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# **University of Southampton**

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

Film

**'The Devil's Architect', 'The Devil's General' and 'The Young Evil God of Death' in film and television: Representations of Albert Speer, Erwin Rommel and Reinhard Heydrich in America, UK and Germany**

By

**Moritz Jonathan Kurt Otto Julius Riewoldt**

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

January 2021



# University of Southampton

## Abstract

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### **'The Devil's Architect', 'The Devil's General' and 'The Young Evil God of Death' in film and television: Representations of Albert Speer, Erwin Rommel and Reinhard Heydrich in America, UK and Germany**

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Moritz Jonathan Kurt Otto Julius Riewoldt

Inspired by the representation of Speer's confession to Hitler in *Downfall* from 2004 and the meaning associated with this film in Germany and abroad, my research examines the fictional depictions of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich in different cultures and time periods. These representations are particularly significant in that, with the loss of living memory, such depictions will be of increasing historical significance in shaping how the past is represented. A positive aspect of this process is that the Third Reich and these leading Nazis will not be forgotten by future generations. This thesis charts points of convergence between the fields of reception studies and cultural memory that generate a line of inquiry which questions how the changing representations of Speer, Heydrich and Rommel in film and television have shaped the meaning associated with these historical figures in America, Germany and United Kingdom. Assuming that historical film never visualises past reality but engages with a history that is already mediated, I propose that these depictions tell us more about the contemporary time period and cultures than about the historical Nazis themselves. In particular my thesis considers that media texts focusing on leading Nazis have been released continuously long after the end of the Second World War, prompting two central research questions: Why do Speer, Rommel and Heydrich still occupy our screens and what do these representations mean for the cultures they are produced in? In order to answer these questions, the thesis analyses reviews from America, Germany and United Kingdom as well as the production contexts to understand the meaning of the fictional representations of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich. My research will deal with the questions of how the historical characters Albert Speer, Erwin Rommel and Reinhard Heydrich are constructed through film texts and through the films' reception contexts, rather than analysing the 'cultural obsession' with Nazis in our contemporary society. The introduction outlines my methodological approach and provides an overview of the academic literature, which influenced my research. My main case studies for the representations of Speer are *Inside the Third Reich* (Marvin J. Chomsky, 1982, USA), *Downfall* (Hirschbiegel, 2004, Germany) and *Speer and Hitler: The Devil's Architect* (Heinrich Breloer, 2005, Germany). In order to examine the fictional depiction of Rommel, I have chosen *The Desert Fox* (Henry Hathaway, 1951, USA) and *Rommel* (Niki Stein, 2012, Germany) as my main case studies. The films *Die Wannseekonferenz* (Heinz Schirk, 1984, Germany), *Conspiracy* (Frank Pierson, 2002, UK) and *The Man with the Iron Heart* (Cédric Jimenez, France & US, 2017) are my case studies to discuss the representation of Heydrich in film and television.



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## Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

Print name: Moritz Jonathan Kurt Otto Julius Riewoldt

Title of thesis: 'The Devil's Architect', 'The Devil's General' and 'The Young Evil God of Death' in film and television: Representations of Albert Speer, Erwin Rommel and Reinhard Heydrich in America, UK and Germany

I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. 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;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. 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;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. 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;
7. None of this work has been published before submission

Signature: ..... Date:



## **Acknowledgements**

For Sophie, my wife, who supported me emotionally during the writing of this thesis and gave up many of her weekends.

For Sabine, Gisela and Kuddel for their support and understanding.

Last but not least, I wish to thank my supervisor, Professor Michael Williams and adviser Doctor Malcolm Cook for their academic guidance and patience.





# Chapter 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

Filmic fiction, according to literature scholar Astrid Erll, possesses the potential to generate and to mould images of the past, which will be retained by whole generations. However, she believes that historical accuracy is not one of the concerns of such films, which offer the audience instead “authenticity” or “truthfulness”.<sup>1</sup> Within this thesis, I concentrate on the fictional representations of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich in different cultures and time periods offering the past in coherent, simplified and compelling narratives. I will analyse what these media texts about leading Nazis tell us about the cultures they are produced in focusing on the production context and reviews in America, Germany and Britain.

The film historian Robert Rosenstone states that “a century after the invention of the moving pictures, the visual media has arguably become the chief carrier of historical messages in our culture”.<sup>2</sup> This statement demonstrates the significance of media texts representing Nazis and the necessity to analyse these depictions in depth in relation to their production context as well as reviews in America, Germany and United Kingdom. I believe that the fictional representations of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich will define how we remember the Third Reich as viewers, who did not experience this time period, learn about the past from film and television. David Eldridge states in *Hollywood’s History Films*:

How and why are these films made? Who made them and which ideas influenced the filmmakers? How did the films interpret history and what biases affected the interpretation? How has the filmmaker interacted with professional historiography, public attitudes, political utilisation of the history to convey a perspective of the past through cinematic means?<sup>3</sup>

Even though my thesis will not focus on how the filmmakers interacted with professional historiography, one part of my research is the question of how and why the fictional narratives about Speer, Rommel and Hedyrich in film and television were made at a

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<sup>1</sup> Erll, A, *Literature, Film, and the Mediality of Cultural Memory*, in *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies* edited by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, De Gruyter, 2010, pp. 389-398, p. 395.

<sup>2</sup> Rosenstone, R., *Introduction in Revisioning History: Film and the Construction of a New Past*, edited by Robert Rosenstone, Princeton University Press, 1995, pp. 3-14, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Eldridge, D., *Hollywood’s History Films*, I.B. Tauris &Co, 2006, p.3.

specific time and in a specific culture, because these depictions tell us more about these areas than about the historical Nazis themselves. Film scholar Paul Cooke argues that it is impossible to watch Bruno Ganz's portrayal of Hitler in *Downfall* (Hirschbiegel, 2004, Germany) in a vacuum.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, I will demonstrate in this thesis how the production context of my case studies such as filmmakers, stars and production companies, affected the interpretation of the Third Reich and the fictional representation of these leading Nazis. Furthermore, my analysis of reviews in Germany, America and UK in relation to my case studies will show what perspective of the past is conveyed in these media texts. My research will deal with the questions of how the historical characters Albert Speer, Erwin Rommel and Reinhard Heydrich are constructed through media texts and through the films' reception contexts, rather than analysing the 'cultural obsession' with Nazis in our contemporary society.

I have chosen this title for my thesis because these historical characters are also known by these names in the public sphere. The German televisual production *Speer und Er* (Heinrich Breloer, 2005, Germany), which focuses on Speer's role in the Third Reich, is titled outside of Germany *Speer and Hitler: The Devil's Architect*. Film scholar Axel Bangert argues in regards of the German title that the title is important because it is usually the first encounter with a film and tells something special about a fictional narrative. He argues:

The implicit reference to Hitler in the title *Speer und Er* serves to underline the significance of his persona for the film. On the one hand it represents him as a legendary and almost godlike figure, and is thus uncomfortably reminiscent of the rhetoric of the Nazi propaganda. On the other hand the specularly of the title's visual design, with its mirroring of the syllable "Er", already hints at the narcissistic relation between Speer and Hitler projected by the docudrama.<sup>5</sup>

The significance of the English title *Speer and Hitler: The Devil's Architect* should not be underestimated. As the viewer encounters this fictional narrative about Speer first through the title, this implies that Speer was a loyal follower of Hitler. Furthermore, it implies that Hitler was a devil not a human persona.

As Speer was for most of his life an architect before he entered the government of the Third Reich, Rommel was a German field marshal during the World War Two. He was

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<sup>4</sup> Cooke, P., *Contemporary German Cinema*, Manchester University Press, 2012, p. 103.

<sup>5</sup> Bangert, A. *The Nazi Past in Contemporary German Cinema- Viewing Experiences of Intimacy and Immersion*, Camden House, 2014, p.83.

celebrated as the brilliant and humane 'Desert Fox', after his successful and bold offensives against the Allies in North Africa from 1941 until late 1942.<sup>6</sup> I will analyse in depth in the second chapter the American film *The Desert Fox* (Henry Hathaway, 1951, USA) comparing the reviews in America and German speaking countries at the time of its release shortly after the end of the Second World War. In a review of the German TV production *Rommel* (Niki Stein, 2012, Germany), by Madeline Chambers for the news agency *Reuters*, it is argued that this film shows how 'a man believes he is serving a king and realises too late that he is a devil'.<sup>7</sup> I will investigate in a later part of this thesis how Rommel is represented in this contemporary German TV production through a comparison of German and English language reviews.

Heydrich organised the meeting at Wannsee, which is near Berlin, when the administrative apparatus of the Third Reich set in motion the detailed plans for the Final Solution.<sup>8</sup> One of my case studies to analyse the fictional representation of Heydrich is the English language HBO production *Conspiracy* (Frank Pierson, 2001, USA & UK). This film is based on the sole surviving copy of the Wannsee Protocol, which is one of the few written proofs of the extent of Hitler's plans to annihilate all European Jewry.<sup>9</sup> Carl Jacob Burckhardt, a Swiss diplomat and historian, said after their first meeting that Hedyrich was 'a young, evil god of death'.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, I believe that this name is fitting for my research in regard to the visual representation of this historical character. The famous British actor Kenneth Branagh depicts Heydrich in *Conspiracy*. I will investigate in a later part of this thesis how this representation by Branagh and the production by HBO shaped the meaning associated with Heydrich in this media text.

My thesis is distinct from other research because of the detailed analysis of the fictional representations of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich in relation reception studies in Germany, USA and UK with various carefully chosen film and television productions. I will focus throughout this thesis on the production context and the reviews in America, Germany and United Kingdom in relation to the fictional representations of these historical characters. My case studies depict leading National Socialists and events that are further removed

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<sup>6</sup> Chambers, M., 'The Devil's General? German film seeks to debunk Rommel Myth', *Reuters*, 2012, [Accessed: <http://www.reuters.com/article/entertainment-us-germany-rommel-idUSBRE8A00RM20121101>, 10.2.2017]

<sup>7</sup> Chambers, M., 2012. [Accessed: <http://www.reuters.com/article/entertainment-us-germany-rommel-idUSBRE8A00RM20121101>, 10.2.2017]

<sup>8</sup> BBC Press Office, 'Kenneth Branagh, Stanley Tucci and Colin Firth star in Conspiracy, an award-winning HBO Films/BBC Films co-production for BBC TWO', *BBC*, 2002, [Accessed: [http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2002/01\\_january/15/conspiracy.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2002/01_january/15/conspiracy.shtml), 12.6.20]

<sup>9</sup> BBC Press Office, 2002, [Accessed: [http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2002/01\\_january/15/conspiracy.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2002/01_january/15/conspiracy.shtml), 12.6.20]

<sup>10</sup> Burckhardt, C. J., in *Heydrich the Face of Evil* by Dederichs, M. R., Casemate, 2009, p. 73.

from personal memory as most of the original witnesses to fascism and the Holocaust have passed away. I believe that is vital to analyse these depictions in film and television in depth, because at some point the fictional representations of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich will define how these historical figures are remembered in the cultural memory. In the first part of this introduction, I will outline the scope of my research and give a brief overview of the historical figures Speer, Rommel and Heydrich. This part will be followed by a literature review including an analysis of Sabine Hake's *Screen Nazis*, Axel Bangert's *The Nazi Past in Contemporary German Cinema* and Rentschler's concept of the "Cinema of Consensus" to demonstrate how my research builds on previous research in this area of film studies. The second part of this introduction will be outlining the methodologies of reception studies and cultural memory. I will focus on Klinger's areas of the synchronic and diachronic in reception studies in relation to the fictional representations of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich and on Landsberg's concept of prosthetic memory.

## 1.2 **Analysing the shifts in the fictional representations of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich**

As Astrid Erll states, "film seems to have become the leading medium of popular cultural memory".<sup>11</sup> She believes that "films that are not watched may provide intriguing images of the past, yet they will not have any effect in memory cultures"<sup>12</sup> Therefore, I will focus on case studies of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich, which had a large audience and an impact in memory cultures. The fictional representations of these leading National Socialists have been actualized over time in different moving media images. The representation of Albert Speer in *Speer and Hitler: The Devil's Architect* was followed by an average of 3,84 million viewers in the prime time broadcast on the German TV Channel ARD in 2005.<sup>13</sup> The fictional representation of Rommel in the German television feature film *Rommel* was followed by 6,38 million viewers in the prime –time broadcast on the German TV Channel ARD in 2012.<sup>14</sup> Reinhard Heydrich was depicted the high production value BBC and HBO co-production *Conspiracy* from 2001, which features well-known actors such as Kenneth Branagh as Reinhard Heydrich, Stanley Tucci as Eichmann and Colin Firth as Dr. Wilhem Stuckart.<sup>15</sup> Due to the high profile of these actors, these casting choices imply that a large

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<sup>11</sup> Erll, A., *Literature, Film, and the Mediality of Cultural Memory*, in *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies* edited by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, De Gruyter, 2010, pp. 389-398, p. 395.

<sup>12</sup> Erll, A., *Literature, Film, and the Mediality of Cultural Memory*, in *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies* edited by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, De Gruyter, 2010, pp 389-398, p. 395.

<sup>13</sup> Bangert, A., 2014, p. 83.

<sup>14</sup> Der Spiegel, 'Rommel Film sorgt für starken ARD-Abend', *Der Spiegel*, 2.11.2012, [Accessed: <http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/tv/rommel-6-38-millionen-sahen-das-ns-biopic-in-der-ard-a-864719.html>], 15.5.20].

<sup>15</sup> Steinweis, A. R., 'Review of Conspiracy (BBC/HBO Films), directed by Frank Pierson from a script by Loring Mandel', *American Historical Review*, Vol. 107, No. 2, April 2002, p.675. [Accessed: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/historyfacpub/89>, 11.6.20].

audience would watch the HBO production *Conspiracy*. Film scholar Marcia Landy argues in her study *The Cinematic Uses of the Past*:

The star served as a carrier for social and economic value in the contemporary culture, thus conferring meaning on the figures and events selected from the past. The star image is history, and in itself has much to teach us about the uses of the past. Thus, aside from the star's role as a historical character in film, the notion of stardom (and of the diva) is in its own rights a historical and cultural artefact and, more important, a carrier of historical knowledge concerning past and present.<sup>16</sup>

This quote shows how international stars such as Branagh, Tucci and Firth can be carriers of history and historical knowledge. These casting choices carry meaning for the viewers and would influence how the selected events from the past are understood in contemporary culture. This notion is also reflected in Bernd Eichinger's assertion, who is the producer of *Downfall*, that 'history is made by individuals'. He argues in an interview in the liberal-conservative German newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine*:

I believe that history is better understood through individuals, instead of learning by heart special year dates. I believe that history is made by individuals. Historical situations do exist, but I argue: Without Hitler none of this would have happened or existed.<sup>17</sup>

Following his argument, the historical time of the Third Reich is better understood through individuals such as Speer, Rommel and Heydrich. I also chose this quote because the interviews from the film producer Bernd Eichinger, who also wrote the screenplay, in various newspapers and his influence on the production of *Downfall* will be relevant in my research, as he is partly responsible for the meaning created around this historical film. In comparison these two quotes reflect part of my research as the stars representing these historical figures carry meaning on their own, as well a historical knowledge. As different visual representations of these historical figures in *Speer and Hitler: The Devil's Architect*, *Downfall*, *Rommel* and *Conspiracy* will have an effect in memory cultures of different countries, I will analyse them as case studies in depth throughout my research in relation to the production context and reviews in America, Germany and Britain.

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<sup>16</sup> Landy, M., *Cinematic Uses of the Past*, University of Minnesota, 1996, p.22-23.

<sup>17</sup> Eichinger in 'Hitler Spielen' by Frank Schirmacher, 2004, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, p. 6, Translated by the author. [Accessed: <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/kino/kino-hitler-spielen-1162697-p6.html>, 2.8.2016]

It seems apparent that Heydrich is still of some interest for our modern culture as in 2017 the English-language French-Belgian film *The Man with the Iron Heart* (Cédric Jimenez, France & US, 2017) based on the French novel *HHhH* (Himmler's Brain Is Called Heydrich) was released.<sup>18</sup> This production focuses on Heydrich professionally and intimately portraying his darkest side but also aiming to modernize the genre.<sup>19</sup> This is an example for the on-going fascination with this historical character. This film was shot in Prague and Budapest.<sup>20</sup> The Australian actor Jason Clarke depicts Heydrich in this case study. All these factors show how that the history of the Third Reich, while focused heavily on Germany, has always been an international undertaking structured by critical historical goals.<sup>21</sup> Randall Halle argues in his book *German Films after Germany* that through the orientation towards marketability and the fact that Europeans filmmakers cannot afford to solely produce for Europeans, they need to find narratives and topics, which will circulate beyond a national audience in order to prove profitable, such as films about the Third Reich or leading National Socialists.<sup>22</sup> I will analyse in a later chapter how Clarke's portrayal of Heydrich in *The Man with the Iron Heart* and Branagh's portrayal of Heydrich in *Conspiracy* define the meaning associated with Heydrich in these media texts through the production context and reviews in Britain and America.

### 1.3 **Brief Overview of the historical figures Speer, Rommel and Heydrich**

Speer, Rommel and Heydrich were chosen to portray a complete picture of the psychology of the Third Reich. In the following paragraphs, I will give a brief overview of these historical figures in order to offer context to their fictional representation in my case studies. Albert Speer joined the National Socialist Workers Party in 1931.<sup>23</sup> In 1935, he designed parade grounds searchlights and banners for the Nuremberg party congress.<sup>24</sup> This historical event is depicted in the propaganda film *Triumph of the Will* (Leni Riefenstahl, 1935, Germany). It could be argued that he became Hitler's personal architect in 1936 as he received the order to restructure Berlin and answered directly to

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<sup>18</sup> Keslassy, E., 'Weinstein Company Acquires U.S. Rights to Nazi Thriller 'HHhH' (EXCLUSIVE)', *Variety*, 2015, [Accessed: <http://variety.com/2015/film/news/weinstein-hhhh-nazi-thriller-jason-clarke-rosamund-pike-1201628742/>], 2.8.2016]

<sup>19</sup> Keslassy, E., 'Cannes: Jason Clarke, Rosamund Pike, Jack O'Connell Join WWII-Set Drama 'HHhH' (EXCLUSIVE)', *Variety*, 2015, [Accessed: <http://variety.com/2015/film/festivals/cannes-jason-clarke-rosamund-pike-jack-oconnell-join-wwii-set-drama-hhhh-exclusive-1201488787/>], 2.8.2016]

<sup>20</sup> Pirodsky, J., 'New Heydrich Assassination Film HHhH gets First Trailer,' *The Prague Reporter*, April 2017, [Accessed: <https://www.praguereporter.com/home/2017/4/27/new-heydrich-assassination-film-hhhh-gets-first-trailer>], 1.7.20]

<sup>21</sup> Halle, R., *German Films after Germany-Toward a Transnational Aesthetic*, University of Illinois Press, 2008, p. 113.

<sup>22</sup> Halle, R., 2008 p. 93.

<sup>23</sup> Brechtken, M. *Albert Speer: Eine deutsche Karriere*, Siedler Verlag, 2017, p. 36.

<sup>24</sup> Brechtken, M., 2017, p. 68.

Hitler.<sup>25</sup> He became the Minister of Armaments in 1942.<sup>26</sup> Historian Magnus Brechtken argues that Speer could have known that the war against the Allies was lost at the end of 1941 or the beginning of 1942. According to him, this would have meant that Speer continued the war with the full consciousness of this fact, deceived millions of people and caused their death.<sup>27</sup> At the Nuremberg trials, Speer was sentenced to twenty years of imprisonment.<sup>28</sup>

Film scholar Axel Bangert argues Speer was Germany's favourite perpetrator and the television production *Speer and Hitler: The Devil's Architect* reinstates the myth that Hitler seduced the German population.<sup>29</sup> Examples for the continuing fascination with Albert Speer in the German cultural memory are the most recent large-scale exhibition *Albert Speer in the Federal Republic-Dealing with the German Past* in Nuremberg in 2018, as well as the most recent Speer biography *Albert Speer-Eine deutsche Karriere* by historian Magnus Brechtken from 2017. However, no academic research has before compared Speer's representation in *Inside the Third Reich*, *Downfall* and *Speer and Hitler: The Devil's Architect* in detail in relation to cultural memory and reception studies. In order to be able to offer a detailed analysis of Speer's representation, I decided to focus on the depiction of Speer's confession to Hitler in these visual narratives in the second chapter.

Erwin Rommel, a famed military tactician, was widely respected in Britain and Germany during and after the war. In the book *Rommel-A Reappraisal*, the British commander in chief in the Middle East Sir Claude Auchinleck characterised Rommel as 'our friend Rommel'. This shows that this historical character continues to enjoy substantial military reputation in Britain.<sup>30</sup> He was known as the 'Desert Fox' for his victories over the British 8<sup>th</sup> Army in North Africa.<sup>31</sup> History scholar Ian Beckett argues "much of Rommel's reputation also rests on the manner of Rommel's death, compelled to take poison on 14 October 1944 after being implicated in the unsuccessful 20 July 1944 bomb plot against Hitler".<sup>32</sup> Beckett argues that Rommel abhorred the suggestion of assassination and would have not moved against Hitler on the 20 July had he been fully fit.<sup>33</sup> One of my key case studies the war film *Rommel*, produced for German television, focuses on Rommel's last

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<sup>25</sup> Brechtken, M., 2017, p. 80-81.

<sup>26</sup> Brechtken, M., 2017, p. 157.

<sup>27</sup> Brechtken, M., 2017, p. 185.

<sup>28</sup> Brechtken, M., 2017, p. 305.

<sup>29</sup> Bangert, A., 'Encountering Hitler: Seductive Charisma and Memory Spaces in Heinrich Breloer's *Speer & Hitler*', in *Hitler-Films from Germany* by Machtans, K. & Ruehl, M. A., (ED), Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, pp. 211-231, p. 231.

<sup>30</sup> Beckett, I. F., in *Rommel-A Reappraisal* by Ian F., Beckett (Ed), Pen and Sword Military, 2013, p.1.

<sup>31</sup> Beckett, I. F., 2013, p.1.

<sup>32</sup> Beckett, I. F., 2013, p.1.

<sup>33</sup> Beckett, I. F., 2013, p.6.

days before his death. Therefore, it is important to keep these historical facts in mind while analysing his fictional representation. According to Beckett, the perception of this historical figure was also shaped by the cinema, through fictional representation such as the American war film *The Desert Fox* from 1952, in which James Mason portrayed Rommel as a sympathetic character.<sup>34</sup> My research will focus on his shifting representations in visual fictions in different cultures from war hero to an opportunist, who had no interest in the mass killing of Jews and refused to assist the officers, who tried to kill Hitler.<sup>35</sup>

Heydrich, chief of the Reich Main Security Office, was one of the principle organizers of the Holocaust as he chaired the Wannsee Conference.<sup>36</sup> At this conference the plans for murder of what would turn out to be approximately six million people were discussed.<sup>37</sup> Historical scholar Robert Gerwarth argues in his biography of Reinhard Heydrich that the discussion at Wannsee was not the moment at which a fundamental decision about the Holocaust was made, but this historical event testified to the increasing radicalism with which the central authorities of Nazi Germany viewed the Jewish question.<sup>38</sup> Heydrich was also acting Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia, two regions in today's Czech Republic. Robert Gerwarth argues that Heydrich was installed as acting Reich Protector at the time that the Nazi leadership decided on a further radicalization of anti-Jewish policies. Therefore, Heydrich must have seemed as the obvious choice to guarantee a swift implantation of Hitler's wish that Prague should become one of the major cities rendered 'Jew-free'.<sup>39</sup> Heydrich was assassinated in 1942 by three Czechoslovak agents in Prague.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Beckett, I., 2013, p.1.

<sup>35</sup> Kennedy, K., 'Erwin Rommel: Courageous Hero or Cynical Opportunist?', *History News Network*, 2012, [Accessed: <http://historynewsnetwork.org/article/149691>, 1.8.2016]

<sup>36</sup> Gerwarth, R., *Hitler's Hangman: The Life of Heydrich*, Yale University Press, 2011, p. 209-210.

<sup>37</sup> Boenisch, G., 'The first In-depth Look at a Nazi 'God of Death'', *Der Spiegel*, 2011, [Accessed: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/spiegel/reinhard-heydrich-biography-the-first-in-depth-look-at-a-nazi-god-of-death-a-787747.html>, 1.8.2016]

<sup>38</sup> Gerwarth, R., 2011, p. 217

<sup>39</sup> Gerwarth, R., 2011, p. 224.

<sup>40</sup> Gerwarth, R., 2011, p. 2.



#### 1.4 Literature review of Sabine Hake's *Screen Nazis-Cinema, History and Democracy*, Axel Bangert's *The Nazi Past in Contemporary German Cinema-Viewing Experiences of Intimacy and Immersion* and Eric Rentschler's "Cinema of Consensus"

##### 1.4.1 Sabine Hake's *Screen Nazis-Cinema, History and Democracy*

In order to frame my argument and to show how my research builds on previous academic work, I will discuss in the following paragraphs Hake's *Screen Nazis* and Bangert's *The Nazi Past in Contemporary German Film*. Furthermore, I will analyse how Rentschler's concept of the "cinema of consensus" can be applied to my case studies in a later part of the introduction. Film scholar Sabine Hake argues that feature films have played and continue to play a key role in the conception of national identity and the definition of national culture.<sup>41</sup> She believes that film must be seen as an integral part of social and cultural history.<sup>42</sup> Even though her focus is on German contemporary films and German identity in her book *German National Cinema*, I believe that her statements can be applied to other cultures and national cinemas. She states:

As aesthetic products, films provide privileged access to the private fantasies that are reflections of, and reaction to social and political conditions at a particular historical juncture. Promising spectatorial pleasure and emotional catharsis, feature films since the beginnings of cinema have exerted a powerful influence over everything from sexual behaviour and consumer choices to aesthetic preferences and political attitudes.<sup>43</sup>

Therefore, it seems evident to analyse how Speer, Rommel and Heydrich are represented through film and TV in our contemporary society, because these representations tell us more about the cultures that produced these media texts about leading Nazis than about the historical characters themselves. Hake believes that "film as the most important mass medium of the twentieth century not only provide powerful stories and images but also uses its own historicity to convey a sense of cultural tradition and historical continuity."<sup>44</sup> This statement could imply that fictional representations of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich in films with powerful stories and images might dominate how these historical characters are remembered in the cultural memory because of the power of narrative films as a form

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<sup>41</sup> Hake, S., *German National Cinema*, Second Edition, Routledge, 2008, p.1.

<sup>42</sup> Hake, S., 2008, p.1.

<sup>43</sup> Hake, S., 2008, p.3.

<sup>44</sup> Hake, S., 2008, p.7.

of social history and national imaginary.<sup>45</sup> Even though most of my German case studies have been produced in a distant time period from the Second World War, the legacy of Nazi films and the Third Reich should not be forgotten. Film scholar Eric Rentschler argues that the unprecedented historical example of the Nazi media dictatorship lingers as a very disturbing prospect, especially now, as sophisticated and pervasive technologies for the transmissions and manipulations of audio-visual materials increasingly define who we are and how we exist.<sup>46</sup> Sabine Hake analyses in depth in her book *Screen Nazis: Cinema, History and Democracy* the fictional representations of National Socialists in different decades and cultures. As this is the closest study to my own, I will outline her argument in the following paragraph and show how my study will move further than hers by incorporating the concepts of cultural memory and reception studies in the analysis of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich.

