forces in the hunt for former terrorists. After having received a lift from a biker, Rita steals his vehicle at a lay-by and heads towards the border. Whereas Brad Prager reads the speed-up at the checkpoint as a suicide fuelled by 'the winds of progress',[384] the final shot might also be interpreted as the classical conclusion of every myth that has as protagonist an Amazon. These mythical creatures challenge the boundaries between male and female rendering such myths the repositories of fears and anxieties between genders. By killing Rita as an Amazon warrior the story ends by denying the viability of female violence and therefore, by affirming the traditional status quo.

The scene is reminiscent of *Thelma and Louise*'s finale (Ridley Scott, 1991), where the two protagonists run with their Thunderbird above a canyon in an iconic and dream-like suicide sequence. The film, which recounts the out-of-the-ordinary road trip of a housewife and a waitress, shows two women acting together in retaliation against the traditional cultural expectations of American society. Leaving

[383] Sjoberg and Gentry, *Mothers, Monsters, Whores*, 43.
[384] Brad Prager, "Glimpses of Freedom: The Reemergence of Utopian Longing in German Cinema," in *The Collapse of the Conventional. German Film and its Politics at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Jaimey Fisher and Brad Prager (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2010), 366-7.

their usual routines and caged lives, they embark on a journey with dangerous consequences (because of the rupture of the patriarchal system); Louise in fact murders a man who was trying to rape her friend in a parking lot. *Thelma & Louise* exposes, as Lynda Hart argues, 'dominant culture underwriting's of lesbianism' when a woman who kills for another woman enters representation.[385] The endings of the two films are similar because the forcing of the police-block and the consequential suicide represent a familiar device for recapturing and containing the violent women who refuses to comply with society's rules. Scott's film does not show the typical shoot-out where the male heroes die in a blaze of glory; the male policeman who tried to help and stop the women is shown crying. Thelma and Louise's deaths are unrepresentable as the camera freezes before the car falls in the canyon.

Conversely, *The Legend of Rita* shows the traditional opposition between male subject (the border policeman) who succeeds in attaining his female object (Rita), and depicts the still running motorbike on the street, without giving any complete absolution. On the whole, the film shows feminist advances and patriarchal structures at the same time. The death of the terrorist excludes her from the traditional coming-of-age experience, shared by the '68 generation. This strategy facilitates the coming to terms with the utopian illusions of that generation, and the realisation of the failure of those aspirations. Representing Rita as a naïve and promiscuous woman who refuses to admit her guilt confirms that she can no longer find space in the new unified Germany. This exclusion reassures those who did not choose terrorism.

Giulia Monfalco: hysterical motherhood and failed redemption

As far as the representation of Italian female terrorists is concerned, it is interesting to note how the sexualisation of women's bodies represents a perspective rarely adopted by the media.[386] Marco Bellocchio's *Diavolo in corpo/Devil in the Flesh* (1986) is an exception as it briefly addresses the issue and remains therefore an anomaly for

[385] Lynda Hart, *Fatal Women: Lesbian Sexuality and the Mark of Aggression* (London: Routledge, 1994), 68.

[386] This tendency is more notable for the representation of male radicals, for instance in *Kleinhoff Hotel*/*The Passionate Strangers* (1977) by Carlo Lizzani. In Chapter Five I will pay more attention to the terrorist male body in historical-action movies about left-wing political violence, specifically in *The Baader Meinhof Complex* and *The Front Line*.

associating erotic passion with female terrorist impulses.[387] In her survey of realist novels about the years of lead, Beverly Allen finds out that

> women on the "terrorist" left are generally represented as being muddle-headed sex objects with well-developed proclivities for doing housework and not speaking out of turn, even when I, the reader, know from their interior monologues that their strategies and tactics are smarter than those of the dominant males.[388]

Although this representation occasionally re-appears on screen, other strategies are instead put into place to deal with the problematic figure of the female terrorist in *The The Best of Youth.* Giordana adopts two different paradigms to understand Giulia's changes from bourgeois student to terrorist: female hysteria and the refusal of motherhood. These narratives function to defeminise the character of Giulia in order to render more understandable her involvement in the armed struggle. The female terrorist is treated as an alterity, a sick person and a reckless mother. However, she is not totally dehumanised and demonised, as she is shown as able to have doubts and regrets. By adopting this perspective *The Best of Youth* continues a tradition of 1990s films, such as *Donne armate*/*Violent women* (Sergio Corbucci, 1991), which prefers a psychological explanation to the roots of terrorism rather than reconnecting it to a political and rational choice.

Giulia Monfalco is introduced after nearly two hours into the narrative, but, despite this, she remains a constant presence in the remainder of the film, having many crucial scenes. A Mozart tune is heard in a courtyard of a Florentine palace, the camera moves on a blond-haired girl who plays the piano, entertaining soldiers and volunteers during a break from the cleaning of the 1966 flood damage. Giulia's look stands out from the crowd with her blue jacket and immediately attracts Nicola, the Carati brother who left Sweden to help his country during the emergency. Giulia is a young bourgeois woman, studying mathematics at university; she is characterised first

[387] In the film the daughter of a BR victim attends a trial against radicals, showing support and tenderness towards her fiancée, a repentant terrorist who is waiting for his sentence. However, after getting aroused from witnessing a female terrorist having sex with a comrade in a security chamber - hence showing the perverse nature of violent women's desire, she decides to leave the fiancée for a high-school student, met a few hours earlier.

[388] Beverly Allen, "Terrorism Tales: Gender and the Fictions of Italian National Identity," *Italica* Vol. 69, No. 2 (Summer, 1992): 170.

of all by her great passion, something that she later decides to abandon as a self-mutilating act, an obligation to suffer for the success of the armed struggle. The love between Giulia and Nicola develops before the involvement of politics in their life, when the spirit of a peaceful generational change was still hoped for.[389] The couple then moves to Turin, where Nicola enrols in medicine and specialises in psychiatry. Giulia is particularly active in the student protests shifting her passion for music to debates about the class struggle. Her growing alienation and abnormal interest in violent politics is introduced in the scene where she reveals her pregnancy. During a demonstration, where the police try to contain and disperse the crowd with charges and tear gas, the couple finds refuge in the internal yard of a block of flats. There, Giulia empties her bag revealing some cobblestones, the typical weapon of protesters against police. Nicola expresses his disappointment, but because of his partner's pregnancy he does not investigate her rage against authority. The body of the violent woman is not yet presented as threatening; Giulia is still in love with Nicola and shows a slight expectant belly. The soon-to-be terrorist is portrayed as a sympathetic figure, whose body is threated by the charges of the police and tear gas; the identification with the suffering pregnant protester is only possible because of her condition and the political cultural context, she is part of the student and worker movements and not a violent association.

The descent into the terrorist cell is, however, hardly explained in the film and only signs of Giulia's inner mental malaise could point to the radical choice she makes. The ideological reasons for Giulia's transition from her maternal duties to the alternative family of the BR are elusive. In contrast, her partner, Nicola, outgrows his rebelliousness and channels his desire for change into specific reform ideas for the national health service, without interfering with his paternal responsibilities. The characterisation of violent women as mentally insane has a prominent place in the history of dealing with deviant female behaviours. In *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar examine Romantic and Victorian literature from a feminist perspective arguing that female characters were confined to embody either the 'angel' or the

[389] Giulia write a letter to her grown-up daughter attaching a picture of the encounter with his father in 1966, where she explains that she was born 'from the love of two happy people. All the sad things that followed […] had nothing to do with her'.

'monster' allegory.[390] They claim that neither the category of the angelic and nurturing woman nor the rebellious madwoman accurately represent women; instead they suggest women writers should go beyond this dichotomy in order to overcome a patriarchal point of view. Hysteria is traditionally considered a female malady, which according to Sigmund Freud was exacerbated by personal trauma.[391] The employment of the madness/hysteria narrative functions in a similar way to the sexualisation strategy adopted in *The Legend of Rita*; if women exhibit violent tendencies, they are not *real* women, but rather 'whores', using Sjoberg and Gentry's classification,[392] masculine or, in this specific case, lunatic. Rarely their actions are shown to be the fruit of rational decisions; more often they are driven by mental imbalance.



Fig. 3.4 Giulia in 1968, 1974, early 1980s and 2000s.

In *The Best of Youth* the hysterical feminine paradigm is manifested first of all on the physical level, in addition to the psychological one. Giulia goes from long blond hair, to short hair, and then dyed black during her underground years and finally, it turns grey when she is in jail, while the other characters seem to age more slowly, remaining, as O'Leary argues, 'literally the best youth'.[393] O'Leary reads the

[390] Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (London and New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000). The title originates from Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, where Bertha, the violently mad wife of Mr Rochester, stays locked in the attic.
[391] Sigmund Freud, "The Psychology of Women," in *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (London: Hogarth Press, 1933), 144-74.
[392] Sjober and Gentry, *Mothers, Monsters, Whores*.
[393] O'Leary, *Tragedia all'italiana*, 222.

vanishing of her female beauty as an indication of the state of her political faith,[394] but if we consider the minimal signs of ageing of the other female characters, it could suggest a further mark of defeminisation. The casting of Sonia Bergamasco with her slender and androgynous physicality certainly helped the process of 'othering' Giulia. The choice of a masculine haircut, the pixie hairstyle, and the use of minimal make-up further enhance the process of defeminisation of the character during her underground years. Moreover, Dora D'Errico observes a transformation in Bergamasco's acting style: the actress performs the young Giulia with fluid and sweet gestures; her body language is always composed, coherent and in order.[395] When interpreting the terrorist Giulia, instead, Bergamasco's performance reflects a compulsive and unhealthy character through losing her gaze in thoughts and automated rhetorical answers.[396]

The defeminisation process involves aspects of her sexuality, as well. Differently from the hypersexualised images of German terrorists in *The Baader Meinhof Complex*, Giulia lacks any sexual desire; first she refuses her partner, turning her back in bed and later she conducts a monastic existence underground, living with minimal contact with her comrades. The desexualisation of the female terrorist is evident also in another recent film on terrorism *Buongiorno, notte/Good Morning, Night* (2003) by Marco Bellocchio. Chiara, the protagonist of the film, is a member of the BR group that kidnaps and incarcerates the Christian Democrat politician, Aldo Moro. In their hideout the terrorists are never involved in sexual activities, although Chiara is in a relationship with one of them. A male terrorist is almost expelled by the cell for sneaking out and meeting a girlfriend, who is not committed to the armed struggle. Sexual and moral liberation seems not to go along with the communist struggle of the BR. The terrorists deny themselves every pleasure, conducting an austere and cloistral lifestyle, to the extent that a work colleague of Chiara urges her to be more feminine and less shy wearing clothes more appropriate 'for a woman in her twenties than those of a nun'.

[394] Ibid.
[395] Dora D'Errico, "La construction du terroriste au cinéma, une lecture de 'La Meglio Gioventù'," *La Clé des Langues*, 7 July 2009, <http://cle.ens-lyon.fr/1179579203120/0/fiche___article/#_ftnref11> (accessed 15 August 2014).
[396] Ibid.

The treatment of female political violence as a mental malady continues in *The Best of Youth* when Giulia becomes an active terrorist. The camera enters a minimally furnished flat, showing her through some window grating, metaphor of her present isolation or premonition of her future incarceration. The terrorist drinks a glass of red wine alone, examining the pictures of her next victims and biting her nails. Then, she inspects the various fake ID cards and passports, proclaiming aloud the names of her new identities as if she was suffering from a mental disturbance, a dangerous schizophrenia with multiple personalities. Close-ups of her nervously moving eyes, uncombed hair and shaking hands are further signifiers of hysteria and potential madness. These become even more evident during her incarceration, where on several occasions Giulia alternates emotional outbursts of anger, joy and desperation. The approach taken by Nicola after Giulia's abandonment of the family home underlines even further the 'madwoman' strategy employed in the film. As a psychiatrist advocating in the 1970s less invasive therapies, and foremost group therapy to deal with mental illnesses,[397] Nicola appears always open to dialogue with the mother of his child, accepting her demands to see Sara from afar during her underground years. However, after failing to diagnose his brother's depression – Matteo commits suicide while the Caratis celebrates New Year's Eve in 1983– he launches into a mission to save his partner from the 'disease' of terrorism, out of fear of losing another dear person. Nicola does not bring Sara to the rendezvous with Giulia, but instead tips off the police about the meeting, suggesting that only forced coercion into an institution, in this case the prison and not the psychiatric hospital, can cure his former partner.[398]

The narrative of treating the terrorist woman as a mental patient persists when Giulia is sentenced to 17 years in prison. During the incarceration, Nicola tries alternative therapies, such as music therapy, to energise her apathetic body; even the tenderness of Sara does not manage to ignite again Giulia's passion for life, who declines instead every contact with the external world and walks neurotically back and forth. According to D'Errico, the prison is presented as place of expiation from sins; Giulia's cell, airy and well lit, resembles more a monastery cell than a high-security

[397] Nicola maintains to be a follower of Franco Basaglia, pioneer of the modern concept of mental health and alternative therapies to electroshock, as well as reformer of Italian mental hospitals.
[398] Nicola describe the arrest as an act of love, saying, 'I have locked up Giulia, it was the best thing for her', a sentence which could easily be referred to one of his patients, as well.

prison for terrorists.[399] This representation of the prison as a place for recuperation and therapy strikingly clashes with the cinematic images of arrested terrorists in German jails. From Margarethe von Trotta's *The German Sisters* to Reinhard Hauff's *Stammheim* the inmates' condition in high-security prisons has been a central concern for many political filmmakers.[400] In particular, the compassionate support of Nicola towards his former partner recalls the emotional visits of Juliane to her incarcerated sister, Marianne, in von Trotta's pivotal film. While in *The German Sisters* we witness a deterioration of the living conditions, symbolised according to Julia Knight by the increasing presence of physical barriers between prisoner and visitor,[401] *The Best of Youth* shows a relaxation of the containment measures. As Giulia progresses through her 'recovery', she is no longer obliged to speak with her visitors through a cold glass; instead she is allowed to sit around a table in a more child-friendly environment.

The different treatment of former terrorists seems to be one of the major differences with the German context. The lack of a true resolution for Giulia makes *The Best of Youth* such a compelling mirror of the contemporary debate on terrorism in Italy. Through the complex portrayal of the mother-daughter relationship and the bond between Nicola and Giulia, Giordana's film voices the concerns of the many victims of terrorism, who refuse to forgive and forget what once happened. They lament media's clemency towards former terrorists and the fact that many of them are now political figures and acclaimed intellectuals, while serving little to no time in prison for their crimes. Through the construction of Giulia's character, as a sick person and thus worthy of some empathy, the film poses an equally strong advocacy for the demands of those convicts awaiting a pardon or integration into society. The patronising attitude of Nicola could suggest a renewed possibility for forgiving and rehabilitating the former terrorists, however, the viewer is also exhorted not to forget what once happened.

[399] D'Errico, "La construction du terroriste au cinema".
[400] The documentary *Starbuck – Holger Meins* (2002) by Gerd Conradt sharply investigates the circumstances around the death of a left-wing radical from hunger strike in a German prison.
[401] Julia Knight, *New German Cinema. Images of a Generation* (London: Wallflower Press, 2004), 99.

In many contemporary German films, the resolution of the drama comes with the death, through suicide or accident, of the terrorists.[402] This could allude to a stronger position to close the debate on terrorism. The hard conditions in the prisons and the death of former terrorists on the run suggest the categorical impossibility of forgiving the violent acts committed in the 1970s by the RAF. As far as *The Legend of Rita* is concerned, what is most unsettling for the viewer is the sympathetic portrayal of Rita in the first part of the film and her inability to justify her actions through ideological beliefs. It was indeed romantic love that drove Rita towards terrorism. She killed a policeman for survival, and not ideology. Therefore, if Schlöndorff seems to excuse the initial radical activities of left-wing extremists, he clearly condemns the lack of remorse of those who did not serve their sentence.

To sum up, the mise-en-scène, acting and narrative techniques of *The Best of Youth* contribute to hystericise the female terrorist in order to undermine her actions, subjectivity and render her culturally intelligible. The 'madwoman' trope does not solely work to ease the anxiety caused by violent women; it also demonstrates the possibility of recovering and being reintegrated into society. By treating political violence as a mental illness and prison internment as a cure, *The Best of Youth* shows that former terrorists can be rehabilitated. This, however, does not mean that their stigmatisation disappears and a complete forgiveness is possible. The characterisation of female terrorists as 'bad mothers' is a much stronger stigma. According to Sjoberg and Gentry, 'motherhood defines them [violent women] – their inability/failure to serve as mothers is *so* dehumanizing (or dewomanizing)'.[403] I will now demonstrate how the strategy of representing the female terrorist as a deplorable mother, and thus a lesser woman, marks her alterity forever, even if there are signs of repentance and recovery from the 'terrorist malady'.

Initially, Giulia's uneasiness towards motherhood manifests itself in symptoms of stress, such as obsessive behaviour, depression and specifically, post-partum depression. She is unable to hold her newborn baby when the grandparents visit and hence, she impassively watches them taking care of Sara from outside the nursery. The episode of Nicola's parents visit underlines how the refusal to be a mother

[402] It is sufficient to think about the terrorist parents' death in Petzold's *The State I Am In* or the many re-enactments of Stammheim's tragic suicides in 1977, for instance in *The Baader Meinhof Complex*.
[403] Sjoberg and Gentry, *Mothers, Monsters, Whores*, 33.

becomes a central component for the characterisation of the Italian female terrorist. According to Rachele Tardi 'women who choose to engage in the armed struggle are characterised, first of all, by the devastating effects that the refusal to be mothers has on them'.[404] In other words, the Italian female terrorist is foremost seen as a woman who fails to fulfil the role that a patriarchal tradition has imposed on her, namely to give life. The aforementioned *Good Morning, Night* also illustrates this issue. Chiara, who holds a cover job as a librarian outside the BR cell in Rome, fails to embody the motherly role. She panics when a neighbour knocks at her door and asks her to take care of her child while finishing an errand. Her hands shake, she cannot calm down the crying baby and is not confortable holding him. Despite being shown as a good housewife (she does not have an active role in the kidnapping and assassination), Chiara seems unable to be a good temporary mother. We see her helping her comrades move the prisoner or listening to the news, while the child is left on a sofa.

The Best of Youth invokes the imagery of the 'bad mother', associating it with female violence in order to justify and control extreme manifestations of femininity. Giulia abandons one by one all the various aspects of her identity: musician, worker, partner and eventually mother. She stops playing the piano and quits her job as a sales assistant; as soon as her engagement with the revolutionary cause evolves, she becomes disinterested in her partner and even her child, Sara, who is left alone while the mother discusses political actions with her comrades. The scene where Giulia leaves the family for good is noteworthy. The flat is immersed in a bluish light, which according to Emanuele D'Onofrio suggests 'a moment of temporal suspension and confrontation in the characters' opposing attitudes to life'.[405] The colour might simply allude to a cold femininity that escapes the warmth of her maternal role. Giulia, fully dressed and with a small suitcase, is blocked at the front door by Nicola who is instead naked and shaking. The traditional roles are here inverted: whereas the female is shown strong-willed and chill, the male figure is portrayed as fragile, with only the bare chest as barrier between the familiar space, the home and the outside world, the antisocial.

[404] Rachele Tardi, "Representations of Italian Left Political Violence in Film, Literature and Theatre (1973-2005)" (PhD diss., University of London, 2005), 165. Qtd. in O'Leary, *Tragedia all'italiana*, 223.
[405] Emanuele D'Onofrio, "Memory, Identity and Ideology: Marco Tullio Giordana and Impegno in the Second Republic," in *Italian Film Directors in the New Millennium*, ed. William Hope (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholar Press, 2010), 82.



Fig. 3.5 Giulia leaves Nicola and her infant daughter in the middle of the night.

In "'Bonnie und Kleid': Female Terrorists and the Hysterical Feminine" Clare Bielby analyses pictures of Ulrike Meinhof and Gudrun Ensslin and narratives on female terrorists in 1970s German papers.[406] Bielby maintains that in order to render more bearable the anxiety generated by a female-dominated terrorist group the press invoked the figure of the hysterical woman in their media representations, for example, by widely speculating on Meinhof's marital problems, her brain operation and her recurrent migraines.[407] Although the news articles considered by Bielby link to a certain degree the image of the 'mad woman' with the refusal of maternity (both Meinhof and Ensslin abandoned their children for the armed struggle),[408] *The Best of Youth* pushes forward this connection. Giulia is stigmatised as hysterical for her refusal of bourgeois life and more importantly, for her inability to be a good mother and wife.

During her underground years, Giulia is torn by doubts in her hideout, despite the fact that the policemen hunting her describe her as a cold-blooded assassin. Her doubts seem not to arise from a weakening of her political belief, but from guilty conscience for her refusal to be a mother. Again political reasons are secondary, or not at all explored; the only decision-making power in Giulia's action is limited to her

[406] Clare Bielby, "'Bonnie und Kleid': Female Terrorists and the Hysterical Feminine," *Forum University of Edinburgh Postgraduate Journal of Culture & The Arts*, Issue 2 "Terror and Fear" (Spring 2006) <http://www.forumjournal.org/article/view/551/836> (accessed 10 August 2014).
[407] Ibid. For a more in-depth account of the case of Meinhof's brain see Amanda Third, "Imprisonment and Excessive Femininity: Reading Ulrike Meinhof's Brain," *Parallax* 16: 4 (2010): 83-100.
[408] Bielby stresses in particular the press interest in Meinhof's attempt to send her twin daughters to a Palestinian training camp for refugees and her suicide on Mother's Day, "Bonnie und Kleid": 13-5.

femininity and maternity. The terrorist mother in *The Best of Youth* recognises the mistake of abandoning her daughter and tries to keep track of her upbringing thanks to information passed by Nicola and Francesca, her sister-in-law. Giulia, however, fails in her mission to kill Carlo by warning Francesca to move to another town, as her husband has become a target. If the warning could be read as an act to protect Francesca's small children and her daughter, Francesca's family represents a point of reference and support for little Sara, Giulia struggles to make atonement for her behaviour during her incarceration and recuperate the mother-daughter relationship.

Even after her release, Giulia carries the signs of her stigmatisation as a bad mother, even when Giulia seems rehabilitated with a job in Florence. Her inability to look her daughter in the eyes, when they finally meet in 2000, her discomfort when Sara announces her pregnancy and the nervous twitches seem to indicate the unresolved nature of her problems. In particular, when Sara shows her mother several images of Madonnas in an old church she is restoring, Giulia does not show any pride or fondness towards the images of the Virgin and the Child. To conclude, I suggest that Giulia is not even considered part of 'the best Italian youth', primarily because of her refusal to act as a mother. *The Best of Youth* concludes with a final party on a restored farm in Tuscany, where all Nicola's friends come to celebrate his daughter's imminent wedding and their personal achievements. Giulia's exclusion from the party marks the definitive condemnation from her friends and the impossibility for her complete acceptance into the extended family. Her absence from the group picture and most importantly at her daughter's wedding could metaphorically suggest her exclusion from the nation and hence, the impossibility of a societal reconciliation.

Conclusions

Generally speaking, female participation in politically motivated violence has been consistent in Western Europe, but in West Germany and Italy the number of female terrorists grew rapidly during the 1970s.[409] With their clandestine life and military

[409] Alison Jamieson quantifies the female membership of the RAF at around 50 %, whereas female terrorists in the BR are estimated at around 23%, "Mafiosi and Terrorists: Italian Women in Violent Organizations," *SAIS Review*, Vol. 20, No. 2 Summer-Fall (2000): 56. The more authorative and wide-

actions the terrorists were forced to adopt rigorous behavioural codes and a claustrophobic morale. A common practice of terrorist organisations such as the BR and the RAF obliged women to appropriate 'male' codes and to abandon 'female' attitudes. If a woman really wanted to be considered a revolutionary she had to separate herself from bourgeois family values.

In this chapter I have analysed one of the most striking aspects of how left-wing terrorism return in the new millennium: the persistence and high visibility given to the figure of female terrorists. The representation of 1970s female terrorists in the present is variegated but tends to follows stereotypical paradigms. I have argued that because women are culturally seen as reproducer and representation of the nation, female terrorists are seen as the worst attack to the patriarchal system and hence several techniques are adopted to contain the threat the violent female body poses. In the *The Legend of Rita* political extremism is domesticated depicting the female terrorist as emotionally dependent on her male counterpart, sexually free, and wild. *The Best of Youth* adopts different strategies to condemn the radical choices of female members of the BR. Giulia joins the armed struggle more because of a inner neurosis than a strong political reason. By presenting her as a mentally suffering woman and a degenerate mother, her actions as a terrorist are undermined, as well as her ideology. The case studies respond in different modalities to the threat that female terrorists posed to the young democracies of Italy and West Germany, but they both concur that this form of violence seem 'unnatural'. The female protagonists of Schlöndorff and Giordana's films are not saints but they are far from the image of ideologically delirious terrorists.

From the perspective of two male directors, the depiction of Rita as a bisexual Amazon and Giulia as a hysterical mother could be something more than a stratagem to defuse the anxiety caused by the gender of the perpetrators. This could be read as an allegory of the 'threat' that 1970s feminism imposed on the traditional patriarchal society. The stigmatisation of the female terrorist could refer to an emotional event, which found limited exposition in films about this historical time, namely the second-

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ranging study by De Cataldo-Neuburger and Valentini finds that women comprised only the 20% of the membership of all left-wing armed organisations, and only 13% of the BR, *Women and Terrorism,* 7-8.

wave of feminist movements.[410] Urban terrorism overlapped with the feminist struggle for women's right, specifically with the campaign for the legalisation of abortion, and in the Italian case the referendum for defending the new divorce law. Those were the years when radical female organisations used to attack cinemas that screened porn movies, occupy courtrooms during abortion trials and kneecap gynaecologists.

In her study of women in Italian violent organisations Alison Jamieson argues that 'for the majority of women adherents, the feminist cause was an end in itself, but within the growing militancy of the extra-parliamentary Left it was a political exercise ground for a more radical battle and more extreme methods'.[411] It is noteworthy that a driving force such as 1970s feminism does not appear in the epic saga of *The Best of Youth*, which covers several significant events in the Italian history of the last fifty years. This omission seems to reinforce the idea that women's movement does not fit with the nostalgic longing and the core story of male bonds.[412] The different destinies of the film protagonists' rebelliousness suggest the absorption into formal official structure (modern psychiatry for Nicola) and the failure of that youthful instance (incarceration and long rehabilitation for Giulia). The death of Rita could indicate, therefore, the impossibility of recomposing the break with society that her violent methods imposed. Despite apparently celebrating youthful idealism, these films reject all forms of action that do not re-inscribe femininity within its pre-established societal role.

In conclusion, I have argued that the portrayal of left-wing female terrorists in postmillennial films is intricate, albeit sometimes stereotypical, and that such representations draw on mythology, cultural imagery and tradition. The reasons for these artistic representations are multiple. In a time when women use their body to disguise bombs and become suicide bombers, cinema is arguably exploiting cultural preoccupations with international terrorism and thus, it is able to appeal to ancestral fears and obsessions. But it could be argued that filmmakers are driven by the necessity to distance left-wing terrorism from their activist past. Political violence can

[410] The German feminist movement had great influence on the New German Cinema, which gave rise to several works, also from male filmmakers, on women's issues, such as childcare, health and violence. However, contemporary films seem to have forgotten the fruitful experience of that revolutionary experience.
[411] Jamieson, "Mafiosi and Terrorists": 53.
[412] David Forgacs, "Our Friends From Turin," *Sight and Sound* 14, n.7 (July 2004): 30.

be blamed on a wild and naïve woman or a mentally unstable mother, as these figures call gendered norms into questions. These characterisations separate them from what a *normal* woman should be, but also from the '68 generation, which is still occupying political and cultural elites positions in our society. The depiction of Rita, as a naïve revolutionary and sexually free and emasculating comrade, interferes with the yearning for a past of glorious radical militancy and socialist utopia. Similarly, the portrayal of Giulia as a depraved mother and a hysterical woman is functional for working through the trauma of terrorism. In reality, these categories could be interpreted in a more compassionate position – the viewer could sympathise with the image of an empowered woman or with a sick person – but the resolution of the two stories call for a reflection on the impossibility of forgiving.

Having established in this first part of this thesis the difficulties in reconciling with the experience of left-wing terrorism in the present, I will now explore how the normalisation process translates on a stylistic level. In the following chapter I will investigate how political violence is glamorised in postmillennial films.

Chapter Four

Glamorising the Terrorist Past: *The Baader Meinhof Complex* (Uli Edel, 2008) and *The Front Line* (Renato De Maria, 2009) as Faux-Vintage Films

The revolution will never go out of style.
Prada-Meinhof Art Group[413]

The female art collective that coined the quotation above attests that the fascination with revolutionary rebels and their iconography is an everlasting phenomenon; it has permeated various media and even crossed the borders of where these cases initially originated. This contemporary attraction for left-wing revolutionary emblems is, however, not new. In *La Chinoise* (1967), for example, Jean-Luc Godard foresaw the revolutionary potential of students – the film was made just one year before the violent social protests of May 1968 – but also the attraction of young people for revolutionary iconography. The film focuses, in fact, on a group of confused bourgeois youngsters who flirt with radical politics dressing up as Vietcong and become obsessed with symbolic objects such as Mao's Little Red Book. Moreover, Alberto Korda's iconic photograph *Guerillero Heroico/Heroic Guerrilla Fighter* (1960), which portrays the Marxist revolutionary Che Guevara wearing a black beret, has transformed from symbol of revolutionary struggle to a more generalised countercultural emblem and marketing image for products with an anti-authoritarian stance.

Contemporary German and Italian cultures are not immune to the mythic legacy of their Marxist revolutionaries. The numerous films on protest movements and terrorist groups produced in the last decade indicate that the iconic images of the armed struggle have not lost their appeal even more than thirty years after the peak of violence in the late 1970s. This new wave of films is nurtured by the fascination for rebel iconography. The novelty concerns not only the appropriation of revolutionary

[413] The British female art group 'Prada-Meinhof' performed for the first time at an event during a festival about the RAF organized by the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London in 2002, Francis Wheen, *Strange Days Indeed: The Golden Age of Paranoia* (London: Harper Collins), 95. The epigraph which opens this chapter is from the group's Tumblr webpage: <http://pradameinhof.tumblr.com/> (accessed 30 August 2014).

imagery by popular culture, but, more specifically, the spectacularisation of the terrorist phenomenon. Within the new wave of postmillennial films about left-wing terrorism one tendency can be noted: the fascination for and fetishism of terrorist symbols, which ultimately lead to a glamorised version of that period of extreme violence. Films such as Christopher Roth's *Baader* (2002), which fictionalises the life of RAF leader Andreas Baader, or Michele Placido's *Romanzo Criminale* (2005), which explores the criminal activities of a mob from Rome, dwell upon the fascination for dangerous male outlaws, and, more interestingly, they capitalise on Germany and Italy's history of violence, to evoke an embellished and, sometimes, even glamorous past.

This chapter considers how two of the most prominent and debated European films on left-wing terrorism, Uli Edel's *The Baader Meinhof Complex* and Renato De Maria's *The Front Line* spectacularise the years of lead, invoking the heritage film genre, adopting a retro aesthetics and lingering over the figure of the male revolutionary. These films introduce traumatic events in the 1970s and early 1980s as a source of aural and visual appeal, thus rendering political violence an attractive and exploitable commodity even for foreign audiences. Although their narratives ultimately support the state's fight against terrorism – and present the struggle against urban guerrilla as founding moment for present-day democracies – *The Baader Meinhof Complex* and *The Front Line* depict terrorists as action heroes and romantic lovers, thus risking glorifying, to a certain degree, terrorist methods as a legitimate path for political change.

This chapter specifically examines how *The Baader Meinhof Complex* and *The Front Line* have revisited the heritage film genre in terms of spectacle in order to explore production trends in the German and Italian cinema industries. The chosen films insert into what Belén Vidal defines as 'a belated phase in the rebranding of the national as a strategy for survival in the globalised market'.[414] They are in fact glocal works (both local and global), as they restyle national stories for an international audience, renovating the self-referential messages typical of auteur cinema into undemanding and thrilling genre narratives, carrying the 'national (anti)heritage into

[414] Belén Vidal, *Heritage Film. Nation, Genre and Representation* (London: Wallflower, 2012), 78.

postnational contexts'.[415] These films highlight not only how national European cinemas keep on turning to their own past to investigate foundational myths (even traumatic stories and negative myths) but also how the heritage genre, and in particular the biopic, is becoming a constant presence at international festivals and on streaming platforms, making it one of the best marketable genres in Europe. Presenting as a blockbuster and a middlebrow drama, respectively, *The Baader Meinhof Complex* and *The Front Line* offer the opportunity not only to understand the legacy of terrorism in popular culture, but also to explore the present-day risks of decontextualisation and forgetting the ideology behind the armed struggle. Often criticised for a loss of political incisiveness in favour of spectacle, these contemporary European biopics downplay a serious investigation into the reasons behind the armed struggle in order to attract younger audiences and compete with Hollywood large productions and more favourable domestic genre, in particular comedy.

The aim of my analysis is to reopen the heritage film debate and investigate 'the possibility of a European heritage film', as postulated by Vidal, by exploring the limits and problems in her definition.[416] My approach will contribute towards stretching and reworking a concept, which since its inception in film studies has created several controversies.[417] I introduce, therefore, the notion of 'faux-vintage film' to bypass the number of important differences that distinguish British, German and Italian heritage films. I am particularly interested in analysing the retro aesthetics of these films, the faux-vintage sensibility, which specifically shows a tendency to incorporate popular historical iconography such as fashion, music, emblematic photographs and television images. A palette of desaturated colours and the shared idiom of signifiers of pastness constitute the real strength of these productions. Most analyses of the mentioned films have acknowledged the plot's historical and cultural invocations and (in)accuracy, but have failed to interpret it in broader cultural terms.[418]

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[415] Ibid.
[416] Ibid, 5.
[417] For a summary of advocates and critics of the notion see Claire Monk, "The British Heritage Film Debate Revisited," in *British Historical Cinema*, eds. Claire Monk and Amy Sargeant, 176-98. (London and New York: Routledge, 2002).
[418] In particular see Catherine O'Rawe, "'A Past that Will Not Pass': Italian Cinema and the Return to the 1970s," *New Cinemas: Journal of Contemporary Film*, 9, (2012): 101-113 and Chris Homewood, "From Baader to Prada: Memory and Myth in Uli Edel's *The Baader Meinhof Complex* (2008)," in *New Directions in German Cinema*, eds Paul Cooke and Chris Homewood, 130-148. (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2011).

The fascination for Italy and Germany's turbulent history and the rise of easy-going, escapist films filled with stars, fashion and design objects asks us to revise the notion of heritage film and foremost representational strategies and goals within new-millennium cinema.

In addition to questions of genre and mise-en-scène this chapter poses, the complexities of the representation of violent masculinity will also be partially unravelled. In the 1990s the heritage film debate paid particular attention to issues of gender and class; at the same time, feminist scholars, such as Sue Harper and Pam Cook, have revitalised the interest in British period films through an attentive analysis of set designs and costumes in the Gainsborough costume dramas.[419] Whereas the majority of studies on the heritage/period film genre have focused on feminine identities, in the following I will explore articulations of masculinity as a site of conflict; charismatic male personalities are invoked as a reaction to present-day images of Islamic terrorists. The glamorous portrayal of leading male terrorists in *The Baader Meinhof Complex* and *The Front Line* responds, therefore, to contemporary anxieties about images of different violent masculinities, but also reflects the historicisation and normalisation of the armed struggle. The strategies adopted to romanticise the figure of the male terrorist are chosen as symptomatic examples of the general spectacularisation of terrorism, which essentially revitalises the cult and myth of left-wing urban guerrilla.

Terrorism as Action

The last few years have seen an increasing number of political thrillers and action movies which see in the 1970s a formative moment of national crisis and chaos. These films present complex and condensed historical events following biographical narratives; political violence, though remaining highly controversial, is thus rebranded

[419] Sue Harper, *Picturing the Past: the Rise and Fall of the British Costume Film* (London: British Film Institute, 1994) and Pam Cook, *Fashioning the Nation: Costume and Identity in British Cinema* (London: British Film Institute, 1996).

into internationally recognisable generic forms through the typical iconography and narratives of gangster films, cop movies and modern epic.[420]

The Baader Meinhof Complex follows this pattern: it is one of the most recent attempts to treat the RAF directly and is probably the most successful European film on this topic, obtaining nominations for best foreign film at the Golden Globes and the Academy Awards.[421] Drawing from the non-fiction book of the same name written by Stefan Aust, Uli Edel's film depicts the tragic vicissitudes of the eponymous terrorists.[422] The film portrays the crucial events in the history of the RAF: the season of protests in West Berlin, the first attacks, the trials of the first generation of terrorists, the murder of banker Jürgen Ponto, and the kidnapping and murder of industrialist Hanns Martin Schleyer by second generation terrorists. Blindly following all chapters in Aust's book, these crucial episodes are graphically depicted in a matter of minutes. The relentless editing sutures together pivotal events in German history, ultimately creating a downfall epic.

The film generated a media storm:[423] not only for its stylised version of historical events, but primarily for the very nature of the topic treated. As mentioned in Chapter One, the RAF was a small organisation, which had a brief and rapid exploit that led to sensational but rather restricted violent episodes. Nonetheless, the terrorists' modern use of media exposure, the attacks in foreign countries, the strong relations with Palestinian terrorists drew attention from large audiences, even non-domestic ones. Moreover, the final cost of €13.5 million, the casting of many of Germany's star system, the extensive marketing campaign and the support of a large-scale

[420] This can be observed even in television productions: TV films dealing with the armed struggle have remained popular throughout the first decade of the twenty-first century and beyond. 2007 saw the release of the TV movie *Mogadishu* (Roland Suso Richter), a thriller on the hijacking of the *Landshut* aircraft in 1977; the following year the biopic *Aldo Moro – Il Presidente/Aldo Moro – The President* (Gianluca Maria Tavarelli, 2008) followed a detective drama formula and became a TV event on the anniversary of the kidnapping of the leader of the Christian Democrat party.

[421] Edel's film earned at the box office more than 16 million US dollars worldwide. <http://www.the-numbers.com/movies/2009/DBMK.php> (accessed 30 August 2014).

[422] Stefan Aust had unprecedented access to the Baader Meinhof gang, knowing personally several members of the RAF. He is credited in the film for contributing to the screen adaptation. Moreover, his involvement in the recovery of Ulrike Meinhof's daughters in Sicily (they were supposed to be sent to a Palestinian Al-Fatah camp) appears in Edel's work.

[423] The film created furor specifically with the victims' families, see the article in *Der Spiegel Online International*, "Anger over Baader-Meinhof Biopic: Victims' Families in Uproar over New German Terrorism Film," *Spiegel Online*, 8 October 2008. <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/anger-over-baader-meinhof-biopic-victims-families-in-uproar-over-new-german-terrorism-film-a-582894.html> (accessed 30 August 2014).

production/distribution house such as Constantin Film made *The Baader Meinhof Complex* a film with global ambitions. The film was, in fact, produced by the late Bernd Eichinger, a major player in European and global film industry, who was the mastermind behind many German blockbusters: *Die unendliche Geschichte/The NeverEnding Story* (Wolfgang Petersen, 1984), *Nirgendwo in Afrika/Nowhere in Africa* (Caroline Link, 2001) and *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* (Tom Tykwer, 2006). Chris Homewood rightly maintains that *The Baader Meinhof Complex* should be understood as a continuation of the 'Eichinger effect', that is the obsession with hyper-verisimilitude first seen in his highly controversial film on Hitler's last days *Der Untergang/The Downfall* (Oliver Hirschbiegel, 2004).[424] Sets, locations, clothes and hairstyles were carefully recreated and even the film's cars were borrowed from museums.[425] I would also add that the 'Eichinger effect' should be understood as a marketing tool, that is the producer's force to turn dark pages of history into a successful commercial product packed for international consumption. The hyper-authenticity is confirmed also in the promotional material; the poster chosen for the domestic market reproduces the police's most wanted poster hung in many German cities during the 1970s, encouraging the audience to play a game 'who plays who'.





[424] Chris Homewood, "From Baader to Prada: Memory and Myth in Uli Edel's *The Baader Meinhof Complex* (2008)," 134.
[425] Christina Gerhardt, "The Baader Meinhof Complex," *Film Quarterly*, vol. 63, no. 2 (Winter 2009): 60.

Fig. 4.1 Film poster for the domestic market. © Constantin Film; "Violent Criminal Anarchists – Baader-Meinhof Band", wanted poster. © Bundesarchiv.

Renato De Maria's *The Front Line* shares with Edel's film a similar aesthetic as well as narrative features, to the point that Alan O'Leary declares that it 'certainly could not take the form it does without the example of the German *Baader-Meinhof Komplex*'.[426] The analogous attention to authenticity, through the adoption of period music, objects and fashion as audio-visual signifiers of the 1970s, the use of some of the most charismatic and attractive faces in its national industry and the fragmented narrative make it quite the Italian equivalent. Unlike *The Baader Meinhof Complex,* however, De Maria's film was not a commercial success. On the first weekend in cinemas the film totalled a meagre gross of €305,000;[427] it also failed to meet an international audience, being picked up by a limited number of French and Belgian distributors, despite the positive reviews at the Toronto Film Festival where it was premiered out of competition. The film, which recounts the evolution of the terrorist organisation *Prima Linea*, suffered from the lower profile of its protagonists, almost unknown beyond the national borders and certainly less familiar than the BR. The domestic market was unfavourable as well, but this time, I believe, it was due to a series of factors: the media buzz during its production worked against it and the film itself lacked a distinctive language, combining action scenes with toned-down monologues in an unsatisfactory way.

Loosely based on the memoir book *Miccia Corta* (Short Fuse) published by former terrorist Sergio Segio in 2006, *The Front Line* traces his biographical experience of radicalism as a young man in an industrial district of Milan: Sesto San Giovanni, 'the Italian Stalingrad' as he calls it. The film does not follow a linear narrative; it begins in 1968 during a protest march before jumping to 1983 when Segio, a member of the left-wing terrorist group *Prima Linea*, is arrested in an ambush. A montage of archival footage and newspaper covers takes the viewer to the heavy atmosphere of the years of lead: images of massacres, riots and assassinations unfurls

[426] Alan O'Leary, "Italian Cinema and the 'Anni di Piombo'," *Journal of European Studies* 40:3 (2010): 255.
[427] Data retrieved from <http://www.mymovies.it/film/2009/laprimalinea/> (accessed 30 August 2014). The total grosses mounted to more than one million euros, against a budget of five million. For comparison, the family saga *The Best of Youth* had 230,000 cinema viewers, but it was watched by six and a half millions TV viewers.

in seconds. With no dissolve we are brought to 1989 when Segio explains his descent into political violence looking straight into the camera.[428] As well as exploring the story of the terrorist group and its increasingly violent methods, the assassination of judge Alessandrini and the retaliatory murder of former members, the film primarily focuses on the romantic relationship between Sergio Segio (Riccardo Scamarcio) and Susanna Ronconi (Giovanna Mezzogiorno), chief of a terrorist cell in Naples. *The Front Line* culminates with the planning and execution of a jail breakout in order to liberate Segio's lover and her fellow comrades, in which an innocent bystander is killed by an explosion.





Fig. 4.2 *The Front Line*'s initial sequence: from strike marches to prison.

[428] *Prima Linea* was born in 1976 as a splinter group of the far left organization *Lotta Continua*; they separated because they oppose the 'soft' methods of this extra-parliamentary group. Eventually they absorbed various smaller formations and became the second-largest terrorist group after the BR.

The film generated a heated discussion in the Italian press because of the request for state funding and also because of Segio's *mea culpa,* which opens the film, but in reality never took place.[429] Associations for the memory of victims of terrorism (Aiviter, Memoria and Unione Familiari Vittime per Stragi) put pressure on the national film commission, postponing their decision to grant funding to the film.[430] The then Minister of Culture Sandro Bondi released a statement claiming that 'it would be better not to finance it' and that in the future similar projects should be first approved by the relatives of the victims.[431] Eventually Andrea Occhipinti, the producer behind Lucky Red, withdrew his request for funding and found backing from the Belgian public television, Eurimages and from filmmaker brothers, Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne. *The Baader Meinhof Complex* experienced a similar uproar: relatives of the group's victims vigorously expressed their concerns for the visual style of Edel's film which in their opinion glamorises terrorism. In particular, Corinna Ponto, daughter of one of the most illustrious victims, Jürgen Ponto, declared that her mother would return the Federal Cross of Merit, Germany's highest civilian honour, as a protest against the film for deviating from reality in the reconstruction of her father's murder.[432]

The similarities between the two case studies are not limited to the frenzied debates in the press surrounding the production of films about such delicate issues. Many commentators stressed the influence of genre cinema and underlined the novelty of the influence of Hollywood cinema.[433] Although in an interview for the press kit of *The Baader Meinhof Complex* Uli Edel tried to distance himself from these

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[429] *L'Unità,* a left-wing newspaper, reported that it received several letters of protest. Alberto Crespi, "Prima Linea. Come eravamo," *L'Unità*, 20 November 2009. <http://www.unita.it/culture/prima-linea-come-eravamo-1.12153> (accessed 30 August 2014). Segio was initially sentenced to life prison, later reduced to a thirty-year sentence. He was the last terrorist to be arrested and condemned; after spending 22 years in jail, he was finally freed on parole in 2004.

[430] ANSA, "Cinema: a Toronto in anteprima mondiale 'La prima linea'," *Miccia Corta*, 23 July 2009. <http://www.micciacorta.it/archivio/articolo.php?id_news=1701> (accessed 30 August 2014).

[431] Luc Dardenne, interviewed by Gabriel Barcaro, Liege, Belgium, 16 November 2009. <http://cineuropa.org/ff.aspx?t=ffocusinterview&l=en&tid=2049&did=114997#cl> (accessed 30 August 2014).

[432] Anonymous, "Anger over Baader-Meinhof Biopic: Victims' Families in Uproar over New German Terrorism Film," *Spiegel Online*, 8 October 2008. <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/anger-over-baader-meinhof-biopic-victims-families-in-uproar-over-new-german-terrorism-film-a-582894.html> (accessed 30 August 2014).

[433] Andrea Dittgen, "Radical Chic," *Sight and Sound*, Vol. 18: 12 (December 2008): 24-6 and Alan O'Leary, *Tragedia all'italiana*, 244-5.

associations[434] – he affirmed that he wanted to avoid everything that is typically connected to genre movies – it is undeniable that the gangster film, the western and the road movie have provided an important influence as far as iconography is concerned. For example, both films dedicate much time to the intertwining of romance and violence: between Gudrun Ensslin and Andreas Baader and between Ronconi and Segio, thus recreating new versions of the Bonnie and Clyde saga. The commentaries which emphasise the glamorisation of the anti-hero characters and the aestheticisation of violence echo, in fact, similar critiques which appeared for instance with Arthur Penn's film on the notorious outlaw couple *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967).[435] The New Hollywood film broke many cinematic conventions with its unprecedented fragmented editing and rapid changes of tone; it was intended as a romantic and comic version of the classic 1930s gangsters but with its forthright handling of sexuality and its level of graphic violence it provoked much controversy on its release. In this case, *The Baader Meinhof Complex* and *The Front Line* broke the taboo of casting attractive faces for the role of terrorists and paying attention to sexual tensions within the illegal organisations.



[434] The official press kit can be downloaded from the film's website: <www.baadermeinhofmovie.com/press/BMC_presskit.pdf> (accessed 30 August 2014).
[435] Several original reviews of *Bonnie and Clyde* are reprinted in Lester D. Friedman, ed. *Arthur Penn's Bonnie and Clyde* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 177-190.



Fig. 4.3 Beautiful and dangerous outlaws in *The Baader Meinhof Complex* and *The Front Line.*

According to Ewa Mazierska the influence of American cinema on *The Baader Meinhof Complex* is foremost signalled by the choice of the film director Uli Edel, who worked extensively in the USA, mainly with independent studios directing films such as *Last Exit to Brooklyn* (1989) and *Body of Proof* (1993), and was renown for his ability to direct complicated scenes with large number of extras.[436] Edel was the perfect choice also because 'as a transnational film professional, [he] is not renowned for a strong political interest or personal voice'.[437] It should not be forgotten, however, that Edel was bound by a strong friendship with Eichinger – they both studied at the film school in Munich in 1970 – and that he started his career as an associate of Douglas Sirk.

The Baader Meinhof Complex takes clues from western and action films to recreate the 'spectacular' attacks organised by the RAF: the camera follows the terrorists in their frantic car chases, arson attacks, large-scale bombing and shootings. For example, Baader's arrest sequence harks back to decisive gun battles in classic westerns, where tension is constructed by a quick montage between close-ups of the barricaded outlaws, and the POVs of the law enforcers. In this case Baader, Meins and Raspe are trapped in a garage in Frankfurt and begin firing at the police in a desperado mode. The police find different vantage points to secure the location and eventually shoot down Baader with his Ray-ban and leather jacket still on. We observe the unfurling of events also from the perspective of the inhabitants of the block of flat,

[436] Mazierska, *European Cinema and Intertextuality*, 106.
[437] Ibid.

where the terrorists found refuge. The quick montage of the sequence renders the film significantly different from the previous paradigm which presented urban terrorism from a distinct intimistic perspective as seen in the previous chapters with films by Schlöndorff and Petzold. But more importantly, it marks a decisive rupture from the New German Cinema approach of Von Trotta and Fassbinder, as Edel interprets the phenomenon of 1970 urban guerrilla via popular genres rather than through an authorial perspective.

The middlebrow drama *The Front Line* presents the fragmented personal history of Segio through a series of flashbacks which depict the key events of the years of lead, beginning with the Piazza Fontana massacres in 1969, the student and workers protests of the Hot Autumn, and the kidnapping and killing of former Prime Minister Aldo Moro by the BR. De Maria's film employs aspects of the action genre in the depiction of the terrorist attacks, but rather than solely taking clues from Hollywood examples it seems to borrow elements also from 1970s Italian political films and cop-thrillers, where anxieties about an oppressive system and deviated elements of the state were expressed through exaggerated performances and suspense-filled sequences. The scene of the planning and execution of judge Alessandrini's murder in 1979 deserves close attention. Segio and his comrades study the daily routine of a key figure behind the anti-terrorist squad, they check his movements and the traffic in the residential neighbourhood of Milan where he lives. The parallel editing between the terrorists and the victim reminds the high-tension sequence of Pontecorvo's *Operación Ogro*, where Basque nationalists dressed up as electricians plant an explosive device in a tunnel under a street along the route of admiral Blanco's journey. In their shadowing of the judge, the terrorists remind the accurate planning of the bombing against Luis Carrero Blanco in Pontecorvo's film. It is difficult to empathise with the struggle of the Italian terrorist because differently from the Basque revolutionaries they are not placed within a dictatorial context. Moreover, the camera is often positioned inside judge Alessandrini's car, aligning the viewer with the victim of the gun battle.



Fig. 4.4 Judge Alessandrini's murder in *The Front Line*

Nonetheless, both films seem to privilege as source of inspiration archival footage or the hundreds of still pictures of the terrorists which were printed in newspapers and magazines. It is difficult for German and Italian audiences to imagine the RAF or Segio and Ronconi without conjuring up in their mind their pictures in courtrooms or during their arrests. In this sense the films bring into play what Stella Bruzzi defines as 'approximation': the way in which fiction films come close to original facts by restaging iconic moments or reworking factual footage and documents.[438] Many large-scale scenes develop from an attentive study of photographs of documented events, such as the visit of the Persian Shah in West Berlin or the explosion at the Rovigo prison during the breakout of Ronconi. The obsession with authenticity ought to be read in the light of the close proximity between fiction and non-fiction in the current cinematic landscape. Both *The Baader Meinhof Complex* and *The Front Line* comprise three diverse layers: genuine archival material; fictional sequences, especially dialogue-driven scenes which are naturalistic in style and plausible in content; and re-enactments, dramatised renditions of real events. Edel makes ample use of re-enactments, a choice that I find too timid, because it is evidence of the filmmaker's difficulty in breaking the traditional imagery of the terrorist organisations, the RAF myth, and exploring non-realist approaches.

[438] Stella Bruzzi, *Approximation. Documentary, History and Staging Reality* (London and New York: Routledge, forthcoming). Initial formulations of this concept are sketched in <http://www.approximation.org.uk/about/the-author-stella-bruzzi> (accessed 30 August 2014). See also her monograph *Documentary: A Critical Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000) for an analysis of how facts and fiction collide in performative documentaries.