Sabine Hake gives in *Screen Nazis* an overview of the different representations of leading National Socialists across different eras and different cultures such as the American, Italian, Danish and German cinema. I will focus on the parts of her study, which relate to my research of the televisual and filmic representation of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich. She argues that the main themes in the filmic representations of Nazism and fascism are the crisis of masculinity, the sexualisation of power and the aestheticization of violence.<sup>47</sup> Some of these themes can be found in relation to the fictional representations of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich in my case studies. As an example Erwin Rommel's representation in *Rommel* could be linked to the aestheticization of violence as a member of the German army is portrayed as a positive identification figure. In this German television production, Rommel saves a British soldier, as an SS officer wants to torture him to death to retrieve some secret information from him. In the following scene, Rommel drinks tea with this enemy and talks in a cultivated manner about the new developments of the war. However, his character could also represent a crisis of masculinity as he is torn between following Hitler due to his military values and supporting the plot to assassinate Hitler.

The sexualisation of power and aestheticization of violence can be found in my case study *Conspiracy* depicting the Wannsee Conference, where the Final Solution would be discussed by 15 men and would seal the fate of the European Jewry.<sup>48</sup> By the end of the meeting, which lasts less than two hours, it becomes obvious that Heydrich is not

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<sup>45</sup> Hake, S., 2008, p.6.

<sup>46</sup> Rentschler, E., *The Ministry of Illusion- Nazi cinema and its afterlife*, Harvard University Press, 1996, p.223.

<sup>47</sup> Hake, S., *Screen Nazis: Cinema, History and Democracy*, The University of Wisconsin Press, 2012, p. 22.

<sup>48</sup> Time Warner, 'Kenneth Branagh and Stanley Tucci Star In HBO Film's Conspiracy, Debuting May 19', *Time Warner*, 2001, [Accessed: <http://www.timewarner.com/newsroom/press-releases/2001/04/05/kenneth-branagh-and-stanley-tucci-star-in-hbo-films-conspiracy>, 7.8.20]

proposing a final solution to the Jewish problem with permanent gas chambers; he is telling the group that such a solution is already in place.<sup>49</sup> The journalist J. Rampton describes in *The Independent* the ending of *Conspiracy*. He states the “immaculately suave Heydrich suggests the guests unwind by listening to Schubert’s Quintet in C major, as the adagio will tear your heart out”. Eichmann refers to the music as “Schubert’s sentimental Viennese shit” after Heydrich has left the villa.<sup>50</sup> This shows as an example how the violence is aestheticized in this fictional representation of Heydrich, as he shows his appreciation of classical music after agreeing on the mass murder of the European Jews.

Furthermore, Hake argues that the films about Nazi dictatorship promote democratic values such as equality, liberty rule of law, divisions of power, and above all individualism. She believes that filmmakers have fully embraced the Nazi’s status as phenomenon and see their ubiquity as an essential part of the politics and economic images in popular cinema.<sup>51</sup> According to Hake the Nazis on screen allow us to control and preserve the threat of their otherness; therein lies the enduring appeal of those we ‘love to hate.’<sup>52</sup> This could be partly an explanation of the on-going fascination with leading National Socialists in film and television across different cultures and eras. Hake states regarding the representation of Nazis on screen:

The Nazis rarely acquire the status of fully developed characters; they appear primarily as stereotypical villains, clichéd madmen and voiceless, faceless extras. Their lack of psychological interiority, their inability to learn and change, and their unwillingness to acknowledge the other as other find foremost expression in their exclusion from what, according to the films, creates and sustain democracies: a rich, complex, and satisfying personal life.<sup>53</sup>

I disagree with the above statement, as Speer, Rommel and Hedyrich do acquire the status of fully developed characters in the fictional narratives, which I have chosen as my case studies. Even though it is debatable how much their characters change throughout the televisual and filmic narratives, these leading National Socialists are not stereotypical

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<sup>49</sup> Time Warner, ‘Kenneth Branagh and Stanley Tucci Star In HBO Film’s Conspiracy, Debuting May 19’, *Time Warner*, 2001, [Accessed: <http://www.timewarner.com/newsroom/press-releases/2001/04/05/kenneth-branagh-and-stanley-tucci-star-in-hbo-films-conspiracy>, 7.8.20]

<sup>50</sup> Rampton, J., ‘Staying In: An appetite for Destruction. BBC2 re-enacts the Chilling Dinner that Sealed the Fate of Thousands of Jews’, *The Independent*, 19.1.2002, [Accessed: <https://www.branaghcompendium.com/conspiracy.html>, 20.2.20]

<sup>51</sup> Hake, S., 2012, p. 17.

<sup>52</sup> Hake, S., 2012, p. 17.

<sup>53</sup> Hake, S., 2012, p. 21.

villains, nor clichéd madmen or voiceless extras. Speer's psychological interiority is portrayed in *Inside the Third Reich*, *Downfall* and *Speer and Hitler: The Devil's Architect* through his confession to Hitler. Rommel's ability to learn and change is portrayed in *The Desert Fox* and *Rommel* through his involvement in the plot to assassinate Hitler. Hedyrich does not acknowledge the other as other as he wants to pursue the mass killing of the Jews in *Conspiracy*. However, he is portrayed in this film as a complex character and not as a stereotypical villain. Gritten describes Heydrich's representation in *Conspiracy* in a review in the liberal-leaning *Los Angeles Times* focusing on Branagh's look and performance. He states "Branagh's hair is dyed blond and swept back sleekly, as he runs the Wannsee Conference like the chairman of a corporation".<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, *The Man with the Iron Heart* depicts Heydrich in domestic scenes with his family showing him with a rich, complex, and satisfying personal life. This shows how my research moves further than Hake's study in analysing the fictional representations of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich in relation to the production of these media texts and the reviews in Germany, America and Britain. Furthermore, I will incorporate Hake's *Screen Nazis* in depth in my discussion of *Downfall* (2004) and the representation of leading National Socialists in this German film in my second chapter and show how my research progresses through the analysis of the fictional representation of Albert Speer in relation to reception studies and the concept of cultural memory. Sabine Hake also argues in her study of contemporary German cinema:

Films about the Nazi past take advantage of the commercialisation, banalisation and kitschification of the Third Reich through the culture industry on the one hand, and the highly circumscribed discourse of guilt, mourning, and taboos prevalent in political and scholarly debate.<sup>55</sup>

Following Hake's statement, the Nazi past, which has been reduced to a consumable good, can be explored, experienced, and enjoyed without guilt by a German audience.<sup>56</sup> I would agree that this notion could be seen in my research for the case studies *Downfall*, *Rommel* and *Speer and Hitler* as the guilt is shifted from the German population to leading Nazis in these fictional narratives. However, I would argue that this statement can only be applied to a German audience, because viewers from different countries might associate a different meaning to these fictional depictions of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich depending on the cultural context and the reviews from their countries. I will explore in the

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<sup>54</sup> Gritten, D., 'When the Job is Odious', *Los Angeles Times*, 13.5.2001, [Accessed: <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2001-may-13-ca-62810-story.html>, 11.11.19]

<sup>55</sup> Hake, S., 2008, p. 213.

<sup>56</sup> Hake, S., 2008, p. 213.

following chapters how the production context such as production companies, directors and stars influence the meaning associated with representations of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich, as well as reviews from Germany, America and Britain.

#### 1.4.2 **Axel Bangert's *The Nazi Past in Contemporary German Cinema-Viewing Experiences of Intimacy and Immersion***

In comparison to Hake's *Screen Nazis*, Axel Bangert analyses in depth Speer's representation in *Speer and Hitler: The Devil's Architect* (2005) in his book *The Nazi Past in Contemporary German Film-Viewing Experiences of Intimacy and Immersion*. He argues that the film directed by Breloer is problematic because it represents the homoerotic bond between Hitler and Speer as the essence of their actual relationship.<sup>57</sup> Bangert states:

Breloers's portrayal of Speer reiterates the apologetic notion that the Germans were "ein verführtes Volk" (a seduced people). While setting out to expose Speer Breloer ultimately reinstates him as the "Lieblingstäter der Deutschen" (the German's favourite perpetrator)-with whom they could identify. And his portrayal of Hitler sustains the myth of a charismatic leader, who in the end betrayed his people."<sup>58</sup>

I will analyse in depth in my second chapter if this statement applies to Speer and Hitler's representation in *Speer and Hitler: The Devil's Architect* in relation to Speer's confession to Hitler. I agree with Bangert that this television production might reinstate Speer as Germany's favourite perpetrator. However, I disagree that this visual narrative focuses on Speer and Hitler's homoerotic bond as the essence of their relationship. I will also outline this in my second chapter.

Bangert argues in his book *The Nazi Past in Contemporary German Film* that the private interaction between Speer and Hitler provides an allegory for the nature and effect of Hitler's seductive charisma, thus serving as a model for the collective adoration of Hitler during the Third Reich.<sup>59</sup> Following his argument, the homoerotic bond between Speer

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<sup>57</sup> Bangert, A., *The Nazi Past in Contemporary German Film: Viewing Experiences of Intimacy and Immersion*, Camden House, 2014, p. 94

<sup>58</sup> Bangert, A., 2014, p. 94.

<sup>59</sup> Bangert, A., 2014, p. 83.

and Hitler is symbolised through the architectonic model of Germania in this visual narrative. This scene, in which Speer reveals an architectural model to Hitler using a spotlight, alludes, according to Bangert, to the interpretation of psychologist Alexander Mitscherlich that within the relationship between the architect and dictator, Speer, by giving birth to Hitler's ideas, played the female part. Therefore, it could be argued that the main theme of the sexualisation of power can be found in this filmic representation of the Third Reich. However, the crisis of masculinity cannot be found in this fictional representation of Hitler and Speer, as the director Breloer depicts Hitler and Speer not as hysteric or fanatics, but as cultivated members of the bourgeoisie, wearing elegant suits.<sup>60</sup>

Furthermore, Bangert argues that film now makes it possible to partake in the life stories of ordinary Germans and to share their grief, as well as their shame of participation. It allows viewers to observe Nazi perpetrators not through the distancing lens of moral judgement, but with curiosity or even empathy, moving closer to examine their features, eyes, and skin.<sup>61</sup> This notion can also be found in my case studies portraying Speer, Rommel and Heydrich in film and television. An important model for Bangert's approach and my research is prosthetic memory by Alison Landsberg. In his study Bangert describes Landsberg's concept of 'prosthetic memory' as the audiovisual media having the experiential quality to equip viewers with memories of events they did not live through.<sup>62</sup> I agree with this statement in relation to my cases studies concerning Speer, Rommel and Heydrich as these media texts might be able to equip viewers with memories of the Third Reich they did not live through. I will outline later in this chapter how prosthetic memory applies to my research. However, I would like to show how Bangert applies this concept to his analysis of Nazi films in contemporary German cinema. He argues that in contrast to Landsberg's study, which focused on the cinema, his study also includes a large number of television productions. He states that a crucial difference between the two media is their reception context. In television, Landsberg's transferenceal space, in which the viewing experience occurs, is the domestic realm. According to Bangert, this is a much more private reception context than that of the movie theatre, providing access to the public sphere, while at the same time remaining detached from it. Bangert believes that the experiential quality of television closely reflects Landsberg's definition of prosthetic memories as privately felt public memories.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Bangert, A., 2014, p. 86.

<sup>61</sup> Bangert, A., 2014 p. 2.

<sup>62</sup> Bangert, A., 2014, p. 12.

<sup>63</sup> Bangert, A., 2014, p. 12.

In his conclusion Bangert argues that narratives of seduction such as *Speer and Hitler: The Devil's Architect* are problematic for fusing personal attraction with political belief.<sup>64</sup> According to him, the turn towards the private empathically embraces Nazi perpetrators; this exposure requires that questions of guilt and responsibility be temporarily suspended.<sup>65</sup> However, I disagree with this statement, as I believe that questions of guilt and responsibility are not suspended in the fictional representations of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich. I will outline and analyse in the following chapters how my case studies use these historical figures as signifiers to address different issues in English speaking cultures against German depictions in relation to reception studies. He believes that the contemporary German films dealing with the Third Reich analysed in his study have granted viewers access to private lives of those figures that have come to symbolize this period of history and exposed viewers to the chaos of war. The intimacy and immersion in these visual narratives are not an escape from political choices or the ethical dilemmas of the past. According to Bangert, the question, which can arise from close encounters with the Nazi past in contemporary German film are-What would I have become? Who are we now?<sup>66</sup> These visual narratives could serve as a point of contact with the Third Reich and the perpetrators. I agree with Bangert that German television productions such as *Rommel* and *Speer and Hitler: The Devil's Architect* can serve as points of contact with this period. However, I would disagree that through these fictional representations the viewers might ask themselves who they are or what they have become, because Speer, Rommel and Heydrich seem removed from our contemporary cultures.

As an increasing number of witnesses of the Holocaust, the Third Reich and the Second World War pass away, the depictions of leading National Socialists in films and television take on increasing importance. Sabine Hake argues that through this generational change and the Nazi past joining the German post-war division in defining collective memory and national heritage, historicization becomes increasingly dependent on mediatization and its particular modes of representation.<sup>67</sup> According to her, historicization means to trace changing constellations of film and fascism since the war and post-war years to assess their discursive function in defining the enemy, the absolute other of democracy, as part of larger political constellations. She argues that to historicize means to reconstruct the conditions under which fascism turned from signified into signifier and became identified with the project of democracy and the crisis of the political.<sup>68</sup> She believes that this revisionist project in relation to German cinema and television productions is most

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<sup>64</sup> Bangert, A., 2014, p. 164.

<sup>65</sup> Bangert, A., 2014, p. 163.

<sup>66</sup> Bangert, A., 2014, 169.

<sup>67</sup> Hake, S., 2012, p. 237.

<sup>68</sup> Hake, S., 2012, p. 23-24.

apparent in the focus on Germans and victims and innocent bystanders; and in the widespread desire for less problematic relationship to German history.<sup>69</sup> I agree with her argument as the focus on prominent Nazis such as Speer, Rommel and Heydrich leads to an understanding of Germans as innocent bystanders.

### 1.4.3 Eric Rentschler's "Cinema of Consensus"

As some of my case studies are German film and television productions, it seems necessary to analyse the German heritage film and the discussion surrounding it. The expression "the cinema of consensus" was coined by film scholar Eric Rentschler to describe a wave of apolitical but popular comedies produced between the mid 1980's and late 1990s.<sup>70</sup> It referred to a gathering films and filmmakers that dominated media accounts and industry campaigns in the political Kohl era in Germany.<sup>71</sup> Rentschler argues that the relationship comedies of this time period lacked critical voices and incisive visions leading to the disappearance of German cinema from major festivals and catalogues of foreign film distributors in the years 1985-1995.<sup>72</sup> Sabine Hake argues in her book *German National Cinema* in 2008 that after the revival of popular cinema in the 1990s labelled by Rentschler as 'cinema of consensus' recent signs of 'cinema of dissent' have been welcomed by scholars, who used to associate German cinema with critical perspectives.<sup>73</sup> This development is shown through film scholar Paul Cooke in his book *Contemporary German Cinema*. He states that the 'cinema of consensus' has been replaced by Hake's definition of a 'cinema of dissent'. One indication of the German cinema attracting international attention again was the showing of *The Edukators* (Hans Weingartner, 2004, Germany) in competition at Cannes in 2004, which became the first German film to be shown for eleven years.<sup>74</sup> Following his argument this development can also be traced back to the international success of films such as Hirschbiegel's *Downfall* from 2004, which made millions at the international box office.<sup>75</sup> Rentschler argues that only German films about Nazis ever get nominated for Academy Awards, such as the most recent example *Downfall*.<sup>76</sup> It seems evident that the notion of a 'cinema of consensus' still remains a key concept in the discussions of contemporary German

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<sup>69</sup> Hake, S., 2012, p. 237.

<sup>70</sup> Bangert, A., 2014, p. 137.

<sup>71</sup> Rentschler, E., *The Use and Abuse of Cinema*, Columbia University Press, 2015, p. 318

<sup>72</sup> Rentschler, E., 2015, p. 320

<sup>73</sup> Hake, S., *German National Cinema*, Second Edition, Routledge, 2008, p. 192.

<sup>74</sup> Der Spiegel, 'Nach elf Jahren- Deutscher Film im Cannes Wettbewerb', *Der Spiegel*, 21.4.2004 [Accessed: <http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/kino/nach-elf-jahren-deutscher-film-im-cannes-wettbewerb-a-296370.html>, 10.9.17]

<sup>75</sup> Cooke, P., *Contemporary German Cinema*, Manchester University Press, 2012 p. 13, See <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=downfall.html>, *Downfall* grossed \$92 million worldwide during its theatrical release.

<sup>76</sup> Rentschler, E., 2015, p. 321.



cinema through the scholarly debate by Sabine Hake and Paul Cook in various books such as *Hake's German National Cinema* and the book *New Directions in German*, which is edited by Paul Cooke.<sup>77</sup>

In his book *The Use and Abuse of Cinema* Rentschler argues that 'the cinema of consensus' continues in retro films, which are commonly labelled as German heritage film. This would contrast Cooke's statement that the 'cinema of consensus; has been replaced by Hake's definition of 'the cinema of dissent'. Hake argues that in the films about the Third Reich since 1989 recognition of the survival of the past in the present and of the changing terms and modes of engagement can be discerned.<sup>78</sup> According to Rentschler, an example for the continuing of the 'cinema of consensus' is the film *The Lives of Others* (Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, 2006, Germany), which depicts the transformation of a Stasi officer into a human being capable of empathy. Rentschler argues that this film became a master text for the remembrance of the GDR.<sup>79</sup> A film such as *Rommel* or a docudrama like *Speer and Hitler: The Devil's Architect* could become the master text for the recollection of these historical characters. Rentschler states *The Lives of Others* does not want to create discomfort nor generate controversy for the audience. It aims to please every member of the audience; it celebrates an art that both defies and overcomes politics; and it harmonizes the topic of the film.<sup>80</sup> This notion can also be found in the films about Speer and Rommel. Even though Nico Hoffman, the producer of *Rommel*, claims that he aims to demystify Rommel, the film leaves the question open of how much Rommel was involved with the plot to assassinate Hitler.<sup>81</sup> British military historian Robert Lyman told BBC Radio's 4 *World Tonight* programme that Rommel was a very loyal soldier, who would have not thought about helping the plotters.<sup>82</sup> The film portrays Rommel as a human being in the last seven months of his life, for which the audience can feel empathy.<sup>83</sup> Therefore, it harmonizes the issue if Rommel was involved in the plot to assassinate Hitler.

The same notion can be found in how the film *Speer and Hitler: The Devil's Architect* depicts the question of whether Speer knew about the Final Solution. This docudrama

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<sup>77</sup> Cooke, P. in *New Directions in German Cinema* by Cooke, P. & Homewood, C., IB Tauris & Co Ltd, 2011, p. 3.

<sup>78</sup> Hake, S., 2008, p. 212.

<sup>79</sup> Rentschler, E., 2015, p. 328

<sup>80</sup> Rentschler, E., 2015, p. 328

<sup>81</sup> BBC News, 'German film looks at ties between Rommel and Hitler', *BBC*, 2.11.2012, [Accessed: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-20180010>, 1.9.16]

<sup>82</sup> BBC News, 2012, [Accessed: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-20180010>, 1.9.16]

<sup>83</sup> Fuhr, E., 'Mythos Rommel zwischen Gehorsam und Widerstand', *Welt*, 1.11.2012, [Accessed: <http://www.welt.de/kultur/history/article110483662/Mythos-Rommel-zwischen-Gehorsam-und-Widerstand.html>, 3.9.16]

portrays Speer mostly as an architect and not as Minister of Armaments. The journalist Jens Jessen states that *Speer and Hitler: The Devil's Architect* is indicative for a broader tendency in German film to portray Nazi perpetrators and the Third Reich in general with a degree of empathy.<sup>84</sup> An article in the German newspaper *Die Zeit* argues that in contrast to the historical truth about Speer's attendance at the famous Posen Speech involving the Final Solution, this production comes to the conclusion that Speer was oblivious about the Holocaust.<sup>85</sup> In comparison to *The Lives of Others*, the German television production *Speer and Hitler: The Devil's Architect* from 2005 does not want to generate controversy or create discomfort in the audience. German heritage films appropriate the past and seek to transform it into a lucrative commodity.<sup>86</sup> However, this trend is not only apparent in German film productions. The English-language French-Belgian film production of *The Man with the Iron Heart*, which was released in 2017, and is based on the successful book with the title *HHhH*, transforms the assassination of Heydrich and his life into a lucrative commodity. The appeal to heritage cinema has quite often deployed national history positively like recalling the former glory of the British Empire and putting treasured traces of the imperial past on display.<sup>87</sup> However, the term "German heritage cinema" almost without exception refers to historical films that look back at horrific history, especially the Nazi epoch.<sup>88</sup> Through these representations of leading National Socialists, the audience attempts to enhance their understanding of the Nazi epoch. *Downfall*, *Speer and Hitler: The Devil's Architect* and *Rommel* ensure that the Third Reich is not forgotten in Germany. However, these fictional representations of leading Nazis might replace the historical figures in the cultural memory.

Rentschler argues that a German film could be seen as a heritage in its own right.<sup>89</sup> The films about Speer, Rommel and Heydrich could be seen as quite literally heritage films as they inscribe heritage in their narrative and enact the construction of a humanistic heritage as a cultural artefact.<sup>90</sup> Through this, they put on display the illusory quality of such a construction and their popular reception also attests to the seductive power of such illusions. One example for the construction of a cultural artefact is the German film *Rommel* (2012, Germany). Even though, the film attempts to demystify Rommel, it leaves open to question whether Rommel was part of the plot to assassinate Hitler. The general's

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<sup>84</sup>Jessen, J., 'Im grellen Zirkus des Gedenkens', *Die Zeit*, 23 March 2005, [Accessed: <http://www.zeit.de/2005/13/Hitler>, 1.4.16]

<sup>85</sup>Schwendemann, H., 'Späte Enttarnung eines Lügners', *Die Zeit*, 4 Mai 2005, [Accessed: [http://www.zeit.de/2005/19/Speer\\_und\\_er](http://www.zeit.de/2005/19/Speer_und_er), 1.4.16]

<sup>86</sup> Rentschler, E., 2015, p. 320.

<sup>87</sup> Rentschler, E., 2015, p. 324.

<sup>88</sup> Rentschler, E., 2015, p. 324.

<sup>89</sup> Rentschler, E., 2015, p. 327.

<sup>90</sup> Rentschler, E., 2015, p. 328.

wife denied he had played a role in this historical event.<sup>91</sup> However, by leaving this question open this film seems to attempt to avoid controversy. In a review of *Rommel* by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) it is mentioned that Rommel could have been a loyal follower of Hitler to the end, while not sharing his Nazi politics.<sup>92</sup> Therefore, I will investigate if Rommel is portrayed in such a manner in the film *Rommel* or if his fictional representation could lead to a different understanding of his character. The intention not to engender discomfort in the audience is also shown in how it deals with the Holocaust. A review from the BBC claims that critics argue that it brushes over the issue of whether Rommel knew about the Final Solution. However, history professor Soenke Neitzel is quoted in this review that even though Rommel did not commit war crimes, he was also not a shining liberal or Social Democrat. According to Neitzel, an officer of his rank must have known about the Holocaust.<sup>93</sup> Through the authentic mise-en-scène, as the film was mostly shot on the original location, the film could be seen as a cultural artefact; and it also constructs heritage through its narrative.

### 1.5 Methodology-Reception Studies

Jonathan Culler described a theorist's approach to reception studies, as "it is not a way of interpreting works but an attempt to understand their changing intelligibility by identifying the codes and interpretative assumptions that give them meaning for different audiences at different periods".<sup>94</sup> This description of reception studies resonates in my thesis, as I will analyse what meaning the representations of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich give to different audiences at different time periods. My research will be structured around Janet Staiger's and Barbara Klinger's concepts of reception studies.

Barbara Klinger argues in her defining essay on reception theory with the title 'Film history\ terminable and interminable: recovering the past in reception studies' that reception theory influenced by cultural and historical materialism ideally analyses the discontinuities and differences characterizing the uses of a particular film, within and beyond its initial appearance.<sup>95</sup> I will analyse in this thesis the fictional representations of Albert Speer, Erwin Rommel and Reinhard Heydrich in film and television productions in relation to reception studies. Klinger states:

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<sup>91</sup> BBC News, 'German film looks at ties between Rommel and Hitler', *BBC*, 2012, [Accessed: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-20180010>, 10.9.2016]

<sup>92</sup> BBC News, 2012, [Accessed: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-20180010>, 10.9.2016]

<sup>93</sup> BBC News, 2012, [Accessed: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-20180010>, 10.9.2016]

<sup>94</sup> Culler, J., *The Pursuit of Sign: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction*, Cornell University Press, 1981, p. 13.

<sup>95</sup> Klinger, B. 'Film history\ terminable and interminable: recovering the past in reception studies', *Screen*, Vol. 38 No. 2, summer 1997, p. 107-128. p. 111 [Accessed: <https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/38.2.107>, 5.1.2018]

Reception studies scholars almost exclusively come to terms with a film's meaning by considering the impact that its original conditions had on its social significance. Research into origins, while all-consuming can ultimately lapse into a kind of historicism that sidesteps the big meaning question: that is the radical flux of meaning brought on by changing social and historical horizon over time.<sup>96</sup>

I believe that this quote from Klinger's essay represents part of my argument in this thesis, as I will analyse the different meanings of the fictional representations of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich, which changed over time accordingly as the social and historical horizon changed. However, Klinger is concerned with the manner a single film can change depending on the audience and the context it is received in. In contrast, I analyse in my research different representations in different periods and cultures as my argument is based in production history.

Even though I will consider the impact the original conditions of films about Speer, Rommel and Heydrich had on their social significance, it is also important to analyse the debate around these fictional representations, which shaped their significance in the cultural memory. Klinger distinguishes in her essay between two large categories, which are the synchronic and diachronic. The first one is about the difference in a particular moment, whereas the other is about change over time in relation to media texts. She states:

The more specific subdivisions under the synchronic are organized in a progressively outward-bound direction, beginning with those areas most closely associated with the production of a film ('cinematic practices'), moving to those technically outside the industry but closely affiliated with a film's appearance ('intertextual zones') and ending with social and historical contexts circulating through and around its border.<sup>97</sup>

Regarding the structure of this introduction, I will analyse the relevant subdivisions of the synchronic, as well as the diachronic and show with examples from my case studies how Klinger's reception theory is relevant for my research. Apart from the synchronic and diachronic, Klinger argues in her essay 'Digressions at the Cinema: Reception and Mass Culture' that a popular text is by definition immersed in a social environment that subjects

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<sup>96</sup> Klinger, B., summer 1997, p. 111, [Accessed: <https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/38.2.107>, 5.1.2018]

<sup>97</sup> Klinger, B., summer 1997, p. 113.

it to interference and dissociation from its original authorial intent.<sup>98</sup> This could mean that the representations of National Socialists, such as the examples I mentioned at the start of this chapter, are subject to interference in a social environment and could take on a different meaning in contrast to the original authorial intent. She also discusses Umberto Eco's definition of a popular text. Eco argues that a popular text is "a complete and closed form in its uniqueness as a balanced organic whole, while at the same time constituting an open product on account of its susceptibility to countless interpretations which do not impinge on its unadulterable specificity."<sup>99</sup> Eco acknowledges that the text circulates as a product and not just as an aesthetic object, but also in such a way that the text is preserved as an integral unit and protected from extrinsic adulteration.