These case studies confirm the inability to treat fiction and documentary, or actual facts, entirely separately. For example, in *The Baader Meinhof Complex* the death of the university student Benno Ohnesorg, bit by the police during some demonstrations, is strictly recreated on the basis of pictures taken from a photoreporter of *Der Spiegel*, who captured the moment a female demonstrator lifted the head of the fatally injured Ohnesorg while staring at the surrounding officers. As Mazierska points out this strategy could be an ethically troublesome choice, 'basing a film on "true stories" or even eyewitnesses' testimonies does not guarantee presenting unquestionable truth, but only gives a certain validity'.[439] Edel was highly criticised by relatives of the victims for his filming of the Ponto assassination and the blast of violence in the scene about the kidnapping of Schleyer.[440] The filmmaker justified his decision of ample use of fire weapons and quick montage by providing the number of bullets and the estimated time of the attack from police reports and medical examinations, which he studied with Eichinger in pre-production.[441]

The obsession with authenticity fails to provide a background to these layered reconstructions, as well as new insight into the reasons behind the explosion of violence. When we are dealing with extremely familiar historical events, the factual image is not sufficient because the events portrayed have been reproduced hundreds of times. Filling gaps through fiction, even divorcing from authenticity, complicates the overall vision and that is what brings to life real facts. Overall, both films seem to lack a proper independent voice, regurgitating media images of the 1970s or pre-constituted sentences uttered by the terrorists in their writings. As a result, *The Front Line* appears more courageous to distance itself from the mere facts by including Segio's apology, which in reality never took place.[442]

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[439] Mazierska, *European Cinema and Intertextuality*, 100.
[440] A particularly fierce report was written by Meinhof's daughter, Bettina Röhl, see her article "Ponto versus RAF-Film: Gericht sanktioniert sachlich falsche Darstellung des Baader-Meinhof-Komplexes," *Die Welt*, 9 January 2009. <http://www.welt.de/debatte/weblogs/Sex-Macht-und-Politik/article6065768/Ponto-versus-RAF-Film-Gericht-sanktioniert-sachlich-falsche-Darstellung-des-Baader-Meinhof-Komplexes.html> (accessed 30 August 2014).
[441] "Interview with Uli Edel", *The Baader Meinhof Complex* Press Kit
[442] In a similar vein, the biopic *Baader* concludes with the death of the terrorist during a violent shootout, whereas in reality he took his own life in prison. For an analysis of this film, see Mattias Frey *Postwall German Cinema: History, Film History and Cinephilia* (Oxford and New York: Berghan Books, 2013), 47-82.

Because of a lower budget, *The Front Line* limits the re-staging of many factual events and prefers having them witnessed by the characters on television. Colour footage of Alessandrini's funeral and the protest marches against this politically-motivated murder are cut to both Segio's parents and then his friend Piero who are silently watching the small screen. This scene is clearly designed to temporally anchor the episode to a precise moment, but according to Catherine O'Rawe it is also inserted 'to demonstrate the collective trauma caused by the murder, and the lack of support for the terrorist actions amongst ordinary left-wing Italians'.[443] In their search for accuracy *The Baader Meinhof Complex* and *The Front Line* emphasise the already-mediated nature of these events, but they are ultimately guilty of not understanding the philosophy of those revolutionary actions by asserting that the only possible reconstruction of those events is the one provided by the broadcasters or the press. This desire for neutral reconstruction of history is, however, problematic and unsatisfactory, but I will return to these implications when dealing with the concept of deliberate archaism.



Fig. 4.5 A highly-mediated history in *The Baader Meinhof Complex*.

For now, I would like to contextualise the adoption of the action genre within a widespread culture, which spectacularises violence and fetishises the symbols of 1970s terrorism. This is particularly evident in the German context. Ilka Rasch traces the RAF revival in the realm of popular culture from the 'Prada-Meinhof' collection of hipster T-shirts sold by Hamburg's boutique *Maegde und Knechte* in 2001.[444] The terrorist-chic phenomenon was followed by a series of articles and a photo shoot with

[443] O'Rawe, "'A Past that Will Not Pass': Italian Cinema and the Return to the 1970s": 107.
[444] Ilka Rasch, "The Generation Gap: The Reappropriation of the Red Army Faction in Contemporary German Film," in *Generational Shifts in Contemporary German Culture*, eds. Laurel Cohen-Pfister and Susanne Vees-Gulani (New York: Camden House, 2010), 185.

models posed as RAF terrorists which appeared in magazines such as *Tussi Deluxe* and *Max*.[445] In addition, the allure of 1970s terrorism has not been restricted to the fashion and press worlds, Rasch notes how it has permeated music as well: lyrics in songs by punk band Wizo and hip hopper Jan Delay make reference to symbols of urban terrorism such as the high-security prison Stammheim.[446] The most recent pop-cultural appropriation of the RAF legacy is the videogame *BioShock Infinite*, where players have to fight against a despotic government and an idealistic but populist movement called Vox Populi, a violent group modeled around the West German terrorist organisation.[447]

Whilst emblems of the RAF are appropriated by youngsters of the Berlin Republic in fashion, music and pop culture, in Italy the phenomenon is quite limited due to the different history of the terrorist groups. Terrorists of the BR, but also members of *Prima Linea*, did not become icons or reach a mythical status as the Baader-Meinhof gang did. The Italian leaders did not commit suicide in prison and many accepted to collaborate with the investigators in exchange for reduced sentences; a large number of former Italian terrorists are now involved in charity work, including Segio and Ronconi, but some became scholars and intellectuals. The casting of Giovanna Mezzogiorno and Riccardo Scamarcio, two leading stars in Italian cinema, and the insistence on the romance between Segio and Ronconi seem to adjust this trend in creating icons about the armed struggle. Margherita 'Mara' Cagol, co-founder and leader of the nucleus of BR with her husband Renato Curcio, is probably the only exception. After her death during crossfire with the police in 1975, she inspired a series of songs such as 'Mara Cagol's eyes' by Moltheni and 'Who brought those flowers to Mara Cagol?' by Yo Yo Mundi. Even Umberto Eco explicitly cited her in his novel *The Name of the Rose*, when he described Fra Dolcino's wife, 'Margherita'.[448]

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[445] Ibid.
[446] Ibid.
[447] In an interview, creator Kevin Levine declared that his source of inspiration was exactly the Baader Meinhof Faction in 1970s Germany. See Adam Serwer, "BioShock Infinite: An American History Lesson," *Mother Jones*, 10 May 2013. <http://www.motherjones.com/media/2013/05/irrational-games-bioshock-infinite-creator-ken-levine-interview> (accessed 20 August 2014).

[448] Eco explains, 'while I was writing more or less at the end of the 1970s, I realised that certain similarities emerged between these phenomena of non-organised medieval revolts and the acts of terrorism that I was witnessing. […]When I discovered that the name of Fra Dolcino's wife was

Despite generic emblems, such as the black five-pointed star on a red background, symbols of Italian terrorism failed to enter popular culture probably due to the absence of a cult for leading figures, a more provincial attitude of Italian formations and a stronger link with the working-class rather than with artistic avant-gardes.[449] In addition, different to the German context attacks from new left-wing splinter groups are still taking place and the phenomenon of terrorism seems not consign to the past. Nonetheless, postmillennial films romanticise the terrorist experience and inextricably associate it with popular culture, as they present opulent visual style and romantic and thrilling plotlines to entertain.

Terrorism as Heritage: Tainted Stories and the Faux-Vintage Film

Over the past few years more and more films have started looking at conflictual moments in German and Italian twentieth century history. *The Baader Meinhof Complex* and *The Front Line*, but also many other post-millennial historical films such as *Das Leben der Anderen/The Life of Others* (Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, 2006) and *Romanzo di una strage/Piazza Fontana: the Italian Conspiracy* (Marco Tullio Giordana, 2012), emphasise a common heritage in a period of individual and collective, internal and external chaos.[450] The favourite setting of these dramas seem to be either World War II, the late stage of the Cold War and the period of protest from 1968 till the early 1980s. In truth, it is not surprising that this turn to history focuses on negative aspects: these films reinforce and reiterate accepted values reproducing

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Margherita, like Margherita Cagol wife of Curcio, dead in similar circumstances, I explicitly mentioned her in the book.' In Alessandra Fagioli, "Il romanziere e lo storico. Intervista a Umberto Eco," *Lettera Internazionale* 75 (2003): 24. A German terrorist commando was named after Margherita Cogol.

[449] Similarly to what happened in Germany with the appropriation of RAF symbols in fashion, a 'criminal-chic' phenomenon developed after the release of the TV series *Romanzo Criminale* in 2010. Teenagers started imitating the look of the villain protagonists: lighters and T-shirts were seized by police officers as they thought they could instigate bullying. See Valeria Forgnone, "T-shirt e accendini della Banda: dilaga tra i giovani la moda criminale," *La Repubblica*, 18 December 2010. <http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2010/12/18/shirt-accendini-della-banda-dilaga-tra-giovani.html> (accessed 2 August 2014).

[450] The phenomenon is not limited to these two national cinemas, but belongs to a broader trend in European productions to recuperate national stories. It is sufficient to think about the Spanish biopic *Puig Antich/Salvador* (Manuel Huerga, 2006) about the last political prisoner sentenced to death during Franco's regime or *Katyn* (Andrzej Wajda, 2007) about the Soviet massacre of thousands of Polish officers in 1940.

national myths and heroes, and in this case anti-heroes. Seen as a transnational cycle Randall Halle describes them as

> a form of critical history, an attempt to create a future by rejecting the past. The stories of that particular era offer negative foils to the positive strivings of the present, the ability to look back and see where "we" came from and how far "we" have travelled.[451]

The new wave of historical films ought to be understood within the memory boom phenomenon, where different communities are trying to articulate and confront their past, but also within production cycles and commercial trends. Given that these films touch upon issues of national history, memory and identity politics, critics have often associated them with the 'heritage cinema' trend.

The notion of 'heritage film' was initially postulated and then repeatedly refined by Andrew Higson to describe a cycle of 1980s British films, which range from biopics, costume dramas, literary adaptations and historical re-enactments that confronted English history as a site of pleasurable yearning and an object of exportability.[452] Films such as *Chariots of Fire* (Hugh Hudson, 1981) and *A Room with a View* (James Ivory, 1985) were identified as heritage films, also because they share some stylistic features: a preference for the use of crane and high angle shots, as well as long takes and deep focus in order to highlight the spectacular and sumptuous mise-en-scène of these productions.[453]Following Higson's categorisation, many other scholars readily identified a new genre, which was being associated with the perceived conservative retrenchment of the 1980s. Among them Phil Powrie suggested that the heritage film was closely linked to the 1980s French 'nostalgia films', where examples such as *Jean de Florette* and *Manon des sources/Manon of the Spring* (both Claude Berri, 1986) evoked painterly and literary landmarks with a sense of melancholia for

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[451] Randall Halle, *German Film after Germany. Toward a Transnational Aesthetic* (Champaign, Il: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 100.

[452] Andrew Higson "Representing the National Past: Nostalgia and Pastiche in the Heritage Film [1993]," in *Fires were Started: British Cinema and Thatcherism*, ed. Lester Friedman, 2nd edition (London: Wallflower Press, 2006), 91-109. In truth, the concept of heritage film was originally coined by Charles Barr with reference to certain patriotic British films of the 1940s, such as *This is England* (David MacDonald, 1941), which drawn upon aspects of the national heritage. The term shifted connotation in the 1980s when anti-heritage film criticism began to emerge journalistically in reaction to the media saturation surrounding the release of *A Room with a View*, in Claire Monk, "The British Heritage Film Debate Revisited", 187.

[453] Higson, "Representing the National Past", 99.

lost times.[454] Since then, the notion of heritage cinema has travelled beyond the borders of British cinema and has become one of the most debated issues in film studies. More surprisingly, however, the critical concept was applied to German and Italian cinemas only recently thanks to the work by Lutz Koepnick and Rosalind Galt, producing, however, as many problems as it solves.[455]

The critical concept of 'German heritage cinema' follows the previous categorisation: the so-called 'cinema of consensus', which groups edulcorated films, rom-coms and road movies produced in the 1990s that failed to reach international recognition and worldwide distribution. According to Eric Rentschler, the cinema of consensus depicts 'the frenetic pursuit of a fun culture (*Spasskultur*) with its comedies about errant yuppies and enterprising trendsetters'.[456] Many scholars agree that German heritage cinema represents a subcategory of the cinema of consensus as it poses a further variant to this development.[457] For Lutz Koepnick German heritage films trivialise history offering 'easy to digest' versions of the past, which glorify Jewish-German co-operation in order to serve political needs and discourse of the Berlin Republic.[458] Films, such as *Aimée & Jaguar* (Max Fäberböck, 1999) and *Nowhere in Africa,* 'discover relevant heritage values in the sphere, not only of material objects, historical décor, and atmospheric textures, but in symbolic expressions and counter-factual models of social accord and multicultural consensus.'[459]

[454] Phil Powrie, "The Nostalgia Film," in *French Cinema in the 1980s: Nostalgia and the Crisis of Masculinity* (Oxford, Oxford University press, 1997), 13-27.
[455] I am referring in particular to these works: Lutz Koepnick, '"America gibt's überhaupt night!" Notes on the German Heritage Film," in *German Pop Culture: How American is it?,* ed Agnes C. Mueller (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 191-208; and Rosalind Galt, "Italy's Landscapes of Loss: Historical Mourning and the Dialectical Image in *Cinema Paradiso*, *Mediterraneo* and *Il Postino*, *Screen*, 43: 2 (Summer 2002): 158-173.
[456] Eric Rentschler, "Postwall Prospects: an Introduction", *New German Critique* 87 (2002), 3.
[457] Among them see the position taken by Paul Cooke and Chris Homewood in "Beyond the Cinema of Consensus? New Directions in German Cinema since 2000" and Christine Haase, "*Downfall* (2004): Hitler in the New Millennium and the (Ab)uses of History," both in *New Directions in German cinema*, eds. Paul Cooke and Chris Homewood (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011).
[458] Lutz Koepnick, '"America gibt's überhaupt night!" Notes on the German Heritage Film", 197.
[459] Lutz Koepnick, "Reframing the Past: Heritage Cinema and Holocaust in the 1990s," *New German Critique* 87 (2002): 58.

The Baader Meinhof Complex certainly shares some aspects with the postwall historical films identified as German heritage cinema:[460] it presents a difficult and still unresolved topic, the urban guerrilla, as a site of distraction and appears conventional in its forms, relying primarily on authentic reconstructions of the 1970s rather than avant-guard techniques. Mixing gangster and thriller motifs under the familiar framework of the heritage film, Edel's film pleases popular tastes: attracting a younger generational audience, which is hungry for knowledge even in simplified formats; and a foreign one, which instead is less emotionally involved in the contested stories. For these reasons, the film belongs to what Paul Cooke and Chris Homewood define as 'the recent wave of history films [which] with their personalised melodramatic accounts of past lives provides, it would seem, a far more immediate and accessible experience of the past than is to be found in earlier films'.[461] If *The Baader Meinhof Complex* is not able to inherit the legacy of the New German Cinema to challenge and unsettle the audience through an avant-garde aesthetics, it seems instead to keep being part of what Rentschler called 'cinema of consensus', a cinema that aims to appeal rather than shock. By presenting the terrorist past as a source of visual attraction, *The Baader Meinhof Complex* follows the postmodern condition where the historical event is emptied of any ideological significance and thus becomes an aesthetic matter and an exploitable commodity.

In *Redrawing the Map: The New European Cinema*, Rosalind Galt has attempted to categorise films such as *Cinema Paradiso/Nuovo cinema Paradiso* (Giuseppe Tornatore, 1988), *Mediterraneo* (Gabriele Salvatores, 1991) and *The Postman/Il Postino* (Michael Redford) as Italian heritage films.[462] These three films employ a similar melodramatic romance narrative, have young Italian men or boys as protagonists and are set in beautiful Mediterranean locations, sharing a comparable mise-en-scène of postmodern nostalgia. Moreover, they were all global blockbusters, in the limits of foreign-language films, and recipients of many awards. Galt establishes that the success of these films is due to '*la belle image'*, the pretty image; in these

[460] For further analysis of the heritage film in the German context, and its adoption in the representation of the GDR see Paul Cooke, *Contemporary German Cinema* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), 88-122.
[461] Paul Cooke and Chris Homewood, "Beyond the Cinema of Consensus," 10.
[462] Rosalind Galt, *Redrawing the Map: the New European Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

examples, the picturesque landscapes of Southern Italy and romantic narratives become, therefore, vehicles for escapist nostalgia.[463] The application of Galt's model of Italian heritage film is problematic for *The Front Line.* Here the beautiful landscapes, which characterises these types of productions, recede and when natural sceneries come to view, they are no longer reassuring and spectacular landmarks of national identity. De Maria's film utilises the industrial landscape of the Venetian lagoon and the dampish landscape of rural Rovigo, a small town in the northeast close to the mouth of the Po River, to reflect on the failure of the armed struggle.



Fig. 4.6 The industrial heritage of the Venice lagoon.

The images are not easily recognisable for foreign audiences, appearing as industrial districts, desolated marshes, neglected meadows and riverbanks. The bird's-eye views of the journey that Segio undertakes to free his lover from Rovigo's low-security prison mirror the dim atmosphere and do not mobilise any nostalgic longing or melancholic feelings towards the past. What instead provides rehabilitation to an intensely politicised history is the popular memory the film invokes: the compact cars used, the songs by Fabrizio De Andrè and Anna Oxa sang by the terrorists and the duffle coats typical of late 1970s male fashion. By focusing on material objects, period décor and the soundtrack the film fulfils two functions: taking the edge off the issue of political violence and allowing a broader interpretation of the historical event, which include aspect of social history and popular culture.

More recently, Alan O'Leary has tried to locate many contemporary historical films within the notion of 'patrimonio all'italiana' (heritage Italian style), where 'the real historical events are embedded in a context of Italian art, fashion, design and glamorous characters' and presented 'as aspects of a haptically delectable and

[463] Ibid, 9-10. See also the aforementioned article by Galt which is an earlier formulation of this idea: "Italy's Landscapes of Loss: Historical Mourning and the Dialectical Image in *Cinema Paradiso*, *Mediterraneo* and *Il Postino"*.

exportable past'.[464] I tend to agree with his notion of 'tainted heritage', a concept he briefly introduces in a coda to his monograph on cinema and terrorism in Italy. In his canon of Italian heritage films, the past is not only a site of violence, but also a repository of valuable assets: beautiful landscape imagery, artistic treasures and other cultural artefacts. For O'Leary this is particularly relevant for *The Best of Youth*, where beautiful landscapes and period objects generate nostalgic sentiments event though the events narrated have a national crisis in the background.[465] Domesticated in the heritage epic, he concludes, 'terrorism is adducted as part of this legacy'.[466] However, his interpretation of the Italian heritage film fails to consider a wider and cultural point of view and does not fully fit the model presented by *The Front Line*. The adoption of the heritage framework is motivated by production contexts and global ambition of consumption; a film is a product to be consumed, hence the recourse to easily identifiable aspects of Italian-ness (in De Maria's film a yellow FIAT 500 features in a key scene of carefree youthfulness). In addition, the visual opulence of these films should be related with the expansion of infotainment, which, on the one hand, has emptied and aestheticized violence, and on the other, it rendered the armed struggle an ingredient for every successful narrative endeavour. Despite the advantages of applying the heritage model to these films (it provides clarity and a mode of classification) I think that this comes with some important limitations. In the following I explain my concerns with the terminology.[467]

Belen Vidal establishes the possibility of a European heritage film from certain common tendencies in the European cinema industry (supra-national production frameworks, such as the European funding programmes MEDIA and Eurimages), and in the visual style of numerous contemporary historical films.[468] Her flexible definition of European heritage film, which embraces films as diverse as *Downfall* and retro-comedies like *Torremolinos 73* (Pablo Berger, 2003), shows how this genre is fluid, complex and open to negotiations and hybridisation and thus, could be useful to frame

[464] O'Leary, *Tragedia all'italiana*, 246.
[465] Ibid.
[466] Ibid.
[467] Similar concerns about the usefulness of such a term are expressed by Mattias Frey in *Postwall German Cinema: History, Film History and Cinephilia* (Oxford and New York: Berghan Books, 2013), 4-7. Specifically, Frey rejects the notion of German heritage cinema in favour of 'a cinema of retrospection'.
[468] Vidal, *Heritage Film*, 78.

the variety of historical dramas in German and Italian cinema. The term itself seems, however, overdue a revaluation as it incorporates such a wide spectrum of films. Given the historically specific origins of the heritage film, in Britain, Germany and Italy, and its resultant point of weakness, a central question is whether heritage film can be said to constitute first of all a valid genre and secondly whether it is useful for grouping historical films about left-wing terrorism.

Andrew Higson has argued that it is feasible to treat heritage films as a genre or subgenre 'of the historical romance or costume drama',[469] albeit one that 'we should try to regulate [...] not too closely or too loosely'.[470] Hence, I would suggest that it could be more beneficial to consider the heritage film as a grand scheme that groups different tendencies. This idea is embraced also by Claire Monk, who argues that 'many heritage films exhibit highly diverse "genre" characteristics' and it would be preferable to consider these features as 'pan-generic, potentially present across a range of period genres'.[471]

Nonetheless, I prefer to describe *The Baader Meinhof Complex* and *The Front Line* as 'faux-vintage films', a sub-genre under the umbrella notion of heritage cinema, which poses more attention to their film styles. There are important differences between German heritage films about 1930s Jews and Italian heritage films about Italian soldiers stranded on an island. O'Leary's notion of 'tainted heritage' retains the term and does not sufficiently question how the 'heritage film' was imported within the Italian national context. Therefore, a change of terminology proves more beneficial as it recognises peculiarities of this new wave of films about a violent past. Specifically, *The Front Line* does not project beautiful images of a sanitised national past in which the bourgeoisie is protagonist; here the gritty reality of the Milanese working class takes centre stage celebrating its shabby chic style.

According to the *Oxford Dictionary of English Language*, vintage denotes 'the times that something of high quality was produced, especially something representing

[469] Andrew Higson, *Waving the Flag: Constructing a National Cinema in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 27.
[470] Andrew Higson, "The heritage film and British cinema," in *Dissolving Views: Key Writings on British Cinema*, edited by Andrew Higson (London: Cassell, 1996), 235.
[471] Claire Monk, "The Heritage Film Debate Revisited," 192.

the best of its kind'.[472] Here I am borrowing the term 'faux-vintage' in its most recent application: the primary characteristic of the phenomenon of photo filters applications that imitate the look of analogue photography.[473] In the same way as smartphone applications like Instagram modify digital pictures adjusting the colours, the contrast or the depth of field, these faux-vintage films transform shameful aspects of history into a pleasurable image. They are 'vintage' because they present a fetishism for music, design and fashion of the past typical of vintage collectors, but they are foremost faux/fake vintage reproductions, imitative of a style from the recent past. In the pursuit of authenticity, they want to look like 1970s films and they imitate iconic pictures taken during those events, but they are ultimately postmillennial products. In doing so, they evince a 1970s look, but at the same time they reveal being fruit of deliberate digital manipulation.

However, these films show a tension towards the past since they do not simply long for it; the focus on perpetrators and anti-heroes clashes, in fact, with the nostalgic longing for the past. The difference in terminology underlines, therefore, a new alternative heritage canon constituted from films, which are male-oriented, populist and closely affiliated to youth-oriented style culture. The past they evoke is a traumatic one characterised by war, armed struggle and state oppression. My preference for calling this group of films 'faux-vintage' does not seek to dismiss the notion of heritage, nor to continue the disparaging connotation associated with it. As Ginette Vincendeau has demonstrated, heritage cinema has had a mixed critical reception, but we should defend its value since 'cinematic efforts to reconstruct the past are a playful and productive experience and provide a space in which social and cultural identities can be explored'.[474] The contemporary faux-vintage film may arguably function as a cinema of compensation, offering reassuring retreat from the barrage of unsettling views. Nonetheless, I argue that the heritage film and its more recent declination, the 'faux-vintage film', should be seen as a helpful attempt: their retro aesthetics exorcises the traumatic past, ignites public discussion and does not

[472] *Oxford Dictionaries*, <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/vintage?q=vintage> (accessed 30 August 2014).
[473] Nathan Jurgenson, "The Faux-Vintage Photo," *Cyborgology,* 14 May 2011. Available at <http://thesocietypages.org/cyborgology/2011/05/14/the-faux-vintage-photo-full-essay-parts-i-ii-and-iii/> (accessed 30 August 2014).
[474] Quoted in Andrew Higson, *English Heritage, English Cinema: Costume Drama Since 1980* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 63.

leave these topics fade into oblivion. As I show in the following pages, this comes with some problems.

Retro Aesthetics and the spectacle of a tainted past

To a different extent *The Baader Meinhof Complex* and *The Front Line* exhibit features central to contemporary understanding of the faux-vintage film: historical setting, high production value, stars and well-researched interior design. They are nostalgic but not wholly escapist. They draw on the cultural significance of props, replicate the look of past media forms, in particular photographic journalism and television and invest in the recent nostalgia's interest – the 1970s. In recreating the years of lead's palette, these films adopt what Christine Sprengler names 'deliberate archaism',[475] a key-defining attribute of the faux-vintage film along with surface realism. According to Sprengler, deliberate archaism 'describes the practice of creating new-old films which mine the memories of media forms and strive to recreate not only the look and feel of the period in question but also the appearance of art from that distant time'.[476] While a veneer of authenticity is conveyed through the use of iconic material objects from the era represented, deliberate archaism is best explained as the imitation of past media forms. This interpretation might partially coincide with the similar concept of pastiche, simply defined by Richard Dyer as 'a kind of imitation that you are meant to know is an imitation'.[477] However, Sprengler distinguishes the two terms: she points out that deliberate archaism constitutes 'a form of pastiche that involves self-conscious simulations as well as reinterpretations of past visual styles', whereas Richard Dyer's pastiche 'almost always involves a dialectic of present and past, and extends its reach to character types and generic conventions'.[478]

The opening scene of *The Baader Meinhof Complex* is significant in this respect. Janis Joplin's song 'Mercedes Benz' plays with some yellowing images of people having fun on a North Sea nudist beach: children are playing by the seashore, a woman wearing sunglasses is reading some magazines. The noise of the film stock and

[475] Christine Sprengler, *Screening Nostalgia: Populux Props and Technicolor Aesthetics in Contemporary American Film* (London and New York: Berghan, 2009), 140.
[476] Ibid.
[477] Richard Dyer, *Pastiche* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 1.
[478] Sprengler, *Screening Nostalgia*, 140.

a man holding a Super8 camera alert us that we are watching a highly mediated history, but also that the story is set in a specific period. The digitally-modified grainy effect could allude to the idea of a home movie; and the following colour matching of the film was explained by cinematographer Rainer Klausmann as a decision to fit *The Baader Meinhof Complex* within the collective memory of 1970s archival footage. In his words,

> the color matching of the film was influenced by what we used because our movie had to fit with the real stuff; we avoided strong reds, blues or greens and we desaturated the image in the DI. Otherwise, it would have looked like two different movies, and that's not good'.[479]

For the same reason, Edel reconnects Klausmann's camerawork to the cinema verité style for complementing 'the spontaneous energy of the archival material'.[480] This documentary style can be noticed also in *The Front Line* where De Maria opted for an ample use of handheld shots to render the fast-flowing and turbulent actions. The editing is smooth: archival footage and fictional reconstruction merge without a hitch. Catherine O'Rawe explains this effect giving account of a meeting between De Maria and the victims' groups, where the filmmaker 'argued that such "work of documentation" was designed to avoid "identification" with the protagonists of the film, and to produce "an unspectacular effect", a realism, which he said, was modelled on that of the Dardenne Brothers'.[481]

The retro aesthetics of both films represents therefore a collaboration between forms of deliberate archaism and hyper-verisimilitude.[482] The word retro has a quite specific meaning: it refers to the self-conscious fetish for period stylisation (in colour, camerawork but also in the profilmic: music, clothes and design).[483] While films such as *The Baader Meinhof Complex* and *The Front Line* might fail some audiences for their apolitical take on terrorism, they remain fascinating cultural objects through

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[479] Mark Hope-Jones, "Anarchy in the BRD," *The American Society of Cinematographer*, September 2009. <http://www.theasc.com/ac_magazine/September2009/TheBaaderMeinhofComplex/page1.php> (accessed 30 August 2014).
[480] Ibid.
[481] O'Rawe, "'A Past That Will Not Pass' Italian Cinema and the Return to the 1970s": 107.
[482] Here my use of the term aesthetics does not draw from the discipline of philosophy of art, rather from popular knowledge, understanding it as visual style and image's texture.
[483] Simon Reynolds, *Retromania. Pop Culture's Addiction to Its own Past* (London: Faber and Faber, 2012).

which to think how we mediate the past and enable our visual constructions. Edel and De Maria do not provide an interpretation of the events which occurred in the long 1970s, rather they offer new versions of the familiar images which constitute the cultural memory of left-wing terrorism. The invocation of particular colour palettes and design objects that symbolise a specific era is not simply a recourse to easily identifiable aspects, or selling points of national identity; the retro aesthetics on its own opens up history.



Fig. 4.7 A vintage past

This approach could be read in the context of a postmodern loss of fixed referent. Jean Baudrillard argued that we nostalgically long for a time when causes still mattered, enemies were clear and more broadly the historical event was contemplated as a fixed referent by all groups.[484] Writing in the late 1970s, when the

[484] Jacques Baudrillard, "La Storia: uno scenario retro [1977]," in *La Storia al Cinema: Ricostruzione del passato, interpretazione del presente*, ed. Gianni Gori (Roma: Bulzoni, 1994), 223.

crisis of failed utopias was clear, Baudrillard analysed the phenomenon of cultural nostalgia and connected cinema's obsession with the past with the grand trauma of that period: political stasis, the loss of revolutionary dreams and euphoria.[485] According to the French sociologist and cultural critic the past became a commodity and the new era of simulation left space to a new version of history, which he called 'retro-fashion'.[486] In this case, the 'faux-vintage' film fetishises the lost historical referent, grieving the absence of historical ideals. In other words, this retro aesthetics represents a postmodern phenomenon, a subcultural capital, which remains when ideological discourses are removed. The discussion of terrorism in the new millennium has lost none of its topicality. What the debate about retro aesthetics, deliberate archaism and nostalgia highlights is that the preoccupation with left-wing political violence ought to be seen in the broader context of historicising and normalising terrorism.

Rebels without a Cause? Glamorising Revolutionary Masculinity

In Chapter Three I explored how youth is such a central issue in the representation of terrorism; the coming-of-age narrative and the treatment of collective memory in generational terms in new-millennium films parallel the coming-of-age of two nations reborn after dictatorships and the armed struggle. I have shown that while films such as Schlöndorff's *The Legend of Rita* and Giordana's *The Best of Youth* celebrate the notion of youth as a social force and origin of national renewal, they present political violence as youthful naiveté, a mistake or malady. Relegating the female terrorist to stereotypical roles, for instance through the figure of the bad mother or the promiscuous woman, these two films defuse the threat of the violent body, reducing at the same time the validity and the political impact of the terrorist ideology. In the following, I will expand the study of the youth trope, focusing in this case on the portrait of the terrorist as a young man. When gender is addressed in research on the representation of political violence, discussion has often been limited to a small selection of exceptional female radicals who joined the armed struggle. An analysis of the glamorous appeal deployed by the male protagonists of *The Baader-Meinhof*

[485] Ibid.
[486] Ibid.

Complex and *The Front Line* represents an alternative reading of the representation of terrorism in the first decade of the new millennium; it also rebalances the study of gendered violence and provides an increased awareness of the role of masculinity and its performance on the screen.[487]

Cinema has often romanticised revolutionaries, gangsters and freedom fighters. According to Stella Bruzzi classic Hollywood gangster films, such as *Little Caesar* (Mervin LeRoy, 1930) and *Scarface* (Howard Hawks, 1932), constructed the archetypal anti-hero in the years before the abolition of the Prohibition Act; she maintains that the creation of a clothes-fetishist and violent narcissistic man responded to the challenge of traditional masculinity that occurred in the Depression era.[488] More recently, however, the trope of the fascinating outlaw has witnessed a revival, inspired by a number of biopics that sometimes revisits previous traditions. Examples include Benicio Del Toro in Soderbergh's *Che* and Johnny Depp as John Dillinger in *Public Enemies* (Michael Mann, 2009). My analysis of the romanticised terrorist comes as part of a general effort to map new trends in the representation of violent masculinity. I limit my discussion to the German and Italian contexts with the cinematic image of Andreas Baader and Sergio Segio, but similar assumptions could be applied to other contexts, for instance in relation to the representation of Venezuelan revolutionary Illich Ramirez Sanchez in the TV mini-series *Carlos*.

While the films discussed thus far employ the discourse of youth to define and involve the '68 generation who did not choose terrorism, *The Baader Meinhof Complex* and *The Front Line* deploy it to invoke the 'worst of youth' and restrain their radical choices. To a certain extent, both films render exciting the unsophisticated underground life and fail to bring the viewers closer to the essence of armed struggle. The main argument that underpins this analysis considers the tension emerging from the ambivalent ways in which these films style the male revolutionary. On the one hand, the male terrorist is rendered a powerless figure by portraying him as infantile, sentimental and sometimes narcissistic. In other words, representing the male

[487] A recent collection of essays tries to convey a balanced overview of the interconnections between gender identity and terrorism, however it does not consider the Italian context. See Sue Malvern and Gabriel Koureas, eds. *Terrorist Transgressions: Gender and the Visual Culture of the Terrorist* (London: IB Tauris, 2013).
[5] Stella Bruzzi, *Undressing Cinema: Clothing and Identity in the Movies* (London: Routledge, 1997), 73-74.

revolutionaries as young people who refuse to grow up and are more interested in themselves or their personal relationships confirms their exclusion, underlines their alterity and defuses their threat, thus reassuring contemporary audiences. The fixation on style and superficiality that characterises the representation of Baader and the obsession of Segio for his partner Susanna have, on the other hand, distinct consequences. The romanticisation of the left-wing terrorist does not necessarily lead to its derision: it could also signal the will to humanise him and render him more sympathetic in comparison with contemporary images of terrorists. I argue, therefore, that *The Baader Meinhof Complex* and *The Front Line* share a tension in the representation of violent masculinity, a tension between conformity and difference; the strategies adopted to romanticise and sometimes feminise the male revolutionary work to undermine their struggle, but ultimately reinforce the mythology of the glamorous and romantic outlaw.

The representation of the male revolutionary in *The Baader Meinhof Complex* mimics strategies adopted by the press in the 1970s to deride the RAF and their anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist ideology. Clare Bielby argues that the West German media of the 1960s and 1970s presented Baader as a feminised figure in order to distance him from normative forms of masculinity.[489] She understands the need to deride the revolutionary terrorist against the backdrop of the threat that the student movement, the second-wave feminism and the RAF were bringing about the young West German democracy.[490] I would like to return once again to the scene of Andreas Baader's arrest in Edel's film to test this hypothesis. In *The Baader Meinhof Complex* the police in Frankfurt manages to capture three leading RAF members: Andreas Baader, Jan-Carl Raspe and Holger Meins; the latter is shown wearing only his underwear, screaming while the agents pull his arms in different directions. The scene is a re-enactment of famous photographs of the arrest, which were published on the cover of newspapers and magazines at that time, but the moving images strongly connote excess, distress and irrationality: the first generation of RAF terrorists are spinning out of control. The idea of a proud masculinity in crisis could allude to the changing social and gender codes at the end of the 1970s, but in this context the

[489] Clare Bielby, "Revolutionary Men and the Feminine Grotesque in the West German Media of the 1960s and 1970s," in *Masculinities in German Culture*, eds. Sarah Colvin and Peter Davies, (New York: Cambden House, 2008), 214-229.
[490] Ibid., 215.

demasculinisation of terrorists exposes the vulnerability of the terrorist body. The depiction of Meins' scream is wordless, the music and the journalistic commentary covers his voice; the iconography, instead, reminds of Edvard Munch's iconic image of existential angst, *The Scream* (1893), as well as the emaciated naked male figures of Ego Schiele's drawings.



Fig. 4.8 Masculinities in crisis in *The Baader Meinhof Complex.*

The close-up images of the contorted torso make us reconsider the public use of the terrorists' bodies. It seems that his figure becomes an object, public property exposed in a disturbing show. This spectacle preludes to Meins' battle for self-determination during his hunger strike in prison, where he uses his body as a weapon to make statements and advance political requests.[491] His hysterical reaction to the arrest seems to indicate a lack of bravery and rationality, attributes that the whole gang does not display during their training in Lebanon for instance. In the scene when the RAF moves to the Middle East for some guerrilla training, rebels belonging to the Front for the Liberation of Palestine show deep repugnance for Baader and the other members, they despise the German terrorists, describing them as cowards who prefer smoking cigarettes instead of being actively involved in shooting exercises.

[491] It is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss biopolitics, corporality and political violence. But it is worth mentioning that the interrelation between politics, art and the body are central tenets of the documentary *Starbuck Holger Meins.* This is a non-fiction work, which remembers the history of the German cinematography student, turned RAF terrorist who died on hunger strike in prison. The image of Meins' arrest is prominently used in the marketing material (both on the poster and the DVD cover).

The revolutionary masculinity is objectified once again when the camera moves from Meins to Baader and stops on his semi-dressed body. Andreas Baader seems however a tamed animal, as we see him through an ambulance window. The terrorist body is spectacularised once again by the media, photographers catch that very moment and the cameras' flashes blind him. More interestingly this strategy conveys a feminising effect: Baader is feminised because his injured body is no longer threatening and his semi-naked body becomes the object of the camera's and the viewer's gaze.[492] However, eyewitnesses and historians have depicted Baader as a charismatic womaniser but also a very brutal man. In the film, he first appears with a beer bottle in his hands, filling it with petrol to make a Molotov cocktail. At the beginning, Baader comes across as a narcissistic villain who likes fast and expensive cars, drugs and guns. Baader's vanity is foregrounded by referencing to his propensity to disguise and to burst out in anger for scratches on his leather jacket. Before the arrest, we see Baader wearing a blond wig and a bright red jacket; the platinum blond hair signals a certain grotesque artificiality. Moreover, during his stay in Stammheim the image of his body wrapped in a long fur coat and surrounded by his music discs, disturbs the hyper masculine identity of the terrorist. By depicting the male terrorist as a vane bandit and then a man in crisis, his political threat is neutralised.

Allegations about the content of *The Baader Meinhof Complex* preceded the opening of the film on German cinemas. The 'Eichinger effect' also became evident in an astute marketing plan which included tantalising interviews with the cast and the release of information about production to selected journalists. Moreover, as Ian Brunskill points out, only a small number of senior representatives of the weekly magazine *Der Spiegel* and the daily *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* were allowed to preview the film in its entirety.[493] This created a fierce resentment among the press and fuelled 'a frenzy of speculations and vehement debate'.[494] Edel's film was criticised for exploiting the human fascination with evil and giving the terrorists a glamorous appeal. In particular, several attacks were addressed towards the casting

[492] The naked male body, this time with signs of beatings and torture, also appears earlier in the film when the young Peter-Jürgen Boock joins the first generation terrorists and has a bath with Gudrun Ensslin.
[493] Ian Brunskill, "A German Complex: Reliving the Baader Meinhof Era," *The American Interest*, 1 May 2009. http://www.the-american-interest.com/articles/2009/05/01/a-german-complex/ (accessed 30 July 2014).
[494] Ibid.

choices, although reviewers were in agreement on the robust and convincing acting performances of the stars after watching the films.

Casting well-known actors and even national stars undoubtedly contributed to the glamorisation of the terrorist figure. Chris Homewood accurately notes that part of the appeal of *The Baader Meinhof Complex* derives from the casting from 'the German star system in the leading roles, rather than [the] unknowns'.[495] Johanna Wokalek received a Bambi award as best German actress for her portrayal of the highly sexualised Gudrun Ensslin. Martina Gedeck studied interviews and pictures of Ulrike Meinhof in order to deliver an almost mimetic performance of the journalist-turned-terrorist. More problematic was the casting of Moritz Bleibtreu as Andreas Baader as his appeal to a younger generation could have further contributed to the discomfort with the fascination with political violence. At the time of shooting Bleibtreu was a young German celebrity, known for his powerful and sensitive charisma. He started his career playing three romantic fools: Karl, the gay cabinet-maker in *Stadtgespräch/Talk of the Town* (Reiner Kaufmann, 1995), the wannabe crook Abdul in Thomas Jahn's *Knockin' on Heaven's Door* (1997) and the lovable loser Manni in *Lola rennt/Run, Lola Run* (Tom Tykwer, 1998). Bleibtreu soon became one of the most sought-after performers in Germany, with a wide repertoire from international thrillers like Steven Spielberg's *Munich* (2005), to psychological films such as *Das Experiment* (Oliver Hirschbiegel, 1999).

His role as Baader was one of the most demanding, as it required a sort of anti-hero magnetism. In an interview released with the press kit of *The Baader Meinhof Complex*, Bleibtreu reveals how he imagined Baader like a movie star with a cigarette in the mouth and Ray-Ban shades on; he maintains that 'no matter how you see Andreas Baader in moral terms, you can't deny that he's a legend of some sort'.[496] By emphasising his rebellious nature against the status quo, rather than his crimes, *The Baader Meinhof Complex* makes Baader almost likeable. Homewood is therefore pessimistic about this choice:

> Bleibtreu's off-screen star persona cannot be easily divorced from his diegetic portrayal of Baader, and so functions as a cultural sign which

[495] Homewood, "From Baader to Prada," 142.
[496] Interview with Moritz Bleibtreu, *The Baader Meinhof Complex Presskit*.

> adds an extratextual layer of meaning to a performance in a film that is aimed at a young, largely mainstream audience. […] To have cast unknowns in the lead roles might have lessened the 'infection' of the character by the star, but as it stands, Bleibtreu's performance carries with it the potential to assuage the negative association with blind brutality which the filmmakers claim they otherwise wanted to expose.[497]

The anxiety about Bleibtreu's charisma in *The Baader Meinhof Complex* links to a broader uneasiness with the attraction of terrorism on film. Such sentiments anticipated and later informed the reaction to *The Front Line*. One of the producers, Sergio Occhipinti of Lucky Red, added fuel to the fire, presenting the trailer of *The Front Line* as 'the film that everyone talks about, but no one has watched'.[498] This statement relates to the insecurity felt by the director De Maria, who admitted in an interview that, 'for the whole duration of the shooting I had constant doubts, I shot with a persistent fear of not casting enough shadow on the characters'.[499] The protagonist of *The Front Line*, Riccardo Scamarcio, after a brief appearance in Giordana's *The Best of Youth* was shot to stardom with teen-movies based on novels for young adults by Federico Moccia. Before interpreting Sergio Segio in De Maria's film, he played in less than a decade a series of characters from the late 1960s and 1970s: the fascist outlaw in *Romanzo Criminale*, the student turned Red Brigade member in *My Brother Is an Only Child* and the left-wing undercover cop in *The Big Dream*.

His performance attracted great criticism, more than the equally troublesome content.[500] In a study of female spectatorship, Catherine O'Rawe has looked at the reaction to the film and concluded that the heartthrob protagonist was perceived to offer a dangerous appeal to the representation of terrorism; critics worried that 'an impressionable young audience, drawn in by their love of Scamarcio, [would] be

[497] Homewood, "From Baader to Prada," 142.
[498] Raffaele Pavoni, "La Prima Linea," *Effettonotte Online. Rivista di Critica Cinematografica* <http://www.effettonotteonline.com/news/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1884&Itemid=73> (accessed 30 July 2014).
[499] Ibid.
[500] See Pierluigi Battista, "Quei volti troppo belli per il male," *Corriere della Sera*, 13 November 2009, 1.

incited to follow the wrong path'.[501] While Scamarcio is praised for getting rid of his aura as teen-idol, his performance is, nonetheless, received with critical difficulty. His tone-down acting and the remorse conveyed in the initial monologue were probably ineffective. De Maria's film contrasts with the *The Baader Meinhof Complex*'s representation of underground life, because in this case the terrorists are no pop stars and their secluded and mundane lifestyle bears more resemblance to the iconography of Clara and Hans in Petzold's *The State I Am In*.

The terrorist existence of *Prima Linea* members is shown monotonous and extremely secluded. *The Front Line* features quotidian scenes in the kitchen and shots with figures muffled up in woollen coats taking walks in foggy Milanese streets. The second half of the film focuses on the planning of the prison breakout. Here the camera pans over the group's bored faces and on Segio's contrived expression; the terrorists are not infantilised: they are not shown playing with guns, rather they are shown checking the plans and wondering about what to do next. Overall, *The Front Line* is characterised by a decidedly dim atmosphere, accentuated by a cold colour palette. There is an element of spectacularity in the terrorists' actual work: they do commit murders and prison break, but this is no theatre, because scenes of contrition balance such a display of violence. For example, while Segio's father and his friend Piero watches the funeral of judge Alessandrini on TV, we see the terrorist getting home and washing his face, perhaps in an act of conscience cleaning.

Casting Scamarcio in the lead role is not the real issue: as a middlebrow industrial product the film has to respond to the market laws and hence needs its stars and spectacular moments. What is problematic consists in portraying Segio's actions as acts of love. The choice of focusing on the love story between these two leaders of *Prima Linea* is equally dangerous. Fictionalising the couple in their intimate moments eventually endangers the project of the film, which is examining how a young man grows into the role of a revolutionary. Ideology takes a back seat to Segio's love for Ronconi: for instance, in one scene we see the couple disregarding the security measures, missing a train and consummate their love. The film does provide a sufficient exposition of the main character's psychology, but it regurgitates Segio's testimony through cliché sentences in voice-over. The only terrorist that seems

[501] Catherine O'Rawe, "The Italian Spectator and her Critics," *The Italianist* Vol. 30, n. 2 (2011): 283.

politically committed is Susanna Ronconi, who in the end appears as an emasculating and paranoid leader. Instead of naturalistic dialogue, the characters often intone excerpts from interviews, Segio's own biography and prison notes. These apologetic instances are probably due to the intention of the scriptwriters and director to find a compromise between spectacle and the needs of with the victims' families in order to present a humble and toned-down portrayal of murders.

Conclusions

In this chapter I have exposed how the glamorisation of the terrorist past operates on different levels: genre conventions, mise-en-scène and performance. The two films discussed in the previous pages can be associated with the German and Italian heritage film genre, but I explained how it would be more beneficial a shift of terminology to the 'faux-vintage film', given their more contemporary setting and the different contexts in which these notions developed. *The Baader Meinhof Complex* and *The Front Line* are unique for heavily drawing on different cinematic traditions: the gangster film, the western and the cop-thriller. As such, these films seem to be made more for entertainment purposes, rather than educational and intellectual ones. Uncomplicated but thrilling narratives, captivating melodies, rich mise-en-scène and engaging performances contain the complexity of left-wing terrorism and radically differ from the minimalist approach taken by Petzold in *The State I Am In* as explained in Chapter Two.

This phenomenon certainly reflects an industrial trend: avant-garde, experimental and art films have become 'minor' and the market privileges conventional formats that could travel well beyond national borders. Nonetheless, one should not dismiss it as a mere popular trend. Critics could not deny the political potential of such a treatment. I argued that the glamorisation of political violence responds to the normalisation process occurring in Germany and Italy: since the RAF and *Prima Linea* are no longer active and thus they do not frighten any longer, *The Baader Meinhof Complex* and *The Front Line* can easily romanticise and aestheticise left-wing terrorism. These films are part of the new millennial production, which shows how an historical period perceived as a national crisis can become material with

which to play and experiment. These works hit a nerve and elicited strong reactions, especially from survivors of the years of lead and relatives of the victims. These heated debates and even the political activism generated (boycotts, open letters in newspapers etc.) are proof that although these films want to leave this traumatic past behind, such a position is very difficult to apply. As the character of Segio utters in *The Front Line*, 'this is a past that does not pass'.

The Baader Meinhof Complex and *The Front Line* were perceived as unsympathetic towards the role and needs of the victims. As survivors urge a 'turn to the victim' to balance the portrayal of the years of lead, the films analysed in this chapter continue, however, the trend of terrorist-centric stories.[502] They firmly condemn terrorist acts and embrace a resolutely anti-violent stance, but they neglect the victims who are, in fact, relegated to mere vignettes. This is even more problematic if we consider that many of the casualties were working for the state and died in service (I am thinking for instance about judge Alessandrini and Attorney General Siegfried Buback, mentioned respectively in *The Front Line* and *The Baader Meinhof Complex*).

Moreover, it is important to underline that these two films not only disregard the victims, but they also pay less attention to the sympathisers of left-wing terrorism. *The Front Line* is more courageous by including Segio's confrontation with his parents and Piero, a childhood friend who voices his disappointment for the trajectory taken by the terrorists despite initially taking part in marches and strikes in the early 1970s. The state's measures against political violence are another aspect that is played down in both films. *The Baader Meinhof Complex* includes brief snippets about the modernisation of the police forces and their anti-terrorist tactics. The solid performance of Bruno Ganz as Horst Herold, chief of the Federal Criminal Police Office, supports this effort, but his intention to understand the motivations of the RAF clashes with the reality of a society under surveillance.

[502] I borrowed this expression from the title of Ruth Glynn's article: "The 'turn to the victim' in Italian Culture: Victim-centred Narratives of the anni di piombo." *Modern Italy* vol. 18 (2013): 373-90. In this research, Glynn analyses public discourse, memoirs and interviews with relatives of victims of terrorism. This phenomenon might expand in films, as well. But to this date the number of films that take a victim-centric narrative is quite limited.

The causes of terrorism are presented through a series of montage sequences that showcase archival footage of police brutality, violent riots and strikes; very often the protagonists themselves observe the unfurling of historical events on television. This underlines the highly mediated nature of those historical facts, but also the difficulty in freeing the viewer from deadlock images and thus the mythology of the years of lead. Although De Maria and Edel wanted to debunk the myth of left-wing terrorism, they ultimately reinforce this legend. The following chapter continues the effort to map how the issue of left-wing political violence is incorporated into popular genre films. Chapter Five reflects on the use of the comedy genre to address the legacy of the years of lead, even its repercussions in the present. The comedies that I am going to analyse deal with parochial stories, however, their narratives allow us to open up the discourse beyond the national and address even transnational considerations.

Chapter Five

Funny Memories: Nostalgia and Irony in *What to Do in Case of Fire* (Gregor Schnitzler, 2001) and *Unlikely Revolutionaries* (Lucio Pellegrini, 2010).

> Carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order. […] Carnival was the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change, and renewal.
>
> Mikhail Bakhtin[503]

In a famous passage from "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte", Karl Marx revises Hegel's philosophical position that the past contains inherent motifs, adding that all important events and figures in world history occur twice: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce.[504] The essay discusses breaks and changes in French political history, specifically referring to the coup in 1851 in which Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte seized power. Marx's idea that history repeats itself is echoed in his discussion of the downfall of the French and German *ancien régimes,* where he maintains that the tragic demise of Louis XVI was only the prelude to the farcical decay of the German system in the 1830s and 1840s. In his own words, 'history is thorough and passes through many stages while bearing an ancient form to its grave. The last phase of a world-historical form is its comedy'.[505] More importantly, he then seems to suggest that these discernible patterns emerge more prominently in artistic representations of the past.

Nowadays, Marx's widely held notion that history contains distinct structures and is determined by the immanent nature of historical facts is considered questionable and often challenged. Representations of the past seem more determined by choices

[503] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, transl. by Helène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 10.
[504] Karl Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte [1852]," Marxist Internet Archive, chapter 1. <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/ch01.htm> (accessed 25 August 2014).
[505] Karl Marx, *Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right',* ed. with an introduction and notes by Joseph O'Malley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 134.

made in the present, through the imposition of narratives, registers and visual style. Among the advocates of this latter position, Hayden White argues that no single real occurrence 'is intrinsically tragic, comic, [or] farcical', but it is the 'imposition [of a structure] upon events that endow them with meaning'.[506] Nonetheless, by making the connection between the past and its artistic representations, and more importantly how different emplotment and narrativisation recount historical events, Marx demonstrates how memory is malleable and prone to changes, despite the fact these mutations are due to present instances rather than the intrinsic nature of events. In addition, by shedding light on the genre of comedy Marx's notorious quote reminds us that we should not undervalue the role of comedy as a representation of the past, but, instead, understand it as a dynamic of memorialisation. According to Marcia Landy, 'Marx's linking of history to farce is an opportunity to rethink how comedy can be regarded as a form of historicizing, as more than mere occasion to produce laughter at human foibles but an opportunity for critical reflections on the uses and abuses of the past'.[507] In highlighting humour's fundamental role as a coping mechanism and laughter as a panacea to serious topics, this chapter considers post-millennial comedies that nostalgically evoke the experience of political violence and youth rebellion in West Germany and Italy.

Generally speaking, humour and terrorism seem to be opposites; political violence is certainly no laughing matter. Yet, the past few years saw the release of controversial comedies about terrorists or alleged terrorists, such as *Harold and Kumar Escape from Guantanamo Bay* (Jon Hurwitz and Hayden Schlossber, 2008) and *Four Lions* (Chris Morris, 2010), which challenged 'war-on-terror' policies and ethnic anxieties following 9/11. As far as left-wing revolutionary terrorism is concerned, there is an emerging visibility of political satire of old ideologies. In this chapter, I analyse the use of comic elements in two films set in the present which make reference to the Italian years of lead and the last fringes of political contestation in 1980s West Germany: *Unlikely Revolutionaries* by Lucio Pellegrini and *What to Do in Case of Fire* by Gregor Schnitzler. In order to understand the evolution of the cultural memory of terrorism in post-millennial Germany and Italy, my analysis

[506] Hayden White, *The Content of the Form* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1987), 44.
[507] Marcia Landy, "Comedy and Counter-History" in *Historical Comedy on the Screen*, ed. Hannu Salmi (Bristol: Intellect, 2011), 177.

concentrates on how the comedic register produces a different approach to the violent past and a more playful relationship with history. Despite being moderately successful domestic products, I suggest these films are symptomatic of a new approach to the topic of terrorism, a more ironic view that hint at the normalisation of the violent past. These comedies grant us an opportunity to perceive the past, even a contested and violent one, as 'a land of opportunity' with which to play.[508] Quite exceptional among the heterogeneous production of fiction and documentary films about left-wing political violence, the case studies probably encourage a reassessment of a certain historical period and represent new formulae to address this topic. This analysis draws links between these films and other previous works that adopted sarcasm and irony to reflect on political violence, including Fassbinder's *The Third Generation* and Bertolucci's *Tragedy of a Ridiculous Man*. This provides a platform for reconsidering comedy as a useful creative tool to reassess visual history, a role, which has often been undervalued.