In relation to my research, I would agree with Eco's definition of a popular text as the cinematic and televisual representations of Albert Speer, Erwin Rommel and Reinhard Heydrich are complete and closed in their form, as well as a balanced organic whole offering the past of the Third Reich to viewers in compelling, coherent and simplified fictional narratives. However, these representations are open to countless interpretations by audience members, critiques and film scholars. Umberto Eco described the concept of intertextuality through the term of inferential walks. According to Eco, inferential walks occur when the reader must identify intertextual frames necessary to decipher the narrative and so has to 'walk outside the text, in order to gain intertextual support.'<sup>100</sup> Even though the narratives about Speer, Rommel and Heydrich are presented to the audience as an organic whole, the audience members sometimes need to walk outside of the text to decipher these narratives.

Without the intertextual support, these representations might not have any meaning to a contemporary audience. I would argue that inferential walks have an impact on the meaning of these fictional representations of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich because intertextual support such as reviews, academic criticism and historical documents inform the audience members about these historical characters. Klinger describes in her essay 'Digressions at the Cinema' that the reader digresses to gather the intertextual support to decipher a moment within a narrative.<sup>101</sup> Such a moment for the fictional representation of Albert Speer would be his confession to Hitler about disobeying his orders during his last

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<sup>98</sup> Klinger, B. 'Digressions at the Cinema: Reception and Mass Culture', *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 28, No.4, 1989, p.7. [Accessed: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1225392>, 5.1.18]

<sup>99</sup> Eco, U., in 'Digressions at the Cinema: Reception and Mass Culture' by Klinger, B., *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 28, No.4, 1989, p. 7. [Accessed: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1225392>, 5.1.18]

<sup>100</sup> Eco, U., in 'Digressions at the Cinema: Reception and Mass Culture' by Klinger, B., *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 28, No.4, 1989, p. 6. [Accessed: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1225392>, 5.1.18]

<sup>101</sup> Klinger, B., 1989, p. 14. [Accessed: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1225392>, 5.1.18]

visit to the Führerbunker. For the fictional representation of Erwin Rommel such a moment would be Rommel's suicide. For Reinhard Heydrich such a fictional moment would be the Wannsee Conference. As films narrate differently than books, the dramaturgical considerations determine the structure of the historical representation of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich and compress history. Judith Keilbach argues that key moments of the past become reference or crystallization points that channel the subsequent course of events.<sup>102</sup> I have chosen these moments, because they are significant for these historical characters, but also because they are represented in various film and television production across different decades and cultures. Therefore, it seems evident that Eco's concept of inferential walks can be applied to my research. In the following chapters I will use the fictional representations of these specific historical moments to analyse in depth the televisual and filmic representations of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich. Speer's confession to Hitler is fictionalised in the American television production *Inside the Third Reich*, the German film *Downfall* and the German television production *Speer and Hitler: The Devil's Architect*. Rommel's suicide is depicted in the American film *Desert Fox* and the German television production *Rommel*. The Wannsee Conference is depicted in the German television production *Die Wannseekonferenz* and the American and British film *Conspiracy*. Through focusing on the fictional representation of these key moments for Speer, Rommel and Heydrich, I will frame my analysis of the televisual and cinematic representation of these historical characters in relation to cultural memory and reception studies. In the following chapters I will use the fictional representations of these specific historical moments to analyse in depth the televisual and filmic representations of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich.

Klinger concludes her essay by stating that the writing of history gives the past a future. The cinematic and televisual representations of Albert Speer, Erwin Rommel and Reinhard Heydrich are giving the past of the Third Reich a future, so that this period will not be forgotten. Klinger argues that the knowledge propagated by a historical account become part of the social fabric as it enters into the competition over what the past signifies to contemporary culture. Thus, it attains a political dimension as it manoeuvres to reawaken concepts of the past to serve the present.<sup>103</sup> The aim of my research is to show how the representation of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich not only portray the past, but they also serve the present and demonstrate what the Third Reich signifies to contemporary culture.

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<sup>102</sup> Keilbach, J., 'National Socialism as Docudrama: On Programmed Ambivalence in Heinrich Breloer's Speer and Hitler', *New German Critique*, No 102, Vol 34, no 3, Fall 2007, p. 62. [Accessed: <https://doi.org/10.1215/0094033X-2007-011>, 8.1.18]

<sup>103</sup> Klinger, B. 'Film history\ terminable and interminable: recovering the past in reception studies', *Screen*, Vol. 38 No. 2, summer 1997, p. 107-128. p. 111 [Accessed: <https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/38.2.107>, 5.1.18]

Janet Staiger argues in her book *Interpreting Film: Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema* that “reception studies does not attempt to construct a generalized, systematic explanation of how individuals might have comprehend a text, but rather how they actually have understood them”.<sup>104</sup> According to Staiger, reception studies have as its object researching the history of interactions between real readers and text, actual spectators and texts. Even though everyone might read in individual ways, reception studies seek generalization, which applying to individual situation provides knowledge about large-scale processes.<sup>105</sup> Therefore through focusing on the production context of the televisual and filmic representation of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich and the reviews in America, UK and Germany, I seek to provide knowledge about processes in German and English cultures. However, Staiger mentions “not everything is possible at every time, although this potential has signal import for everyone concerned about social and political future”.<sup>106</sup> In relation to my research, this would mean that even though individual readings of the representations of leading National Socialists might be possible, my case studies might not lead the audience to different interpretations, other than the ones suggested by the media texts.

Each spectator is a complex and contradictory construction of self-identities as gender, sexual preference, class, race and ethnicity. The pertinence of each self-identity might at times dominate the other, perhaps overdetermine and contradict as well.<sup>107</sup> Staiger believes that reception studies can contribute to the understanding of how culture interweave and affect each other, as it helps to understand historical process and the struggle over the meaning of signs.<sup>108</sup> It seems evident that reception studies will enhance my analysis of the fictional representations of Speer Rommel and Heydrich, as these media texts portray the struggle over the meanings associated with these historical characters.

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<sup>104</sup> Staiger, J., *Interpreting Film: Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema*, Princeton University Press, 1992, p. 8.

<sup>105</sup> Staiger, J., 1992, p. 10.

<sup>106</sup> Staiger, J., 1992, p. 10.

<sup>107</sup> Staiger, J., 1992, p. 13.

<sup>108</sup> Staiger, J., 1992, p. 15.

## **1.6 Methodology-Klinger's areas of the synchronic and diachronic in reception studies in relation to the fictional representations of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich**

In order to frame my approach to reception studies, I will keep to Klinger's defined areas of the synchronic and diachronic in her essay 'Film history\terminable and interminable: recovering the past in reception studies'. She divides these two areas into three subdivisions- cinematic practices, intertextual zones and social and historical contexts.<sup>109</sup> However, the nature of interrelations between the various areas is deeply interactive.<sup>110</sup> According to Klinger, the synchronic areas are associated with the film production, distribution and exhibition that shape the film the audience will watch moving to those technically outside the industry, but closely affiliated with a film's appearance (intertextual zones) and ending with social and historical contexts circulating through and around its border."<sup>111</sup> Klinger argues that as a 'meaning-making' institution the industry, which introduces the film to the public, represents a powerful source with which to historicize the impact one contextual arena had on creating 'preferred' reading for films.<sup>112</sup> The diachronic dimensions are organized through the following terrains: revivals and retrospectives, reviews, academic theory, criticism and history, broadcast, satellite and cable television, video and laserdisc reproduction, fan culture, the biographical legend and cross-cultural reception.<sup>113</sup> I will focus in the following paragraphs more on the synchronic areas of reception studies, as Klinger states, "the practices and intertextual zones of the diachronic are most visibly active in the reappearance and circulation of classic era films through moments in history."<sup>114</sup> The focus of my research is the fictional representation of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich in contemporary film and television productions. However, reviews and academic criticism has shaped the meaning of my case studies as well and I will incorporate this into my thesis. Klinger believes that "those pursuing issues of reception interrogate such contextual elements to understand how they helped negotiate the film's social meaning and public reception, attempting to pinpoint the meanings in circulation at a given historical moment."<sup>115</sup> In order to show how reception studies can be integrated in my research, I will outline in the following paragraphs Klinger's definition of the synchronic areas of study with examples related to my case studies, which represent Speer, Rommel and Heydrich in film and television.

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<sup>109</sup> Klinger, B. 'Film history\ terminable and interminable: recovering the past in reception studies', *Screen*, Vol. 38 No. 2, summer 1997, p. 107-128. p. 111 [Accessed: <https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/38.2.107>, 5.1.18]

<sup>110</sup> Klinger, B., summer 1997, p. 114.

<sup>111</sup> Klinger, B., summer 1997, p. 113.

<sup>112</sup> Klinger, B., summer 1997, p. 115.

<sup>113</sup> Klinger, B., summer 1997, p. 124-126.

<sup>114</sup> Klinger, B., summer 1997, p. 123.

<sup>115</sup> Klinger, B., summer 1997, p. 114.



The first area of synchronic studies linked to cinematic practices is film production. Klinger asks, “what factors within this arena affected the ultimate constitution of the film(s) in question?”<sup>116</sup> I will focus on how the economic structure and production practices of a studio during a specific historical period helped shape the film product. Randall Halle argues in his book his book *German film after Germany* that the historical films proved particularly successful during the decade of the European Union, especially focused on the time period from the mid 1920s to 1945. According to Halle, the historical genre has been deployed within the national ensemble as a vehicle for imagining of the national community. He states, “the future of the European Union lies in contemporary film productions of the past”.<sup>117</sup> According to Halle, “as European filmmakers cannot afford to produce solely for Europeans, films produced within the arena of public funding must orient themselves towards an expanded film market”.<sup>118</sup> Therefore, I will analyse how these economic factors influence my case studies. An example for how a historical period shaped a film, could be the time period in which *Downfall* (2004) and *Speer and Hitler’s the Devil Architect* (2005) were produced, as it aligns itself with the sixtieth anniversary of the end of World War II. Randall Halle argues in his book *German film after Germany* that the significance of the recent German films dealing with the topic of the Third Reich derives from the fact that these films were produced as films from Germany, the aggressor nation, and the land of the perpetrators. In relation to *Downfall*, he argues that it should not be forgotten that this film is a popular entertainment film with high production values representing significant investment. It does not rely on experimental or challenging visual language, rather it draws on classic narrative forms, which could be seen as the language of popular world cinema.<sup>119</sup> These factors align itself with Klinger’s question of how the studio’s house style governs the selection of producers, directors, stars, scriptwriters and other personnel. In terms of *Downfall*, this could be reason of how Speer is portrayed in this film production. I will discuss this in length in the next chapter.

Another area of synchronic studies, I will focus on is film personnel, as the choice of actors, scriptwriters, directors and produces has an impact on a film’s social appropriation via the studio’s circulation of stories in the print and visual media about those personnel. One example for this is the casting choice of Heino Ferch as Speer in *Downfall*. The audience is also not only watching a human but Speer as a screen character portrayed by Heino Ferch embodying this historical figure. Heino Ferch was known to the German

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<sup>116</sup> Klinger, B., summer 1997, p. 115.

<sup>117</sup> Halle, R. *German Films after Germany-Toward a Transnational Aesthetic*, University of Illinois Press, 2008, p. 90.

<sup>118</sup> Halle, R., 2008, p. 93.

<sup>119</sup> Halle, R., 2008, p. 112.

audience through his roles in *The Tunnel* (Roland Suso Richter, 2001, Germany) and *Comedian Harmonists* (Joseph Vilsmaier, 1997, Germany). In *The Tunnel*, Heino Ferch portrayed the main character Harry Melchior, who digs a tunnel with the help of his friends to rescue their loved ones out of the German Democratic Republic known as GDR. By casting Heino Ferch as Speer, the screen character of Speer becomes more sympathetic for a German audience. The same might apply to the casting choice of Kenneth Branagh as Reinhard Heydrich in the international film production of *Conspiracy*, which fictionalises the Wannsee Conference. According to Klinger, “various personal biographies, commentaries and reported worldviews become part of the public’s structuring principles of viewing films”.<sup>120</sup> Therefore, it seems important to analyse this part of reception studies in depth in relation to my case studies representing Speer, Rommel and Heydrich.

Intertextual zones acknowledge cinema’s relation to other media and businesses, the mutual influences between film and associated practices external to the film industry. Klinger outlines one area of intertextual zones, which is review journalism. This refers to film criticism that appears in newspapers, magazines, radio and television. She states “such criticism helps establish the terms by which films will be discussed and evaluated in public”<sup>121</sup> An example could be a review for the German film *Rommel* (2012, Germany) by the British Broadcasting Corporation. This review argues that even though, the film attempts to demystify Rommel, it leaves open to question whether Rommel was part of the plot to assassinate Hitler. The general’s wife denied he had played a role in this historical event.<sup>122</sup> However, by leaving this question open this film seems to attempt to avoid controversy. Furthermore, this review mentions that Rommel could have been a loyal follower of Hitler to the end, while not sharing his Nazi politics.<sup>123</sup> Therefore, it could be argued that this review might influence how the British public evaluates this film. A different example would be the review of *Downfall* by the acclaimed German director Wim Wenders. He argued that it should not be allowed to portray Hitler in day-to-day situations and accused the film for not showing Hitler’s and Goebbels’s death.<sup>124</sup> This review could also shape the meaning of the fictional representation of leading National Socialists in *Downfall*.

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<sup>120</sup> Klinger, B., 1997, p. 117.

<sup>121</sup> Klinger, B., 1997. p. 118.

<sup>122</sup> BBC News, ‘German film looks at ties between Rommel and Hitler’, *BBC*, 2012, [Accessed: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-20180010>, September 2016]

<sup>123</sup> BBC News, 2012, [Accessed: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-20180010>, September 2016]

<sup>124</sup> Wenders, W., ‘Tja dan wollen wir mal’, *Zeit*, 21.10.04, p. 3. [Accessed: [http://www.zeit.de/2004/44/Untergang\\_n](http://www.zeit.de/2004/44/Untergang_n), 3.9.16]

In relation to my primary sources from various newspapers discussing and reviewing the fictional representations of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich, I will outline in the following paragraphs my rationale for the selection of these specific sources analysing the reception of each film. My research into the critical reception of these film and television texts included both broadsheet and tabloid newspapers, each with their own political character and I hope to include a range of perspectives from those selected. Regarding the first fictional representation of Albert Speer in the American television miniseries *Inside the Third Reich* for the television channel ABC, I focused for my primary sources on reviews from liberal newspapers such as *The New York Times*. This review focuses on how Speer was represented in this media text and how much he knew about the Final Solution. I found this review online. In order to discuss Speer's confession to Hitler in *Downfall*, one of my primary sources is from the liberal newspaper *The New York Times*. This review discusses the possibility of feeling sympathy with characters such as Speer in *Downfall*. Another primary source regarding the reception of *Downfall* in the UK is the review of the historian Ian Kershaw in the liberal newspaper *The Guardian*. I also found these sources online during my research.

During my trip to the library of the British Film Institute in London, I found most of the primary sources regarding the representation of Rommel in *The Desert Fox* in this archive. Some articles regarding the reception of this film during the screenings in the England are from *The Daily Worker*, which was founded in 1930 by the Communist Party of Great Britain *The Daily Worker* seems to be one paper in English where the film criticism follows the party line, which is left-wing. However, this not always the case with a conservative source such as the conservative magazine *The Spectator*, which includes left-wing critics for their culture part. Another primary source for the reception of *The Desert Fox* is from the conservative tabloid newspaper *The Daily Express* from 1951 with the title 'Mason's Rommel will fan up the fire again'. For the reception in America, I focused on primary sources from the conservative-leaning *The Detroit News* and the liberal-leaning American *TIME* magazine. One of my main primary sources for the reception of this film in America is the review 'Curious Twist: Now a German General is Heroized on Screen' by Bosley Crowther in the liberal *New York Times*. I decided to focus on this review because Darryl F Zanuck, the studio head of Twenty Century Fox, commented on this review in a letter showing the importance of this primary source. I found this review in the online archive of the liberal *The New York Times*. The primary sources for the reception in Germany are from the conservative newspaper *Die Welt*, the liberal newspaper *Kurier* and the conservative tabloid *Bild-Zeitung*, which are all from Germany. The primary sources for the reception in Austria are the Austrian communist newspaper *Der Abend* and the conservative British newspaper *The Daily Telegraph*.

Regarding the representations of Rommel in the German television film *Rommel* from 2012, I found most of my English primary sources in the press clipping on the website of the international distributor Betafilm. This press clipping included reviews from, British centric public service broadcaster *BBC*, the liberal-leaning *The Independent* and the centrist news-agency *Reuters*. I decided to focus on these reviews because they gave a comprehensive overview of the reception of *Rommel* outside of Germany. In comparison, I focused on the reviews regarding the reception of *Rommel* in Germany in the left-liberal German news magazine *Stern*, the conservative German newspaper *Frankfurt Allgemeine Zeitung* and the conservative German political magazine *Cicero*. Another primary source was the interview of the producer Hofmann in the liberal German newspaper magazine *Spiegel*. I was not able to locate online reviews in the tabloid online press.

On the subject of the reviews of Heydrich's representation in *Die Wannseekonferenz*, I found through my online research a review from the conservative German newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. I contacted the newspaper via email, and they provided me with a copy of it as a PDF file. I translated the article myself from English into German. The article 'Eiskalter Engel in der Herrenrunde' (An ice cold angel in the convivial group of men) from 1984 discusses *Die Wannseekonferenz* and questions the authenticity of the film. In comparison, I will also discuss the debate in the liberal German newsmagazine *Der Spiegel* in which the writer Mommertz took part. I accessed these German articles through the online archive of *Der Spiegel*. My primary sources for the reviews of *Die Wannseekonferenz* in America are from the liberal *New York Times* and the liberal *The Washington Post*. I found these sources through my research in the online archives of these newspapers. For my case study *Conspiracy*, I researched online for reviews and I mostly found reviews in the more liberal 'quality' newspapers such *The Guardian* to discuss the reception of the film in the UK and *The Independent* to discuss the scheduling of the film on the Holocaust Memorial Day in the UK. For the reception of *Conspiracy* in the US my primary sources are the liberal-leaning *Los Angeles Times*, the liberal weekly magazine *The New Yorker* and the conservative tabloid newspaper *New York Daily News*. My primary sources for discussing the casting choices of Jason Clarke and Rosamund Pike in *The Man with the Iron Heart* are also from liberal newspapers such as *The Guardian* and *The Independent*. One of my other primary sources for interviews with the director and the stars from this film, which I found online, is the French film magazine *Mondociné*. I also found online a review in the conservative *The Sunday Times* discussing the structure of this film. I was not able to locate online reviews in the tabloid press for *The Man with the Iron Heart*. I mostly found liberal-leaning sources. I am aware that these

sources tend to privilege the voices of men and white men, which is a reflection on the nature of these sources.

Another important part for my approach to reception studies is the area of academic theory, criticism and history as outlined by Klinger. Academic research, journal articles or academic books might differ dramatically from any meaning the film may have earned in its original context and affect transformations of cinematic meaning through time within the institution itself. I will analyse throughout my research how academic debates and criticism have shaped the meaning of the televisual and filmic representations of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich. One example for this could be the academic analysis of the humanisation of National Socialists in *Downfall*. Johannes von Moltke argues that the humanisation of Hitler is misleading because the audience is watching not a human, but a screen character portrayed by a human actor embodying a historical figure.<sup>125</sup> Speer returns to the bunker for a farewell visit and a confessional moment with Hitler. However, before his final encounter with Hitler, he visits Goebbels's children; checks in with Magda Goebbels, who is sick in bed; finally Speer accepts Eva Braun's invitation to see her before he takes leave of the Führer. Von Moltke argues that through aligning a beneficent Speer with the innocence of children, a sick woman and the incorrigibly naive Eva Braun, the film solicits the audience's moral allegiance with Hitler's secretary for armament and war production.<sup>126</sup> This scene will be analysed in depth in the following chapter and its surrounding academic debate through film scholars such as Axel Bangert. This example showcases how the academic debate can influence the representation of Speer and create the meaning for this representation.

### **1.7 Cultural Memory in relation to the fictional representation of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich**

According to Jan Assmann, cultural memory is a memory, which is tied to material objectivation, such as the medium of film, as it is purposefully established and celebrated.<sup>127</sup> Not only did he coin the term, but he also defined it:

The concept of cultural memory comprises that body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose 'cultivation' serves to stabilize and convey that society's self image. Upon such collective knowledge, for

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<sup>125</sup> Von Moltke, J., 'Sympathy for the Devil: Cinema, History and the Politics of Emotions', *New German Critique*, No 102, Fall 2007, p. 42. [Accessed: [www.jstor.org/stable/27669207](http://www.jstor.org/stable/27669207), 3.9.16]

<sup>126</sup> Von Moltke, J., 2007, p. 27.

<sup>127</sup> Assmann, J. in *Memory in Culture* by Astrid Erll, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, p. 28.

the most part (but not exclusively) of the past, each group bases its awareness of unity and particularity.<sup>128</sup>

It follows that on the images of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich, which are reused in each epoch, different groups base their self-image and identity. I decided to focus on Assmann's concept of cultural memory as it offers a clear definition of this term. Astrid Erll also claims in her book *Memory in Culture* that Assmann's book *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis* is the most influential book in the area of cultural memory.<sup>129</sup> As groups do not have a memory, they tend to make themselves one through film and television. Aleida Assmann calls this cultural memory.<sup>130</sup> The fictional representations of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich in film and television stabilize the understanding of this time period and identities of different groups through their cultivation in the cultural memory. The images linked to these leading National Socialists are either reused to stabilize the German identity in order to demonstrate the current German society is different to the Third Reich or these images are reused to show how different other groups and societies are in comparison with the National Socialists.

Alison Landsberg argues in her book *Prosthetic Memory-The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* that memories have ceased to belong to a particular group and have become part of a public domain.<sup>131</sup> It follows that mass cultures had the unexpected effect of making group specific cultural memories available to a diverse and varied populace.<sup>132</sup> In contrast to the cultural memory described by Assmann, this new form of memory does not reinforce a particular group's identity by sharing memories, but instead opens up memories and identities to persons from radically different backgrounds.<sup>133</sup> The sharing of memories of the Third Reich, which might be exclusive to cultural groups or generations, through film and televisual representations of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich increases the chances of these memories to attain social and political recognition.<sup>134</sup> The fictional representation of these leading National Socialists constructed in various film and television productions over different eras reinforce how these historical characters are remembered in the cultural memory.

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<sup>128</sup> Assmann, J. in *Memory in Culture* by Astrid Erll, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, p. 29.

<sup>129</sup> Erll, A., *Memory in Culture*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, p. 33.

<sup>130</sup> Assmann, A., in 'Communicative and Cultural Memory' by Jan Assmann from *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies* by Erll, A & Nünning, A., (Eds), De Gruyter, 2010, p. 111.

<sup>131</sup> Landsberg, A., *Prosthetic Memory-The transformation of American Remembrance in the age of mass culture*, Columbia University Press, 2004, p. 11.

<sup>132</sup> Landsberg, A., *Prosthetic Memory-The transformation of American Remembrance in the age of mass culture*, Columbia University Press, 2004, p. 11.

<sup>133</sup> Landsberg, A., 2004, p. 11.

<sup>134</sup> Landsberg, A., 2004, p. 11.

## 1.8 Methodology-Prosthetic memory

Landsberg argues that spectators adopt prosthetic memories of a period of time they have not lived through as a result of their experience with a mass culture technology i.e. their contact with cinema that dramatizes or recreates history of the Third Reich.<sup>135</sup> Even though I agree with this statement, I would argue that not only the experience of watching the Third Reich through a film might create a prosthetic memory, but also the reception of this film, which is defined through the production and the reviews. According to Landsberg, new technologies like the cinema have transformed memory by creating an unprecedented circulation of images and narratives about the past.<sup>136</sup> Alison Landsberg defines this new form of memory as prosthetic memory. It emerges at the interface between a person and a historical narrative about the past. Through this experience, the spectator sutures themselves into a larger history.<sup>137</sup>

Film scholar Russell Kilbourn argues that prosthetic memory represents a theory of artificial memory, in which representations in effect precede reality. This notion can be seen throughout my thesis as the fictional representations of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich precede the real historical figures. I would argue that the fictional representations of Speer Rommel and Heydrich would replace the historical figures in the cultural memory. According to Kilbourn, prosthetic memory is less concerned with questions of historical 'accuracy' or the recuperation of an authentic past and more with the ethically empowering potential for the individual of an expanded mnemonic dimension.<sup>138</sup> Kilbourn argues that the theory of prosthetic memory implies that the individual has been empowered by technology to simultaneously witness and experience historically significant events. He believes that this part of the prosthetic memory is not possible to achieve, as the process to feel or experience in relation to cinema would entail a mode of technical mediation beyond the capacities of conventional cinema.<sup>139</sup> Even though I agree with Kilbourn that it is difficult to measure to what extent an individual is able to feel or witness an historical event through prosthetic memory, I believe that Landsberg's notion of prosthetic memory enables individuals to have a personal connection to an event or time period they did not live through such as the Third Reich.<sup>140</sup> As the individuals see the historic time period of the Third Reich through the eyes of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich,

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<sup>135</sup> Landsberg, A., 2004, p. 28

<sup>136</sup> Landsberg, A., 2004, p. 8.

<sup>137</sup> Landsberg, A., 2004, p. 2.

<sup>138</sup> Kilbourn, R. J. A., *Cinema, Memory, Modernity- The Representation of Memory from the Art Film to Transnational Cinema*, Routledge, 2010, p. 27.

<sup>139</sup> Kilbourn, R. J. A., 2010, p. 159.

<sup>140</sup> Landsberg, A. in *Cinema, Memory, Modernity- The Representation of Memory from the Art Film to Transnational Cinema* by Kilbourn, R. J. A., Routledge, 2010, p. 159.

the prosthetic memory enables ethical thinking and creates empathy for these historical characters because every individual is able to witness and experience this time period through various media texts.

According to Landsberg, the cinema has the capacity to create shared social frameworks for people, who inhabit literally and figuratively different social practices and beliefs.<sup>141</sup> She states, “this mass technology can structure ‘imagined communities’ that are not necessarily geographically or nationally bounded.”<sup>142</sup> However, the spectator does not simply apprehend a historical narrative but takes on a more personal, deeply felt memory of a past event like the Third Reich. The resulting prosthetic memory has the ability to shape the person’s subjectivity and politics.<sup>143</sup> Fictional representations of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich could influence the audience’s subjectivity about these historical characters. As an example the latest depiction of Erwin Rommel in the German film *Rommel* has been criticised by members of the soldier’s family, who claim that it depicts him as a Nazi criminal who was in thrall to Hitler.<sup>144</sup> They argue that film represents Rommel as “an upstart, a favourite of Hitler and a Nazi war criminal”.<sup>145</sup> However, nothing is straightforward: Rommel is known to have become more critical of the Nazis as the war progressed, however he was also a confidant of propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels, who helped to build his image as a German hero.<sup>146</sup> The director Niki Stein argued that he sees Rommel as a hero of a generation of wartime Germans “who realise only gradually and too late that the person they have served with such passion is a criminal”.<sup>147</sup> This filmic representation could change the public image of Rommel for a younger German generation, who did not experience this time period.