The chapter then considers how nostalgia can be associated with a violent event, drawing on Svetlana Boym's theorisation of restorative and reflexive nostalgia.[509] Boym identifies two tendencies of nostalgia: a restorative one that leads to reconstruct the past as it really was; and a reflexive one, a more sadder but ironic nostalgia, that acknowledges the futility of the restorative effort and call it into doubt. I suggest that by employing different forms of longing for the past the two case studies display an anxiety and dissatisfaction with the present, which generally means Germany after 1989 and Italy in the Berlusconi era. Specifically I will explore in the final section how the remembrance of political violence is intertwined with the phenomena of *Westalgie*[510] in Germany and post-socialist nostalgia in Italy. The longing for the atmosphere of West Berlin before 1989 and for the time when the BR were challenging the Italian State is connected with sentiments of dissatisfaction for the German reunification, the end of ideologies and utopian idealism, and, in the Italian case, the economic crisis.

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[508] Hannu Salmi, "Introduction: The Mad History of the World" in *Historical Comedy on the Screen*, ed. Hannu Salmi (Bristol: Intellect, 2011), 29.
[509] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 41-56.
[510] Westalgie means the nostalgia for the Federal Republic of Germany before the fall of the Berlin Wall, its popular culture and commodities. The notion is not a simple reverse form of *Ostalgie*, the nostalgia for East German everyday culture, because the changes in the FRG were not so radical as in the GDR after 1989.

These films actually draw from a widespread revolutionary consciousness to articulate a vision of recent social and economic changes. Debates about the connection between terrorism and economic crisis emerged in Italy and Germany at the turn of the millennium. *What to Do in Case of Fire* and *Unlikely Revolutionaries* explore these ramifications looking back at the past and hence showcase the tortuous nature that constitutes memory's interconnectivity. Differently from Chapter Two where we considered interconnected memories in conjunction with post-memories and prosthetic memories of other traumas, here I pay more attention to the palimpsestic nature of these contemporary representations of political violence. I suggest that we consider the interconnected memories that emerge in these two comedies as objects of 'ongoing negotiation, crossreferencing, and borrowing'.[511] In light of Michael Rothberg's theorisation, these examples inform us of the importance of comparative analysis as a tool to understand and produce new knowledge of memories that travel across space and time and use original archetypes to reflect on the present. Before analysing the comic aspects of the two case studies, I shall briefly describe the synopses and contexts of the films under consideration, dealing with each of them in turn.

"What to Do in Case of Fire? Let it burn…"

Premiered in November 2001 at Kinofest, a German Film Festival in Lünen, *What to Do in Case of Fire* represents the debut feature of director Gregor Schnitzler (b. 1964).[512] Set in Berlin at the turn of the new millennium, the film is a lighthearted comedy with action sequences which focuses on a group of disillusioned young adults in their thirties. As such, it does not directly address the experience of 1970s urban guerrilla, and specifically the terrorist groups RAF, B2J or the Red Cells; however, it deals with the last phase of the contestation movements blurring the distinction between punk counterculture, anarchy and 1970s left-wing terrorism. The film begins in 1987 when five anarchists squatting in the neighbourhood of Kreuzberg, West Berlin, make training films on how to put together a homemade bomb against

[511] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* 3.
[512] Born in West Berlin, Schnitzler previously worked in television networks, directing two ZDF's TV films *T.E.A.M. Berlin* (1997 and 1998), and the RTL's mini series *Balko* (1999).

'imperialist pigs'. The bomb they placed in a vacant villa in Grunewald, on the outskirts of Berlin, explodes 13 years later, injuring a real estate agent and a potential buyer. Prompted to find the terrorists responsible for the act, the police raid an old building where two of the original anarchist squatters Tim (Til Schweiger) and Hotte (Martin Feifel) still live. They are politically engaged in the anti-gentrification movement and take part in rallies, anti-police protests and petty thefts, despite Hotte's disability (he is in a wheelchair as his legs were crashed by a water cannon tank during a previous riot). The squatters face eviction from the owner of the building, a rich Turkish man, who is planning to refurbish it, but without success because of Hotte's mobility handicap and the astute defence tactics of the anarchists. While the police confiscate a cask with the incriminating Super8 film and bring it in their headquarters, Tim and Hotte try to warn their former comrades, who, instead, went on with their lives. Nele (Nadia Uhl) is a single mother of two children; Terror (Matthias Matschke) is an attorney; Maik (Sebastian Blomberg) runs an advertising agency and Flo (Doris Schretzmayer) leads a very conventional middle-class life and is about to get married. After some disagreements on how to proceed, the former anarchists devise the plan of infiltrating the police barracks disguised as a television news crew in order to recuperate the evidence that could link them to the explosion. They are inadvertently helped by a young but naïve inspector from Bonn, Henkel (David Striesow), who is eager to develop good public relations with the press. This strategy is, however, contested by an old-school cop Manowsky (Klaus Löwitsch), who prefers, instead, studying microfilms of old newspapers, where he finally discovers a picture of the bombing culprits: Group 36.[513] Failing in their first attempt, the gang decides to smuggle in another explosive device in order to destroy the crate in the evidence room. Hotte places a pressure cooker with an explosive mix in the right place, but gets trapped in the room because of incomprehension and miscommunication with the rest of the group. In the end, the gang frees Hotte who finally got hold of the incriminating film and Manowsky manages to evacuate the building before the explosion.

[513] The group was initially squatting a building in Machnowstraße with the SO36 post code, hence the name of the anarchist gang. The street is in the bohemian district of Kreuzberg in the southeast part of West Berlin, which at that time was surrounded on three sides by the wall and hence felt like a secluded island. Barbara Mennel notes that 'SO 36 had a higher density of Turks and squatters because of the lack of investment in the area adjacent to the wall,' in "Political Nostalgia and Local Memory: The Kreuzberg of the 1980s in Contemporary German Film," *The German Review: Literature, Culture, Theory* 82: 1 (2010): 57.

What to Do in Case of Fire is a feel-good comedy that could be seen as a continuation of the tradition of light-hearted popular genres of the 1990s, which Eric Rentschler disparagingly labelled as 'cinema of consensus', a series of shallow romantic comedies, road movies and action films that rather than being politically motivated and provocative accommodated the audience.[514] There are certainly some similarities with the 1990s comedy boom: like the cinema of consensus, Schnitzler's film proved a reasonable domestic success, considering the competition of Pixar's box-office hit *Monsters Inc.* (Peter Docter, 2001), which was released on the same day.[515] Moreover, the film casts one of the most famous male stars of post-unification German cinema, Til Schweiger '*the* top German film star' of the 1990s;[516] Schweiger plays the central male character, Tim, an immature idealist who is not able to take up responsibilities. As he squats the old commune and hence delays adulthood, Tim follows what Rentschler defines 'Peter Pan narratives', typical occurrences of the cinema of consensus as they project the postponed development of the unified German nation.[517]



Fig. 5.1 The last Mohicans of West Berlin.

On the whole, *What to Do in Case of Fire* is certainly a commercial endeavour, an entertainment product that exploits a groovy political issue by evoking nostalgia for

[514] Eric Rentschler, "From New German Cinema to the Post-Wall Cinema of Consensus," in *Cinema and Nation*, eds. Mette Hjort and Scott MacKenzie (London: Routledge, 2002), 260-77.
[515] *What to Do in Case of Fire* totaled 404.553 sold tickets, for a gross of €2.379.661. Data retried from: *Die erfolgreichsten Filme in Deutschland 2002*. <http://www.insidekino.com/DJahr/D2002.html> (accessed 15 August 2014).
[516] Malte Hagener, "German Stars of the 1990s," in *The German Cinema Book*, eds. Tim Bergfelder, Erica Carter and Deniz Göktürk (London: BFI, 2002), 99.
[517] Rentschler, "From New German Cinema to the Post-Wall Cinema of Consensus," 273.

the anarchist environment of 1980s West Berlin, instead of finding a strong political stance. In other words, this is a movie that Maik, the character who became a successful advertisement executive thanks to his radical slogans, would be jealous of. This interpretation is also confirmed by Elvis Mitchell from *The New York Times* where he writes that *What to Do in Case of Fire* 'hijacks the heat of revolution and turns it into a sales tool'.[518] Similar critical responses to the conciliatory and entertaining treatment of violence emerge from domestic critical reviews. In the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* Bert Rebhandl underlined the general quality of Schnitzler's debut, but also its lack of bite.[519] Simone Mahtrnholz echoes his comments, arguing that the director reduces 'politics into entertainment, idealism into an adrenaline element and solidarity into romantic accessory', making the whole movie a fictional pacifying view of political struggle.[520]

Despite such criticisms, I argue that *What to Do in Case of Fire* is more than a film of consensus; it is a light comedy which achieves what it sets out to do, but it also provides a counterview to modes of addressing the topic of political violence and presents some veiled criticism towards the new Berlin Republic for its lack of utopian idealism. While the notion of cinema of consensus was coined in opposition to the politically engaged and internationally successful New German Cinema, Schnitzler's film is situated at the edge of a new phase within postunification German cinema, where radical change in the industrial infrastructure – started with the fall of the Berlin wall – led to an internationalisation of the film industry and an expanded distribution at the turn of the new millennium.[521] The film was co-produced, in fact, by the German branch of Columbia TriStar, screened in the US, though not particularly successfully, and released on DVD for the British market. However, it did not reach the international success of *Ostalgie* comedies, such as *Sonnenallee/Sun Alley* (Leander Haussmann, 1999) and *Goodbye Lenin!* (Wolfgang Becker, 2003). With this, I do not want to clearly categorise this comedy as either a film of dissent, nor a celebration of materialism, a key characteristic of the cinema of consensus. In taking

[518] Elvis Mitchell, "When Revolutionaries Mature and Have to Face Up," *The New York Times*, 19 July 2002. <http://movies.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=9A00E6D81039F93AA25754C0A9649C8B63> (accessed 15 August 2014).
[519] Bert Rebhandl, "Tanz der Autonomen" *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zietung*, 1 February, 2002.
[520] Simone Mahrenholz, "Löschen!" *Der Tagesspiegel Berlin,* 30 January 2002.
[521] Tim Bergfelder, "Contemporary German Cinema," in *The Cinema Book*, 3rd revised edition, ed. Pam Cook (London: British Film Institute, 2008), 214.

the challenge of considering the serious issue of anarchist bombing in the 1980s, the film calls for a more nuanced approach and deserves some merit for reinventing previous cinematic traditions.

A Brigade of Losers

Unlikely Revolutionaries is a similar ensemble comedy, part action, part road movie, which does not directly hint at the BR or the new terrorist formations which killed Italian politicians at the turn of the new millennium; the film, nevertheless, alludes to their violent methods, language and ideology.[522] Similarly to *What to Do in Case of Fire* this is the product of a relatively young director, Lucio Pellegrini (b. 1965),[523] who was too young to be ostensibly engaged with the politics of the 1970s, but instead, politically matured in the subsequent decade. Differently from film-makers from an older generation, such as Marco Tullio Giordana, Rosalia Polizzi, and Volker Schlöndorff, who clearly separated political activism from the armed struggle and, as seen in Chapter Three, nostalgically lamented the loss of revolutionary spirit, Pellegrini reinvigorates the radical potential of thirty-something-year-old adults, who are trying to find their position within Italian society but and are suffering from a stagnant job market and the new labour reforms. The fourth feature film by Pellegrini, a filmmaker primarily involved in commercial projects, was funded by the regional film commission of the Aosta Valley, and hence was shot between Cervinia, a small Alpine village in the north-west of Italy, and Rome.

Unlikely Revolutionaries recounts how a construction worker Toni (Fabio Volo), who witnessed the on-the-job death of a friend, takes part in a TV talk show in Rome about industrial accidents. Toni does not measure up to his interlocutor, the minister of trade and business, and disillusioned by the inability of the political class to comprehend the real problems of working people, he wanders aimlessly around the capital. He pours out his emotion to a PE teacher on strike, Pepe (Pierfrancesco

[522] The title of the film, which literally means 'children of the stars', alludes to the five-pointed star, which became a symbol for many left-wing revolutionary groups. But it is also the original title of a famous 1977 song, *Figli delle stelle* by Alan Sorrenti, a disco pop melody inspired by the Bee Gees.
[523] Like Gregor Schnitzler, Lucio Pellegrini comes from an apprenticeship in television, working as a screenwriter for MTV, RAI and Mediaset. He particularly favours directing comedies; his filmography include *Allora Mambo/Let's Mambo* (1999), *Tandem* (2000) and *È nata una star?/A Star is Born* (2012)

Favino) who still lives with his mother, lost his teaching job and now makes ends meet by selling sandwiches in a highway stop. Toni decides to kidnap the minister and use the ransom to compensate the widow of the worker thanks to the help of Pepe and his friends: a convicted felon with revolutionary aspirations, Ramon (Paolo Sassanelli), a nostalgic communist, Bauer (Giuseppe Battiston) and a naïve journalist, Marilù (Claudia Pandolfi). *Unlikely Revolutionaries* is a comedy of errors, and in fact the would-be terrorists kidnap the wrong politician, the blameless undersecretary MP Stella (Giorgio Tirabassi). Following a series of comic misadventures, the group finds refuge in Marilù family's old holiday home in a small village in the Alps. There, the local community initially support the project moved by the disdain towards the political class and help them in securing the ransom, hoping to gain some money for themselves. The police, however, are already on their track; eventually, the village community turns their back and they consign Toni and Bauer to the authorities. While Marilù is tied in a ski lift cabin, so she does not seem to be involved in the kidnapping, Ramon and Pepe try to reach the border with Switzerland. Ramon is captured, as a heart attack interrupts his run, but Pepe manages to pass the frontier on the glacier. The film concludes with a fortuitous encounter between Mr. Stella, now a member of the cabinet, and Pepe who has opened a restaurant by the sea.[524]

Comedy is probably the most popular genre in Italian cinema and has always registered and reflected on cultural transformations, traumas and national vices, especially in its post-war years during the golden age of the *commedia all'italiana*, Comedy Italian Style.[525] Italian film comedy has of course adapted and evolved by constantly taking into account social and political changes, offering as Luisella Farinotti notes 'a consolatory function for the average Italian'.[526] *Unlikely Revolutionaries* is the first contemporary Italian comedy that addresses the issue of left-wing terrorism. Because of the use of emblems, linguistic expressions and circumstances associated with the notorious BR, it is noteworthy for dealing with the

[524] It is not clear from the final scenes whether Pepe managed to open the restaurant thanks to some money from the ransom. A deleted scene in the DVD extras shows Marilù dropping a sport bag full of cash by the house of the widow of Toni's friend.
[525] For an overview of comedies Italian style in the 1960s see the chapter "Commedia all'italiana. Comedy and Social Criticism" in Peter Bondanella, *A History of Italian Cinema* (New York: Continuum, 2012), 180-216.
[526] Luisella Farinotti, "Comedy," in *Directory of World Cinema: Italy*, ed. Louis Bayman (Bristol: Intellect, 2011), 109.

legacy of the years of lead in a lighter tone. There are of course also other contemporary dark comedies which depict politically-motivated kidnappings, and murders; I am thinking for instance about *Bye Bye Berlusconi* (Jan Henrik Stahlberg, 2006) and *Ho ammazzato Berlusconi/I killed Berlusconi* (Gianluca Rossi, 2008), however, these films firmly do not refer to 1970s terrorism, if not for the method used for their political attacks. The historical comedy *I primi della lista/The First on the List* (Rohan Johnson, 2011), which is set in 1969 and recounts the misadventures of three left-wing activists who try to expatriate in fear of a military coup in Italy, is probably the only comedy set in the years of contestation. It is unique because it is based on real events and addresses the anxiety following 1968, where terrorism was perceived as a primarily right-wing phenomenon, orchestrated by the state to justify stricter enforcement rules. More satiric accounts on the years of lead could be expected in the next few years; but until now, mocking directly the terrorists of the BR seems still a taboo and probably a marketing suicide. *Unlikely Revolutionaries* deflects any association with the kidnapping of Aldo Moro, probably the most known episode of the years of lead, by establishing some temporal distance with the 1970s and setting its plot in the present. In addition, through a creative use of irony and nostalgia it allows more opportunities for the construction of new narratives about the past.

Receiving mix reviews for updating the terrorist discourse in a comic take, Pellegrini's film performed satisfactorily at the box office, although it encountered the competition of one of the most successful comedies of the last decade *Benvenuti al Sud/Welcome to the South* (Luca Miniero, 2010), the Italian adaptation of *Bienvenue Chez les Ch'tis/Welcome to the Sticks* (Dany Boon, 2008) which was released only the previous weekend.[527] Despite a noticeable script omission (the character of Toni disappears for much of the central part of the film) critics were enthusiastic at the mix of grotesque comedy, political pamphlet and nostalgic video music aesthetics.[528] In particular, Davide Turrini highlights in *Liberazione* how *Unlikely Revolutionaries* intertwines anti-politics protest, nostalgia for old ideologies and rebellion of the weak

[527] While *Unlikely Revolutionaries* totaled €1.4m, *Welcome to the South* grossed €29.8m drawing even closer to *La vita è bella/Life is Beautiful* (Roberto Benigni, 1998), Italy's best box office hit at that time. See Cinetel data for 2010, Ufficio Studio Anica "Il cinema in numeri" <http://www.anica.it/online/news/ANICA_dati_cinema_2010.pdf> (accessed 28 August 2014).
[528] Various authors, "Figli delle Stelle (2010) – Press Clippings," *Kinoweb.it* <http://www.kinoweb.it/cinema/figli_delle_stelle/presskit/rassegna_stampa.pdf> (accessed 30 August 2014).

and exploited, with a great cast, which resembles that of Italian style comedies of the 1960s.[529] Full of intertextual references to old comedy classics, the film is, according to Alberto Crespi, simply 'bitter, comic and appalling: a snapshot of Italy in the Berlusconi era'.[530] *Unlikely Revolutionaries* is a low-budget production, but it is an engaging and challenging film because through its deflection strategies it proposes alternative takes on the terrorist discourse among the panorama of auteur films, thrillers and historical dramas which boomed in the first decade of the new millennium.



Fig. 5.2 Children of the (red) stars.

On the whole, it is important to stress how the Italian critical reception failed to open up the issue of whether it is ethical to use laughter to deflect from the serious act of political kidnapping or if this grotesque satire is appropriate for reassessing the legacy of the years of lead in contemporary Italy. This is in stark contrast, for example, to the worldwide controversies that emerged with the release of *La vita è bella/Life is Beautiful* (Roberto Benigni, 1997), one of the most notorious Holocaust comedies.[531] The Holocaust is commonly considered to be the most monstrous act of violence of the twentieth century. The possibility and risks of representing it, as well as the ethical

[529] Davide Turrini, "Nessun politico ferito durante le riprese," *Liberazione*, 22 October 2010, 13.
[530] Alberto Crespi, "Terroristi da strapazzo," *L'Unità*, 22 October 2010, 42.
[531] Films such as *Jacob the Liar* (Peter Kassovitz, 1999) and *Train de Vie/Train of Life* (Radu Mihaileanu, 1998) belong to this subgenre. This is a richly researched topic, but for a discussion of the limitations of Benigni's film see Slavoj Zizek, "Laugh Yourself to Death: the new wave of Holocaust comedies!" Lecture, Lund University, 15 December 1999. <http://www.lacan.com/zizekholocaust.htm> (accessed 30 August 2014).

concerns about adopting comedy, have been a much-debated issue.[532] One therefore might have expected comparable reactions, or at least some uneasiness when the first comedy alluding to the BR came out. Similarly, the positive responses to *What to Do in Case of Fire* contrast with the concerns which followed *Good Bye Lenin!*, where comedic and nostalgic registers were criticised for filtering the real problems of living in East Germany. For example, writing about the *Ostalgie* film wave, Daniela Berghan questions whether it is not 'unethical to use comedy to deflect from the inhumanity of the GDR's totalitarian system'.[533] Paul Cooke also echoes her concerns, attesting to the dangers of 'cheap "Ostalgie"';[534] in his view the nostalgia for the former GDR constitutes 'a dangerous form of selective amnesia'.[535]

This lack of indignation, which instead was a constant with other comedies about traumatic events, might be proof of the successful deflection strategies, but it is also symptomatic of something broader, namely the normalisation of the terrorist past. In other words, I argue that the nostalgic attitude toward bohemian life in Kreuzberg and the tragicomic condition of underemployed young Italians turned terrorists ease over the concerns about the use of violence and allow the normalisation, at least in the popular imagination, of the experience of revolutionary terrorism. These comedies might be the result of a desire to turn this page of history and to put aside the sorrow brought about by those violent events. In particular, as far as the German case study is concerned, the coming-of-age narrative and the reconciliatory resolution at the end of the film hint at the necessity to overcome that period of contestation. For the Italian case, it might also refer to rampant anti-political sentiments in post-ideological society; in other words, politicians are not taken seriously, hence it is allowed a comic account of violence against them. Secondly, Schnitzler and Pellegrini, who are young filmmakers more concerned about present-day issues such as the gentrification of certain Berlin neighbourhoods or the effect of the economic crisis in Italy, could adopt the comedy genre because they believe that laughter is the best antidote against the

[532] About the ethics of framing the Holocaust through comedic or fantasy narratives see also James Hoberman, "Dreaming the Unthinkable," *Sight and Sound* vol. 9, no. 2 (February 2009): 20-23 and Slavoj Zizek, "Camp Comedy," *Sight and Sound* vol.7, no. 4 (April 2000): 26-9.
[533] Daniela Berghan, *Hollywood Behind the Wall: The Cinema of East Germany* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2005), 247
[534] Paul Cooke, *Representing East Germany Since Unification: From Colonization to Nostalgia* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2005), 111.
[535] Ibid., 104.

disappointments of the present. The third reason connects the figure of the would-be terrorist to the tradition of the good but gullible criminal.[536] The terrorist comedy is therefore the ultimate version of satirical comedies, which attacked social vices and attitudes. The German punk-anarchists and the Italian want-to-be revolutionaries are the latest manifestations of Robin Hood, bandit figures, who commit crimes for the greater good. In the following pages I will explore this ultimate aspect and link *What to Do in Case of Fire* and *Unlikely Revolutionaries* to previous comedic takes at terrorism.

Satirical predecessors and the carnivalesque in terrorist comedies

As the aforementioned films about the Holocaust or the end of communism in East Germany testify, comedies have always been one of the favourite genres to channel troubling stories and contested memories both in Europe and in Hollywood. Generally speaking, popular culture does manage to laugh at the past surprisingly often.[537] However, as far as academic debates are concerned, there have been excellent studies on films about terrorism, but comedies have been usually only touched upon in these or have appeared only in footnotes. The same is true the other way around: there is of course a great deal of research on comedy but the question of terrorism in comedy has been studied only occasionally.[538]

Soon after the attacks of 9/11, American cinema and television relied on the kinship between comedy and fiction to filter the trauma of those events. Comedies such as the animated film *Team American: World Police* (Tray Parker 2004) worked as a cathartic moment to laugh simultaneously at international terrorism and the war on terror and American counterterrorism. In his study of news parody *The Onion* Paul

[536] This is particularly relevant for the Italian context, given the convention of the 'looser' archetype in the *commedia all'italiana*. On peculiar characters in this genre see the chapter "Quei perdenti che fanno ridere. I personaggi" in Mariapia Comand, *Commedia all'italiana* (Milan: Il Castoro, 2010), 7-14.
[537] This long tradition spans from Charlie Chaplin's *The Great Dictator* (1940) to *Dr. Strangelove: or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (Stanley Kubrik, 1964), just to name a few.
[538] Alan O'Leary, for instance, analyses the treatment of terrorism in comedies of the 1970s and 1980s through the prism of the figure of the father and the Oedipus complex; however, his overview does not include more recent examples. See the section in *Tragedia all'Italiana*, 127-138. In academic literature on cinematic representation of German terrorism *What to Do in Case of Fire* is often mentioned as an example of comedy that vaguely treat the issue of political violence, however, it is never studied in depth, beside Barbara Mennel "Political Nostalgia and Local Memory" on Kreuzberg in the 1980s.

Achter maintains that 'comedy has a special role in helping societies manage crisis moments',[539] and this is particularly true for works released in the immediate aftermath where the memorialisation process is still on-going. In the following pages I elucidate the different functions that contemporary Italian and German comedies about terrorism perform compared to the few dark comedies from the 1970s, which represented the immediate response to political violence. In brief, whilst satire and parody functioned as counter-history and filter to deal with an incomprehensive phenomenon, contemporary postmillennial examples, instead, become manifestations of formal and aesthetic normalisation. Popular and mainstream narratives show that the normalisation of the terrorist past is neither perceived as an urge to play down the crucial role of the terrorist organisations, the guilt of the State for not negotiating with them and limiting civil rights, nor a desire to instil national pride. It rather promotes an effort to incorporate the experience with left-wing terrorism into a coherent narrative for the new Germany and Italy, and a moral lesson that had been learned and can be put behind.

The association between terrorism and comedy will always be prone to controversies, as occasionally it can hit some nerves. Although the films analysed here did not generate fiery arguments, this cannot be generalised to all works, which combine terrorism and humour. I am thinking about the polemics and the calls for a ban associated with the release of the aforementioned British dark comedy *Four Lions*, which features four home-grown jihadists from Sheffield who aspire to be suicide bombers.[540] Whilst comedies on religious terrorism are a more recent phenomenon, comedies about urban terrorism and more generally political violence have always been present in Italian and German cinema. But whereas the recent adoption of comedic narrative could be seen as a depoliticisation of the terrorist discourse and a turn to popular culture in order to appeal to a younger generation, the comedies, shot during the years of lead, worked rather as a shield to deal with the crisis of the state and the rapid changes in society and to reveal the absurdity of such violence.

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[539] Paul Achter, "Comedy in Unfunny Times: News Parody and Carnival After 9/11," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* vol. 25, issue 3 (2008): 276.

[540] Sam Adams, "Chris Morris. An Interview," *The AV Club*, 4 November 2010. <http://www.avclub.com/articles/chris-morris,47210/> (accessed 1 September 2014). See also Russ Hunter, "'I don't wanna be dead! There's no future in it!': The US and UK critical reception of *Four Lions*," in *No Known Cure: The Comedy of Chris Morris*, eds James Leggott and Jamie Sexton (London: Routledge, 2013), 212-222.

The most famous example of the use of dark humour to deal with left-wing guerrilla activities is arguably Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *The Third Generation*. Set in Berlin in the mid 1970s, the film deals with a group of young political activists and drug-addicts who decide to kidnap the CEO of an American computer company. They do not realise, however, that they are being manipulated by the industrialist himself, who lured them into a trap to generate panic among the political leadership and increase his company's revenue by selling surveillance equipment to the government. Fassbinder defined his own work as a fairy tale, similar to those 'you tell children so they're better equipped to bear their lives as people buried alive'.[541] Thomas Elsaesser does not fail to notice that in *The Third Generation* society seems to need corruption, drugs and terrorism in order to function, hence Fassbinder's predilection for 'shady figures.[542] These are not the only interpretations of the film, but they all concur that Fassbinder's strategy goes beyond the mere representation of the political chaos occurring in West Germany in the 1970s. In this sense, *The Third Generation* adopts a satiric narrative and a puzzling aesthetics to filter the trauma of terrorism, but also to reveal the difficulty in reaching its significance.