Landsberg states that prosthetic memory can make people feel themselves part of larger histories and narrative that go beyond our families and transcend barriers of race and ethnicity.<sup>148</sup> She believes that prosthetic memory enables ethical thinking and fosters empathy.<sup>149</sup> It could also create new relations to the past that have consequences for the present.<sup>150</sup> I would argue that the prosthetic memories created by the film and television

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<sup>141</sup> Landsberg, A., 2004, p. 8.

<sup>142</sup> Landsberg, A., 2004, p. 8

<sup>143</sup> Landsberg, A., 2004, p. 2

<sup>144</sup> Child, B., ‘Rommel film criticised for depicting general as ‘Nazi war criminal’, *The Guardian*, 21.9. 2011 [Accessed: <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2011/sep/21/rommel-film-nazi-war> , 9..8.2018]

<sup>145</sup> Child, B., 21.9.11, [Accessed: <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2011/sep/21/rommel-film-nazi-war>, 9..8.18]

<sup>146</sup> Child, B., 21.9. 2011, [Accessed: <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2011/sep/21/rommel-film-nazi-war>, 9..8.18]

<sup>147</sup> Stein,N. in ‘Rommel film criticised for depicting general as ‘Nazi war criminal’ by Child, B., 2011, [Accessed: <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2011/sep/21/rommel-film-nazi-war>, 9..8.18]

<sup>148</sup> Landsberg, A., 2004, p. 152.

<sup>148</sup> Landsberg, A., 2004, p. 152.

<sup>149</sup> Landsberg, A., 2004, p. 149.

<sup>150</sup> Landsberg, A., 2004, p. 152.



about Speer, Rommel and Heydrich could shape and define how these historical figures are remembered.

In critique of the concept of prosthetic memory film scholar Lutz Koepnick argues in his academic paper 'Reframing the Past: Heritage Cinema and the Holocaust in the 1990s' that not every film dealing with the past can create a prosthetic memory for the audience.<sup>151</sup> He believes that Landsberg implies the historic film's implied audiences can establish empathetic relations to the victims of the Holocaust and become their prostheses in the present.<sup>152</sup> In Koepnick's analysis of films such as *Comedian Harmonists* (Joseph Vilsmaier, 1997, Germany), *Aimee & Jaguar* (Max Färberöck, 1999, Germany) and *Gloomy Sunday* (Rolf Schnübel, 1999, Germany) he argues that these films convert Nazi history into a theme park, a screen of timely and untimely projections, instead of producing knowledge about the Holocaust.<sup>153</sup> Following Koepnick's argument, these films are easy to digest and envision history, including its violent struggles, from a consensus-orientated perspective, which can gratify diverse audiences and offer something to everyone. He believes that this cinema undercuts any serious attempt at negotiating historical distances, losses and damages.<sup>154</sup> The prosthetic memory of films such as *Comedian Harmonists* and *Aimée & Jaguar* produce nostalgia for successful moments, which transcend the traumas and ruptures of public history.<sup>155</sup>

## 1.9 Thesis Structure-Chapter Breakdown

This thesis consists of five chapters, examining the fictional representations of the historical characters Speer, Rommel and Heydrich. Chapter two is focused on the fictional representation of Albert Speer. I will discuss his depiction in *Inside the Third Reich* (Marvin J. Chomsky, 1982, USA), *Downfall* (Hirschbiegel, 2004, Germany) and *Speer and Hitler: The Devil's Architect* (Heinrich Breloer, 2005, Germany). These case studies are chosen because Albert Speer is either represented as a protagonist or appears as a supporting character. I will analyse the different popular images of Speer in different cultures as a diachronic study of his image analysing how the films were received after their release. My first case study is the representation of Albert Speer in the American television movie *Inside the Third Reich*. Despite Speer's faithfulness to Hitler in which he is portrayed by Rutger Hauer, he is never made to seem as ruthless and cruel as the

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<sup>151</sup> Koepnick, L, 'Reframing the Past: Heritage Cinema and the Holocaust in the 1990s', *New German Critique*, No. 87, Special Issue on Postwall Cinema, Autumn 2002, p. 77-78. [Accessed: [www.jstor.org/stable/3211135](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3211135), 4.9.17]

<sup>152</sup> Koepnick, L, Autumn 2002, p. 78.

<sup>153</sup> Koepnick, L, Autumn 2002, p. 78.

<sup>154</sup> Koepnick, L, Autumn 2002, p. 78.

<sup>155</sup> Koepnick, L, Autumn 2002, p. 79-80.

other leading National Socialists such as Hitler, Goering and Goebbels. He is depicted more of an opportunist. In all the filmic and televisual representations of Albert Speer, he is portrayed as a sophisticated, intelligent and civilized man. However, some of the films develop a different conclusion in how much Speer knew about the Holocaust and I will examine briefly his representation in this American television production to frame his later depictions in *Downfall* and *Speer and Hitler: The Devil's Architect*. The most recent depiction of Speer in the German television production *Speer and Hitler: The Devil's Architect* Speer portrays him as a reserved individual driven primarily by his architectural ambitions and then seduced by the attentions and flattery of his leader.<sup>156</sup> Through comparing these productions as my key sources, I will explore how they shaped the cultural remembrance of Albert Speer through their narrative structure, film production and reviews. I have chosen these three case studies, because in all of these three fictional representations, Speer's confession to Hitler about disobeying his order is depicted, even though it never happened in reality. I will analyse in this chapter this scene in detail demonstrating how this scene shaped Speer's fictional representation in relation to the concepts of cultural memory and discussing reviews in different cultures.

Chapter three examines the representation of Erwin Rommel in film and television. I will discuss his depiction in *The Desert Fox* (Henry Hathaway, 1951, USA) and *Rommel* (Niki Stein, 2012, Germany). These two case studies are chosen because Erwin Rommel is represented as a protagonist. However, these two media texts use the historical figure of Rommel as a signifier to address current issues at the time of the production. I will compare how Rommel's popular image changed over time in different cultures through the production contexts and reviews in Germany, America and Britain. I undertook my research in the archive of the British Film Institute to analyse the reviews of *The Desert Fox* in United Kingdom. Through this research I will be able to offer a detailed analysis of how *The Desert Fox* was received when it was distributed in UK, Germany and Austria shortly after the end of the war. Through *The Desert Fox*, the cinematic Rommel became the paradigm for the decent German officer.<sup>157</sup> Richard Crossman, former psychological warfare officer and Labour MP, stated that the British Nation deceives itself into believing that there were two sorts of Germans, which were Good Germans and Bad Germans. The 'Bad' Germans are militarists, Nazis and anti-democratic. In contrast to this, he 'Good

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<sup>156</sup> Guner, F., 'DVD: Speer and Hitler: The Devil's Architect', *theartsdesk*, 6.6.11, [Accessed: <http://www.theartsdesk.com/film/dvd-speer-and-hitler-devils-architect>, 10.4.16].

<sup>157</sup>Rau, P., *Our Nazis-Representations of Fascism in Contemporary Literature and Film*, Edinburgh University Press, 2013, p. 129.

Germans' were peace-loving democrats and real gentleman. As Rommel was a clean fighter, he must have been anti-Nazi and would be a good ally of democracy.<sup>158</sup>

In order to have a clear framework in this chapter, my main key source will be the most recent representation of Rommel in the German film production *Rommel*. I will compare his representation in this fictional narrative to an earlier depiction in *The Desert Fox*. In contrast *Rommel* focuses on the last seven months in Rommel's life. Nico Hoffmann, the producer, claims that ninety per cent of the dialogues is based on protocols of army meetings validating the authenticity of this fictional narrative.<sup>159</sup> Rommel is represented as tragic hero, who admired Hitler for too long and overlooked evidence about the mass killing of the Jews.<sup>160</sup> The film implies that he was fully aware of the Holocaust and that he may have been an anti-Semite.<sup>161</sup> However, Cortina Hecht, a German historian, claims that this film leaves out several important details about Rommel's involvement in German resistance against Hitler.<sup>162</sup> The extent to which Rommel was prepared to oppose Hitler will remain unknown and his aim to broker a peace deal with the Allies was never realised. Through analysing the production of the American film *The Desert Fox* and the German TV production *Rommel*, as well as the reviews in America, UK and German, I will demonstrate what these fictional representations of Rommel convey about the cultures they are produced in and the time period of their productions. Therefore, I will discuss in this chapter how Rommel's cinematic representation changed over time and how the decent German officer turned into a tragic hero, who was defeated by history.<sup>163</sup>

Chapter four examines the depiction of Reinhard Heydrich in film and television. I will discuss his depiction in *Die Wannseekonferenz* (Heinz Schirk, 1984, Germany), *Conspiracy* (Frank Pierson, 2002, UK) and *The Man with the Iron Heart* (Cédric Jimenez, France & US, 2017). These case studies are chosen because Reinhard Heydrich is represented as a protagonist. I will compare how Heydrich's popular image changed over time in different cultures. One of the most well-known representations of Heydrich was in the HBO production *Conspiracy*. In this film, the historical event of the Wannsee

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<sup>158</sup>Crossmann, R., in *Our Nazis-Representations of Fascism in Contemporary Literature and Film*, Rau, P., 2013, p. 130.

<sup>159</sup> Buss, C., 'Hitlers Hamlet', *Der Spiegel*, 1.11.12 [Accessed: <http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/tv/rommel-ulrich-tukur-als-hitlers-wuestenfuchs-in-der-ard-a-863956.html>], 11.8.16]

<sup>160</sup> Buss, C., 1.11.2012. [Accessed: <http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/tv/rommel-ulrich-tukur-als-hitlers-wuestenfuchs-in-der-ard-a-863956.html>], 11.8.16].

<sup>161</sup> Paterson, T., 'Row over film that portrays Rommel as more rat than fox', *The Independent*, 28.10.12 [Accessed: <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/news/row-over-film-that-portrays-rommel-as-more-rat-than-fox-8229392.html>], 15.8.16]

<sup>162</sup> Paterson, T., 28.10.12 [Accessed: <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/news/row-over-film-that-portrays-rommel-as-more-rat-than-fox-8229392.html>], 15.8.2016]

<sup>163</sup> Paterson, T., 28.10.12 [Accessed: <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/news/row-over-film-that-portrays-rommel-as-more-rat-than-fox-8229392.html>], 15.8.16]

Conference is depicted. The German film production *Die Wannseekonferenz* also depicts the Wannsee Conference. However, this film is not as widely known as *Conspiracy*, which could be due to its casting choice and the release on West German television in the 1980s in German. Even though *Die Wannseekonferenz* claims to be historical authentic and it portrays the attending National Socialists as coldblooded, who wanted the Holocaust to happen.<sup>164</sup> However, the historian Uwe Dietrich Adam claims that Heydrich never actually talked about the mass killing at the conference, but only talked about an employment of labour in the East.<sup>165</sup> Furthermore, I will discuss how the casting choices of the international stars Branagh in *Conspiracy* and Clarke in *The Man with the Iron Heart* influenced the meaning associated with these fictional representations of Heydrich. Therefore, I will analyse how these media texts shaped the cultural image of Heydrich through their production and reviews in Germany, America and Britain.

### 1.10 The Moebius strip and the fictional representations of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich

In his book *Hi Hitler! How the Nazi Past is being Normalized in Contemporary Culture* Gavrin D. Rosenfeld compares the Nazi past to the Moebius strip.<sup>166</sup> The Moebius strip was discovered by a German scientist in the mid nineteenth century and symbolizes endless futility. One depiction of this invention is M. C. Escher's famous drawing of ants walking indefinitely along the strip's path.<sup>167</sup> I believe that this comparison is appropriate to describe the representations of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich in film and television. Rosenfeld states that this image represents the never-ending debate over the Nazi past. His argument is also emphasised through new films such as *The Man with the Iron Heart* from 2017 as the production of films dealing with Nazis, as their main subject seems to never end.

It seems at first abstract to relate Escher's painting to the fictional depictions of Speer, Rommel and Hedyrich, but the debate around *Downfall* shows that the ants might represent the on-going fascination with the Nazi past. The *New York Times* criticised the overall project:

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<sup>164</sup> Hoehne, H., 'Eine Falle der Betroffenheit', *Der Spiegel*, 17.12.84, [Accessed: <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-13511955.html>], 17.8.16]

<sup>165</sup> Hoehne, H., 17.12.84, [Accessed: <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-13511955.html>], 17.8.16]

<sup>166</sup> Rosenfeld, G., D., *Hi Hitler! How the Nazi Past is being Normalized in Contemporary Culture*, Cambridge University Press, 2015, p. 349.

<sup>167</sup> Rosenfeld, G., D., 2015, p. 349.

It is fascinating without being especially illuminating, and it holds your attention for its very long running time without delivering much dramatic or emotional satisfaction in the end.<sup>168</sup>

This notion is also shared by the *Entertainment Weekly*:

The film's portrayal stops short of revelation. Once you witness Hitler's denial, the film has little more to say about him.<sup>169</sup>

In comparison with these international critical responses, Christine Haase states that the German critics were underwhelmed by the film in the book *New Directions of German Cinema*. She argues that the liberal German magazine *Spiegel* deemed it 'banal, the liberal German newspaper *Tagesspiegel* 'strangely empty; and the liberal German newspaper *Die Zeit* 'rather pointless altogether.<sup>170</sup> These ants in Escher's painting never seem to arrive and never able to stop. In comparison with these critical responses, I believe that Escher's painting can be applied as an allegory for the representation of leading National Socialists in film and television.

According to Rosenfeld, the drawing is also a reminder that the paths of remembrance are not linear and the goal of normality lies out of reach beyond a curving horizon.<sup>171</sup> The different depictions of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich in film and television prove that the paths of remembrance are not linear. Their representations have changed over time. Through the various representations in film and television our current society attempts to explain the Nazi era and to understand these leading National Socialists. However, I would argue that the goal of these fictional narratives is not normality, as by focusing on Speer, Rommel and Heydrich the uniqueness of this time period is emphasised. It seems that fictional narratives about these historical characters also relate to the ants in Escher's drawing, as they never stop to be reproduced. Randall Halle argues in his book *German Film after Germany* that contemporary film productions dealing with the period of World War II, the European fascism and the Holocaust can be seen as attempts to create a future by rejecting the past.<sup>172</sup> He states, "the stories of that particular era offer negative

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<sup>168</sup> Scott, A.O., 'The Last Days of Hitler: Raving and Ravioli', *New York Times*, 18.2.05, [Accessed: <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/02/18/movies/the-last-days-of-hitler-raving-and-ravioli.html>, 15.9.2018]

<sup>169</sup> Gleiberman, O. 'Downfall: It's springtime for Hitler's final 12 days in Germany (B)', *Entertainment Weekly*, Vol. 808, 25 February 2005, p. 79-80.

<sup>170</sup> Haase, C., 'Downfall (2004): Hitler in the new millennium and the (ab)uses of history', in *New Directions in German Cinema* by Cooke, P. & Homewood, C., (ED), I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2011, p. 48.

<sup>171</sup> Rosenfeld, G. D., 2015, p. 349.

<sup>172</sup> Halle. R., *German Films after Germany-Toward a Transnational Aesthetic*, University of Illinois Press, 2008, p. 100

foils to the positive strings of the present, the ability to look and see where “we” came from and how far “we” have travelled.”<sup>173</sup> According to Halle, films such as *Downfall* offer the audience manageable images of the past that seems to have been overcome in our present.<sup>174</sup> He points to the danger that a film such as *Downfall* suggest that spectators have engaged with the past in the simple act of viewing images of the Third Reich, without the demand to see those images in a network of historic connections and expanding critical-analytic capabilities.<sup>175</sup> I will investigate in the following chapters if this applies to the fictional representations of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich.

Halle offers another explanation for the contemporary film productions portraying leading National Socialists such as Speer, Rommel and Heydrich. He believes that there will never be satisfying representation of the Third Reich. According to him, ‘we’ do not expect any single film or group of films to offer the last word. There will always be more that ‘we’ can expect, more that ‘we’ should demand.<sup>176</sup> This argument links back to Escher’s painting of the ants on the Moebius strip, the ants never arrive at a destination and there might never be a satisfying representation of the Third Reich as no singular film or television productions might be able to offer the last word on this topic. My thesis will explore in the following chapters if the fictional depictions of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich arrive at any destination regarding reception studies and the concepts of cultural memory or like the ants on the Moebius strip these films will follow indefinitely along the strip’s path of the never-ending debate about the Third Reich.

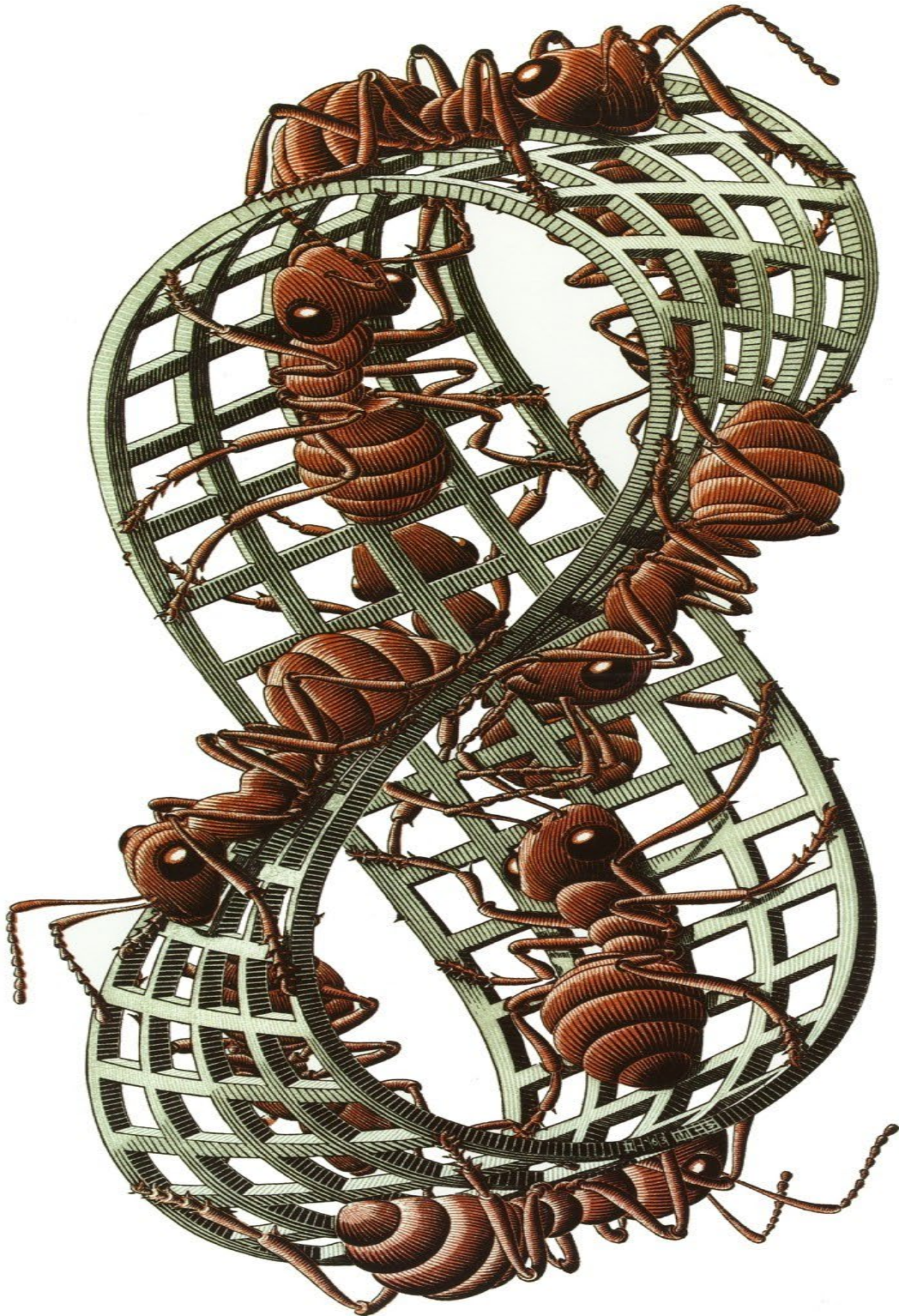
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<sup>173</sup> Halle, R., 2008, p. 100.

<sup>174</sup> Halle, R., 2008, p. 127.

<sup>175</sup> Halle, R., 2008, p. 127-128.

<sup>176</sup> Halle, R., 2008, p. 128.



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Figure 1: Drawing of the Moebius strip by M. C. Escher





## Chapter 2 'The Devil's Architect': Albert Speer in film and television

### 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will analyse the fictional representation of the historical character Albert Speer in film and television productions in America and Germany. In order to provide a clear framework of how the concepts of cultural memory and reception studies are applied to the depictions of Albert Speer, I will mainly focus on his representation in the German film and television productions *Downfall* (Hirschbiegel, 2004, Germany) and *Speer and Hitler: The Devil's Architect* (Heinrich Breloer, 2005, Germany). At the start of this chapter, I will give an overview of Speer's first fictional depiction in the American television production *Inside the Third Reich* (Marvin J. Chomsky, 1982, USA) to outline how his portrayal in media texts changed depending on the culture and time period. These fictional representations produce an image of this historical character in the cultural memory, which stands in opposition to the 'real persona' and might create a different meaning for this historical character in relation to the culture and era in which the media text is produced. This means that Speer's fictional representations in the German productions *Downfall* and *Speer and Hitler: The Devil's Architect* could determine how this historical character is remembered and will replace the image created by historical facts and books. I will discuss in depth at a later part of this chapter the fictional representation of Speer's confession during his last visit to Hitler's bunker. Klinger argues that historical reception studies moved the main arena of meaning and significance from text to context.<sup>177</sup> This means that the aesthetic or political value of a film is no longer a matter of its intrinsic characteristics, but the way those characteristics are deployed by various intertextual and historical forces.<sup>178</sup> The selective fictional representations of Albert Speer in film and television focusing on specific historical events shape history by representing only certain events from this time period. This means that their intertextual context also shapes the significance of these media texts and the meaning they create linked to the historical character Albert Speer through reviews and the production contexts in America and Germany.

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<sup>177</sup> Klinger, B. 'Film history\ terminable and interminable: recovering the past in reception studies', *Screen*, Vol. 38 No. 2, summer 1997, p. 107-128. p. 111 [Accessed: <https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/38.2.107>, 5.1.18]

<sup>178</sup> Klinger, B., summer 1997, p. 112.

## 2.2 Reception studies in relation to *Downfall* and *Speer and Hitler: The Devil's Architect*

I will focus specifically on my case studies *Downfall* and *Speer and Hitler: The Devil's Architect* in relation to reception studies and analyse both of these media texts with Klinger's categories of the synchronic and diachronic. The synchronic categories are those areas more closely associated with the production of a film labelled as the cinematic practices such as the film production, film distribution, film exhibition and the film personnel, which means the choice of actors, directors and producers.<sup>179</sup> I will analyse in depth how the selection of actors to represent Speer in my case studies such as Rutger Hauer, Heino Ferch and Sebastian Koch could influence the representation of Albert Speer, as well as the choice of directors such as Hirschbiegel and Breloer and their approach to the visual narrative of the Third Reich in *Downfall* and *Speer and Hitler: The Devil's Architect*.

Another factor in terms of film personnel and film production is the producer of *Downfall* Bernd Eichinger, who influenced the reception of *Downfall* to a large extent through interviews in German newspapers and arranging a pre-showing for the British historian Ian Kershaw, who wrote afterwards a very positive review of this film. Eichinger was partly responsible for how this media text was received through reviews, interviews and marketing strategies in the German public sphere. In terms of the category of film distribution in the synchronic categories, my two German case studies *Downfall* and *Speer and Hitler* have major differences. The first was distributed in national and internationally cinemas, later also on German national television, with the aim to appeal to a large audience at home and abroad, in order to be financially successful. The second was distributed only on German national television being able to apply a more complex narrative, which might not appeal to a very large audience.

The area of the intertextual zones from the synchronic areas I will focus on the most is review journalism, which refers to film criticism that appears in newspapers, magazines, radio and television, as such criticism helps establish the terms by which films will be discussed and evaluated in public.<sup>180</sup> I would argue that the intertextual zone such as review journalism could be entangled with the categories of film practices such as film personnel and film exhibition in reception studies. One example for this is the review of *Downfall* by the historian Ian Kershaw in the liberal-leaning British newspaper *The*

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<sup>179</sup> Klinger, B., summer 1997, p. 115.

<sup>180</sup> Klinger, B., summer 1997, p. 118.

*Guardian*. In terms of film personnel, the producer Bernd Eichinger allowed Kershaw to view the film before its general release. This is an unusual to allow a historian to preview a film before press screening or a general release. Kershaw points out in this review that the film is a triumph, it is according to him “chillingly authentic, the cast is outstanding, and it is a marvellous historical drama”. His only criticism is that it does not help the viewer to understand Hitler better. However, he argues that Hitler will always be an enigma.<sup>181</sup> This overall positive review of *Downfall*, through the conscious decision of the producer Eichinger to let Kershaw view the film before its release, demonstrates how these synchronic categories of reception studies can be linked together and influence the meaning attached to a media text in relation to the fictional representation of the Third Reich.

The social and historical contexts defined by Klinger in relation to the synchronic areas of study are categorised through the economy, law, religion, politics, class, race and ethnicity, gender and sexual difference, family, ideology and cross-cultural reception.<sup>182</sup> I will give an example in the following paragraph how the social and historical context could influence the meaning of my case studies linked to my German case studies in relation to the area of politics. Film scholar Bangert argues that the term of “Normalisierung” (normalisation), which originated during the years of Helmut Kohl’s chancellorship played a key role in the fictional representation of the Third Reich and is a crucial term for the national identity and collective belonging that resurfaced in Germany after 1990. According to Bangert, normalization sought a rehabilitation of national identity toward the inside and Germany’s acknowledgment as a country like any other towards the outside.<sup>183</sup> Bangert quotes Paul Cooke and Stuart Tarbener, who state that German reunification both reaffirmed and transformed the effort to normalize Germany’s self image and role in the world.<sup>184</sup> The following German government under chancellor Gerhard Schröder continued the process of normalizing German history.<sup>185</sup> Film scholars Cooke and Tarbener recognize as one Schröder’s major achievements the promotion of a less troubled attitude towards the past and being German.<sup>186</sup> Both of my case studies *Downfall* (2004) and *Speer and Hitler* (2005) were produced after Schröder’s government was in

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<sup>181</sup> Kershaw, I., ‘The human Hitler’, 17.9.2004, *The Guardian*, [Accessed: <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2004/sep/17/germany>, 20.8.18]

<sup>182</sup> Klinger, B., summer 1997, p. 119-123.

<sup>183</sup> Bangert, A., 2014, p. 136.

<sup>184</sup> Cooke, P. and Tarbener, S. in *The Nazi Past in Contemporary German Film* by Axel Bangert, 2014, Camden House, p. 136.

<sup>185</sup> Bangert, A., 2014, p. 136.