As such, the film retains the nature and function of the carnivalesque as described by Mikhail Baktin. Developed by the Russian literary critic, the notion of 'carnivalesque' refers to a mode that subverts common assumptions, inhibitions and rules through humour and chaos.[543] The carnivalesque in *The Third Generation* emerges, first of all, in an explicit display of carnival celebrations: the film is set in February and we see the terrorists wearing colourful costumes and masks during the celebrations in Köhln. Secondly, the chaotic nature of the film is further enhanced by the cacophony of diegetic voices and sounds; the soundtrack is so rich that it is very difficult to follow the dialogue at times. Mood music, radio recordings and TV broadcasting, as well as rich and saturated colours, contribute to the grotesque and puzzling atmosphere. Thus, while Fassbinder's stylistic avant-garde carnival mirrors

[541] Rainer Werner Fassbinder, "'Madness and Terrorism': Conversations with Gian Luigi Rondi about Despair and The Third Generation" in *The Anarchy of the Imagination. Interviews, Essays, Notes*, eds. Michael Töteberg and Leo A. Lensing (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins Press, 1992), 126.
[542] Thomas Elsaesser, *Fassbinder's Germany: History Identity, Subject* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996), 41-2.
[543] In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984) and *Rabelais and His World* Bakhtin traces the carnivalesque mode from the genre of Ancient Greek satire, as well as from the Medieval tradition of the Feast of Fools.

the conflict and confusion in late 1970s West Germany, the carnivalesque in *What to Do in Case of Fire* is primarily restricted to the profilmic: we see an explosion of youthful freedom, characterised by innocent graffiti and cake throwing at the police. Here Schnitzler makes a reference to the phenomenon of *Spassguerilla* (Fun Guerrilla), which developed within the student movement of the late 1960s in opposition to the more radical strategies of Rudi Dutschke, who talked about *Stadtguerilla* (urban guerilla). Anarchist and pacifist movements reprised their anti-conformist tactics in the 1980s.[544]

Bakhtin outlines four characteristics of the 'carnivalistic sense of the world': free and familiar interactions of unlikely people, eccentric behaviour, carnivalistic misalliances or union of the opposites, and no punishment for sacrilegious actions.[545] With its happy ending and the absence of punishment for the unlawful actions of the young professionals and anarchists, *What to Do in Case of Fire* reinterprets Bakhtin's carnivalesque, rendering their resistance to authority, the police and the Turkish landlord, a place where change can occur. For example, the stealing from a large department store of some chemicals for the development of photographic films evokes Fassbinder's carnivalesque depiction of terrorist attacks in *The Third Generation*, emphasised through the use of the grotesque, as 'a comedy, or, rather a parlour game on the topic of terrorism'.[546] The action at the shopping centre is also a loose reference to early campaigns by the RAF, given their similar anti-capitalist mission. Whereas Gudrun Ensslin and Andreas Baader set fire to a department store in Frankfurt, the protagonist of the film, Tim, hides himself in the home section and eventually escapes leaving wide open the sliding doors thus allowing people to freely loot the goods. Moreover, the carnivalesque emerges from the unlikely alliance between the anarchists, dressed up as journalists, and the young and naïve inspector Henkel, who inadvertently gives access to restricted areas in the police headquarter.

While the carnivalesque mode links this contemporary comedy with the spirit of Fassbinder's work, stylistically Schnitzler's work seems closer to more mainstream

[544] See Simon Teune, "Humour as a Guerrilla Tactic: The West German Student Movement's Mockery of the Establishment," in *Humour and Social Protest* eds. Marjolein t'Hart and Dennis Bos (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 115-32.
[545] Sue Vice, *Introducing Bakhtin* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1997), 150-55.
[546] Fassbinder "Madness and Terrorism", 126.

formats, such as the 1990s comedy *Die Terroristen!/The Terrorists!* (Philippe Gröning, 1992), which deals with a fictional kidnapping of the federal chancellor by a group of youngsters in pursuit of fame. In their recurrent failures, the terrorists manage to rob a bank but do not get any mention in the media because of the radical transformation and debates going on in 1990. They eventually reach notoriety, but by accident; although they failed to check the batteries of the radio control for a demonstrative bomb, a neighbour triggers the device and blows up a whole block of flats. Overall the film twists the traditional story that sees terrorists as freedom fighters and revolutionaries, and shows that also ordinary people can turn to violence because of their frustration about society.[547] With regards to this 1990s comedy, Stefan Wolff has claimed that *The Terrorists*, 'makes the reality of terrorism a conditional one – no act of violence in itself carries the quality of terrorism, only its interpretation does'.[548] The implicit critique in this goes toward the state's response and the media, who frame and decide what terrorism is according to their agenda – in fact their first attack in the bank is not considered an act of terrorism.

In *What to Do in Case of Fire* the grown-up anarchists clearly make distinctions between their actions and those of 1970s revolutionary fighters, Nele, the single mother of two, says at a certain point: 'We were not the RAF', whereas the police investigator immediately associates Group36 with splinter RAF organisations and defines them as 'bloody terrorists'.[549] In this aspect, the two comedies are very similar as they primarily investigate the difficulty of defining what is terrorism, and what is instead vandalism or simple criminality. If in Fassbinder's work comedy has functioned as a counter-history to undermine official narratives of the German Autumn, today's German popular films continue being instrumental through the lens of parody, farce, and satire in offering views of the past, but most of all, they try to understand the present and society's discontent. As Sabine Hake affirms, 'in measuring the impact of unification on social structures, psychological disposition, and cultural tastes, film-makers during the 1990s re-enlisted the stabilising function of classical narrative in their effort to make sense of everyday life in the Berlin

[547] Stefan Wolff, "The Fictionalisation of Terrorism," in *100 Years of European Cinema*, 129
[548] Ibid.
[549] In the end Manowsky helps the former anarchists, calling them 'the last Mohicans of Berlin', as he recognised that they were more moved by friendship than political intentions.

Republic".[550] The turn to comedy, classic narratives and popular genre ought to be understood as an attempt to participate in the normalising effort.

To sum up, *What to Do in Case of Fire* continues the carnivalisque tradition initiated by Fassbinder with *The Third Generation* in depicting terrorists. Schnitzler seems, however, less stylistically radical and more benign toward the anarchists, probably because of the changed circumstances and because younger generations are less sentimental about those events occurred in the 1970s. The comedy mode liberates tradition and appears as a functional way to represent an incomprehensible surge of violence in post-unification Berlin, such as the discovery of petrol bombs, the arson of private properties and police headquarters. The carnivalesque episodes also function to highlight the dullness of everyday life in post-unification Berlin: the former anarchists now turned bourgeois find real excitement only when they embark on their previous eccentric actions.[551] This is evident from a dialogue between Terror, now a brilliant lawyer and Maik a copy editor, who longs for the days of street guerrilla which characterised their youth. In recollecting their past adventures the two young men complain for the boring routines of their nine-to-five jobs, regretting the lack of danger, excitement and freedom. *What to Do in Case of Fire* adopts a lighter tone with a visual style, which recalls music videos and MTV aesthetics in a similar way as *The Terrorists* does, for instance when the anarchist assaults against the police are edited in a quick montage following the rhythm of the punk music soundtrack.

Unlikely Revolutionaries is a much darker comedy with a bittersweet ending, which homages in several scenes classics of the *commedia all'italiana.* The genre of *commedia all'italiana,* which had its golden age in the 1960s with filmmakers such as Pietro Germi, Dino Risi and Mario Monicelli, refers to a popular cinematic cycle, which developed soon after the Second World War during a period of vast economic changes and social modernisation. The films deal with the vicissitudes of male anti-heroes, a single comedian or an ensemble, who miserably and comically fail in their attempts. According to Peter Bondanella what makes these comedies so distinct is the

[550] Sabine Hake, *German National Cinema* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 205.
[551] In the following pages I will expand on this when addressing the phenomenon of *Westalgie*. It should be noted, however, that Schnitzler restricts the period of carnivalesque actions to a precise and limited time. The ending of the film seems to suggest that Hotte and Tim have politically matured and are now able to have proper jobs and become members of the new German society.

constant presence of social malaise.[552] Here the carnivalesque aspect is much less pronounced, leaving space for the grotesque and serious reflection. In their work on laughter and film, Steve Neale and Frank Krutnik cite *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* definition of comedy, suggesting that a comedy is characterised not simply by its light, amusing elements, but also by its concern with the representation of everyday life and its resolution, which is usually a happy one.[553] Comedy alone, they argue, is insufficient to make something a comedy; indeed they note that some comedies can make audiences laugh as much as they can make them cry.[554] A further feature of the comic form is, in fact, its political, even subversive, potential; and this is particularly relevant for Italian comedies and for *Unlikely Revolutionaries*. Walter Benjamin points to its cerebral qualities when he asserts that 'there is no better starting point for thought than laughter; speaking more precisely, spasms of the diaphragm generally offer better chances of thought than spasm of the soul'.[555] The comic, therefore, has a potentially political side, a subversive nature, which allows audiences to think beyond the action.

The intertextual references to films belonging to the tradition of *commedia all'italiana* are not simply parodies of earlier works. The legacy of this tradition is important because according to O'Leary, Italian style comedies 'provided the first cinematic responses to the phenomenon of terrorism and its social consequences in 1970s Italy'.[556] The wannabe terrorists look like the protagonists of *L'Armata Brancaleone/The Incredible Army of Brancaleone* (Monicelli, 1966),[557] a satirical comedy about the crusades and Medieval times, where every choice the knights make ends up in a mistake. Despite the different setting, in both films issues arise when family and sentiments are invoked. In *Unlikely Revolutionaries*, for example, the police identify the gang, because Bauer uses a mobile to call his children, and hence reveals the position of the group. As Landy argues, Monicelli's films are not comedies

[552] Bondanella, *A History of Italian Cinema*, 180-1.
[553] Steve Neale and Frank Krutnik, *Popular Film and Television Comedy* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 11.
[554] Ibid.
[555] Walter Benjamin, *Understanding Brecht*, trans. Anna Bostock (London: Verso, 2003), 101.
[556] O'Leary, *Tragedia all'italiana*, 128. In the chapter "Patriarchy Postponed", the Irish scholar singles out a series of 1970s comedies that offer a response to terrorism: *Mordi e fuggi* (Dino Risi, 1973), *Caro Michele* (Mario Monicelli, 1976), *Un borghese piccolo piccolo* (Mario Monicelli, 1977), episodes of *I nuovi Mostri* (Mario Monicelli, Dino Risi, Ettore Scola, 1977) and *Caro papà* (Dino Risi, 1979).
[557] The idiomatic expression *armata Brancaleone* is still used today in Italian to define a group of badly assembled and useless individuals.

of manners or romantic comedies but are satiric, utilising parody and farce, as a pretext to explore affinities with contemporary cultural and political life.[558] The farcical kidnapping of the politician in Pellegrini's film is certainly a tool to explore the problems of a dumb political class, but differently from Italian style comedies of the 1960s, this work seems to adhere to the model it wants to criticise and eventually empathises with the situation, rather than portraying and stigmatizing.

Unlikely Revolutionaries looks back at a political history, its characters do démodé actions, copying debatable models, running towards isolation which is both a physical refuge, the small flat in Cervinia and a metaphorical refuge in the past. I suggest that Pellegrini's film reflects the nature of Italy, a country which is old, nostalgic, and unable to refuse old schemata and propel something new. This interpretation also emerges in the film itself, when, during a TV news bulletin, the claim of responsibility for the political kidnapping is described as a 'delirium of a group of nostalgics'. This is an interesting definition. It is clear, therefore, that this is a film aiming at recounting a social reality turning a substantially dramatic event into a comedy, playing, however, with the surreal and the grotesque, thus, the definition of delirium.

It is also clear that this film looks back at the tradition of satirical comedies with its intertextual references to the portrayal of vices and problems of the country, so dear to filmmakers such as Monicelli and Risi. The scene where the whole village and the gang are involved with the washing and drying of marked banknotes is reminiscent of another episode of a very popular film linked to the *commedia all'italiana:* Totò's *La banda degli onesti/The Band of Honest Men* (Camillo Mastrocinque, 1956*),* where an exactly identical scene occurs. However, in the DVD commentary, the filmmaker mentions that the inspiration came instead from a more historical fact. Reading the biography of Curcio and Franceschini, founders of the BR, he took note of the aftermath of an early BR kidnapping where terrorists had been forced to dry bags full of Liras, since the banknotes were all covered by a marking colouring substance. The comic mode refuses to demonise the terrorists, but instead adopts archetypes of the *commedia all'italiana* to portray an average Italian, often a looser. Whilst in 1970s comedies a group of comedians, among them Ugo Tognazzi, Alberto Sordi and Nino

[558] Landy "Historical Comedy on Screen", 181.

Manfredi, gave voice to the typical Italian, in *Unlikely Revolutionaries* an ensemble of actors, TV and radio personalities constructs a variegated set of iconic faces, which mirror Italian society thanks to genuine performances and the adoption of different regional accents. By transforming tragedy into farce, this film allows audiences to laugh for a moment at the foolishness of political kidnapping and the incompatibility of radical left-wing politics with the present, albeit without stigmatising its protagonists.[559]



Fig. 5.3 Laundering the ransom in *Unlikely Revolutionaries*.

Unlikely Revolutionaries continues in its attempt to make fun of iconic images often reproduced in historical films, most importantly images associated with the Moro kidnapping by the BR in 1978. If in Bellocchio's *Good Morning Night* the prison of Aldo Moro was reconstructed following the description of former terrorist Anna Laura Braghetti,[560] here 'the prison of the people' is a place stuck back in time, with walls covered with Soviet Pravda papers, where funny accidents, a pipe breaks

[559] Another cinematic reference is the final sequence. *Unlikely Revolutionaries* ends in high mountain at 3800m on the glacier separating Italy from Switzerland. The white-snowed landscape reminds the difficult journey of migrants in the neorealist film *Fuga in Francia/Flight into France* (Mario Soldati, 1948).

[560] Bellocchio's films draws inspiration from the memoir *Il Prigioniero* written by Annalaura Braghetti and Paola Tavella in 1998.

and flood the hideout, keep on happening. Even the kidnapped politician, MP Stella, is not immune to caricature, being renamed by the wannabe terrorists as 'the reindeer', given their Alpine shelter. The film is quite courageous in the depiction of the prisoner in the trunk of the car. The association with the iconic image of the retrieval of the corpse of Aldo Moro in a Renault 4 after 55 days of imprisonment is apparent. In Pellegrini's film the kidnapped politician is yet shown in foetal position inside the truck of the car, but he is sleeping deeply and snoring, unaware of the shootout between the terrorists. Although the filmmaker denied any connection with the Moro kidnapping in the audio commentary to the film,[561] one cannot dismiss that this ironic treatment of MP Stella could be interpreted as a trivialising performance of the terrorist past and Moro's martyrdom. As O'Leary points out this crucial event in Italian post-war history has left a mark if not in collective consciousness, at least in the continuous recycling of pictures of the attack and the prisoner.[562] Nonetheless, I suggest that Pellegrini's unintentional offence is no more problematic of the many re-enactments of the discovery of Moro's dead body in films and TV biopics about the Christian Democrat leader. These reconstructions are questionable for a different reason: they sanctify the victim through political and nationalistic clichés, exploiting the emotional image of Moro's body.

Pellegrini's denial reminds me of a similar episode when Bernando Bertolucci took some distance from his 1981 work *Tragedy of a Ridicolous Man.* The film represents a satiric continuation of his take on Italian history started in *1900*. The story revolves around a father who is torn between saving his factory facing bankruptcy or paying the ransom for the kidnapping of his son by the hand of some terrorists. Defined as 'an exercise in comedy which pays tribute to the capacities of the *commedia all'italiana* to deal with the violence of the *anni di piombo*',[563] Bertolucci's film shows the appropriateness of the tragicomic register to represent the ambiguity of terrorism. Justifying his ambiguous ending and replying to negative critical reviews, Bertolucci pointed out that the film was not exactly about terrorism.[564] One

[561] In the DVD commentary Pellegrini claims, 'if someone, while watching the film, starts thinking about Aldo Moro, it means, he/she does not understand anything about what happened to Moro; in my opinion, it is the contrary: they might undervalue what happened to Moro'.
[562] Alan O'Leary, "Dead Man Walking: The Aldo Moro kidnap and Palimpsest History in *Buongiorno, notte*." *New Cinemas: Journal of Contemporary Film* 6: 1 (2008): 33-45.
[563] O'Leary, *Tragedia all'italiana*, 126.
[564] T.J. Kline, *I Film di Bernardo Bertolucci* (Rome: Gremese, 1994), 131.

interpretation, that the son faked his own kidnapping and died later, was based on similar cases in Italy. Bertolucci declared that he did not want to be literal with this episode, as he did not want to enter into the shabby details of terrorism.[565] I read Bertolucci's denial as a fear of going against the tide and antagonising a part of the audience, but also a discomfort at being confronted with the problematics of the *anni di piombo*. The same explanations could be applied to *Unlikely Revolutionaries*, but, in the case of Pellegrini, negating the obvious seems also a way to shift the discourse to the present. The experience of the years of lead is therefore just an inspiration to creatively play with historical images. The film is not about the Moro case at all, but as a dark comedy centred on a political kidnapping it breaks and reassembles a recurrent trope of the Italian films on terrorism, liberating it from its specific historical context.

Nevertheless, Bondanella indicates that the subtle treatment of real social and political problem started with the *commedia all'italiana* was courageous and probably more successful than overtly ideological films.[566] *Unlikely Revolutionaries* creatively adopts motifs, and archetypes initiated back in the 1970s, but whilst earlier comedies were symptomatic of the condition of the years of lead, contemporary examples show that the comic mode functions more as a proof of the more relaxed attitude toward past events. Moreover, continuing the tradition of *commedia all'italiana* in assessing and reproducing vices and problems of the country, the film comments on the present-day economic crisis. Released in 2010, Pellegrini's work portrays some of the recurrent problems of the Italian economy, made worse with the financial crisis of 2008: underemployment, casual work, and lack of social state. At the same time, it may reflect on the possibility of the return of the New Red Brigades which are reorganising and gaining support thanks to the difficult economic situation.[567]

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[565] Michel Ciment, *Film World. Interviews with Cinema's Leading Directors* (Oxford: Berg, 2009), 16.
[566] Bondanella, *A History of Italian Cinema*, 181.
[567] After the Stefano D'Antona and Marco Biagi murders in 1999 and 2001 respectively, limited terrorist activities occurred in the last decade, including explosive parcels sent to public offices and newspapers as well as kneecapping of industrialists. See Andrea Indini, "Volantino Br al Giornale: 'Colpiremo I leader politici'" *Il Giornale*, 26 May 2012. <http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/interni/volantino-br-giornalecolpiremo-i-leader-politici.html> (accessed 20 August 2014).

Westalgie and Post-communist Nostalgia

There are of course other means that allow audiences to laugh about aspects of terrorism: namely accommodating the past through the nostalgic gaze. In the following pages I will argue that when the comic mode is applied to exceptional events and memories, dark humour is mixed with nostalgia; this helps to reduce the impact of the violent past and creates an image of harmonic life. Linda Hutcheon's thought provoking article 'Irony, Nostalgia and the Postmodern' previously tried to link both concepts.[568] In her discussion, irony and nostalgia are not considered single entities, but characteristics of human response, which do not necessarily contradict each other. Therefore, one can think of a complex response that will include both of them at the same time, although Hutcheon acknowledges that when irony is attached to nostalgia, it restrains it.[569] In other words, the nostalgic depiction of the past is often tempered by a sense of irony. The combination of nostalgia and irony may appear slightly odd, but actually they share a similar feature: for Hagain Dagan they are both about a gap between the literal, the explicit meaning and the non-literal one, the implicit.[570] I also believe that nostalgia needs irony when facing a difficult and not too rosy past; without it, nostalgia could hardly evoke any positive memory of a time primarily characterised by violent acts.

While the phenomenon of *Ostalgie* has developed since the middle of the 1990s to describe a feeling of nostalgia for the old socialist East German Republic, the notion of *Westalgie* started being discussed more recently when several novels and cinematic works at the turn of the new millennium addressed a similar sense of loss, this time tough for West Germany before the fall of the Berlin Wall.[571] Gregor Schnitzler's *What to Do in Case of Fire*, set in present-day Berlin but with flashbacks to the 1980s, appears as a prime example of this trend. Sabine Hake points out that two other films capture the 'widespread frustration with the consequences of unification

[568] Linda Hutcheon, "Irony, Nostalgia, and the Postmodern," *Studies in Comparative Literature* vol. 30 (2000): 189-207.
[569] Hutcheon, "Irony, Nostalgia and the Postmodern," 190.
[570] Hagain Dagan, "'Holocaust-Nostalgia', Humour and Irony: The Case of *Pizza in Auschwitz*," in *Historical Comedy on Screen*, ed. Hannu Salmi (Bristol: Intellect, 2011), 155.
[571] The phenomenon was first observed in post unification literature, such as Matthias Politisky's *Weiberroman* (1997), Florian Illies's *Generation Golf. Eine Inspektion* (2001), Frank Goosen's *Liegen Lernen* (2000) and Sven Regener's *Herr Lehmann* (2002), the latter two novels were adapted into successful feature films.

and residual attachments to the social and cultural networks': *Die Unberührbare/No Place to Go* (Roehler, 2000) and *Herr Lehmann/Berlin Blues* (Gisela Elsner, 2003).[572] I have already mentioned that the idea of *Westalgie* could be redundant since the economical and political changes in West Germany were less pronounced than in the East after 1989. This interpretation is also shared by Dorothea Otto, who maintains that

> the specific sense of "East Germanness" connected with "Ostalgie" is also a product of differentiation from the Western-reference culture; to be from the East means explicitly *not* being from the West, while West German identity was not defined through distinguishing themselves from the people in the GDR. The influences and discourses shaping the self-image of the FRG people were rather to be found in the increasingly globalized character of the entire Western world.[573]

A film like *What to Do in Case of Fire* can thus be seen as a nostalgic piece on late 1980s youth and music subculture in Berlin, the anarchist-squatting phenomenon which thrived in Kreuzberg. However, the film displays a mix of cultural markers: some are exquisitely West German, but others allude to the more global phenomenon of punk culture. The soundtrack, for instance, mirrors the transformation of the protagonists from political activists to young professionals as punk tunes turn to more pop and melodic rhythms towards the end.[574] I would also add that these music choices mirror the economic and social transformations going on in Germany at that time. More interestingly, however, these tracks are not only from West German singers, such as the Fehlfarben with their 1980s anthems 'Paul is tot' and 'Ein Jahr (Es geht voran)', but also international hits like 'I Fought The Law' by The Clash and 'The Everlasting' by the Manic Street Preachers. This is to confirm what Andrew

[572] Hake, *German National Cinema*, 211.
[573] Dorothea Otto, "'Westalgie' in Leander Haussmann's *Herr Lehmann*,' *Senses of Cinema* issue 60 (October 2011). <http://sensesofcinema.com/2011/feature-articles/%E2%80%9Cwestalgie%E2%80%9D-in-leander-hausmann%E2%80%99s-herr-lehmann/> (accessed 29 August 2014).
[574] Philip Stirm, "Soundtrack *Was tun, wenn's brennt*?," *Stern*, 7 February 2002. <http://www.stern.de/kultur/musik/soundtrack-187was-tun-wenns-brennt171-72005.html> (accessed 29 August 2014).

Plowman has observed, that 'West Germanness (…) is refracted through the lens of a standardised and transnational popular culture'.[575]

It is noteworthy that whereas in *Ostalgie* comedies the border between East and West is always an important presence, as well as a narrative device, in *What to Do in Case of Fire* the wall is never in evidence, although the story is set in Kreuzberg, which is in the very close proximity of it. Only a superimposed hand-drawn map at the beginning suggests the existence of an active, secluded and utopian space in West Berlin next to the border. The mise-en-scène further contributes to the construction of an alternative blissful culture. Group36 is squatting a rundown building decorated with banners, graffiti and anarchist flags. The film opens with a 'faux-vintage' sequence, an imitation of a home-made Super8 film shot by the anarchists, which didactically provides instructions for building a bomb.

The opening montage as well as the scene where the protagonists watch a screening of old home-made films in the squatted apartment suggest an interpretation of *Westalgie* as a form of escapism from the status quo of the reunited German Republic. The film offers some consolation for those who experienced that period and are familiar with the alternative West Berlin environment, but have now moved on. The character of Maik, for instance, appears as a bored head of an advertisement agency, which has exploited anarchist imagery, the only episode in his existence that has given him some thrills. It is only when he meets his old comrades and starts planning an incursion into police headquarters, thus recreating his lost 'home' the anarchist years, that he is again carefree.

[575] Andrew Plowman, "Westlagie? Nostalgia for the 'Old' Federal Republic in Recent German Prose," *Seminar: A Journal of Germanic Studies* vol. 40, no. 3 (September 2004): 257.



Fig. 5.4 Watching home-made movies.

Another factor that needs to be taken into account is the background of the directors of these nostalgic films. In the case of *What to Do in Case of Fire*, Gregor Schnitzler is a member of the so-called 'generation of 78', those born between 1959 and 1967 who came of age in the early to mid 1980s.[576] Cooke claims that the nostalgia in *westalgic* novels and subsequent films 'reveals an attempt by this generation to mark its difference from the politically engaged "generation of 68" (…) and the hedonistic "generation of 89"'.[577] The coming-of-age narrative present in this film represents the search of this generation to find their own identity between the left-wing politicised individuals belonging to the '68 generation and the younger age groups. Nonetheless, Schnitzler fails to reflect on the political tenets of the former anarchists, and hence his generation, reducing their political idealism to vacuous

[576] Stuart Taberner, "Introduction," in *German Literature in the Age of Globalization*, ed. Stuart Taberner (Birmingham: University of Birmingham, 2004), 10.
[577] Paul Cooke, *Representing East Germany since Unification*, 119.

slogans and emblems. Overall, we can identify two paradoxical tendencies of *Westalgie* within the film: the nostalgia for a bohemian and left-wing past alludes to a desire to recreate the special environment of Kreuzberg in the 1980s, an island of euphoric anarchy. But it can also be seen as the pain for the loss of youth and its lack of responsibilities.[578]

In *Unlikely Revolutionaries*, similar generational issues are discussed. One of the last dialogues between two characters is illustrative of the bittersweet finale. Toni realises the group have probably made a huge mistake, he says: 'I think we screwed up', while Pepe replies 'At least we did something'. This is indicative of their generational hopes and problems, a generation, those of the mid-thirties, who are blocked by other figures, and in-between the fathers and the younger less politicised brothers. In their challenge to find a proper identity the unlikely revolutionaries do not really succeed, except for Pepe, and thus one is left with a bitter taste of an unchangeable society with no room for individual voices.

Unlikely Revolutionaries is more interesting as an example of how feelings of post-socialist nostalgia are possible in a country belonging to the Western Bloc. In Italy, the transition of the communist party to a democratic left-wing force was determined by the collapse of the old ideologies in the post- Cold War era; with the end of the First Republic the hegemonic socialist culture started waning and the communist constituency felt 'orphan' of a solid identity and legitimacy.[579] Although the label 'communist' is still used as a widespread insult in right-wing discourses in Italy, articulations of this form of nostalgia take many forms: from yearning for the golden age of the Communist Party, as portrayed in Sandra Ceccarelli's *Cosmonauta* (2009), a nostalgic tale about the Italian Communist Party and the fascination for

[578] This could symbolically indicate the representation of the old Federal Republic, a country who had to grow up and behave sensibly in the immediate aftermath of the fall of socialism; but Schnitzler might look back nostalgically to the good old times when him and his generation did not need to be concerned about these issues.

[579] It should be reiterated that the PCI was the largest communist force in Western Europe during the Cold War. It was a unique political formation, which broke with Moscow on many aspects and tried 'to project Marxism as a valid choice within a democratic society'. Mario B. Mignone, *Italy Today: Challenges of the New Millennium* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 54.

female involvement in space exploration, to longing for the radical student movements and the season of contestation in the late 1970s.[580]

Recent scholarship has explored the various facets of the broader phenomenon of post-socialist nostalgia: *Ostalgie*, Yugo-nostalgia to name just a few, but mainly in countries of the Eastern Bloc.[581] In their study of post-socialist nostalgia, Maria Todorova and Zsuzsa Gille counter current trends that approach this longing for the Cold-War past in Eastern Europe as a mere anachronism, and argue that it is part of a complex effort to heal the scars of an attractive but disastrous ideology.[582] I concur with their interpretation of the phenomenon as the dangers of such a condemnation risks limiting our understanding. In fact, Todorova clarifies that the widespread disillusionment and nostalgia 'is not only the longing for security, stability, and prosperity. There is also the feeling of loss for a very specific form of sociability, and vulgarization of the cultural life'.[583]

The issue of post-socialist nostalgia – albeit a reflective, critical and ironic one – seems to have an important place when analysing the character of Bauer in *Unlikely Revolutionaries*. Certainly the temporal detachment had an impact on the possibility of laughter at a political kidnapping. The fact that the comedy is set in the present more than thirty-five years after the crucial kidnapping of Aldo Moro in 1978, and a couple of decades since the collapse of the traditional Italian political parties, facilitates a detached and freer approach towards politically-motivated violence. Pellegrini's work can carnivalise the Marxist-Leninist fighter and the character of Bauer is exemplary in this objective, as he is shown as the archetypal 'retro-chic' revolutionary. Susan Purdie maintains that laughter is a successful tool of disempowering and degrading a person;

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[580] For an analysis of *Cosmonauta* in relation to post-socialist nostalgia and female identity, see Chiara Bonfiglioli, "Former East, Former West: Post-socialist Nostalgia and Feminist Genealogies in Today's Europe," *Bulletin of the Ethnographical Institute*, vo. 59, no. 1 (2011): 115-28.

[581] For further debates on post-communist nostalgia see Zala Volcic, "Yugo-Nostalgia: Cultural Memory and Media in the Former Yugoslavia," *Critical Studies in Media Communications*, vol. 24, no. 1 (2007): 21-38 and Mitja Velikonja, "Lost in Transition. Nostalgia for Socialism in Post-socialist Countries," *EEPS East European Politics and Societies and Cultures* vol. 23, no. 4 (November 2009): 535-51.

[582] Maria Todorova Nikolaeva and Zsuzsa Gille, eds. *Post-Communist Nostalgia* (New York: Berghan Books, 2010).

[583] Maria Todorova Nikolaeva "Introduction: From Utopia to Propaganda and Back," in *Post-Communist Nostalgia* eds. Maria Todorova Nikolaeva and Zsuzsa Gille (New York: Berghan Books, 2010), 7.

in her words: '"laughing at" is always aggressive'.[584] Hence we can laugh at the contemporary revolutionary also because he/she is no longer powerful and his ideology cannot be taken seriously any longer.

Employed with a short-term contract as a research assistant in a university, Bauer is moved by high ideals to educate future generations, however, his life is quite contradictory as he is married to a rich bourgeois woman and sends his children to a private catholic school and uses his aunt's second home as a 'prison of the people'. The irony towards this character emerges from the peculiarity of his costumes and the convoluted and démodé language he employs. Wearing an old green parka with a red-starred GDR lapel badge, Bauer is the more politically involved of the group. He is responsible for incoherent communiqués full of extreme-left rhetoric, mixed with no-global and anti-capitalist jargon drawn from Noam Chomsky and Antonio Negri's works, such as the ubiquitous expression 'factory of consensus'. He sets up the first prison for undersecretary Stella, covering the walls of a small room in his aunt's flat with old Pravda's pages. His musical taste is hilarious, even for his comrades, who make fun of him during the long road trips. In the car he listens to CDs with GDR and URSS hymns. In particular the *International* is played towards the end of the film when Bauer, after distributing the ransom, decides to leave the Alpine village. The low-volume but distinguishable hymn dissolves when four police cars stop him and threaten to shoot him. He gets out of his car, raises his hands above his head and smilingly announces 'I declare myself political prisoner'; the music, then, explodes in high volume at the trumpet refrain of the Soviet hymn. It is the end of his revolutionary dream.



Fig. 5.5 Bauer surrenders himself.

[584] Susan Purdie, *Comedy: The Mastery of Discourse* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), 60.

It is interesting, therefore, to note how many comic episodes centre on this politically motivated character that is still anchored in a past and believes in old ideologies. For instance, Bauer is the trigger of another grotesque scene. When waiting for Marilù in a hideout in the outskirt of Rome, he mishandles some firearms, firing at his friends' car and piercing the tyres, and risking killing their prisoner. The laughter is always compassionate rather than unsympathetic, probably because of the absurdity of the episodes. Bauer seems to be the only one who has a political thought; he is angry at the institutions but still has confidence in idealised principles of socialism. He is politically committed but, at the same time, he is the clumsiest of the group and the cause of every problem. The portrayal of a left-wing revolutionary in the Berlusconi era is, therefore, ironic. The old ideology of communism can no longer exist in present-day Italy, hence the series of misadventures prompted by Bauer. This also underlines how any form of political terrorism is out of fashion and context in 'normalised' Italy and should be just ridiculed.

The feeling of nostalgia is visually translated in the sequences shot in the Alpine village. The arrival in Cervinia is signalled by a sentimental and powerful soundtrack for the terrorists: the music of East Germany's national hymn welcomes the group as they exit the tunnel and finally see the Matterhorn mountain. A panoramic shot gives an overview of the village with its old sport infrastructures and blocks of flats, which, at that time the 1970s, were state of the art with internal swimming pools, bowling alleys and shops but, nowadays, are just a reminder of the unauthorised and unscrupulous housing boom and economic decline. Entering Marilù's flat is another trip down memory lane, with its old furniture in Alpine style, ski suits and woollen pullovers; however, also in this instance, it is music that triggers most emotions. When the protagonists find Marilù's brother's discs and his turntable, the song that gives the title of the film, Sorrenti's 'Figli delle stelle', let the terrorists, and the prisoner, loose, dancing around the flat and humming the captivating jingle. According to Simon Reynolds, nothing conjures the vibe of an epoch more effectively than pop songs from that time.[585] David Shumway further explains that the use of popular songs in films' soundtracks generates nostalgia because of the widely shared

[585] Simon Raynolds, *Retromania. Pop Culture's Addiction to its Own Past* (London: Faber and Faber, 2012), xix.

nature of those melodies.[586] Naming a film with a song from the recent past represents not only an easy way to reactivate nostalgia for a specific era, but it is also part of a marketing strategy to generate more income through the separate sell of CDs with the film's soundtrack.[587]

The nostalgic effect of the song 'Figli delle stelle' gives a distinctive characterisation of retro sensibility to the film and treats the past with detachment. However, I do not agree with Reynolds that such a process tends 'neither to idealise nor sentimentalise the past, but seeks to be amused and charmed by it'.[588] In Pellegrini's film the song does treat with exaggerated and self-indulgent feelings of tenderness the late 1970s, when Marilù and the rest of the gang were probably children. Reflective nostalgia, and its ironic and eclectic effects, emerges after the end of the musical number. In fact, the awkwardness of the episode and their transformation with vintage clothes is ridiculed when Toni re-joins the group exclaiming, 'How did you dress up?!'. This encounter represents the clash between the past, an idealised past, and the present with all its problems. On the one hand, we have the terrorist gang, wearing 1970s ski suits, isolated in thinking that old-fashion strategies, political kidnapping, can solve social injustices; on the other hand, there is Toni, in his normal clothes, who brings down to earth the disillusioned friends. The sad but sincere encounter between the kidnappers, who dream about going back the 1970s, and Toni suggests that the past is used as a rich depository of material from which to extract cultural knowledge and fashionable commodities.





[586] David Shumway, "Rock 'n' Roll Sound Tracks and the Production of Nostalgia," *Cinema Journal* vol. 38, no. 2 (1999): 36.
[587] Concurrently with the release of the film in cinemas, the cover of Sorrenti's 'Figli delle Stelle' sung by Irene Grandi was distributed on digital platforms. The cover song accompanies the final titles sequence.
[588] Raynolds, *Retromania*, xix.

Fig. 5.6 A retro hideout in *Unlikely Revolutionaries*.

While in the previous chapter on the glamorisation of terrorism, we have seen how Baudrillard presented 'retro' as essentially content-less, here I see the reification of the past more closely associated to what Raphael Samuel judge as an 'unofficial form of knowledge'.[589] Drawing on the work by the British historian, I read this retro-shabby appropriation of the 1970s as a playful exercise to discover aspects of popular culture. The use of Sorrenti's song, therefore, ought to be read as a populist phenomenon; the faux vintage sensibility here avoids established historiography and challenges temporality and circumstances.

Conclusions: Laughing at Terror?

The two films discussed in this chapter function as pop-cultural products of the legacy of terrorism. We should not disparage them for their video-music aesthetics and their saccharine resolutions, because they represent important counterparts to more serious engagements, for instance those by auteurs like Christian Petzold or Marco Bellocchio. The comic accounts of the last fringes of revolt in 1980 West Germany and present-day contestation in Italy are due to many reasons. Most importantly, this phenomenon is related to the process of normalisation of the years of lead. In other words, these anarchic comedies demonstrate how fiction cinema creatively plays with the past, showing that Germany and Italy are 'normal' again, because they can laugh at forms of political violence.

These films seem to draw a line about what and who can be ridiculed: laughing directly at the RAF and BR terrorists still remains a taboo. In order to laugh at political violence the case studies deploy deflection strategies: *What to Do in Case of Fire* refers to the phenomenon of anarchist protest in 1980s West Berlin rather than the more brutal force of the RAF or B2J; *Unlikely Revolutionaries* adopts a symbolism typical of the language of the years of lead but does not mention the new BR formations active at the turn of the new millennium. The process of normalisation is still on-going and given that many episodes of political violence were left unpunished

[589] Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory* (London: Verso, 1994), 95.

(and many terrorists received very short sentences) the topic remain highly contested. Hence it remains to assess whether this turn to the popular is going to continue and become more explicit in its parody of terrorist violence or not.[590] I have already mentioned that *The First on the List* constitutes the first historical comedy set during the Italian years of lead, but again it addresses the fear of political coup d'état and military dictatorship in the late 1960s, rather than the violence of notorious left-wing formations. *What to Do in Case of Fire* and *The First on the List* might constitute isolated occurrences in the German and Italian cinematic landscape, but they are also part of a broader cultural phenomenon, which approaches shameful and delicate aspects through the ironic and comedic registers.[591]

Furthermore, in this chapter I argued that it is problematic to consider these films as dangerous products that promote the forgetting of the violent past. More audience research to assess whether these attempts risk of forgetting the real horror of terrorist attacks is necessary. These comic accounts do not necessarily silence the events occurred during the years of lead, they could also ignite new discussions about the past. Young generations, those who did not experience the events portrayed and those who rarely encountered them in history books, ought to be memory literate and these popular forms of recollection could better appeal to them and trigger further explorations of the topic.

When looking at cinematic works by younger filmmakers belonging to a post-terrorism generation, it emerges a clear tendency to fabricate stories that combine old motifs with present-day images and issues. There are however some differences. Schnitzler seems more prone to put the past to rest, as his characters set on fire the incriminating film reel in the final scene of his work, consigning their revolutionary adventure to history. Pellegrini's film, instead, attests the long-lasting impact of the Moro's kidnapping, but also confirms that putting a seal on left-wing terrorism is impossible. While filmmakers of previous generations have turned to the history of

[590] Bruce LaBruce's *Raspberry Reich* represents an ironic critique of the RAF, and the phenomenon of terrorist-chic. This is a pornographic film (it exists also a soft-core version) which mocks the 'Prada-Meinhof' phenomenon, but it is ultimately also a product of it.

[591] I am thinking about films such as *Good Vibrations* (Lisa Barros D'Sa and Glenn Leyburn, 2013), part biopic, part retro comedy on the background of the Northern Irish Troubles and *La mafia uccide solo d'estate*/*The Mafia Kills Only in the Summer* (Pif, 2013) an Italian comedy-drama about growing up in Sicily during the most violent years of the mafia's history.

German Fascism or the Italian Resistance to reflect on the experience of 1970s terrorism, here younger directors turn 1980s anarchists and present-day left-wing revolutionaries into sites of 'interconnected memories'. Similarly to the spatial movements described by Michael Rothberg as 'multidirectional memory', here the films display connections, dynamic transfers and appropriations between different times. Drawing on psychoanalytic theories and Sigmund Freud's notion of screen memories, Rothberg notes the process by which the memory of French colonialism, comes to stand in for the Holocaust in a series of novels, memoirs and contemporary films.[592] Rothberg also observes that 'multidirectional memory (…) frequently juxtaposes two or more disturbing memories and disrupts everyday settings'.[593]

However, in this case the interaction is between a traumatic memory, the experience with left-wing terrorism in the 1970s and a less violent scene. Although Rothberg's approach of co-operation between contrasting memories deals with the French context and two disturbing recollections, his visualisation of memory as a travelling nexus could also be beneficial for describing the dynamic between the years of lead, contemporary anxiety for new forms of terrorism and the economic crisis. Ridiculing political violence in the present is no longer a defence mechanism to contain the recollection of a disturbing memory, but instead it is the fruit of travelling memories of generations which did not witness those tragic events and use it to deflect present-day fears and insecurities about the future.

This chapter has not only demonstrated that the use of the comedy genre is possible when dealing with the topic of political violence, but also that it is symptomatic of a normalised vision of this historical past. New social issues and greater fear for other forms of terrorism allow the ridiculing of left-wing insignia and the laughing at anarchist violence. By setting the story at the end of the German contestation phenomenon, the late 1980s, *What to Do in Case of Fire* is able to nostalgically dwell on the Kreuzberg squatting scene in the 1980s. Similarly, *Unlikely Revolutionaries* by setting the narrative on the background of the present economic crisis avoids clear association with the Moro kidnapping and murder. The pop-appropriation of the terrorist discourse is not something new, at least in the Italian

[592] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 14.
[593] Ibid.

context. *Unlikely Revolutionaries* comments with sarcasm on contemporary problems and social injustices dialoguing with the genre of the *commedia all'italiana*, specifically comedies of the 1970s which mirrored the tensions occurring in Italy at that time. *What to Do in Case of Fire*, instead, draws from light-hearted comedies of the 1990s, the cinema of consensus and picks up the baton left by Fassbinder in questioning the phenomenon of terrorism, yet without his biting vigour.

There are of course striking differences between these different approaches. Dealing with terrorism through comedic narratives finds its roots in the decade when political violence erupted. While Italian popular genres acted as screens where to project social concerns and shield the reality of the years of lead, a filter to address anxieties which were too close and still evolving at that time, the comedies of the new millennium come as a consequence of the end of the state of emergency and the collapse of the ideologies which were the founding base of those groups. The adoption of the comedy genre is, therefore, symptomatic of a new social context, less infused with political discussions, old ideologies and resentments. Considered in this light, it is suggested that *Unlikely Revolutionaries* and *What to Do in Case of Fire* are not about the years of lead per se, but their intertexts invoke that experience as a metaphor diverged from the exact Italian and German historical circumstances. Differently from the case studies discussed in the preceding chapter, where the image of the RAF and *Prima Linea* have become 'screen memory' through the ample use of archival material and the obsessive search for authenticity, here the films analysed evoke the atmosphere of a period while eliding the actual mass conflicts and the brutal violence.

Some might argue that laughing at political kidnappings and Molotov bombs may be a joke too far, however, I hope to have shown that nostalgia, and particularly its ironic facet, facilitates this approach. In *What to Do in Case of Fire*, where the protagonists long for the world pre-fall of the Berlin wall, 'westalgic' tendencies are adopted to camouflage anarchist violence. This becomes functional to reflect on the consequences of unification, given that the former comrades lament the dull life in the new Berlin and the responsibilities of their 'new' lives. *Unlikely Revolutionaries* creatively plays with the everlasting memory of the Moro kidnapping, but this is just a point of departure, rather than another 'Moro movie', to shed light on Italy's economic downfall.

Conclusion

'The past is never dead. It's not even past'.[594] It is in the spirit of this famous passage from the novel *Requiem for a Nun* by William Faulkner that my thesis has unearthed the return of the issue of terrorism in postmillennial German and Italian cinema. What the attorney Gavin Stevens declares in Faulkner's novel is simple: the past is inescapable, it is still around us, at least some of it is still here. No matter how society tries to erase shameful aspects, we are bound by the past. In this study of the representation of left-wing political violence in contemporary fiction films I have noted how the years of lead have continued to play a pivotal role in the present-day cultural imaginary and the memories of 1970s terrorism have been revitalised by contemporary issues. This cluster of postmillennial films functions as an indicative assessment for understanding the dynamics of remembering, namely how historical events and figures are transmitted between generations and through media, but also how certain aspects are effaced, contained if not suppressed. My thesis has contributed to new knowledge in three main areas: terrorism and its representation, memory studies and transnational European cinema.

Specifically, I implemented the mapping of the genres and representional modes adopted by filmmakers to deal with left-wing political violence and its legacy in the present. The first decade of the new millennium has offered a wide array of German and Italian films about this issue; the eight case studies, in fact, epitomise the variety of productions, proving that revolutionary terrorism is still a crucial and absorbing aspect of national and international politics. I have considered auteur and art films, middlebrow dramas, blockbusters with global ambitions, comedies for the national market, commercially successful and less fortunate works. This heterogeneous group respond to one primary concern: the normalisation of the violent past, a historical process which aims at revaluing the long 1970s and manifests both at the content and stylistic level. German and Italy cinemas return to this period because left-wing terrorism is no longer as threatening as it was during the years of lead, and

[594] William Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun* (New York: Random House, 1951), 92.

because it is possible to approach it with less spirited sentiments in the new millennium.

The memory of 1970s political violence resonates with many present-day concerns, for instance with the current NSU trial in Germany. The revival of left-wing terrorism in postmillennial German and Italian cinema is due to multiple factors. Firstly, the massive social and historical changes following the fall of the Berlin Wall came to fruition at the turn of the new millennium and particularly within the visual culture of the 2000s. The effects of such change took time before they became evident. The temporal detachment from these events allowed a less emotional involvement; the end of the Cold War and the First Italian Republic brought about a depoliticised approach to the highly contentious debate of the armed struggle. Secondly, the release of former terrorists from prison, the return of the new BR in Italy and the emergence of violent anarchist and neo-Nazi groups in Germany have stirred a reconsideration of the years of lead. The recollection of this troubled period is, however, an on-going process that mediates eyewitness accounts (communicative memories) and archival footage, photographs and previous cinematic traditions (prosthetic memories).

It is important to underline that left-wing revolutionaries return in postmillennial cinema with different narratives. Some of them return as losers within a society that is not willing or not yet able to forgive their criminal acts. Others are presented as undefeated fighters, melancholic and still clinging to old ideologies. Terrorists return also as fascinating icons, romantic rebels and media phenomena. The glamorisation of the armed struggle has coincided with the adoption of popular genre motifs and a Hollywood style, strategies that were generally read as a way to reach younger audiences and foreign markets. Because of the temporal detachment and a generational change, terrorists can return as ridiculous buffoons. These are not individuals active during the peak of violence of the RAF and the BR in 1977 and 1978, but younger rebels belonging to anarchist fringes or new improvised political formations. A crucial finding of this thesis considers the genre of comedy. I have ascertained that historical comedies set in the 1970s remain uncommon, laughing at the RAF and BR terrorists continues to be a taboo. Postmillennial comedies signal that it is nonetheless possible to satirise left-wing political violence by blurring the

distinction between punk culture, anarchy and criminality, setting the stories in the present and infusing the narratives with dark humour and nostalgia.

My thesis has contributed to the better understanding of reconciliatory practices which manifest both at the narrative and representational level. In particular, the first part of this thesis focused on narrative strategies adopted to make sense and peace with the history of left-wing terrorism. Chapter Two and Three explored how the years of lead are re-inscribed into a national unifying trope, dealing with the (im)possibility of forgiving former terrorists. It appears that there is no space for terrorists, even inactive ones, in the Berlin Republic: in the German context normalisation is intended as the necessity to close this chapter of history and consign it to the past. Schlöndorff's *The Legend of Rita*, for instance, tries to reimagine the history of urban guerrilla (primarily a West German phenomenon), including East Germany's position (the secret police service helped with smuggling arms and offering protection to terrorists). But, similarly to Petzold's *The State I Am In*, the former terrorists die, as their existence seems incompatible with the new political order. Nonetheless, the state's effort to consider it a finished business, an old story, appears ineffective; memory is fluid and prone to be reactivated by present instances. Conversely, Italian filmmakers do not provide a definitive answer to the possibility of reintegrating former terrorists into society: normalisation dictates that they should lead subdued and ordinary lives. The former terrorists of *Reconciled* and *The Best of Youth* do re-enter society, but the question about their full recovery and integration within the nation remains unanswered. Moreover, by excluding victims of terrorism from these narratives the hope for a wider societal reconciliation is deflected.

As far as representation is concerned, I have outlined different strategies adopted to devalue the political weight of left-wing terrorist groups; youthful naïveté and error are the more common justifications of the eruption into violence during the years of lead. Anxiety about femininity does feature in a large number of films throughout the decade, but is manifested in a variety of forms and performs different cultural tasks. In *The Legend of Rita* and *The Best of Youth,* for instance, normalising the terrorist past manifests through the relativisation of the actions perpetrated by female terrorists. These films are particularly preoccupied with violent women involved in the armed struggle and apply gender archetypes to contain such disruption

of social order. The female terrorists are described as either submissive companions, madwomen or wicked mothers. These containment strategies work as domesticated memories with soothing and reassuring effect. I have argued that these anxieties about terrorist women, and nostalgic male-bond narratives, not only present the threats and challenges of breaking down traditional gender roles but also that they foreground the insecurity emerging from the experience of feminism in the 1970s.

As I have demonstrated in the second part of this thesis, the normalisation of the history of left-wing terrorism manifests also through formal conventions of generic storytelling. Specifically, in Chapter Four I analysed how *The Baader Meinhof Complex* and *The Front Line* adopt a more commercial style, characterised by the use of national stars, popular songs and the attention for period details in order to empty the terrorists groups of any political legacy. The association with the action-thriller or the heritage film genre is in many cases the result of a depoliticisation of the terrorist discourse. In the post-ideological era, these films do not possess the same abrasive style of auteur films, for instance those of the New German Cinema, but they respond to contemporary phenomena, such as the Prada-Meinhof fashion, and industrial trends that privilege clear and simple narratives in order to appeal to youngsters and foreign audiences. The German and Italian terrorists are often decontextualised: the cause of the violent outbursts in the 1970s are not sufficiently investigated and the ideology of these groups disappears in the background; what remains are only their actions and their revolutionary iconography. Therefore, I have adopted the notion of 'faux-vintage film' to underline the contradictions of these stylistic choices. This hyper-authenticity seems rather paradoxical, because these films invoke a revolutionary past divorcing it from radical cinematic forms, which characterised filmic engagement with left-wing terrorism in the 1960s and 1970s. They are retro, imitative of old times at an aesthetic level, thanks to the use of archival footage and the deliberate archaism of washed-out colour palette and digitally imposed scratches, and at the profilmic level with an attentive use of vintage clothes, car and design objects. This is an original contribution of my thesis, which has a wider impact on the study of the representation of the near past. The implications of the 'faux-vintage' film shed new light on the understanding of how we approach and relate to a difficult and temporally close past.

Chapter Five has, instead, addressed the adoption of the genre of comedy to deal with the legacy of political violence in the present, in other words, as a way to show the normalisation of the relationship between radicals and the state. *What to Do In Case of Fire* and *Unlikely Revolutionaries* satirise the past to evaluate rampant consumerism in the present, the changed reality of reunited Germany and the consequences of the economic stagflation in postmillennial Italy. These films choose a commercial aesthetic that speaks the language of MTV videos, but they are not bereft of critical impetus thanks to an ironic use of nostalgia. Nonetheless, in this postmillennial cluster of commercial films the identity and ideology of left-wing terrorist organisations are reduced to empty symbols and insignia: they became commodities appropriated by popular culture. The RAF and BR have lost almost completely their political significance because terrorism is a different phenomenon nowadays, more distant but also more enigmatic. It is my contention that following the Al-Qaeda's attacks in the USA and in Europe the memory of left-wing terrorism shields us from less comprehensible contemporary concerns; the obsession and fascination for 1970s political violence function therefore as a defence mechanism against new forms of terrorism.