<sup>186</sup> Cooke, P. and Tarbener, S. in *The Nazi Past in Contemporary German Film* by Axel Bangert, 2014, Camden House, p. 136.

power and this political development could have an influence on their meaning in relation to reception studies.

Film scholar Paul Cooke argues that *Downfall* suggests the internalization of normalization by a large number of German filmmakers, as this film production provides another example for Germany's shift towards the cinematic mainstream, because its narrative, filmed in the style of a 'Hollywood war epic', allows the audience to identify with, yet distance themselves from the world they see through the eyes of Hitler's naïve and young secretary Trauld Junge.<sup>187</sup> Therefore it could be argued that the political development during the Kohl's and Schröder's government encouraged German filmmakers to normalize Germany's self image and role in the world through representing the Third Reich in film and television. *Downfall* and *Speer and Hitler* establish an unprecedented intimacy with figures such as Hitler and Speer and enable viewers to share their subjective perceptions of history as it unfolds.<sup>188</sup> This shows how a political development and climate can shape the meaning of media texts.

The other areas of reception study, as defined by Klinger, are the diachronic areas of study. These areas are revival and retrospectives, reviews, academic theory, criticism and history, broadcast, satellite and cable television, video and laserdisc reproduction, fan culture and the biographical legend and cross-cultural reception linked to revivals, foreign films festivals, retrospectives and screenings.<sup>189</sup> I will focus mainly on the diachronic category of academic theory, criticism and history to show how these areas create meaning for the fictional representation of Albert Speer. One example for the academic criticism creating meaning for the representation of Albert Speer is film scholar Johannes von Moltke's in-depth analysis of Speer's confession to Hitler in *Downfall* in his essay 'Sympathy for the Devil: Cinema, History and the Politics of Emotions'. Moltke focuses in great detail on the fictional representation of Hitler and how empathy is created for Hitler through Speer's confession.<sup>190</sup> I would argue that the same could be applied to the fictional representation of Albert Speer in this scene. Moltke's academic theory and criticism related to this scene shows how important the visual representation of this incident is to comprehend the fictional representation of Speer, as well as it creates significances for *Downfall* far removed from its origins.<sup>191</sup> I will analyse Moltke's essay in

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<sup>187</sup>Cooke P., 'Der Untergang (2004)- Victims, Perpetrators and the Continuing Fascination of Fascism' in *A Nations of Victims? Representations of German Wartime Suffering from 1945 to the Present* by Helmut Schmitz, (ED), Rodopi, 2007, p. 258.

<sup>188</sup> Bangert, A., 2014, p. 163.

<sup>189</sup> Klinger, B., summer 1997, p. 124-127.

<sup>190</sup> von Moltke, J. *Sympathy for the Devil: Cinema, History and the Politics of Emotions*, New German Critique 102, 2007, p. 42 [Accessed: [www.jstor.org/stable/27669207](http://www.jstor.org/stable/27669207), 1.9.16].

<sup>191</sup> Klinger, B., summer 1997, p. 124.

more detail in a later part of this chapter. Furthermore, my analysis in this chapter will look in detail at the question of whether Speer is represented in my case studies as a cold-hearted Nazi or an opportunist, who valued his career more than his conscience. I will concentrate on the fictional representation of Speer's confession to Hitler in film and television. The main focus is on the fictional representation of Albert Speer and how these television and cinema productions have changed his public image as different evidence has become available.

Robert Rosenstone, a leading scholar in the field of history on film, believes that the chief source of historical knowledge for the main part of the population must be the visual media.<sup>192</sup> Therefore, it seems that the visual representations of Albert Speer would shape his public image possibly more than the historical studies, which are concerned with this persona. I have chosen to focus on Speer's representation in the contemporary German cinema in *Downfall* and *Speer and Hitler: The Devil's Architect*. In order to fully comprehend Speer's representation in contemporary German cinema and to show how his visual representations changed over time, I will also examine the fictional representation in *Inside the Third Reich* in the first part of this chapter. As the meaning attached to the visual representations of this historical character is not only created through media texts and the impact of its original conditions, I will also analyse reviews and scholarly debates in relation to Klinger's synchronic and diachronic categories of reception studies. Furthermore, I will incorporate into my analysis the concept of cultural memory.

### **2.3 The concept of cultural memory in relation to the fictional depictions of Albert Speer in America and Germany**

The process of cultural memory is bound up in complex political stakes and meanings. Through the process of defining memory as cultural, individuals interact in the creating of meaning. Cultural memory could be regarded as a field of cultural negotiation through which different stories vie for a place in history.<sup>193</sup> This argument outlining the characteristics of cultural memory by American scholar Marita Sturken could be adapted to the representation of Albert Speer in film and television. It stands in contrast to the model of cultural memory developed by Jan and Aleida Assmann, as Aleida Assmann believes that the mass media is able to influence how we remember, but are unable to

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<sup>192</sup> Rosenstone, R. A., *Visions of the Past- The Challenge of Film to our Idea of History*, Harvard University Press, 1995, p. 22.

<sup>193</sup> Sturken, M., *Tangled Memories- The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic and the Politics of Remembering*, University of California Press, 1997, p. 1.

generate any form of cultural memory on its own. Film scholar Axel Bangert also disagrees with Assman's assertion about mass media in relation to cultural memory in his book *The Nazi Past in Contemporary German Film*. His book stresses the relevance of the audiovisual in evoking the past, because it privileges presentness over pastness. He uses the term "experience" to frame his study of the Nazi past, as he emphasizes, by what means and to what effect history is turned into film experience from the selection of particular events to the positioning of the viewer in relation to them.<sup>194</sup> I will follow this approach in some aspects, as this chapter concentrates on the fictional representation of Speer's confession to Hitler in my case studies and how these specific fictional representations position the viewer in relation to them. I would also argue in contrast to Assmann's statement that the mass media such as film and television productions do create cultural memory of its own. The stories about the Third Reich, through the fictional representations in *Inside the Third Reich*, *Downfall* and *Speer and Hitler: The Devil's Architect*, are not forgotten and stay relevant in the cultural memory for future generations, who have not experienced this time period. Through Albert Speer's representation in the above-mentioned fictional narratives, individuals such as filmmakers interact and meaning is created. The fictional narratives depicting Speer's life and the Third Reich prevent these stories from being forgotten in the cultural memory. However, there is a potential that the fictional representations of Speer replace the historical figure in the cultural memory.

Camera images whether photography, films or television footage are central to the interpretation of the past as memory, which is often thought of as an image, is produced by and through images.<sup>195</sup> Film theorist Roland Barthes believed that in modern society the photograph replaced the monument as an eternal witness to 'what has been' in the realm of memory.<sup>196</sup> He states:

Earlier societies managed so that memory, the substitute for life, was eternal and that at least the thing which spoke Death should itself be immortal: this was the Monument. But by making the (mortal) Photograph in the general and somehow natural witness of 'what has been', modern society has renounced the Monument.<sup>197</sup>

Therefore, it seems worthwhile to analyse the representations of Albert Speer in visual narratives as these images have replaced monuments to remember this historical

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<sup>194</sup> Bangert, A., 2014, p. 11-12.

<sup>195</sup> Sturken, M., 1997, p. 11.

<sup>196</sup> Sturken, M., 1997, p. 11.

<sup>197</sup> Barthes, R., in *Tangled Memories- The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic and the Politics of Remembering* by Sturken, M., University of California Press, 1997, p. 11.

character and this time period. Andreas Huyssen argues in his book *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* that memory is itself based on representation because the past is not simply there in memory but it must be articulated to become memory.<sup>198</sup> He believes re-presentation comes after even though some media will try to provide the delusion of pure presence.<sup>199</sup> Rather than leading to some authentic origin or giving us verifiable access to the 'real', memory itself is based on representation.<sup>200</sup> Therefore, I believe it is necessary to analyse the first depiction of Speer in the American television production *Inside the Third Reich* to fully comprehend Speer's representation in the German television production *Speer and Hitler: The Devil's Architect* as memory is based on representation. The past of the Third Reich and Albert Speer becomes memory through processes of representations in film and television.

Film scholar Murray Smith argues that even the most basic comprehension of a fiction film requires that we never cease to attend to the fact that it is a representation based on conventions such as a narrational agency representing the actions for the viewer and manipulating the temporal dimension.<sup>201</sup> Even though the representation of Albert Speer is built on conventions such the repeated use of generic narratives and stereotypes, a person watching these fictional narratives might be inclined to disregard these conventions and accept the representation as realistic. In contrast to this, Allan argues that "our perception of the image as projective illusion is incompatible with the awareness of the image as a photographic reproduction of this world and hence with the conventions of the medium as conventions."<sup>202</sup> This notion can be found in the fictional representations of Albert Speer in visual narratives as the image of Albert Speer is not regarded as photographic reproduction, but instead as a realistic representation of this historical character.

American scholar Maria Sturken, who is a professor of Media Culture and Communication at the New York University's Steinhardt School of Culture, argues in her book *Tangled Memories- The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic and the Politics of Remembering* that cultural memory and history are entangled rather than oppositional. Personal memory, cultural memory and history do not exist within neatly defined boundaries.<sup>203</sup> Memories

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<sup>198</sup> Huyssen, A., *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*, Routledge, 1995, p. 2-3.

<sup>199</sup> Huyssen, A., 1995, p. 2.

<sup>200</sup> Huyssen, A., 1995, p. 2-3.

<sup>201</sup> Smith, M., 'Film Spectatorship and the Institution of Fiction'. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 53, no. 2, 1995, p. 121 [Accessed: [www.jstor.org/stable/431540](http://www.jstor.org/stable/431540), 10.1.18].

<sup>202</sup> Allen, R., 'Representation, Illusion, and the Cinema', *Cinema Journal*, vol. 32, no. 2, 1993, p. 36. [Accessed: [www.jstor.org/stable/1225603](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1225603), 10.1.18].

<sup>203</sup> Sturken, M., 1997, p. 5.

and memory objects can move from one realm to another.<sup>204</sup> Survivors of traumatic historical events have difficulty distinguishing their personal memories from those of popular culture. Movies representing the Second World War have subsumed the individual memories of war veterans into a general script.<sup>205</sup> This statement outlines the difficulties to make true distinctions between personal memory, cultural memory and history.<sup>206</sup> Through outlining the defining characteristics of a historical film, I will be able to demonstrate how cultural memory and history are entangled.

#### **2.4 Robert Rosenstone's concept of the historical film in relation to *Downfall* and *Speer and Hitler: The Devil's Architect***

I will begin by outlining the defining characteristics of a historical film, as all my case studies are historical films. As abroad German historical films have become nearly synonymous with German cinema, it is essential to define these characteristics, as both my key sources *Downfall* and *Speer and Hitler: The Devil's Architect* are German historical film and television productions.<sup>207</sup> In 2003, eight of the fifteen highest-crossing German films on the home market were historical films.<sup>208</sup> Robert Rosenstone outlines some characteristics for mainstream historical drama. Following this argument, the mainstream feature tells the past as a story with a beginning, middle and end. It leaves the spectator with a moral message and usually feeling of uplift.<sup>209</sup> The films about Speer mostly start with the beginning of his life or the beginning of his career and end with his imprisonment in Spandau. The moral message for the audience could be that even an intelligent man like Speer can be deceived by Hitler. Rosenstone argues that film insists on history as a story of individuals, men or women who are already renowned or who are made to seem important because they are singled out by the camera.<sup>210</sup> The films about Speer insist the history of the Third Reich as a story of the life of Albert Speer. Following his argument, film offers the spectator history as a story of unitary, closed and completed past. The films provide no alternative possibilities to what is happening on screen.<sup>211</sup> He also states that film personalizes, dramatizes and emotionalizes the past through close-up and the juxtaposition of images. The audience has the feeling of experiencing the past instead of watching it.<sup>212</sup> In relation to the films about Speer, the

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<sup>204</sup> Sturken, M., 1997, p. 5.

<sup>205</sup> Sturken, M., 1997, p. 6.

<sup>206</sup> Sturken, M., 1997, p. 6.

<sup>207</sup> Beier, L.-O., & Wagner, W., 'Das deutsche Kinowunder', *Der Spiegel*, 11.7.2005, [Accessed: <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-41028283.html>, 19.5.17]

<sup>208</sup> Frey, M., *Postwall German Cinema- History, Film History and Cinephilia*, Berghan Books, 2013, p. 1.

<sup>209</sup> Rosenstone, R. A., *History on Film-Film on History*, Routledge 2013, p. 53.

<sup>210</sup> Rosenstone, R.A., 2013, p. 53.

<sup>211</sup> Rosenstone, R.A., 2013, p. 53.

<sup>212</sup> Rosenstone, R.A., 2013, p. 53



audience experiences this time period through dramatic devices such as close-ups of Speer's face.

According to historian David Herlihy, films cannot serve as independent statements regarding the past as they are illusions and must be recognized as such.<sup>213</sup> However, in the visual age the historical films about Albert Speer serve as independent statements about his character and are not always recognized as illusions by the audience, instead they often accept these fictional narratives as authentic representations. One example for this would be the fictional representation of Speer's confession to Hitler in *Downfall* and *Speer and Hitler: The Devil's Architect*, which I will analyse in a later part of this chapter. The historical films, which I have chosen in this chapter, construct a specific image of Albert Speer depending on the cultural context and the time period they are produced in. Limitations of space and the focus of this thesis make it necessary to disregard the discourse about the concepts of 'authenticity' in historical films as my focus is on the construction of Albert Speer in media texts. As history is constructed by historians, the directors of my case studies, Chomsky, Hirschbiegel and Breloer, have taken conscious choices to represent Albert Speer in a certain manner, as my analysis of Speer's confession to Hitler in a later part of this chapter will demonstrate. Therefore, I will analyse how these historical films streamline the complex character of Albert Speer into digestible narratives in film and television in different cultures and time periods.<sup>214</sup>

## **2.5 The fictional representation of Albert Speer in *Inside the Third Reich***

Even though *Downfall* and *Speer and Hitler: The Devil's Architect* are my key sources to analyse the representation of Albert Speer, I believe it is essential to examine Speer's first fictional representation in film and television to fully comprehend the later depictions of this historical character. The first fictional representation of Albert Speer in a moving media image was in *Inside the Third Reich* with Rutger Hauer in the role of Albert Speer. This television miniseries was first broadcast in 1982 on the American television channel ABC.

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<sup>213</sup> Herlihy, D., 'Am I a Camera? Other Reflections on Films and History', *American Historical Review*, Vol. 93 No 5, 1988, p. 1992. [Accessed: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/1873533.pdf>, 10.4.2017]

<sup>214</sup> Stubbs, J., *Historical Film-A Critical Introduction*, Bloomsbury Academic, 2013, p. 51.

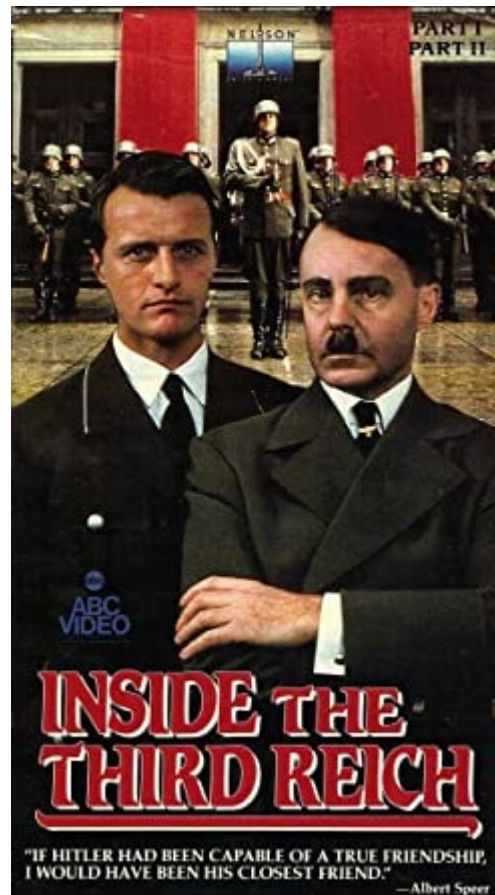


Figure 2: Poster for VHS of *Inside the Third Reich*.

Both parts of this television production recount Speer's life and involvement in the Third Reich in a linear narrative. According to Grodal, the canonical way of telling stories is to follow a protagonist.<sup>215</sup> This television production follows Speer from his start as architecture student to becoming the Armaments Minister of the Third Reich, to his imprisonment in Spandau.<sup>216</sup> The Nuremberg trials are not included on screen. However, several times scenes depicting post-war conversations of Speer with an American officer in Spandau prison interrupt the linear narrative. In one of these scenes, Speer is questioned about what he knew about the Holocaust. He denies any knowledge of these events. In a later scene after Speer became Armaments Minister, he sits in a bar with a friend. He advises Speer not to go to a concentration camp and to refuse under any circumstances to go Auschwitz. Speer remains silent in this scene. By comparing these two scenes, the visual narrative undermines Speer's fictional post-war statement in this television production that he did not know about the Final Solution until the Nuremberg trials. Even though this television production leaves out the question whether Speer attended Himmler's Speech at Posen, it portrays how Speer visits a labour camp. It is not

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<sup>215</sup> Grodal, T., *Moving Pictures- A New Theory of Film, Genres, Feelings and Cognition*, Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 84.

<sup>216</sup> Grodal, T., 1997, p. 84.

made clear which labour camp Speer is visiting. However, the audience is aware that this is a labour camp through the mise-en-scène and the set-design. The entire scene is set in a tunnel. While Speer and other generals walk along middle of the tunnel, inhabitants of the labour camp are working on the sides. Speer enquires about the working conditions and the medical situation. After a general admits that there is no doctor in the medical team, Speer insists that this situation must be improved. This behaviour shows a more human side of his character. However, it becomes clear that he wants to improve these working conditions in the tunnel in order keep to his production schedule and not because he cares about these human beings working under these inhuman conditions.

## 2.6 Academic criticism and reviews of Speer's representation in *Inside the Third Reich*

Another part of reception studies, the academic theory, criticism and history is one of the most prolific areas in creating meaning of films via contemporary institutions and perspectives. This field belongs to the diachronic areas of reception studies as defined by Barbara Klinger. She states that these various practices can produce certain intertextual commentaries to create significations for a cinematic text far removed from those defining its origin.<sup>217</sup> Academic constructs assessments that differ dramatically from any the film may have earned in its original context.<sup>218</sup> The academic criticism of Speer's representation by Charles P. Mitchell in his book *Hitler Filmography: World Wide Feature Film and Television Miniseries Portrayals 1940 through 200* creates meaning for the fictional representation of Albert Speer in the television production *Inside the Third Reich*.

Charles P. Mitchell argues in his book *Hitler Filmography* that Rutger Hauer portrays Speer as blinded by his own ambition until the very end. As Speer is the protagonist of this television production, he is the most likely character for spectator identification.<sup>219</sup> Mitchell argues that Speer wins admiration in this fictional depiction through his resistance against Hitler's scorched earth policy.<sup>220</sup> This statement portrays that the audience could be able to feel empathy for Speer in this television production as he attempts to save the German population. Grodal argues that identification need not necessarily imply empathy but empathy will very often be the consequence of a prolonged identification.<sup>221</sup> The audience has identified themselves over a long time with Speer and has been 'forced' to

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<sup>217</sup> Klinger, B. summer 1997, p. 124-127.

<sup>218</sup> Klinger, B. summer 1997, p. 124-127.

<sup>219</sup> Mitchell, C. P., *The Hitler Filmography: Worldwide Feature Film and Television Miniseries Portrayals, 1940 through 2000*, McFarland & Company, Inc Publishers, 2002, p. 125.

<sup>220</sup> Mitchell, C. P., 2002, p. 125.

<sup>221</sup> Grodal, T., 1997, p. 93.

'actualize' the emotions, which are presupposed in order to give coherence and meaning to his acts during the Third Reich.<sup>222</sup>

Mitchell argues that the portrayal of Speer breaking down and sobbing prevents the audience from feeling any empathy with Speer. Following his argument, this scene manages to diminish any scepticism by the spectators that Speer's representation in this miniseries might be too positive. Speer is portrayed as a person, who chose to be a whole-hearted Nazi, even if he was the least repellent of the leading officials of the Third Reich.<sup>223</sup> This statement by Mitchell is partly true in this miniseries as Speer is portrayed as intelligent, elegant and idealistic in contrast to Goebbels.<sup>224</sup> Ian Holm portrays Goebbels as an intelligent but malicious and fanatical man, who prefers to see his children die rather than live in a future in a Germany without Adolf Hitler.<sup>225</sup> In contrast to Goebbels, Speer seems to care for his family as he plans for their escape in the end of the miniseries. In contrast to Mitchell's statement that this scene prevents the audience from feeling empathy for Albert Speer, this scene could have the opposite effect. One of the key factors, which would lead us to a feeling of empathy for Speer, would be our innate capacity for motor mimicry.

Plantinga argues that the close-up can be used to create intimacy with a protagonist.<sup>226</sup> According to social psychologist Elaine Hatfield, humans have a tendency to mimic each other's postures, facial expressions and vocalizations.<sup>227</sup> This mimicry occurs beneath the level of consciousness as a kind of automatic response.<sup>228</sup> Motor mimicry is the tendency of an observer to outwardly mimic the facial and body movements of another person.<sup>229</sup> Plantinga argues that facial expressions provide us with proprioceptive feedback that at its greatest causes an emotion and influences the spectator's emotional experience.<sup>230</sup> By showing Speer in an emotional state mourning Hitler's death in a close-up, this television production could influence the spectator's emotional experience towards him. Through motor mimicry, the spectator could feel empathy towards Speer. Motor mimicry is an internal response in that the spectator shares some of the experience the character is

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<sup>222</sup> Grodal, T., 1997, p. 95.

<sup>223</sup> Mitchell, C. P., 2002, p. 126.

<sup>224</sup> Jester, 'Inside the Third Reich (1982)', *Jester Reviews*, 9.5.1982, [Accessed: <http://www.jestersreviews.com/reviews/1119>, 1.12.2016]

<sup>225</sup> Jester, 9.5.1982, [Accessed: <http://www.jestersreviews.com/reviews/1119>, 1.12.2016]

<sup>226</sup> Plantinga, C., *Moving Viewers- American Film and the Spectator's Experience*, University of California Press, 2009, p. 120.

<sup>227</sup> Hatfield, E. in Plantinga, C., *Moving Viewers- American Film and the Spectator's Experience*, University of California Press, 2009, p. 125.

<sup>228</sup> Hatfield, E. in Plantinga, C., 2009, p. 125.

<sup>229</sup> Plantinga, C., 2009, p. 124.

<sup>230</sup> Plantinga, C., 2009, p. 125.

thought to have, possibly in an automatic and unconscious way.<sup>231</sup> The spectator is capable to feel empathy for Speer because they also maybe had some experience with losing a close friend or a family member. For Plantinga, it seems clear that the spectators can respond to a character emotionally and maintain some critical distance. A spectator may respond emotionally to Speer's behaviour in this scene and dislike or disdain her or his response to it.<sup>232</sup> The spectator's mind is capable of multiple, ambiguous and even conflicting responses. Therefore, it seems possible that this scene creates empathy for Speer especially because it shows him sobbing and breaking down despite the reason for his emotional reaction.

In the liberal *New York Times* review 'The Third Reich According to Speer', journalist John Vinocur argues that the miniseries adopts the standard line on Speer: he was an archetypical technocrat who succeeded in transforming his special status to insulate himself from a good part of the monstrous realities.<sup>233</sup> This television production gives the basic story of Speer's involvement in the Third Reich. However, it leaves the spectators to decide for themselves when Speer should have valued his conscience rather than his career.<sup>234</sup> This shows in terms of reception studies how this review could create a preferred reading of Speer's representation as a technocrat oblivious to the Holocaust in *Inside The Third Reich*, because review journalism establishes the terms by which films will be discussed and evaluated in public.<sup>235</sup> In the following paragraph, I will give an overview of Speer's representation in *Speer and Hitler: The Devil's Architect*, before analysing in detail the role of close-ups in *Inside the Third Reich* and *Speer and Hitler*, outlining how this cinematic practice could create meaning for the fictional representation of Albert Speer.

## **2.7 The fictional representation of Albert Speer in *Speer and Hitler- The Devil's Architect***

The German television production *Speer and Hitler- The Devil's Architect* offers the spectator a detailed overview of the story of Speer's life and the Third Reich as a triptych. The fictional representation of Speer is part of a three-part docudrama, which means that the fictional episodes moving from Speer's imprisonment in Nuremberg and Spandau

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<sup>231</sup> Plantinga, C., 2009, p. 127.

<sup>232</sup> Plantinga, C., 2009, p. 127.

<sup>233</sup> Vinocur, J., 'The Third Reich according to Albert Speer', *The New York Times*, 9<sup>th</sup> May 1982, [Accessed: <http://www.nytimes.com/1982/05/09/arts/the-third-reich-according-to-albert-speer.html?pagewanted=all>, 11.12.2016]

<sup>234</sup> Jester, 9.5.1982, [Accessed: <http://www.jestersreviews.com/reviews/1119>, 1.12.2016]

<sup>235</sup> Klinger, B., summer 1997, p. 118.

back to his career during the Third Reich are interlinked with interviews in the present portraying for example the complicate relationship between Speer and his children. However, I will solely focus on the fictional episode concerning Albert Speer portrayed by the German actor Sebastian Koch. The first part "*Germania- Der Wahn*" ("*Germania- The Delusion*") could be labelled as a 'war movie' as it shows Speer as Hitler's governmental minister leading to his imprisonment in a Nuremberg cell. As Germania was the name of the planned capital of the Third Reich and of Speer's architectural model, this title could be an allegory for the delusions of grandeur by Speer and Hitler.<sup>236</sup> The second part "*Nürnberg-Der Prozess*" ("*Nuremberg-The Trial*") focuses on the war crimes trials in Nuremberg, which can be compared to as a classic 'courtroom drama'. In this depiction, Speer successfully distances himself from the Führer's inner circle and deceives the court to believe that he was oblivious to the Genocide. The third part "*Spandau-Die Strafe*" ("*Spandau-The Punishment*") concentrates on Speer's twenty years of imprisonment in the manner of a 'prison drama'.<sup>237</sup> This part of the television production alternates between his prison cell and memories of his ascent during the Third Reich. However, it also addresses Speer's attempt to adjust to the different world developing outside of Spandau. It portrays his successful construction of his public image as a cultivated individual, while the alienation between his wife and children increases.<sup>238</sup>

While setting out to expose Speer, the director, Breloer, might reinstate him as the German's favourite perpetrator, with whom the German population could identify with.<sup>239</sup> Sebastian Koch portrays Speer in the fictional episodes sympathetically, as a reserved individual driven primarily by his architectural ambitions and then seduced by the attentions and flattery of his leader.<sup>240</sup> However, Axel Bangert argues in his study of *The Nazi Past in Contemporary German Film* that throughout this production Hitler was explicitly or implicitly the driving force behind Speer's actions.<sup>241</sup> In one of the first fictional episode, Speer attends a speech of Hitler's in a pub. In this is the moment Speer could have decided to join the NSDAP and fell victim to Hitler's charisma. However, the fictional adaptation of this encounter replaces the run-down location described by Speer with the imposing setting of a brightly lit hall.<sup>242</sup> The set-design is dominated by large swastika flags on both side of the stage creating a ceremonial atmosphere. Through the mise-en-

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<sup>236</sup> Bangert, A., 2014, p. 84.

<sup>237</sup> German Films, 'DEVIL'S ARCHITECT, THE (SPEER UND ER', Production Report, *German Films Quartely* 02/2004, [Accessed: <http://www.german-films.de/filmarchive/browse-archive/view/detail/film/devils-architect-the/>, 17.4.2016]

<sup>238</sup> Bangert, A., 2014, p. 83-84.

<sup>239</sup> Bangert, A., 2014, p. 94.

<sup>240</sup> Fisun Guner, 'DVD: Speer and Hitler: The Devil's Architect', *theartsdesk*, 6 June 2011, [Accessed: <http://www.theartsdesk.com/film/dvd-speer-and-hitler-devils-architect>, 17.4.2016].

<sup>241</sup> Bangert, A., 2014, p. 85.

<sup>242</sup> Bangert, A., 2014, p. 86.

scène, Speer is highlighted in the audience directing the spectator's attention towards his subjective attention of Hitler and his seductive charisma.<sup>243</sup> Bangert argues that the director Breloer decided to depict Hitler not so much as hysteric or fanatic, but rather as a cultivated bourgeois, who wears an elegant dark suit instead of a military uniform.<sup>244</sup> The change of set-design and the Hitler's attire might not be 'historical accurate', but it assists the spectator to understand Speer's fascination with Hitler.

According to film historian Rosenstone, the dramatic structure of a history film and the limitations on screen time, ensure that dialogue will have to be created, events and characters condensed, compressed, altered and invented.<sup>245</sup> Under his viewpoint, the more serious kind of history film does 'history' only in so far as it attempts to make meaning out of something that has occurred in the past.<sup>246</sup> This notion can also be found in this scene portraying Speer's first encounter with Hitler. Through altering the mise-en-scène, the spectator might understand the reasoning behind Speer's fascination in a clearer way than by representing this scene historically accurate. According to Rosenstone, a historical film cannot be an unbiased representation of the past and what happens on screen rather points to the events of the past, instead of depicting them truthfully.<sup>247</sup> The alterations in this scene enhance the spectator's understanding of the meaning of this event. The importance of this scene is highlighted by the cinematography. The camera is initially placed behind Speer integrating the spectator into the audience of Hitler's speech. It gradually transforms into Speer's individual perspective. Longer shots of portraying Speer's position with the audience are intercut with close-ups of Speer and Hitler's facial expressions. The cinematography and the mise-en-scène portray Hitler through the image of him that Speer created for himself.<sup>248</sup> Through this scene, *Speer and Hitler* might offer the spectator the explanation that Speer joined the NSDAP and followed Hitler's ideology because of Hitler's seductive charisma.

This television production attempts to answer how much Speer knew about the Holocaust. In comparison to *Speer and Hitler, Downfall*, which portrays Hitler's final days chronologically and without any overt interpretation, remains indebted to traditional form of history telling through its focus on National Socialism's power elite and the figure of Hitler.<sup>249</sup> The chronological narrative of *Downfall* could be compared to history books as it

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<sup>243</sup> Bangert, A., 2014, p. 86.

<sup>244</sup> Bangert, A., 2014, p. 86.

<sup>245</sup> Rosenstone, R. A., 2013, p. 182.

<sup>246</sup> Rosenstone, R. A., 2013, p. 182.

<sup>247</sup> Rosenstone, R. A., 1995, p. 70.

<sup>248</sup> Bangert, A., 2014, p. 86.

<sup>249</sup> Keilbach, J., 'National Socialism as Docudrama: On Programmed Ambivalence in Heinrich Breloer's *Speer and Hitler*', *New German Critique*, No. 102, 2007, p. 63. [Accessed: [www.jstor.org/stable/27669209](http://www.jstor.org/stable/27669209), 8.1.2018].

claims to provide no interpretation of and ascribe no meaning to historical facts but merely reconstruct them in detail in the chronological order.<sup>250</sup> According to the critic Michael Kohler, this historical drama focuses solely on making authenticated historical material accessible and appealing to a large number of the public.<sup>251</sup> *Speer and Hitler* utilizes a historical footage and recordings, eyewitness testimony, re-enactments, the revisiting of historical sites, investigative journalism, emotions, experts, written documentation and a veritable chorus of voices. This television production represents the recent historiographical paradigms, which focuses less on the notion of truth than the concepts of plurality and history as possibility reflecting historiography as construction.<sup>252</sup> *Speer and Hitler* has a more complex structure than *Downfall* as flashbacks and interview sequences interrupt the linear narrative. Through this structure, the representation of this past in *Speer and Hitler* is accessible only in fragments, which could point towards the difficulties of historical reconstruction and representation.<sup>253</sup> In the following part of this chapter, I will compare how close-ups have been utilized in *Inside the Third Reich* and *Speer: The Devils' Architect* to represent Speer in these media texts and create meaning.

## 2.8 The role of close-ups in *Inside the Third Reich*

In terms of Klinger's reception studies category cinematic practices, which are part of the synchronic areas, I will analyse in the following paragraph how the conscious decision to portray certain key scenes in close-ups created meaning for the representation of Albert Speer in the fictional narrative *Inside the Third Reich*. The production of this media text also played a role in the first fictional representation of Albert Speer, as this media text was produced for American television and broadcast on network television by the American Broadcasting Company (ABC). In the article 'The Third Reich according to Albert Speer' in the liberal *New York Times*, the director Marvin J. Chomsky explains how the production for television shaped the fictional narrative and the final products. He states:

Our audience is the guy, who's used to walk around and getting a beer. We have got to reach him. He is a guy, who hasn't made much of a commitment to give his rapt attention to what we are offering, right? We are going for the 80 million who

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<sup>250</sup> Keilbach, J., Fall 2007, p.63.

<sup>251</sup> Kohler, M., 'Der Untergang', *film-dienst*, Nr. 19, 16<sup>th</sup> June 2004 [Accessed: <http://www.filmportal.de/node/69095/material/544441>, 6.1.2017]

<sup>252</sup> Keilbach, J., Fall 2007, p.64

<sup>253</sup> Keilbach, J., Fall 2007, p.64.



will watch something. We go in for close-ups and we try to find conflicts. My job is to hold the audience.<sup>254</sup>

In terms of reception studies, this quote shows that the production for television and the conscious choice of close-ups influenced and shaped the fictional narrative and representation of Albert Speer in this media text. It also shows that the director had to force the complex character of Albert Speer into a digestible narrative, in order to hold the viewer's interest and attention. Klinger states that this factor related to the production of my case studies could affect the ultimate constitution of the production.<sup>255</sup> I would agree with her and this notion is also reflected in the above mentioned quote by Chomsky. Furthermore, Chomsky acknowledges in this article that he had to accept Speer's account of the historical events. He also states that he had to balance out the Nazis represented in this fictional narrative with a dramatic device that would represent decency in some redeeming characters. These were according to Chomsky Speer's wife and Speer's father, who reoccur throughout the five-hours as a chorus of conscience and to counterweight the Nazis in *Inside the Third Reich*.<sup>256</sup> This is another example how the production for television influenced the fictional narrative in relation to reception studies. In order to get the full attention of the viewers, who are watching this fictional narrative on screen, the fictional narrative needs to include conflicts and close-ups. Therefore, I will analyse in the following paragraph the role of close-ups in *Inside the Third Reich*.

According to film scholar Grodal, the spectator tries to construct the protagonist's emotions and affects based on context.<sup>257</sup> In classic film-theory, great emphasis was placed on the role of close-ups of facial expressions as central means of cinema and its communication of emotions.<sup>258</sup> As it is not the aim of this thesis to analyse the different the concepts of classical film theory, I will give a brief description in the following paragraph. The classical film theory can be categorised into two categories. The creationists and formalists such as Sergei Eisenstein and Béla Baláz, who defend cinema as an art form, which goes beyond realism; then there are the realists, especially André Bazin and Siegfried Kraucer, who celebrate film specifically because it sticks so close to the real.<sup>259</sup> Formalist theory values the cinema to the extent that it is more than 'the feeble mechanical production of real life'. Realist theory values cinema to the extent that it

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<sup>254</sup> Vinocur, J., 'The Third Reich according to Albert Speer', *New York Times*, 9.5.1982, [Accessed: <http://www.nytimes.com/1982/05/09/arts/the-third-reich-according-to-albert-speer.html?pagewanted=all>, 11.12.16].

<sup>255</sup> Vinocur, J., 9.5.1982.

<sup>256</sup> Vinocur, J., 9.5.1982.

<sup>257</sup> Grodal, T., 1997, p. 89.

<sup>258</sup> Grodal, T., 1997, p. 90.

<sup>259</sup> Easthope, A., (ED), *Contemporary Film Theory*, Routledge, 1993, p. 3.

adheres to 'a mechanical production in the making of which man plays no part'. Though both theories assume that cinema, based as it is in photography, must be judged as in part a mechanical reproduction whether feeble or convincing. The iconic and indexical relation between the film image and the object it represents entails that a major effect of cinema stands apart from human intervention and resists signification, expression and value.<sup>260</sup>

In one of the scenes in *Inside the Third Reich* in the Spandau prison, Speer tells the story of a mother with a young girl waiting in line for a gas chamber at a concentration camp to an American general. He claims that he did not cry for the little girl and apparently saw this incident at the Nuremberg trial broadcast on film. In the end, Speer admits that the only cried once in his life and that was for Adolf Hitler. This scene is mostly shot in close-ups and focuses on Albert Speer's face. However, Speer's face remains emotionless during this scene. The audience could be drawn to feel empathy for Albert Speer through the setting in the prison cell and his narrative about the concentration camp. However, the statement that the only incident in his life, when showed any emotions, was in reaction to Hitler's suicide could create a distance between the audience and Albert Speer. Later in the second part of the mini-series, this narrated incident is depicted in a scene.

Film scholar Carl Plantinga defines a scene as a unit of action that occurs in a single location. In a conventional narrative, each scene must include conflict that blocks character goals and suggests possible outcomes that threaten the spectator's desires for the narrative and character.<sup>261</sup> Speer is alone in the room and shows emotion in this fictional narrative for the first time. This scene occurs in a single location and the conflict, which blocks Speer's goals could be the end of the war and Hitler's suicide. However, the spectator's desires are ambiguous because the spectator does not want the National Socialists to succeed but could be emotionally linked to Speer' through character identification throughout this television production. Speer is packing a suitcase in a bedroom, which seems to be a luxurious apartment due to its set design, when a servant informs him that Hitler is dead. It is not made clear to the spectator where Speer is at this moment of the fictional historical narrative. In contrast to the hardship of the normal population during the Second World War, Speer's situation seems not to have been affected by the end of the war. At first, Speer does not show any emotions regarding the news. However, he sits down on the bed and turns his bag to the camera. The camera tracks around his body and reveals his face in a close-up. Speer is crying hard. He takes

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<sup>260</sup> Easthope, A., (ED), 1993, p. 5.

<sup>261</sup> Plantinga, C., 2009, p. 94.

a piece of clothing and bites into it to suppress his emotions and to prevent himself from howling out loud.

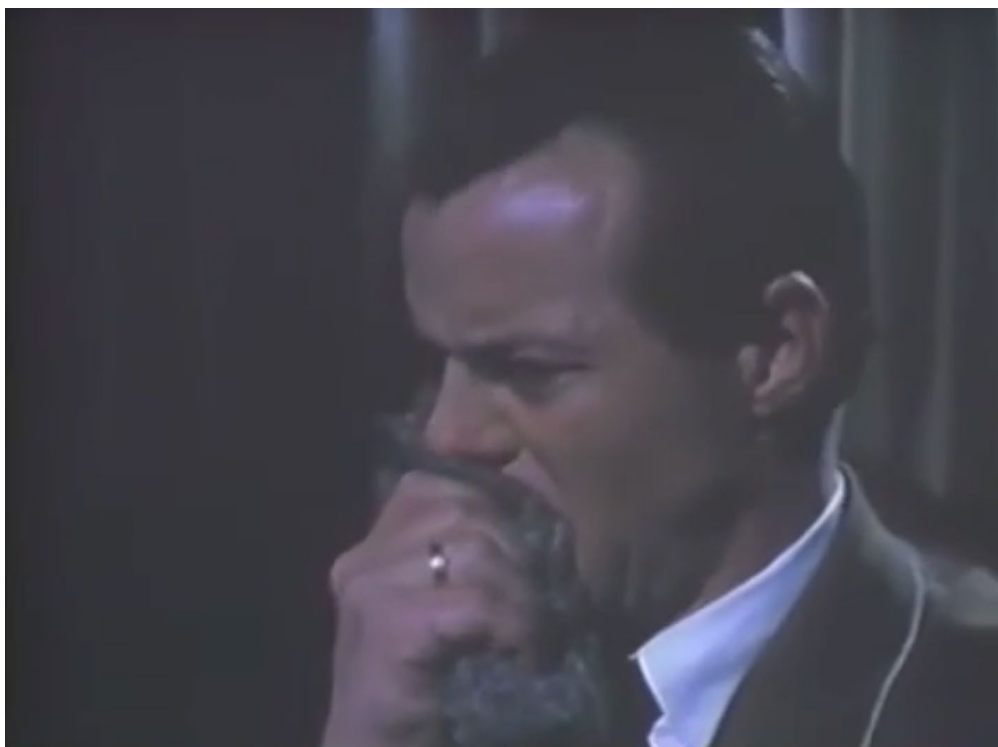


Figure 3: Rutger Hauer as Speer in *Inside the Third Reich* reacting to Hitler's Death.

However, the spectator's desire for narrative and character could also be conflicted because Speer only shows emotions for Adolf Hitler, who portrays his lack of humanity with his diatribe calling for a total scorched earth policy.<sup>262</sup> The scorched earth policy meant that Hitler called for the complete destruction of Germany's infrastructure. The approaching enemy would find nothing, but scorched earth and the intention was to destroy the German population as punishment for the defeat.<sup>263</sup>

## 2.9 The role of the close-up in Speer and Hitler: The Devil's Architect

As I have discussed the role of the close-up in *Inside the Third Reich* in relation to Speer's representation, I will now examine in more detail the role of the close-up in the fictional representation of Albert Speer in *Speer and Hitler: The Devil's Architect*.

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<sup>262</sup> Mitchell, C. P., *Hitler Filmography: Worldwide Feature Film and Television Miniseries Portrayals 1940 through 2000*, McFarland & Co Inc., 2002, p. 125.

<sup>263</sup> German History in 'Documents and Images, Hitler's "Scorched Earth" Decree (Nero Decree) (March 19, 1945) and Albert Speer's Response (March 29, 1945)', [Accessed: [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=1590](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=1590), 3.12.2016]

In classic film-theory, great emphasis was led on the role of close-ups of facial expressions as a central means of cinema and its communication of emotions.<sup>264</sup> Béla Balázs stated, “if we look and understand each other’s faces, we not only understand but we also learn to feel each other’s emotions.”<sup>265</sup> As the close-up is one of the essential tools to understand a character, I will focus on how close-ups support the feeling of empathy for Speer in *Speer and Hitler: The Devil’s Architect*. In the first part of this docudrama, a scene links Speer through editing and camera position with the crimes of the Third Reich. The scene is set at the Nuremberg trials and the camera focuses through a close-up on Speer’s face while the charges against him are read out in the courtroom. This is followed immediately by a brief shot of members of a concentration camp working under inhuman conditions. Through the construction of these two scenes in the fictional narrative, Speer is linked directly to the workers in the concentration camp. The spectator could be inclined to think that Speer is responsible for the situation of these people because his face was shown in a close-up directly before. However, it is left to the individual to decide what they meaning they give to these two scenes.

Film scholar Judith Keilbach argues in an article about the ambivalence in *Speer and Hitler* that an explanation for Speer’s behaviour during the Nuremberg trials and his involvement at the end of the Third Reich could be the concept of trauma symbolized through flashbacks.<sup>266</sup> This academic theory around the flashbacks in my case study shows, in terms of reception studies, how meaning can be created through academic theory, which might have not been the meaning at the origin of this television production. The cinematic flashbacks are associated with Speer’s visit to the Mittelbau-Dora armament complex where he witnessed the inhumane condition of the inhabitants of the concentration camp. In the docudrama, Speer witnesses the beating of prisoners and sees bodies lying packed together on the ground. After these incidents, Speer is offered some alcohol by the camp commander. However, Speer stares ahead for a brief moment and then continues to talk, as the incidents did not occur in front of him. Therefore, it could be argued that the Armaments Minister of the Third Reich suffered a trauma caused by the sight of atrocities.<sup>267</sup> Even though, Keilbach argues that these cinematic flashbacks of Speer’s visit to the concentration camp symbolize a trauma, she also points out that the spectator will decide how to interpret these flashbacks. As Koch’s facial expressions are ambivalent, their meaning depends on what meaning is given to the flashbacks in the first

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<sup>264</sup> Gordan, T., 1997, p. 90.

<sup>265</sup> Balázs, B., *Theory of the Film in Film: An Anthology* by Talbot, D., (Eds), University of California Press, 1966, pp. 201-2016, p. 208.

<sup>266</sup> Keilbach, J., Fall 2007, p. 64.

<sup>267</sup> Keilbach, J., Fall 2007, p. 65.

place.<sup>268</sup> Keilbach argues that these flashbacks highlight other questions such as of how much Speer did know about the Holocaust and to what extent he was responsible for it. Basing the answer for these questions on the flashbacks, she believes that Speer was either a cold-hearted criminal, who witnessed the mistreatment of human beings without any feelings for them or a victim of events that he witnessed during the visit to the armaments factor.<sup>269</sup> However, through this ambivalence in the fictional parts of this docudrama Speer functions as a 'suggestive screen', onto whichever new interpretative attempts can be projected.<sup>270</sup>

*Speer and Hitler* leaves to the viewer to decide the meaning of these flashbacks, this fictional narrative decides to portray another fundamental question of Speer's life differently. The question I mean is: did Speer attend Himmler's Speech at Posen or was he absent when the plan regarding the Final Solution was announced? In this television production, the room in which Himmler holds the famous Posen speech and addresses Speer personally, is dimly lit and very dark. The viewer can only see some of the leading national socialists as silhouettes, which leaves the question open if Speer attended this speech. Speer always insisted that he did not attend this speech and had no knowledge of the Final Solution. Harry Siegmund, the former personal assistant to the Gauleiter, claimed that the hall in the Imperial castle in Posen was so dimly lit that Himmler could not see that Speer was missing. However, the conference did not actually take place in the Imperial castle in Posen, but in the town hall.<sup>271</sup> Therefore, it could be stated that Speer did know about the Final Solution. According to historian Gitta Sereny, Speer became an active participant in these crimes once he knew of them and continued to work for Hitler.<sup>272</sup> However, through this representation in *Speer and Hitler*, the viewer is drawn to the conclusion that Speer did not attend the Himmler's speech and made to believe that he was oblivious to the mass killing of the European Jews. I have chosen to focus on the visual representation of Speer's confession in my case studies *Inside the Third Reich*, *Downfall* and *Speer and Hitler* as a key historical moment to analyse the fictional depictions of Albert Speer, as it seems that this historical incident is a defining moment for how Speer is remembered in the cultural memory. Therefore, I will analyse Speer's confession to Hitler in my case studies in the following part of this chapter.

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<sup>268</sup> Keilbach, J., Fall 2007, p. 62.

<sup>269</sup> Keilbach, J., Fall 2007, p. 66.

<sup>270</sup> Keilbach, J., Fall 2007, p. 67.

<sup>271</sup> Schwendemann, H., 'Spaete Enttarnung eines Lügners,' *Die Zeit*, 4 Mai 2005, [Accessed: [http://www.zeit.de/2005/19/Speer\\_und\\_er\\_](http://www.zeit.de/2005/19/Speer_und_er_), 1.4.2016].

<sup>272</sup> Sereny, G., *Albert Speer: His Battle with Truth*, Picador, 1996, p. 704.

## 2.10 The fictional representations of Speer's confession to Hitler during his last visit to the Führerbunker

As films narrate differently than books, the dramaturgical considerations determine the structure of the historical representation of Speer and compress history. Film scholar Judith Keilbach argues that key moments of the past become reference or crystallization points that channel the subsequent course of events.<sup>273</sup> One of the key moments of the filmic historical representation of Albert Speer is his final meeting with Adolf Hitler in Berlin. This event is represented in the filmic and televisual narratives of *Inside the Third Reich*, *Downfall* and *Speer and Hitler*. As “films” seem to have become the leading medium of popular cultural memory, these representations could define how Albert Speer's character is remembered.<sup>274</sup> Based on Astrid Erll's argument that a ‘memory’ shaped by media and institutions must be actualized by individuals, I believe that this scene is of great significance to understand the representation of Albert Speer in film and television. Erll believes that without such actualizations monuments, rituals and films are nothing but dead material and fail to have any impact in cultures of memory.<sup>275</sup> This event of Speer's last meeting with Hitler has been actualized in visual narratives of *Inside the Third Reich*, *Downfall* and *Speer and Hitler*. These different filmic representations of this historical event in different time periods and cultures offer an opportunity to analyse how Albert Speer is remembered in popular cultural memory.

In the book *Albert Speer: His Battle with the Truth*, Albert Speer claims that he confessed to Adolf Hitler about countermanding his orders and his scorched earth policy in his last meeting at the Führerbunker. According to Speer, Hitler showed no reaction regarding this information.<sup>276</sup> This confession was first mentioned by Albert Speer in his book *Inside the Third Reich*.<sup>277</sup> Albert Speer wrote to his friend Wolters regarding this essay that it essential for him to “de-heroize” his last trip to Berlin because neither Hitler nor himself spoke one word about their personal relationship. Speer admits that no confession or emotional scene occurred. Maria von Below, wife of Nicolaus von Below who was a colonel in the Luftwaffe, offered an explanation to Gitta Sereny why Speer allowed this lie to exist.<sup>278</sup> She believes that Speer would have not confessed to Hitler about disobeying his policies because he was not crazy. However, she can understand why he did not

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<sup>273</sup> Keilbach, J., Fall 2007, p. 62.

<sup>274</sup> Erll, A, *Literature, Film, and the Mediality of Cultural Memory*, in *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies* edited by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, De Gruyter, 2010, pp. 389-398, p. 395.

<sup>275</sup> Erll, A., ‘Narratology and Cultural Memory Studies’, in *Narratology in the Age of Cross-Disciplinary Narrative Research*, Sandra Heinen and Roy Sommer, (ED), Walter de Gruyter, 2009, p. 218.

<sup>276</sup> Albert Speer in *Albert Speer: His Battle with Truth* by Gitta Sereny, Picador, 1996, p. 528.

<sup>277</sup> Sereny, G., 1996, p. 528.

<sup>278</sup> Zvielli, A., ‘Hitler's kept woman’, *The Jerusalem Post*, 5<sup>th</sup> May 2012, [Accessed: <http://www.jpost.com/Magazine/Features/Hitlers-kept-woman>, 7.1.17]

correct this event, when he wrote his book fifteen years later. Under her point of view the version of his last trip to Berlin fitted in well with the impression he then wanted to convey to the public.<sup>279</sup> Even though it seems evident that Speer did visit Berlin and Hitler before the end of the war and of the Third Reich in 1945, Speer's confession did not happen.<sup>280</sup> Therefore, the realistic representations of Speer's confession in *Inside the Third Reich*, *Downfall* and *Speer and Hitler* create a certainty for the audience that this incident happened. These fictional representations shape how Speer is remembered in the public memory and how younger generations interpret his character.

### 2.11 The fictional representation of Speer's confession in *Downfall*

*Downfall* depicts Speer's confession in a different manner. In contrast to *Inside the Third Reich*, Speer is only a supporting character in this film as the main focus is to portray Hitler and his last days in the bunker. However, Speer is an important character in this fictional narrative as he could provide the spectator with a privileged perspective on the sealed world of the bunker.<sup>281</sup> Sabine Hake argues in her analysis of *Downfall* in her book *Screen Nazis* that he could represent a positive model for self-identification for contemporary German audience.<sup>282</sup> David Bathrick argues his academic essay on *the U.S. Reception of Downfall* that Speer belongs in *Downfall* to a group of perpetrators, who survive and appear to have been exonerated of any political accountability or shared guilt.<sup>283</sup> This academic discussion surround Speer's representation in *Downfall* shows in terms of reception studies, how the meaning surrounding this media text can be created long after its production, exhibition and distribution in academic criticism and discussions.

David Bathrick analyses the positive representation of the Ernst-Günther Schenk, who was a doctor and member of the SS in contrast to the real historical figure.<sup>284</sup> In *Downfall*, he treats wounded civilians, rescues sick patients and prevents executions of the SS death squads. However, Schenk carried out hunger experiments on prisoners in the concentration camp Mathausen.<sup>285</sup> Bathrick argue that the same could be said about the representation of characters such as Albert Speer in this film. Before his final encounter with Hitler, Speer visits Goebbels's children and Magda Goebbels, who is sick in bed, exemplifying his human characteristics. Finally Speer accepts Eva Braun's invitation to

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<sup>279</sup> Sereny, G. 1996, p. 704.

<sup>280</sup> Sereny, G. 1996, p. 529.

<sup>281</sup> Hake, S., 2012, p. 234.

<sup>282</sup> Hake, S., 2012, p. 234.

<sup>283</sup> Bathrick, D. and Magshamrain, R. L., 'Whose Hi/story Is It? The U.S. Reception of Downfall', *New German Critique*, No. 102, Fall 2007, p. 13 [Accessed: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/27669206.pdf>, 10.10.16]

<sup>284</sup> Bathrick, D. and Magshamrain, R. L., Fall 2007, p. 13.

<sup>285</sup> Reinecke, S., 'Der Arzt von Berlin', *Taz*, 15<sup>th</sup> September 2009, [Accessed: <http://www.taz.de/!699312/>, 3.1.2017].

see her before he takes leave of the Führer. By aligning a beneficent Speer with the innocence of the children, a bedridden woman and the incorrigibly naive Eva Braun, the film solicits the audience's moral allegiance with Hitler's Minister of Armament and War production.<sup>286</sup>

This positive representation is enhanced for the German audience through the casting choice. As the audience is not only watching Speer as a screen character, without external context, the actor Heino Ferch would have been familiar to the German audience. He was known to through his roles in *The Tunnel* (Roland Suso Richter, 2001, Germany) and *Harmonists* (Joseph Vilsmaier, 1997, Germany). In *The Tunnel*, Heino Ferch portrayed the main character Harry Melchior, who digs a tunnel with the help of his friends to rescue their loved ones out of the GDR. By casting Heino Ferch as Speer, the screen character of Speer becomes more sympathetic for the German audience. Following Bathrick's argument, he believes that it is not legitimate as a cinematic strategy and in regards of authenticity to turn these characters in to anti-Nazis as *Downfall* is not a fictionalized war film but a docudrama, whose task it is to present the spectator with historical facts and authentic history.<sup>287</sup> Johannes von Moltke argues in his academic essay *Sympathy for the Devil* that the scene depicting Speer's confession is a key scene in *Downfall* to understand Hitler and to feel empathy with him. However, I would argue that as much as it provides the spectator with an enhanced understanding of Hitler's character it also functions in a similar way for Speer's character.