My thesis has unearthed another thematic trend. Normalisation could also mean opening up the Pandora's box of violence and repression. Although, notorious victims of terrorist attacks still catalyse the attention of filmmakers, the notion of 'victim' has been shifting in the last few years. Recent films such as *Piazza Fontana: The Italian Conspiracy* and *Guido che sfidò le Brigate Rosse* expand the repertoire of stories set during the years of lead, including victims of right-wing violence and common citizens. In Chapter Three, in particular, I revealed the emergent attention towards children of terrorists, and more broadly younger generations, whose existence has been affected by political violence. Although the case studies analysed here still present terrorist-centric narratives – very often they draw on interviews and memoirs by former terrorists – it is noteworthy how more consideration is now paid towards those who still suffer from the trauma of those violent events and those who survived them. This shift began with documentaries such as *Deathgame* and *Black Box BRD*, but it is now becoming visible also in fiction films. Probably thanks to the pressure of associations that group relatives of victims, new narratives emerge to counter the

abundance of biopics on the RAF or the BR. More interestingly, many films of the new millennium include a voice of resistance, a character who is not afraid of expressing his/her condemnation, doubt and sorrow. In *The State I am In* this unusual perspective is provided by Jeanne, the daughter of a couple of runaway terrorists; in *The Front Line*, instead, both the parents of Segio and his friend, Piero, provide a counter balance to his choice of violent revolt.[595]

These strategies aim at suturing the wound between perpetrators, sympathisers and the wider community. I read this tendency as a way to recontextualise the phenomenon of terrorism, bringing it closer to the experience of younger generations who were not exposed to the violence of the years of lead. As Thomas Elsaesser notes, the process of normalisation has gradually introduced 'the more malleable and adaptable category of the *survivor*: a group to whom almost everyone could belong'.[596] The protagonists of the punk-anarchist comedy *What to Do in Case of Fire* fit this description, as they all shared a past of vandalism and radical politics during their experience of the Group36 commune in West Berlin and now lead different lifestyles after the fall of the wall. Nicola from *The Best of Youth,* but also Malena and her friends in *Reconciled* are a further example of this figure, reflecting upon the faded promise of the 1960s and the lost dreams of a generation. As survivors, former activists in the years of contestation, they very often embody a left-wing constituency and represent those who did not choose to embrace arms after the student and workers' protests in 1968.

In the course of this thesis, I have challenged previous scholarship focused primarily on local national histories by comparing how Italian and German postmillennial cinemas reflect on the experience of left-wing terrorism, and complicate the idea of a singular memory culture. Considering the nation-state as a 'social framework of collective memory', to use Maurice Halbwachs' terminology, is still very important.[597] In fact, despite European unifying policies and globalisation's force, it is still the nation that plays a major role in the creation of an official memory

[595] To this list we could add the characters of Sara, the daughter of Giulia and Nicola in *The Best of Youth*, and also Enzo, Chiara's friend in *Good Morning Night*.
[596] Elsaesser, *German Cinema: Terror and Trauma*, 145.
[597] This notion emerges first in Maurice Halbwachs, *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* [1925], ed. Gérard Namer (Paris: Albin Michel, 1994), but it is later refined in Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* [1950].

culture: building memorials, financing cultural projects and initiating public commemorations. The official memory and the national framework of remembrance affect personal memories, even if these are further influenced by conflicting familial or generational memories. However, memories spread beyond borders, they travel and are changed when they reach global spectatorship. My original contribution to the field of memory studies considers how these memories travel, eclipse and mutate when they get into contact with other memories.

My cross-national approach has provided a useful grid to comprehend how terrorism has generated a transnational network of memories. Although the films analysed depict national events and characters, they ultimately respond to a transnational aesthetic of portraying violence. In the current age of global media cultures, memoirs and historical novels are quickly translated; films dealing with the past are screened in festivals and streamed simultaneously on different platforms. To describe this process, I adopted the notion of 'interconnected memories' to highlight the travelling nature of memories through space and time. I argued that in order to 'stay alive', both on the individual and collective level, memories have to travel and connect with other stories; it is the on-going interpretation and renewal, but also the incessant contestation among different constituencies, that allowed the revival of the memory of left-wing terrorism in the new millennium.

As I hope to have shown, I interpreted 'interconnected memories' as an approach that understands memory as nexuses. Interconnected memories essentially intend exchanges, vertical connections between generations, and horizontal movements between different cultures. The case studies presented here show how memory circulates between individual and collective frameworks, travelling among social and media dimensions. These films recount stories which are still nation-bound, in the sense that in most cases they depict fundamentally local, provincialised stories. Nonetheless, they display an attention to the memory dynamics unfolding across and beyond temporal and spatial parameters. This is done through the invocations of other traumatic memories, or intertextual recollection of past cinematic heritage. Having briefly outlined some of the important findings of my thesis, I want to now embark on the more speculative work made possible by this research.

Following the examples about Holocaust memory suggested by scholars such as Levy, Sznaider, Rothberg and Silverman,[598] I propose that the memory of terrorism and more broadly political violence has the potential to become a new global paradigm, a worldwide object of remembrance and a transnational source of empathy. My thesis has not only formulated a new interpretation of 'travelling memories', but also outlined new developments in transnational studies. By elucidating similarities and differences between two national cinemas, I have evinced new trends within European cinema. The TV series *Carlos* by Olivier Assayas goes in this transnational European direction, as it shows a hybrid memory of terrorism that overlaps rather than separates different contexts. This French-German co-production was shot in eleven locations in Europe, North Africa and the Middle East; seven languages were used, four of them spoken by the main protagonist. It recounts the vicissitude of 20th century's most notorious terrorist: Ilich Ramirez Sanchez, who was behind many terrorist attacks in 1970s Europe, Asia and Africa. Differently from the eight case studies analysed here, this TV series indicates a growing interest in co-productions that deal with terrorism from a cosmopolitan perspective.

The biopic of this terrorist mercenary is, in many aspects, an exemplary case of the direction that I prefigure from this study. Due to globalising forces and increasingly cinematic exchanges more transnational films about terrorism are expected to be produced. Memory, in fact, is no longer the property of autonomous subjects. My consideration of films on left-wing terrorism through the prism of interconnected memories has attempted to suggest that intertwinings between distant stories and events may allow to elaborate a version of memory which recognises individual differences and general instances, specifically the co-presence of personal, generational and cultural memories. *Carlos,* as a polyglot European co-production, dialogues with the idea of shared values, common belongings between the nations that struggled with revolutionary terrorism during the long 1970s. As such, it captures the inherent tension of European cinema, and the European Union more broadly, what Tim Bergfelder summarises as the 'contested position between national and supranational interests […] to negotiate and reconcile the desires for cultural

[598] Cf. Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age*, Michael Rothberg's *Multidirectional Memory* and Max Silverman's *Palimpsestic Memory.*

specificity and national identity with the larger ideal of a supranational community'.[599] Terrorism, or better the fight against terrorism, could become the focus of many new transnational cinematic endeavours, being one of Europe's last shared historical phenomenon.

A further original contribution to knowledge regards the notion of nostalgia, which seems to be a recurrent paradigm even in postmillennial films about terrorism. In this thesis I traced how the return of left-wing political violence manifests many of the classic signs of how societies selectively remember and forget. The cultural memory of the years of contestation is characterised by a tension between remembering and forgetting. My research sets out to explore how nostalgia is often associated with such a violent decade. I have identified the nature, the extent and the reasons and motivations of its applications, arguing that nostalgia for the years of lead functions as the *pharmakon* of memory, in other words both the cure and the poison for remembering a troubled past. Nostalgia shades shameful aspects; in fact, the retreat into sugarcoated images filters the trauma and sanitises the memory of terrorism. As a palliative against anxiety, nostalgia contributes to the cultural elaboration of the caesura in the 1970s. On the one hand, films such as *The Best of Youth,* bring to the silver screen events, figures, objects and tunes which have become iconic;[600] on the other hand, the widespread use of nostalgic elements further contribute to the reduction of the past to a visual and aural pleasure, relegating the reasons and consequences of political violence to the oblivion.

My thesis has revealed the relationship between the circumstances of production and the kind of films that were made, and suggested how the films are ultimately connected with a range of contexts. Such an approach has allowed me to thoroughly interrogate the film text while not negating important social, economic and industrial issues. What my thesis has allowed is a detailed consideration of production trends and critical agency, and it has permitted me to demonstrate how the memory of

[599] Tim Bergfelder, "National, Transnational or Supranational Cinema? Rethinking European Film Studies," *Media, Culture Society* 27, 3 (2005): 315.

[600] In Chapter Five I have introduced the notion of post-communist nostalgia in relation to comedies about left-wing revolutionaries. This is an on-going phenomenon, which takes many facets. For instance, Walter Veltroni, a former PD leader, directed a documentary on the PCI politician, Enrico Berlinguer: *Quando c'era Berlinguer/When There Was Berlinguer* (Walter Veltroni, 2014). The nostalgia for the 1970s could be connected to the longing for a time when left-wing culture was hegemonic and the left had a strong leader.

left-wing terrorism is evolving under the influence of contemporary instances. One can expect further changes, given that almost every year there is a new film set during the years of lead, about its protagonists or the state's response. As the first extensive cross-national study of the representation of left-wing terrorism in German and Italian cinema, my innovative methodology could inform new research into the transnational nature of memory and violent phenomena. It is clear that there is still more to be said on 1970s terrorism and its legacy in the present. This thesis demonstrates the crucial role of fiction films in reworking the memories of the German and Italian years of lead, countering official historiography, reaffirming mythologies, nuancing debates and revealing micro histories. As a result, I would also hope that my thesis leads the way for further cross-national inquiry into similar research areas.

Filmography

Aimée & Jaguar. DVD. Directed by Max Färberböck, Senator Film Produktion, 1999.

Aldo Moro – Il presidente/ Aldo Moro – The President. DVD. Directed by Gianluca Maria Tavarelli, Taodue Film. 2008.

Allora Mambo/ Let's Mambo!. DVD. Directed by Lucio Pellegrini, Medusa. 1999.

Anni di piombo/ Emprise Sexuelle. VHS. Directed by Silvio Bandinelli, Showtime. 1999.

Anni ribelli/ Laura: The Rebel Years. VHS. Directed by Rosalia Polizzi, Sintra S.r.l. and Divisíon Producciones. 1994.

Gli anni spezzati/ The Broken Years. DVD. Directed by Graziano Diana, Albatross Entertainment Spa and RAI fiction. 2014.

L'Armata Brancaleone/ The Incredible Army of Brancaleone. DVD. Directed by Mario Monicelli, Mario Cecchi Gori. 1966.

A Room with a View. DVD. Directed by James Ivory, Merchant Ivory Production. 1985.

Attacco allo stato/ Political Target. DVD. Directed by Michele Soavi, Taodue. 2006.

Baader. DVD. Directed by Christopher Roth. 72 Film, Leading Edge Productiones and SellOutPictures. 2002.

Der Baader Meinhof Komplex/ The Baader Meinhof Complex. DVD. Directed by Uli Edel, Constantin Film. 2008.

Bambule. Online Video. Directed by Eberhard Itzenplitz. Südwestfunk, 1970. <http://ubu.com/film/meinhof_bambule.html> [Accessed 30 August 2014].

Basic Instinct. DVD. Directed by Paul Verhoeven. Carolco and Canal+, 1992.

La battaglia di Algieri/ The Battle of Algiers. DVD. Directed by Gillo Pontecorvo, Igor Film and Casbah Film. 1966.

Il… Belpaese. VHS. Directed by Luciano Salce, Italian International Film. 1977.

Benvenuti al Sud/ Welcome to the South. DVD. Directed by Luca Miniero, Medusa, De Lauretis, 2010.

Bienvenue Chez les Ch'tis/ Welcome to the Sticks. DVD. Directed by Dany Boon, Paté Renn Production. 2008.

Black Box BRD. DVD. Directed by Andres Veiel, Hessischer Rundfunk, Südwestrundfunk, Zero Film GmbH and arte Geie. 2001.

Die bleierne Zeit/ The German Sisters. DVD. Directed by Margarethe von Trotta. Bioskop Film and Sender Freies Berlin SFB. 1981.

Bloody Sunday. DVD. Directed by Peter Greengrass, Irish Film Board, Granada Television, 2002.

Body of Proof. DVD. Directed by Uli Edel, Neue Constantin Film Produktion and Dino de Laurentis. 1993.

Un borghese piccolo piccolo/ An Average Little Man. DVD. Directed by Mario Monicelli, Auro Cinematografica. 1977.

Bronyenosyets Potyomkin/ *The Battleship Potemkin*. DVD. Directed by Sergei Eisenstein, Goskino. 1925.

Buongiorno, Notte/ Good Morning Night. DVD. Directed by Marco Bellocchio, FilmAlbatros and RAI CinemaFiction. 2003.

Bye Bye Berlusconi. DVD. Directed by Jan Henrik Stahlberg, Schiwago Film. 2006.

La caduta degli angeli ribelli. VHS. Directed by Marco Tullio Giordana, RAI 2 and Filmalpha. 1981.

Caro Michele/ Dear Michael. DVD. Directed by Mario Monicelli, Flag Film. 1976.

Caro papà/ Dear Father. DVD. Directed by Dino Risi, AMLF, Dean Film and Les Films Prospec Inc. 1979.

Carlos the Jackal. DVD. Directed by Oliver Assayas. Films en Stock and Egoli Tossell Film, Canal+ and Arte France. 2010.

Il caso Mattei/ The Mattei Affair. DVD. Directed by Francesco Rosi, Verona Produzione and Vides Cinematografica. 1972.

Chariots of Fire. DVD. Directed by Hugh Hudson, Enigma Production. 1981.

Che. DVD. Directed by Steven Soderbergh, Morena Films, Telecinco and Guerrilla Films. 2008.

Children of the Revolution. DVD. Directed by Shane O'Sullivan. Irish Film Board, Transmission Films and Westdeutscher Rundfunk. 2010.

Cosmonauta/ Cosmonaut. DVD. Directed by Susanna Nicchiarelli, Fandango and RAI Cinema. 2009.

Deutschland im Herbst/ Germany in Autumn. DVD. Directed by Volker Schlöndorff, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Edgar Reitz, Hans Peter Cloos, Katja Rupé, Bernd Sinkel and Alf Brustellin. Filmverlag der Autoren. 1978.

Diavolo in corpo/ Devil in the Flesh. VHS. Directed by Marco Bellocchio. L.P. Film. 1986.

La donna è cambiata, L'Italia deve cambiare/ The Woman Has Changed, So Italy Must Change. Online Video. Directed by Rosalia Polizzi, Unitelefilm. 1977. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1eHceHGf1r0> [Accessed 12 August 2014].

Die dritte Generation/ The Third Generation. DVD. Directed by Reiner Maria Fassbinder, Filverlag der Autoren. 1979.

Dr. Strangelove: or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb. DVD. Directed by Stanley Kubrik, Columbia Pictures. 1964.

Elephant. DVD. Directed by Gus van Sant, HBO Films, Meno Films and Blue Relief Productions. 2003.

È nata una star?/A Star is Born. DVD. Directed by Lucio Pellegrini, ITC Movie, Warner Bros. 2012.

Es kommt der Tag/ The Day will Come. DVD. Directed by Susanne Schneider, Arte, Filmtank Hamburg, Wüste Film Ost (Potsdam/Studio Babelsberg). 2009.

Das Experiment/ The Experiment. DVD. Directed by Oliver Hirschbiegel, Typhoon Film, Fanes Film. 2001

La faute à Fidel/ Blame it on Fidel. DVD. Directed by Julie Gavras, Gaumont and Canal +. 2006.

Figli delle stelle/ *Unlikely Revolutionaries*. DVD. Directed by Lucio Pellegrini. Pumpkin Production, ITC Movie, Warner Bros. 2010.

Four Lions. DVD. Directed by Chris Morris, Film4 and Warp Films. 2010.

Fuga in Francia/ Flight into France. VHS. Directed by Mario Soldati, Lux Film, 1948.

Goodbye Lenin!. DVD. Directed by Wolfgang Becker, X-Filme Creative Pool. 2003.

Good Vibrations. DVD. Directed by Lisa Barros D'Sa and Glenn Leyburn, Canderblinks Film and Music, Revolution Films and Northern Ireland Screen. 2012.

Il grande sogno/ The Big Dream. DVD. Directed by Michele Placido, Taodue, Babe Film and Medusa. 2009.

The Great Dictator. DVD. Directed by Charlie Chaplin, Charlie Chaplin Film Corporation. 1940.

Große Freiheit, kleine Freiheit/ Big Freedom, Small Freedom. VHS. Directed by Kristina Konrad, Dinamita and Konrad Frosch Filmproduktion. 2001.

Guido che sfidò le Brigate Rosse/ Guido who challenged the Red Brigades. DVD. Directed by Giuseppe Ferrara, Sistina Cinematografica, Emme Cinematografica and L'Occhio di Genova. 2007.

Harold and Kumar Escape from Guantanamo Bay. DVD. Directed by Jon Hurwitz and Hayden Schlossber, Kingsgate Film and Mandate Pictures. 2008.

Herr Lehman/ Berlin Blues. DVD. Directed by Leander Haussmann, Boje Buck Produktion. 2003

Ho ammazzato Berlusconi/ I killed Berlusconi. DVD. Directed by Gianluca Rossi, Collepardo Film. 2008.

Hunger. DVD. Directed by Steve McQueen, Channel Four Film, Northern Ireland Film, Broadcasting Commission of Ireland. 2008.

Die inner Sicherheit/ The State I Am In. DVD. Directed by Christian Petzold. Schramm Film, ARTE, Hessischer Rundfunk. 2000.

In den besten Jahren/ In the Best Years. DVD. Directed by Hartmut Schoen, Cine Centrum Deutsche Gesellschaft für Film- und Fernsehproduktion mbH, Westdeutscher Rundfunk. 2011.

L'infame e suo fratello/ The Infamous and His Brother. Online Video. Directed by Luigi Maria Perrotti, Stamen Film/White Balance. 2008. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XJqK-PNCNV4> [Accessed 20 August 2014].

Indagine su un cittadino al di sopra di ogni sospetto/ Investigation of a Citizen above Suspicion. DVD. Directed by Elio Petri, Vera Films S.p.a. 1970.

Jakob the Liar. DVD. Directed by Peter Kassovitz, Columbia Pictures. 1999.

Jean de Florette. DVD. Directed by Claude Berri, DD Productions, RAI, Films A2 and Renn Productions. 1986.

Katyn. DVD. Directed by Andrzej Waida, Akson Studio, TVP S.A., Polski Instytut Sztuki Filmowej, Telekomunikacja Polska and Legion Entertainment. 2007.

Kleinhoff Hotel/ The Passionate Stranger. DVD. Directed by Carlo Lizzani, Roxy Films and Trust International Films. 1977.

Knockin' on Heaven's Door. DVD. Directed by Thomas Jahn, Buena Vista International Film production and Mr. Brown Entertainment, 1997.

Il ladro di bambini/ The Stolen Children. DVD. Directed by Gianni Amelio, Erre produzioni, Alia Film, Arena Films. 1992.

Last Exit to Brooklyn. DVD. Directed by Uli Edel, Allied Filmmakers, Bavaria Film and Neue Constantin Film. 1989.

Lavorare con lentezza/ Work Slowly (Radio Alice). DVD. Directed by Guido Chiesa, Fandango, Medusa Film, Les Films des Tournelles, Roissy Film. 2004.

Das Leben der Anderen/ The Life of Others. DVD. Directed by Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, Wiedermann & Berg Filmproduktion. 2006.

Little Caesar. DVD. Directed by Mervyn LeRoy, First National Pictures. 1930.

Lola rennt/ Run Lola Run. DVD. Directed by Tom Tykwer, X-Filme Creative Pool, Westdeutscher Rundfunk and Arte. 1998.

Madre ma come?/ Mother, but How?. Online Video. Directed by Rosalia Polizzi, Unitelefilm. 1979. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OqNVyLtAOyk> [Accessed 12 Agosto 2014].

La mafia uccide solo d'estate/ The Mafia Kills Only in the Summer. DVD. Directed by Pif, Wildside, Rai Cinema and MTV Italia. 2013.

Maledetti vi amerò/ To Love the Damned. VHS. Directed by Marco Tullio Giordana. Filmalpha, Cooperativa Jean Vigo and RAI 2. 1980.

Manon des sources/ Manon of the Spring. DVD. Directed by Claude Berri, DD Productions, RAI, Films A2 and Renn Productions. 1986.

La meglio gioventù/ The Best of Youth. DVD. Directed by Marco Tullio Giordana. Bibi Films and RAI Cinemafiction. 2003.

Mein Leben als Terrorist: Hans-Joachim Klein/ My Life as a Terrorist: Hans-Joachim Klein. DVD. Directed by Alexander Oey, Submarine. 2006.

Mesrine Part 1 +2. DVD Directed by Jean-François Richet, La petite reine. 2008.

Messer im Kopf/ Knife in the Head. DVD. Directed by Reinhard Hauff. Bioskop Film, Hallelujah Film, Westdeutscher Rundfunk. 1978.

La mia generazione/ My Generation. VHS. Directed by Wilma Labate, Compact and RAI. 1996.

Milano violenta/ Bloody Payroll. DVD. Directed by Mario Caiano. Jarama. 1976.

Mio fratello è figlio unico/ My Brother Is an Only Child. DVD. Directed by Daniele Lucchetti, Cattleya and Babe Film. 2005.

Mogadishu. DVD. Directed by Roland Suso Richter, teamWorx. 2008.

Mordi e fuggi/ Dirty Weekend. DVD. Directed by Dino Risi, Champion and Concordia Cinematografica. 1973.

Munich. DVD. Directed by Steven Spielberg, Dreamworks and Universal Pictures. 2005.

Near Dark. VHS. Directed by Kathryn Bigelow, F/M Entertainment. 1987.

Nirgendwo in Afrika/ Nowhere in Africa. DVD. Directed by Caroline Link, Constantin Film. 2001.

Novecento/ 1900. DVD. Directed by Bernardo Bertolucci, Produzioni Europee Associati, Artemis Film. 1976.

Nuit et brouillard/ Night and Fog. DVD. Directed by Alain Resnais, Argos Film. 1955.

I nuovi mostri/ Viva Italia!. DVD. Mario Monicelli, Dino Risis and Ettore Scola, Dean Film. 1977.

Ochos apellidos vascos/ Spanish Affair. DVD. Directed by Emilio Martínez-Làzaro, La Zona Film, Kowalski Film and Telecinco Cinema. 2014)

Operatión Ogro/ Ogro. DVD. Directed by Gillo Pontecorvo, Action Film, Sabre Film and Vides Cinematografica. 1979.

One Day in September. DVD. Directed by Kevin Macdonald, Passion Pictures, Arthur Cohn Productions, BBC and Dan Valley Film AG. 1999.

Pasolini un delitto italiano/ Pasolini: An Italian Crime. DVD. Directed by Marco Tullio Giordana, Cecchi Gori Group Tiger Cinematografica, CGG Leopold Srl and Numero Cinque Srl. 1995.

Perfume: The Story of a Murderer. DVD. Directed by Tom Tykwer, Constantin Film Produktion, VIP 4 Medienfonds, Davis-Films and Rising Star. 2006.

La piovra/ The Octopus. DVD. TV series produced by Rai 1, Telecip, Channel 4, Taurus Film and Escort Cine TV. 1984-2001.

La polizia ringrazia/ The Enforcers. DVD. Directed by Steno. Dieter Geissler Filmproduktion, P.A.C., Primex Italiana. 1972.

Il portaborse/ The Yes Man. DVD. Directed by Daniele Lucchetti, Sacher Film, Eidoscope Productions. 1991.

La prima linea/ The Front Line. DVD. Directed by Renato De Maria, Lucky Red, Les Films du Fleuve, RTBF. 2009.

I primi della lista/ The First on the List. DVD. Directed by Rohan Johnson, Palomar, RAI. 2011.

Prova d'orchestra/ Orchestra Rehearsal. DVD. Directed by Federico Fellini, Daimo Cinematografica, RAI, Albatros Filmproduktion. 1978.

Public Enemies. DVD. Directed by Michael Mann, Universal Pictures. 2009.

Puig Antich/ Salvador. DVD. Directed by Manuel Huerga, Future Films, Mediapro. 2006.

Quando c'era Berlinguer/ When There Was Berlinguer. DVD. Directed by Walter Veltroni, Sky and Palomar. 2014.

The Raspberry Reich. DVD. Directed by Bruce LaBruce, Jürgen Brüning Filmproduktion. 2004.

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Romanzo Criminale/ *Crime Novel*. DVD. Directed by Michele Placido. Cattleya, Babe Film, Warner Bros., Aquarius Films. 2005.

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Sangue/ Blood. DVD. Directed by Pippo Delbono, Casa Azul Films, Compagnia Pippo Delbono. 2013.

Sbatti il mostro in prima pagina/ Slap the Monster on the Page One. VHS. Directed by Marco Bellocchio, Jupiter Generale Cinematografica, UTI Produzioni Associate. 1972.

Scarface. DVD. Directed by Howard Hawks, The Caddo Company. 1932.

La seconda volta/ The Second Time. DVD. Directed by Mimmo Calopresti, BanFilm, Sacher Film and La Sept Cinèma. 1995.

Sfiorando il muro/ Brush against the Wall. DVD. Directed by Silvia Giralucci and Luca Ricciardi, Doclab S.r.l. 2012.

Il sol dell'avvenire/ Red Sunrise. DVD. Directed by Gianfranco Pannone, Blue Film. 2008.

Solo Sunny. VHS. Directed by Konrad Worlf and Wolfgang Kohlhaase. DEFA. 1980.

Sonnenallee/ Sun Alley. DVD. Directed by Leander Haussmann, Boje Buck Produktion. 1999.

Stammheim – Die Baader-Meinhof Gruppe vor Gericht/ Stammheim – The Baader-Meinhof Group in Trial. DVD. Directed by Reinhard Hauff. Bioskop Film and Thalia Theater. 1986.

Stadtgespräch/ Talk of the Town. VHS. Directed by Rainer Kaufmann, Buena Vista Pictures, Studio Hamburg Filmproduktion, Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen (ZDF). 1995.

Starbuck – Holger Meins. DVD. Directed by Gerd Conradt. Hartmut Jahn Filmproduktion. 2002.

Die Stille nach dem Schus s/ The Legend of Rita. DVD. Directed by Volker Schlöndorff. ARTE, Babelsberg Film, MDR and MDF. 2000.

Strohfeuer/ A Free Woman. VHS. Directed by Volker Schlöndorff, Hallelujah Films and Hessischer Rundfunk. 1972.

Tandem. VHS. Directed by Lucio Pellegrini, ITC Movie. 2000.

Team America: World Police. DVD. Directed by Tray Parker, Paramount Pictures. 2004.

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Todesspiel/ Deathgame. DVD. Directed by Heinrich Breloer, WDR, Multimedia Gesellschaft für die Audiovisuelle Information mbH. 1997.

Torremolinos 73. DVD. Directed by Pablo Berger, Estudios Picasso, Mama Film, Nimbus Film Productions and Telespan 2000. 2003.

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Die unendliche Geschichte/ The NeverEnding Story. DVD. Directed by Wolfgang Petersen, Neue Constantin Film and Bavaria Film. 1984.

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Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum/ The Lost Honour of Katherina Blum. DVD. Directed by Volker Schlöndorff and Margarethe von Trotta. Bioskop Film, Pramount-Orion Filmproduktion and WDR. 1975.

La vita è bella/ Life is Beautiful. DVD. Directed by Roberto Benigni, Cecchi Gori Group. 1997.

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Das Wochenende/ The Weekend. DVD. Directed by Nina Grosse, UFA cinema, 2012.

World Trade Centre. DVD. Directed by Oliver Stone, Paramount Pictures, Double Feature Films, Intermedia Films. 2006.

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