When Speer enters Hitler's room, Hitler is shown from a distance in a static low-angle medium shot framed internally by the doorway in the immediate foreground. This camera setup is repeated three times and frames Speer on his own, after Hitler has taken a seat off-screen.<sup>288</sup> This camera position already implies the separation of the two characters.<sup>289</sup> After Hitler sits in his seat, the scene follows a shot-reverse-shot pattern with tight angles focusing on Speer and Hitler. He tells Speer that fought the Jews openly and informs him about his plans regarding his suicide. This is one of the rare occasions, in which this film references the Holocaust. By mentioning his fight against the Jews openly in front of Speer, it could imply that Speer knew about the Holocaust as well. Only when Hitler informs Speer that he sees no other option as to demise of the German population, Speer confesses that he did not carry out his orders. Until this point in the scene, reaction shots were favoured over shots of the speaker.

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<sup>286</sup> von Moltke, J., 'Sympathy for the Devil: Cinema, History and the Politics of Emotions', *New German Critique*, no. 102, Fall 2007, p. 27, [Accessed: [www.jstor.org/stable/27669207](http://www.jstor.org/stable/27669207), 3.9.16].

<sup>287</sup> Bathrick, D. and Magshamrain, R. L., Fall 2007, p. 13-14.

<sup>288</sup> von Moltke, J., Fall 2007, p. 27.

<sup>289</sup> von Moltke, J., Fall 2007, p. 28.



After Speer's confession, Hitler is depicted in a medium shot, which reveals that his upper body is turned away from Speer. In contrast to *Inside the Third Reich*, Hitler remains silent and shows no reaction in his face. However, he breaks a pencil, which he was holding in his hand. This behaviour could symbolise his anger and frustration with Speer's confession. Speer gets up to leave and extends his hand for a final farewell. Hitler fails to return the gesture and before Speer leaves the room, he wishes Hitler good luck in the future. However, this statement contradicts with Hitler's plans as he informed Speer about his suicide earlier in the scene. Speer offering Hitler his hand as a farewell and his last line could imply the separation between these two characters as Speer does not want to stay in Berlin and Hitler during the last days of the war. The last shot of this scene is a close-up of Hitler and a tear trickles down his right cheek. This scene humanises Hitler as he shows emotions for Speer, but it also makes Speer relatable for the audience as he disobeyed Hitler's orders and saved the German population. After Speer's confession to Hitler, the camera tracks behind Speer as he leaves the bunker distancing his character even more from Hitler and the leading National Socialists in the bunker. Speer does not react to a soldier offering him the Hitler Salute. Outside the bunker, Speer stands in front of the Reich Chancellery and the building he has built. The camera shows the war damage of the building in a wide-angle shot. The last shot of this scene is a medium shot only showing Speer's face and the background is out of focus.



Figure 4: Heino Ferch as Speer in *Downfall* after the confession to Hitler.

Speer turns around and walks away from the camera into the blurry and dusty background of Berlin. The flickering lights in the background could be seen as burning fire in the

damaged streets of Berlin around Hitler's bunker. This last part of this scene could symbolise the public opinion of Speer after the war, as he turns away from Hitler and distances himself from the leading Nazis in the bunker.

## **2.12 Plantinga's concept of a "scene of empathy" in relation to Speer's confession in *Downfall***

Carl Plantinga defines a "scene of empathy" by different criteria regarding the acting, cinematography and shot duration. In order for a scene to be labelled a "scene of empathy", the narrative of a film momentarily slows down and the interior emotional experience of a favoured character becomes the focus of attention in a scene.<sup>290</sup> The narrative in *Downfall*, which focuses on Hitler's last days in the bunker, does slow down during Speer's confession through the muted gestures and voices of the characters and the lack of outside noises from the bunker. This scene also focuses on the emotional experience between Speer and Hitler.

Film scholar Johannes von Moltke analyses in his essay *Sympathy for the Devil* in detail that his scene fulfils all of Plantinga's criterions to be regarded as an effective scene of empathy. The scene focuses the spectator's attention on Hitler and Speer's facial expression; the duration of the shots and of the scene is sufficient to allow for a response; the narrative laid the proper foundation for empathy to occur as it provides sufficient information about as Speer disobeying Hitler's orders; this scene locates the characters in a situation where neither of them believes no one is observing; the different aspects of film technique collaborate to create a "affective congruence", which according to Plantinga is to give the scene a consistent "feeling tone".<sup>291</sup> Johannes von Moltke argues that one of Plantinga's criterion for a "scene of empathy" is to align the spectator with the character on screen. According to Plantinga, the allegiance to the character on screen, whose face is represented, determines the degree of contagion and empathy.<sup>292</sup> *Downfall* attempts to let the spectator experience the same emotions of betrayal as Hitler does at this moment in the narrative.

Johannes von Moltke argues that according to Plantinga's concept a "scene of empathy" goes beyond the task of communicating information about a character and his or her feelings. A "scene of empathy" could elicit a response that aligns the spectator emotionally

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<sup>290</sup> Plantinga, C., in., 'Sympathy for the Devil: Cinema, History and the Politics of Emotions' by Johannes von Moltke, *New German Critique*, no. 102, Fall 2007, p. 29 [Accessed: [www.jstor.org/stable/27669207](http://www.jstor.org/stable/27669207), 3.9.16].

<sup>291</sup> von Moltke, J., Fall 2007, p. 29.

<sup>292</sup> Plantinga, C., in., 'Sympathy for the Devil: Cinema, History and the Politics of Emotions' by Johannes von Moltke, *New German Critique*, no. 102, Fall 2007, p. 29 [Accessed: [www.jstor.org/stable/27669207](http://www.jstor.org/stable/27669207), 3.9.16].

with Hitler or Speer. Under von Moltke's point of view, the ideological purpose of an alignment with Hitler and the creation of an empathic relation with this historical character through cinematic strategies should be questioned. He believes that it would be enough to show that Hitler feels betrayed, instead of bringing the spectator into a relation of allegiance with Hitler and experiencing his emotions.<sup>293</sup> However, von Moltke shows through his argument of strongly questioning the creation of empathy for Hitler in *Downfall* that in the opposite case this does not apply to Speer. By questioning the cinematic strategies which create empathy for Hitler, von Moltke implies that the creation of empathy for Speer does not need to be questioned and can be accepted by the spectator. As much as the spectator is emotionally aligned with Hitler through the last shot, where a tear runs down Hitler's face, the spectator is also emotionally aligned with Speer. I would argue that the spectator is in a stronger relation of allegiance with Speer than with Hitler in this scene, because Speer shows emotions for the German population by disobeying Hitler's orders. Through his confession, Speer is represented as an honest and brave character because the consequences for his actions could result in his own death.

Sabine Hake argues in her book *Screen Nazis* that *Downfall* insists on the accessibility of the past and representability of history.<sup>294</sup> This scene lets the spectator access the character of Hitler and Speer. Hitler is portrayed as an evil man, who hates the Jewish population and who wants to destroy the German population because of the failure of the war. Speer is represented as brave man, who does not think about himself and wants to save the German population. Even though, these leading national socialists are more complex characters, this scene represents history in an unambiguous mode. Furthermore, the realistic representation of Speer's confession in *Downfall* generates through acting, set-design and camera positions a certainty in the spectator's mind that this historical incident occurred, even though it never happened.

### **2.13 The fictional representation of Speer's confession in *Speer and Hitler- The Devil's Architect*.**

In contrast to *Downfall*, the main focus in the docudrama *Speer and Hitler* is Speer and his life positioning him as the protagonist of the narrative. In the second part of this docudrama, the last visit of Speer to the bunker is depicted. The contrast between the depiction of Hitler in *Downfall* and *Speer and Hitler* is that the actor Tobias Moretti appears as the on-screen character of Hitler. Tobias Moretti's stature and age give Hitler a much more active and vital appearance as Bruno Ganz in *Downfall*. Furthermore,

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<sup>293</sup> von Moltke, J., Fall 2007, p. 29.

<sup>294</sup> Hake, S., 2012, p. 235.

Moretti's acting style downplays Hitler's Parkinson's disease in this scene, whereas in *Downfall* Bruno Ganz's hands trembled consistently during Speer's confession. In comparison, it seems that Speer's last visit does not have such an impact on Hitler's mental and physical health as it does in *Downfall*.

In *Speer and Hitler*, Hitler also does not mention the elimination of the Jewish population. The scene starts with a point of view shot of Speer and the camera moves through Hitler's chambers to reveal him sitting behind a half-closed door. Hitler's voice can be heard off screen acknowledging Speer's arrival. The next shot is a close-up of Hitler opening the door to address Speer. The scene is dimly lit and the dark lightning underlines the shadows in Hitler's face. Through this lightning design, Hitler's face could be seen as sinister and it might symbolise the end of Hitler's life. Hitler moves to the table to sit down while discussing military strategies with Speer. Speer assures Hitler that he can trust his military general Dönitz. As in *Downfall*, Hitler does discuss in detail his suicidal plans with Speer. However, Hitler seems to be more composed and controlled in *Speer and Hitler*. The camera focuses on a close-up of Speer as Hitler mentions that he will stay in the bunker and end his life there. This camera positions attempts to portray Speer's emotions for Hitler through this cinematic strategy. Even though Speer does not show any emotions like a tear running down in his cheek, he seems to be upset by the thought of Hitler's suicide. After this statement, Hitler gets up from his chair and moves closer to Speer. While standing next to Speer, he mentions that Eva Braun wants to stay with him and that he will poison his dog. Speer responds that even though they had some disagreements about his policies, he is still loyal to him and would stay with him until the end if this would be Hitler's wish. Hitler does not respond to this remark as Speer turns away and leaves the room. While Speer leaves Hitler's room the voice-over of a radio broadcast can be heard announcing Hitler's death. The scene ends like it started with a point of view shot of Speer. However, this time the camera is static and shows Hitler standing in front of a painting of Frederick the Great. As Speer closes the door, the screen turns dark foreshadowing Hitler's suicide. In contrast to *Downfall*, Speer does not confess to Hitler about disobeying his policies. Through Speer's last words to Hitler, it is implied that Hitler is already informed about this situation. Even though Speer does not offer Hitler his farewell or his hand as leaves the room, the positioning of the characters create more of an intimacy between Hitler and Speer than in the depiction of this incident in *Downfall*.

In comparison with an earlier scene in this docudrama, where Speer presents to Hitler his architectural model of Germania, this last encounter between Speer and Hitler also symbolizes the bond between these two historical characters. Axel Bangert analyses in his book *The Nazi Past in Contemporary German Film* the scene, in which Hitler and

Speer inspect his architectonic model of Germania, in detail and regards it as symbolising the homoerotic bond between these two leading National Socialists.<sup>295</sup> Even though it can be argued to what extent the bond between Speer and Hitler can be labelled as homoerotic, it seems evident that a special bond did exist between them. However, I would argue that Speer's last visit portrays this bond through the *mise-en-scène*. As Hitler talks about the plans regarding his suicide, he stands up and moves closer to Speer so that he stands next to him. Hitler shows his trust in Speer by revealing his private thoughts about his suicide. In contrast to the scene with the architectonic model of Germania, there is no model dividing the personal space between Hitler and Speer. Their bodies stand very close to each other. Speer stating his loyalty to Hitler and offering to stay with him in Berlin until the end of the war articulates the bond between Speer and Hitler. However, Hitler does not respond to him as Speer leaves the room. This could indicate that the bond, which existed earlier in this visual narrative, does not exist anymore.

Bangert argues that this docudrama reaffirms the notion that Hitler's charisma was an irresistible force.<sup>296</sup> Speer's last words directed at Hitler symbolize this statement. Even though Speer does not agree with Hitler's scorched earth policy, he cannot resist Hitler's charisma and offers to stay with him until the end of the war. At this point in the narrative, Speer does not believe in Hitler's ideology anymore or his policies. However, he still feels loyal to him. Bangert argues that through the possible identification of the spectator with Speer, because he was seduced by Hitler, this portrayal of Hitler sustains the myth of a charismatic leader who in the end betrayed his people.<sup>297</sup> This notion can be found in the last shot of this scene. The point of view shot of Speer looking at Hitler portrays Hitler standing in front of a painting of Frederick the Great. By aligning Hitler with this German leader, he is portrayed as strong and charismatic leader. Through this portrayal, Hitler could be seen as a leader awaiting the end because he lost the war and betrayed the German population. In comparison with the depiction of Hitler in *Downfall*, this visual narrative portrays Hitler in a different way by not showing any of Hitler's emotions. *Speer and Hitler* depicts Hitler and the Third Reich through the personal memory of Albert Speer. The depiction of Hitler as a composed leader planning his suicide is based on Speer's personal memory of Hitler during this last visit between Speer and Hitler's Parkinson's disease in this scene is not as emphasised as in *Downfall*. The spectator might come to the conclusion that these leading National Socialists are akin and are both responsible for the Third Reich.

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<sup>295</sup> Bangert, A., 2014, p. 91-92.

<sup>296</sup> Bangert, A., 2014, p. 93.

<sup>297</sup> Bangert, A., 2014, p. 94.

## 2.14 The concept of 'cinematic realism' in relation to Speer's confession

As all of the fictional portrayals of Albert Speer's confession deploy a realist mode of representation, I will outline the key characteristic of this cinema technique. Film historian Robert Rosenstone outlines in his book *Visions of the Past* the conditions for "cinematic realism".<sup>298</sup> He argues that films attempt to make the spectator think that they reality. However, the reality the spectator sees on screen is neither inevitable nor natural to the camera, but a vision creatively constructed.<sup>299</sup> Following his argument, the spectator conveniently forgets this fact in order to participate in the experience cinema provides.<sup>300</sup> The "cinematic realism" is constructed through different camera positions in different sequences seamlessly edited together to give the spectator a sense that nothing is being manipulated to create a world on screen, in which he or she can feel at home.<sup>301</sup> Even though it can be debated how much the spectator feels comfortable in the world of the Third Reich, Rosenstone's description of "cinematic realism" can be applied to all representation of Speer's last visit in the bunker. The "cinematic realism" in *Inside the Third Reich*, *Downfall* and *Speer and Hitler* offer the spectator the illusion that nothing is being manipulated.

Rosenstone argues that the standard historical film symbolizes the notion that the spectator can look somehow through the window of the screen directly at a "real" world, present or past.<sup>302</sup> This notion can also be found in the visual narratives about Albert Speer. These narratives offer the spectator through scenes such as Speer visiting Hitler for the last time history as a closed, completed and simple past.<sup>303</sup>

The spectator is not provided with an alternative possibility to the depiction of Speer's visit to the bunker and promotes this historical assertion with a degree of confidence.<sup>304</sup> However, Rosenstone argues that it is essential to accept invention in historical films.<sup>305</sup> As film summarizes, generalizes and symbolizes, it cannot be seen as a window to the past. The depiction of an historical event is an approximation of what happened in the past; instead of depicting a visual narrative points to the event of the past.<sup>306</sup> The acceptance of inventions in historical films changes, accordingly to Rosentone, how the past is remembered. Following his argument, this means that historical films offer a

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<sup>298</sup> Rosenstone, R. A., 1995, p. 54.

<sup>299</sup> Rosenstone, R. A., 1995, p. 54.

<sup>300</sup> Rosenstone, R. A., 1995, p. 54.

<sup>301</sup> Rosenstone, R. A., 1995, p. 54.

<sup>302</sup> Rosenstone, R. A., 1995, p. 55.

<sup>303</sup> Rosenstone, R. A., 1995, p. 57.

<sup>304</sup> Rosenstone, R. A., 1995, p. 57.

<sup>305</sup> Rosenstone, R. A., 1995, p. 67.

<sup>306</sup> Rosenstone, R. A., 1995, p. 71.

different method of understanding the past and a different path to pursue the conversation about where humanity came from, where it is going and who everybody is.<sup>307</sup> The spectator should accept the invention of Speer's last encounter with Hitler, because it enhances our understanding of this time period and of these historical characters. This invention would not have such an impact if the audience would be aware of this invention. However by offering this event in a closed, complete and simple past, the viewer might accept this scene as a window of the past. The different depictions of Speer's confession in *Inside the Third Reich*, *Downfall* and *Speer and Hitler* might offer different methods of understanding Hitler and Speer for the spectator. However, these scenes in different films about Albert Speer promotes the historical assertion that this event has happened in reality with a degree of confidence, whereas the complete opposite is true.

According to Rosenstone works of history cannot literally recreate the past, but only attempt to explain vanished people, events moments and movements in the present.<sup>308</sup> The films about Albert Speer do not recreate the past but attempt to explain the events during his lifetime and incidents in the Third Reich, such as Speer's confession to Hitler in the bunker, to the spectator in the present. Even though Rosenstone believes that it is counter-intuitive to regard the film as a new form of historical thinking, he points towards the increasing importance of historical films in a visual age. Metaphors and symbols may become more important than amassing date or creating a logical argument in the visual thinking of the past.<sup>309</sup> Even though Gitta Sereny proves in *Albert Speer: His Battle with Truth* that Speer's confession never happened, the filmic recreation of this event becomes more important than the logical argument in Sereny's book. This event becomes a symbol to represent Albert Speer. Whereas in *Inside the Third Reich* and *Speer and Hitler* Speer's confession is one of many scenes to represent his character, this scene stands alone in *Downfall* to symbolise the historical character of Speer. As Johannes von Moltke has shown in his essay 'Sympathy for the Devil: Cinema, History and the Politics of Emotions', this scene is not only important to represent Speer but also the character of Hitler as he shows emotions after Speer's confession with a tear on his face. This humanization of Hitler shows the significance of this scene for the narrative in *Downfall*. Furthermore, the close-up of Hitler's face after Speer's confession is the only moment that this film positions Hitler on his own heightening the significance of this incident.<sup>310</sup>

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<sup>307</sup> Rosenstone, R. A., 1995, p. 77.

<sup>308</sup> Rosenstone, R. A., 2013, p. 183.

<sup>309</sup> Rosenstone, R. A., 2013, p. 185.

<sup>310</sup> von Moltke, J., Fall 2007 p. 25.

### 2.15 **Reviews and Academic Theory in relation to Speer's confession in *Downfall***

Film critic A. O Scott claims in his review of *Downfall* from the liberal *New York Times* in 2005 that the real subject is not Hitler, but his followers such as the officers, bureaucrats and loyal civilians, who were loyal to Hitler until the end.<sup>311</sup> He argues that this film allows the spectator's sympathy to gravitate towards characters such as Speer and Schenk because in comparison with Hitler and Goebbels they don't seem to be so evil. Scott states that this fact could be linked to the conventions of film narrative as the spectator longs to identify with someone on screen, even if nobody is especially admirable.<sup>312</sup> David Bathrick develops this thought even more in his essay 'Whose Hi/istory is it? The U. S. Reception of *Downfall*' from 2007. He states that the distinction between absolute evil symbolised through Hitler and Goebbels and the seemingly less evil others prevents an understanding of the grey zone of Nazi everyday. In terms of Klinger's concept of reception studies, these two examples show how meaning for this fictional representation of Speer can be created after the production of this visual narrative, which might differ from its original intent. The first example is from the category of review journalism from the synchronic areas of study and the second example is from category of academic theory and criticism. These two examples show how the synchronic areas of study and the diachronic areas of study can be entangled. It could be argued that the meaning created by the review of *Downfall*, closer to its release than the academic essay by Bathrick, might have more of an influence on how this film is discussed and evaluated in public. However, the meaning created by Scott's reviews resonates in Bathrick's academic essay and shows that this aspect is important to analyse the fictional representation of Albert Speer. Furthermore, Bathrick argues that as the story progresses most of the assistants, bystanders or minister of the Reich are turned into war victims in *Downfall*.<sup>313</sup> Even though this argument is debatable, the fictional representations of characters such as Speer and Schenk do not portray the full extent of their involvement in the government of the Third Reich and its crimes.

As the historical film does not offer a clear window to the past, these invented dialogues and events do not diminish the quality of a historical film because it cannot literally recreate the past but only attempt to explain events and moments to a contemporary audience.<sup>314</sup> Bern Eichinger, the producer, claimed from the start the *Downfall* is more authentic than any other and that anything that could not be corroborated was simply not

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<sup>311</sup> Scott, A. O., 'The Last Days of Hitler: Raving and Ravioli', *New York Times*, 18.2.2005, [Accessed: [http://www.nytimes.com/2005/02/18/movies/the-last-days-of-hitler-raving-and-ravioli.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/02/18/movies/the-last-days-of-hitler-raving-and-ravioli.html?_r=0), 5.1.2017]

<sup>312</sup> Scott, A. O., 18.2.2005.

<sup>313</sup> Bathrick, D. and Magshamrain, R. L., Fall 2007, p. 11.

<sup>314</sup> Rosenstone, R.A., 2013, p. 182-183.



included.<sup>315</sup> Even though the mise-en-scène creates a realistic representation of the Third Reich through set design and costumes, *Downfall* does not keep with an authentic representation of historical characters such as Speer and Schenk by creating a sympathetic reaction towards them from the audience. The director of *Downfall*, Hirschbiegel, claims that the film is entirely authentic because nothing is invented.<sup>316</sup> The film does not show anything the historical characters did not do. According to Hirschbiegel, every detail is confirmed, historically documented and absolutely authentic.<sup>317</sup> However, through these claims by the producer, Eichinger, and the director, Hirschbiegel, regarding the authenticity of *Downfall* the audience expects this film to offer a clear window onto the past and accept Speer's invented confession as historical truth. *Downfall* conveys to the contemporary audience an accurate representation of the leading National Socialists in the last days of the war. This film could enhance the viewer's knowledge about Hitler and the audience might be able to understand his character more after watching this film. However, it does not convey an authentic representation of Speer to the audience. Speer's representation could lead to a sympathetic identification with him, disregarding his involvement in the Final Solution, the government of the Third Reich and the Second World War.

Rosenstone believes that the images, sequences and visual metaphors created by history films help to understand and to think about the past. It creates a sense that nobody can ever really know the past, but can only reconfigure and try to make meaning out of traces the past has left behind.<sup>318</sup> Even though this statement could be accepted it seems that *Downfall* as a historical film offers the opposite to its audience. This historical film leads the audience to think about the Third Reich and to try to understand this time period. However, it does not create a sense that nobody can ever really know this past nor does it alter how the way history is perceived. The spectator believes that they know the past of Hitler, Speer and the Third Reich because of the authentic representation in *Downfall*. Even though *Downfall* enables to the audience to create a meaning out of the traces, which the Third Reich left behind, the audience is misled to believe that this historic film offers them an unbiased window onto the past through which they can understand historical characters such as Speer and Hitler because of their authentic representation.

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<sup>315</sup> von Moltke, J., Fall 2007, p. 25.

<sup>316</sup> Eichinger, B., in 'Whose Hi/story Is It? The U.S. Reception of Downfall' by David Bathrick and Rachel Leah Magshamrain in *New German Critique*, No. 102, Fall 2007, p. 8 [Accessed: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/27669206.pdf>, 10.10.2016]

<sup>317</sup> Hirschbiegel, O. in 'Whose Hi/story Is It? The U.S. Reception of Downfall' by David Bathrick and Rachel Leah Magshamrain in *New German Critique*, No. 102, Fall 2007, p. 8 [Accessed: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/27669206.pdf>, 10.10.2016]

<sup>318</sup> Rosenstone, R.A., 2013, p. 186.

In all the filmic representation of Speer's last farewell visit to Hitler in *Inside the Third Reich*, *Downfall* and *Speer and Hitler*, Speer's confession is employed to either humanise Speer or Hitler and to create a sympathetic identification with these historical characters. As David Bathrick states the distinction between absolute evil symbolised through Hitler and Goebbels and the seemingly less evil symbolised through Speer creates a different perception of this historical character. Bathrick believes that as the story progresses in *Downfall* most of the assistants, bystanders or minister of the Reich are turned into war victims.<sup>319</sup> Even though Speer is not turned into war victim in all the fictional depictions as his last visit to Hitler emphasises his involvement in the government of the Third Reich, he is portrayed as courageous man, who disobeys Hitler's orders to destroy Germany and takes responsibility for his actions in contrast to the real historical figure.

## 2.16 Conclusion

Joseph Goebbels, Minister of Propaganda of the Third Reich, stated in a speech to the Ministry of Propaganda in 1945: "in a hundred years' time, they will be showing a fine colour film about the terrible days we are living through."<sup>320</sup> The German film *Downfall* does exactly portray the terrible last days of the Third Reich. Film scholar Axel Bangert states that this medium sought to make the audience relive history by focusing on the Nazi elite, soldiers and civilians often in catastrophic defeats.<sup>321</sup> Goebbels prediction could be applied to *Inside the Third Reich*, *Downfall* and *Speer and Hitler* as these high production value films portray the Third Reich in a realistic manner. The fairly recent cinema and television productions *Downfall* and *Speer and Hitler* show that the contemporary audience still has an interest in Speer and is fascinated with the Third Reich.

Whereas *Downfall* portrays Speer mostly through the scene, in which he confesses to Hitler about disobeying his orders and positioning him as the opposite of Hitler, the docudrama *Speer and Hitler* offer the spectator a more complex portrayal of Albert Speer. Throughout the docudrama Speer is portrayed as an intelligent character driven primarily by his architectural ambitions. His representation in *Speer and Hitler* could support the claim that he was Germany's favourite perpetrator, who symbolises the notion that the Germans were seduced by Hitler.<sup>322</sup> *Speer and Hitler* leaves the spectator to decide if Speer attended Himmler's speech at Posen through the mise-en-scene and the lightning.

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<sup>319</sup> Bathrick, D. and Magshamrain, R. L., Fall 2007, p. 11.

<sup>320</sup> Goebbels, J. in *The Nazi Past in Contemporary German Film* by Axel Bangert, Camden House, 2014, p. 3.

<sup>321</sup> Bangert, A., 2014, p. 3.

<sup>322</sup> Bangert, A., 2014, p. 94.

In this television production, the room, in which Himmler holds the famous Posen speech and addresses Speer personally, is dimly lit and very dark. The audience can only see some leading national socialists as silhouettes, which leaves the question open if Speer attended this speech. By leaving this question open, this docudrama improves Speer's argument that he did not attend the Posen speech and was oblivious to the Final Solution. Gitta Sereny argues that even without attending the speech, Speer became an active participant in these crimes once he knew of them and continued to work for Hitler.<sup>323</sup> The filmic representations of Albert Speer, where he was the protagonist, *Inside the Third Reich* and *Speer and Hitler*, do not portray him as an active participant in the Final Solution. Even though *Inside the Third Reich* does not represent Himmler's speech, one scene depicts Speer visiting a labour camp. Following Sereny's statement about Speer's involvement in the Third Reich, this scene portrays him as active participant in the Third Reich, who must have known about the crimes and continued to work for Hitler.<sup>324</sup> However, Speer claims in this visual narrative that he did not know about the Final Solution until the Nuremberg trials.

Whereas *Inside the Third Reich* created this reality of the Third Reich for American audiences at the time, *Speer and Hitler* created the reality for a contemporary German and international audience, who might have not lived through this time period. Film scholar Judith Keilbach believes that Speer was either a cold-hearted criminal, who witnessed the mistreatment of human beings without any feelings for them or a victim of events that he witnessed during the visit to the armaments factor.<sup>325</sup> Even though this decision is left to the audience, *Speer and Hitler* portrays a selective version of events such as the visit to Mittelbau-Dora and Speer representing Hitler his architectural model of Germania. German journalist Frank Schirmacher argues that no history book such as Gitta Sereny's *Albert Speer: His Battle with the Truth* could explain the behaviour and interactions at this time period, the portrayal of Albert Speer in *Speer and Hitler* could be the only technique for a contemporary audience to understand the Third Reich.<sup>326</sup> Therefore, it is even more important to analyse the reality *Speer and Hitler* is creating for the audience, who might accept this docudrama as a window onto the past because of its 'cinematic realism'.<sup>327</sup> Speer is represented in this docudrama as reserved individual driven primarily by his architectural ambitions and then seduced by the attentions and

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<sup>323</sup> Sereny, G., 1996, p. 704.

<sup>324</sup> Sereny, G. 1996, p. 704.

<sup>325</sup> Keilbach, J., Fall 2007, p. 66.

<sup>326</sup> Schirmacher, F., 'Filme die Geschichte machen', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 2.12.2004, p. 1, [Accessed: <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/drittes-reich-filme-die-geschichte-machen-1106230.html>, 20.4.16].

<sup>327</sup> Rosenstone, R. A., 2013, p. 183.

flattery of his leader.<sup>328</sup> *Speer and Hitler* offers the spectator the explanation that Speer joined the NSDAP and followed Hitler's ideology because of Hitler's seductive charisma. An example for this is one of the first fictional episode in the docudrama, in which Speer attends a speech of Hitler in beer hall.

The publisher of Speer's memoirs Wolf-Jobst Siedler, who knew him very well, described Speer as an 'angel that came from hell.'<sup>329</sup> Even though this statement seems too extreme to describe Albert Speer, he could have been an example of the idealistic, hardworking German, who fell under Hitler's spell.<sup>330</sup> Siedler changed this statement in an interview in the conservative newspaper *Die Weltwoche* after *Speer and Hitler: The Devil's Architect* was broadcasted on German television. He stated that Speer was apparently only 'a devil that came from hell'. This showcases how a media text can shape how a historical character is remembered in the cultural memory. This reception of *Speer and Devil's Architect* by somebody, who knew Speer and spent a lot of time with him, shows how a media text can reshape somebody's perception of a historical character. Siedler's feelings about Speer and his empathy for this historical character by labelling him an 'angel that came from hell' were changed through this fictional representation of Albert Speer in a contemporary television production. I would argue that the fictional representation of Speer's confession in *Downfall* and *Speer and Hitler: The Devil's Architect* portray him as the 'angel who came from hell' and creates an image in the public memory as a sympathetic character disobeying Hitler's 'Scorched Earth' policy as Minister of Armaments and saving the German population.

Historian Martin Kitchen argues that Speer provided exculpation for millions of old Nazis and an entire generation because if the man, who was the closest to Hitler and with such immense power was unaware of the Final Solution how could the rest of Germany have known about it.<sup>331</sup> Even though the director Breloer attempted to demystify Speer in his biographical film *Speer and Hitler*, the scene in which Himmler presents his speech at Posen leaves the spectator to decide if Speer attended this speech.<sup>332</sup> This fictional representation reinstates the myth that Speer was oblivious to the mass murder of the Jews. Himmler and Heydrich were among Speer's closest associates and they were

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<sup>328</sup> Guner, F., 'DVD: Speer and Hitler: The Devil's Architect', theartsdesk, 6 June 2011, [Accessed: <http://www.theartsdesk.com/film/dvd-speer-and-hitler-devils-architect>, 1.4.16].

<sup>329</sup> Siedler, W.-F., in Kitchen M., *Speer Hitler's Architect*, Yale University Press, 2015, p. 366.

<sup>330</sup> Kitchen M., *Speer Hitler's Architect*, Yale University Press, 2015, p. 366.

<sup>331</sup> Kitchen M., 2015, p. 366.

<sup>332</sup> Kitchen M., 2015, p. 355.

complicit in a mass murder on an unimaginable scale. Following Kitchen's argument, it is inconceivable that Speer knew nothing about the Final Solution.<sup>333</sup>

Emily K. Ergang argues in her study 'Speer: An Artist or a Monster?' that Speer was not sentenced to death because of his steps to prevent the destruction of the German infrastructure. Following her argument, he might have not been the real criminal of the Third Reich because he had the courage to tell Hitler that the war was lost.<sup>334</sup> This behaviour is symbolised through Speer's confession to Hitler in *Inside the Third Reich*, *Downfall* and *Speer and Hitler*, even though this incident never occurred. Furthermore, she believes that by accepting responsibility for his actions and for the actions of the government itself at the Nuremberg trials, Speer represents a possible story of redemption.<sup>335</sup> Therefore, this could be one of the reasons for the ongoing fascination with this historical character.

In *Downfall*, which was also a box-office hit in America, Speer is only defined through his confession to Hitler about disobeying his orders.<sup>336</sup> As four and a half million spectators in Germany saw *Downfall* by the end of its theatrical release, the representation of Albert Speer in this media text has an immense impact on how this historical figure is remembered in the cultural memory.<sup>337</sup> Christine Haase argues in the book *New Directions in German Cinema* that "this film reconstructs the history of the Third Reich and the Holocaust as a cruel and crazed but linear and readable story emanating from Hitler as its centre."<sup>338</sup> Following Haase's argument, *Downfall* supports the old revisionist model of primarily implementing a small group of fanatic mad men tracing the existence and crimes of Nazi Germany to one rather confined field of force. Film scholar Paul Cooke supports this statement in his essay 'Der Untergang (2004): Victims, Perpetrator and the Continuing Fascination with Fascism'. According to Cooke, *Downfall* presents many convinced followers of National Socialism not as perpetrators complicit with a barbaric regime, but rather as having been duped by it and consequently as its victims.<sup>339</sup> This notion can also be found to some extent in Speer's fictional depiction in this film. Even though Speer is not portrayed as a victim, his involvement in the Nazi regime is not shown

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<sup>333</sup> Kitchen M., 2015, p. 367.

<sup>334</sup> Ergang, E. K., 'Speer: An Artist or a Monster?', *Constructing the Past*: Vol. 7 : Issue. 1 , Article 14. [Accessed: <https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/constructing/vol7/iss1/14>, 5.5.2017]

<sup>335</sup> Ergang, E. K., 2006, p. 124-25.

<sup>336</sup> Bathrick, D. and Magshamrain, R. L., Fall 2007, p. 1.

<sup>337</sup> Haase, C., 'Downfall (2004): Hitler in the new millennium and the (ab)uses of history', in *New Directions in German Cinema* by Cooke, P. & Homewood, C., (ED), I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2011, p. 44-45

<sup>338</sup> Haase, C., 2011, p. 53.

<sup>339</sup> Cooke, P., 'Der Untergang (2004): Victims, Perpetrator and the Continuing Fascination with Fascism' in *A Nation of Victims? Representations of German Wartime Suffering from 1945 to the Present* by Schmitz H, (ED), Rodopi B.V., 2007, p. 253.

to the spectator. The audience remembers Speer through the fictional depiction of his confession to Hitler. This scene constructs an image of Speer in the cultural memory to which an individual can relate to as he shows his courage by countermanding Hitler's orders. Through this scene, Speer is remembered in the cultural memory of the German audience as an honest and brave character because the consequences for his actions could result in his own death. Cooke argues that films such as *Downfall* mark the beginning of a genuine process of coming to terms with the nation's history instead of marking a moment when the past can finally be put to rest. I agree that *Downfall* and *Speer and Hitler: The Devil's Architect* help the German nation to come to terms with the history of the Third Reich. However, they construct fictional images of these historical figures, which are in contrast to the real persona. Cooke agrees with Johannes von Moltke's argument that:

The very fact that we, as spectators, are at time put in a position to sympathise with Hitler's point of view does not mean that we forget his crimes. Instead it potentially allows us to reflect anew on the nature of these crimes and the ways they have been, and can be, represented.<sup>340</sup>

Even though I agree with his argument that the spectator does not watch Bruno Ganz's portrayal of Hitler in a vacuum, I believe that the opposite for Speer is true.<sup>341</sup> Through the scene of Speer's confession in *Downfall*, the spectator forgets his crimes and involvements in the Third Reich. The spectator sympathises with Speer in this scene and it prevents the spectator to reflect anew on this historical figure and the reasons behind his involvement in the Nazi regime.

*The Hollywood Reporter* claimed that *Downfall* was "one of the best war films ever made and that it will set new standards in the art of committing history to celluloid."<sup>342</sup> However, it could commit an image of Albert Speer on celluloid, which is very different to the historical truth. Speer is positioned as Hitler's opponent through his fictional representation and his confession.<sup>343</sup> Kitchen argues that it is easy to overestimate Speer's role in the final stages of the Third Reich because a scorched earth policy was impossible to implement. The German population had enough of the war wanted an end

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<sup>340</sup> Von Moltke, J., in *New Directions in German Cinema* by Cooke, P. & Homewood, C., (ED), I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2011, p. 11.

<sup>341</sup> Von Moltke, J., in *New Directions in German Cinema* by Cooke, P. & Homewood, C., (ED), I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2011, p. 11

<sup>342</sup> Eric Hansen, 'Downfall', *Hollywood Reporter*, September 16, 2004, in *Whose Hi/story Is It? The U.S. Reception of Downfall* by Bathrick, D. and Magshamrain, R. L., *New German Critique*, No. 102, Fall 2007, p. 2 [Accessed: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/27669206.pdf>, 10.10.2016]

<sup>343</sup> Bathrick, D. Magshamrain, R. L., Fall 2007, p. 13.

to the horror and were prepared to wave the white flag at the risk of the death penalty. Therefore, Speer's involvement in preventing the destruction of the German infrastructure could be seen as myth as well as Speer's image in the cultural memory as a technocrat oblivious to the Holocaust. However, these myths about Albert Speer are reinforced and given credibility by my case studies such as *Downfall*, through their cinematic realism and their claim to authenticity, related to the statements by the director Hirschbiegel and producer Eichinger of *Downfall* and the review of historian Ian Kershaw, which also shape the meaning of this media text. Even though the spectator's understanding of the Third Reich and about these leading national socialists is enhanced through the fictional narratives about Albert Speer, it seems to become and more difficult to look past these constructed images of Albert Speer, which become traces to interpret the past of the Third Reich.<sup>344</sup>

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<sup>344</sup> Lowenthal, D., *The Past Is a foreign Country-Revisited*, Cambridge University Press, 2015, p. 25.





## Chapter 3 'The Devil's General': Rommel in film and television

### 3.1 Introduction

The German television production *Rommel* from 2012 portrays the historical character Rommel as man, who was torn by his loyalty and the realization that he might be serving a devil.<sup>345</sup> The producer of *Rommel*, Nico Hofmann states that his aim is to demystify Rommel through this fictional representation.<sup>346</sup> Whereas Speer could be seen as the 'Devil's Architect', Rommel could be labelled the 'Devil's General'. He is described as such in an online article by the news agency Reuters.<sup>347</sup> *Rommel* has received criticism by Rommel's family after its release on German television because it might underplay his role in the resistance against Hitler and present lies to viewers.<sup>348</sup> In this chapter, I will discuss how my case studies create the fictional representations of Erwin Rommel analysing the production context and reviews in Germany, America and Britain. My main case studies will be *The Desert Fox* (Henry Hathaway, 1951, USA) and *Rommel* (Niki Stein, 2012, Germany).

The representation of Rommel in film and television changed accordingly to the time period of the representations and the origins of these fictional narratives. In 1951, Rommel was favourable portrayed in *The Desert Fox* by James Mason, which highlighted his role in the plot to assassinate Hitler.<sup>349</sup> Whereas James Mason portrayed Rommel as a hero, who distanced himself from Hitler, Ulrich Tukur portrays him very differently in the German television production *Rommel* from 2012.<sup>350</sup> In this contemporary fictional narrative, Rommel's last words to his wife and son before his suicide are that he is innocent and did not support the plot to assassinate Hitler. This dialogue changes the representation of Rommel immensely because it shows that he was not actively involved in the resistance against Hitler.

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<sup>345</sup> Chambers, M., 'The Devil's General? German film seeks to debunk Rommel myth', *Reuters*, 1.11.2021 [Accessed: <http://www.reuters.com/article/entertainment-us-germany-rommel-idUSBRE8A00RM20121101>, 10.2.17].

<sup>346</sup> Hofmann N., in 'The Devil's General? German film seeks to debunk Rommel myth' by Chambers, M., *Reuters*, 1.11.2012, [Accessed: <http://www.reuters.com/article/entertainment-us-germany-rommel-idUSBRE8A00RM20121101>, 10.2.17].

<sup>347</sup> Chambers, M., 1.11.2012.

<sup>348</sup> Chambers, M., 1.11.2012.

<sup>349</sup> Chambers, M., 1.11.2012.

<sup>350</sup> Cicero, 'Erwin Rommel- Der Held, der keiner war', *Cicero*, 2012 [Accessed: <https://www.cicero.de/kultur/der-held-der-keiner-war/52374>, 10.2.17].

German history professor Soenke Neitzel explained that *Rommel* was authentic and did not construct a biased image of the general.<sup>351</sup> He said that even though Rommel did not commit war crimes, he took casualties elsewhere and was a servant of the regime. Rommel was as well as Albert Speer mostly interested in his career.<sup>352</sup> In August 1978 the liberal German magazine *Spiegel* published an article by Manfred Rommel, Rommel's son. He states in this article that his father did not know about the plot to assassinate Hitler until it happened.<sup>353</sup> *The Desert Fox* and *Rommel* show how the fictional representations of Rommel are transformed like memories with the passage of time and with the emergence of new information regarding this historical character. Astrid Erll stated, "film seems to have become the leading medium of popular cultural memory".<sup>354</sup> Therefore, I will analyse how the historical character Rommel is remembered in this chapter through his representations in film and television focusing on the production context and the reviews in Germany, America and United Kingdom.

To explain the past to the present demands taking into account not only changed viewpoints and values, but also what has happened since the period under the study. We are bound to see the Second World War differently in our modern time compared to 1945, not merely because new evidence has come to light but also because the ensuing decades unfolded further consequences such as the Bomb, decolonization, the Cold War and much more.<sup>355</sup> This notion could explain the changing representation of Rommel in film and television linked to the changing worldview and different national contexts. Therefore, I will analyse how Rommel's representation in film and television changed from films such as *The Desert Fox* to *Rommel*. In an article in the conservative political magazine *Cicero* from Germany with the title 'Erwin Rommel- The hero, who wasn't one', which reviews the television production *Rommel*, the argument is put forward that Rommel was a symbol of the of the German population in 1944. He could symbolise the middle class of the National Socialism because Rommel could not decide if he should be loyal to Hitler or support the resistance. According to this article Rommel's behaviour symbolises the fear of the German population that with the end of the Führer their dream of stability, power and feeling of security would end too. This could have been one of the reasons why the German middle class was still loyal to Hitler at the end of the war.<sup>356</sup>

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<sup>351</sup> Neitzel, S., in "Braune Soße" by Tieschky, C. in *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2011 [Accessed: <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/medien/film-ueber-erwin-rommel-braune-sosse-1.1177469>, 11.2.17]

<sup>352</sup> Neitzel S., in 'German film looks at ties between Rommel and Hitler' by BBC, 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2012, [Accessed: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-20180010>, February 2017]

<sup>353</sup> Rommel, M. in "Hitler verhaften: ja! Attentat: nein!" by Riehl, K., in *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 4.11.2011, p.2.

<sup>354</sup> Erll, A, *Literature, Film, and the Mediality of Cultural Memory*, in *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies* edited by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, De Gruyter, 389-398 at 395.

<sup>355</sup> Lowenthal, D., 2015, p. 340.

<sup>356</sup> Cicero, 'Erwin Rommel- Der Held, der keiner war', *Cicero*, 2012 [Accessed: <https://www.cicero.de/kultur/der-held-der-keiner-war/52374>, 10.2.17].

Therefore, I will analyse in this chapter to what extent Rommel could be seen as symbolising the German population in the fictional representations in film and television.

Historian David Lowenthal argues in this book *The Past is a Foreign Country*:

Driven to see the world as more simple, predictable, and coherent than it really is, we imposed a causal order on the past, making it more explicable than its usual coincidences.<sup>357</sup>

This notion is reflected in my case studies regarding the representation of Erwin Rommel, as the fictional representations in film and television impose a causal order on the past of the Third Reich, for example offering the viewers an explanation if Rommel knew about the extermination of the Jews and how much he was involved in the plot to assassinate Hitler. Michel-Rolph Trouillot stated that history did not need to be mine in order to engage with me. The past needed to relate to someone, anyone.<sup>358</sup> Therefore, it could be argued that the audience is able to engage with the past of the Third Reich because it is Rommel's past. Society deals with the historical character Rommel through the medium of cinema and television. It is essential to recognize our continuity with those in the past, who routinely said and did things that we would today regard as unthinkable.<sup>359</sup> However, a consequence of folding past into present is a growing inability to accept that bygone folk held other principles and viewpoints as the zeitgeist alters over time. If each generation is free to measure its predecessors morally, using the criteria now accepted no one will escape condemnation. To form a correct estimate of Rommel merits and crimes, we ought to place ourselves in his situation, to remove ourselves from our time and all that knowledge which he could not have access to, which the current audience has.<sup>360</sup> However, it could be argued according to a contemporary credo that 'a society will not be able to successfully pass into the future until it somehow deals with the demons from the past'.<sup>361</sup> Therefore, I will analyse in this chapter how my case studies attempt to deal with the demons of the Third Reich through the personification of Rommel and how Rommel is remembered in the German cultural memory through the recent German TV production *Rommel*.

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<sup>357</sup> Lowenthal, D., 2015, p. 340.

<sup>358</sup> Trouillot, M.R., *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, Beacon Press, 1995, p. 142.

<sup>359</sup> Fletcher, G.P., *Romantics at War: Glory and Guilt in the Age of Terrorism*, Princeton University Press, 2002, p. 209.

<sup>360</sup> Thomas Babington Macaulay, 'Sir James Macintosh', 1835, in *Critical and Historical Essays*, London, 1903, 2, pp. 49-114 p. 68, in *The Past Is a Foreign Country-Revisited* by David Lowenthal, Cambridge University Press, 2015, p. 602.

<sup>361</sup> Rhoda E. Howard-Hassmann and Mark Gibney, 'Introduction: apologies and the West', in *The Age of Apology- Facing Up to the Past*, Gibney, M., Howard-Hassmann, R. E., Coicaud, J.-M. and Steiner N., (Eds), PennPress, 2008, pp. 1-9, p. 1.

### 3.2 **Analysis of Matthew McGinn's thesis "Rommel, you magnificent Bastard": The Desert Fox and the Rehabilitation of Germany in Post-war Media**

In order to show how my research builds on the previous scholarly work and how it progresses with the analysis of Rommel's fictional representation in film and television, I will engage in the following paragraph with Matthew McGinn's thesis "*Rommel, you magnificent Bastard*": *The Desert Fox and the Rehabilitation of Germany in Post-war Media*. McGinn focuses in his thesis on the fictional representation of Rommel in several British and American films across different time periods including *The Desert Fox: The Story of Rommel*. As this film is one of my case studies, I will discuss McGinn's analysis of Rommel's representation in this fictional narrative. I chose this film as one of my case studies because it portrays Rommel for the first time to as a sympathetic character and shed a positive light on the German military.<sup>362</sup> McGinn focuses in his thesis on the political values of the films such as *The Desert Fox*. He argues that the sympathetic portrayal of Rommel by James Mason is linked to the changing political situation with the West German government after the war and the perception of the Wehrmacht after the Second World War.<sup>363</sup> According to McGinn, Rommel's role as resistance leader was used after the war to show that the German military was an honourable organization unblemished by Nazi ideology.<sup>364</sup> He argues that the negative perception of the Wehrmacht began to change after the verdicts of the Nuremberg War Crime Tribunals and the rearmament of the West German government. The United States Nuremberg Military Tribunals took place between 1947 and 1948 and fourteen members of the Wehrmacht high command were charged with crimes against peace and participating in war crimes. The high command officers were acquitted of crimes against peace but were found guilty of war crimes. The verdict could imply that the Wehrmacht had paid its price for having served the government of the Third Reich.<sup>365</sup> The West German chancellor Konrad Adenauer pushed forward a plan to rearm Germany and join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization through rehabilitation the military by harnessing a narrative of resistance with historical characters such as a Rommel.<sup>366</sup>

McGinn believes that the US government had to re-educate Americans about their attitudes towards Germans and one way was through the fictional depictions of Rommel.<sup>367</sup> The political value of *The Desert Fox* is no longer a matter of its intrinsic

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<sup>362</sup> McGinn M., "*Rommel, you magnificent Bastard*": *The Desert Fox and the Rehabilitation of Germany in Postwar Media*, Thesis, San Diego State University, 2013, p. 17.

<sup>363</sup> McGinn M., 2013, p. 43.

<sup>364</sup> McGinn M., 2013, p. 16-17.

<sup>365</sup> McGinn M., 2013, p. 14-15.

<sup>366</sup> McGinn M., 2013, p. 15.

<sup>367</sup> McGinn M., 2013, p. 15.

characteristics, but also how it is deployed to change the view of the Wehrmacht and the historical character Rommel.<sup>368</sup> I would argue that *The Desert Fox* was also produced as a Hollywood film because it would be a financially successful film choosing a narrative which would be interesting and appealing for an international audience shortly after the war. Five of the twenty-five top crossing films of 1951 were service pictures. According to *Variety*, *The Desert Fox* finished twenty-fifth of the year.<sup>369</sup> This fictional representation of Rommel makes the image of the Third Reich and the Second World War available for mass consumption in America and the Federal Republic of Germany shortly after the end of the Second World War. This is shown through the film's success in West Germany, as it came in at number eleven in the box office ranking for 1952 and the number one Hollywood import of that year.<sup>370</sup> I would argue that this media text was also produced because it could offer to the audience the accessibility of the past and the representability of the historical time period of the Third Reich. Furthermore, the audience in America and West Germany could identify with the main character Rommel through the sympathetic representation by James Mason. James Mason reprises his roles as Rommel in *The Desert Rats* (Robert Wise, 1953, USA) and is depicted as a master tactician, who led from the front inspiring his men to fight.<sup>371</sup> McGinn argues that this film used the desert war narrative to show how Allied Powers became a unified fighting force in order to overcome the Germans.<sup>372</sup>

Even though he outlines in his thesis the political situations during the production of various fictional depictions of Rommel, I would argue that he does not engage critically what meaning this political situation created for media texts such as *The Desert Fox*. According to McGinn, this film took cues from the Adenauer government by focusing on a resistance narrative in order to portray the Field Marshal in a sympathetic way.<sup>373</sup> Therefore, it could be argued that this film is part of a political development after the Second World. In terms of reception studies, the meaning of this fictional depiction of Rommel could be linked to Klinger's category of the politics, which is part of the social and historical contexts of the synchronic areas of study. This area of reception study acknowledges how cinematic practices and intertextual zones interact with social and historical developments in order to create meaning for films. According to Klinger the

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<sup>368</sup> McGinn M., 2013, p. 15.

<sup>369</sup> Hoberman J., *An Army of Phantoms: American Movies and the Making of the Cold War*, The New Press, 2012, p.235.

<sup>370</sup> Major, P., 'Shooting Rommel: The Desert Fox 1951 and Hollywood's public private diplomacy', *Historical Journal of Radio, Film and Television*, Vol 39, Issue 2, pp. 209-232, Published Online 30.10.2018, p. 224 [Accessed: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01439685.2018.1522791>, 11.1.19].

<sup>371</sup> McGinn M., 2013, p. 31.

<sup>372</sup> McGinn M., 2013, p. 30.

<sup>373</sup> McGinn M., 2013, p. 15.

social and historical context of politic developments play also an important part in the negotiation of what films mean publicly.<sup>374</sup> I would agree with McGinn that the political developments after the Second World War played an important part in creating meaning for the fictional depiction of Rommel in *The Desert Fox* and *The Desert Rats*. McGinn believes that the Wehrmacht became an honourable institution removed from the Nazi ideology through its depiction in the movies. However, I would argue that one of the main reasons why *The Desert Fox* was made was a financial one and the past of the Third Reich could be told in a compelling and compelling narrative through focusing on Rommel. Therefore, I will analyse in the following paragraphs, how Erwin Rommel is remembered in the cultural memory through his depiction in a Hollywood film from 1952 and a German TV production from 2012. In order to frame my analysis of the historical character Erwin Rommel in film and television, I will examine Rommel's depiction in *The Desert Fox* in the following part of this chapter.

### 3.3 The fictional representation of Rommel in *The Desert Fox*

This fictional depiction of Rommel is a biographical narrative, which follows Rommel's military career from 1942 to his death. However, it focuses on the last few months of Rommel's life. The film begins with Rommel's defeat by the British, Free French and Americans in North Africa.<sup>375</sup> This film was released six years after the end of the Second World War in 1951 by Twentieth Century-Fox in America and premiered in Germany in 1952. In terms of reception studies, this part of the production of this fictional narrative had an impact on the fictional portrayal of Rommel, because a Hollywood studio produced it a few years after the end of the war, which means that most viewers of this media text still had a personal experience of this time period.<sup>376</sup>

Klinger argues that even though the specifics of a network might vary depending on the genre or the social period in which a film is released, several filmic elements tend to be consistently to commodification: character/stars, subject matter/genre and style including mise-en-scène. She believes that director and star represent one of the most visible examples of the relation between commodity fetishism and promotion, whereas the film can be apprehended as a star vehicle. In relation to my case study *The Desert Fox*, this would mean that the meaning associated with the representation for Rommel depends on

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<sup>374</sup> Klinger, B., 'Film history\ terminable and interminable: recovering the past in reception studies', *Screen*, Vol. 38, No. 2, 1.7.1997, pp. 107-128. p. 120 [Accessed: <https://academic.oup.com/screen/article/38/2/107/1611732>, 5.1.2018].

<sup>375</sup> Tunzelmann, A., 'The Desert Fox: does it capture the real Rommel?', *The Guardian*, 6.10.2011, [Accessed: <https://www.theguardian.com/film/filmblog/2011/oct/06/the-desert-fox-rommel>, 12.7.20]

<sup>376</sup> Tunzelmann, A., 6.10.2011.

the casting choice of James Mason as Rommel. The style of the film and genre as a war film will also influence the meaning associated with the representation of this leading National Socialist. Crowther argues in a review in *The New York Times* from 1951 that James Mason as Rommel makes this historical character more sympathetic.<sup>377</sup> This notion can also be seen in the book *Monty and Rommel: Parallel Lives* by Peter Caddick-Adams. He argues that the film was a shock for the world because Mason's Rommel was the first time in any film that a German officer had been portrayed with sympathy. James Mason spoke perfect English without a German accent making Rommel less alien to an English-speaking audience.<sup>378</sup> Film scholar Peter Lev states the casting of the film was problematic, because a German-language film would not work for American audiences and German-accented English might be inconsistent or irritating. Twentieth Century-Fox decided to use a mostly British cast with the variance of American accents denoting "foreignness". Lev argues that despite the irony of portraying Germans via their bitter enemy this technique works, as Mason gives a beautifully measured performance as Rommel.<sup>379</sup> This notion is echoed in a review in the conservative tabloid newspaper *The Daily Express* in the UK from 1951 with the title 'Mason's Rommel will fan up the fire again', which describes the film sensational, brilliantly made and well-acted. This article argues that "through this pulsing film strides James Mason, a master actor, back from the wilderness".<sup>380</sup> Furthermore, it quotes a British brigadier, who met Rommel three times during the war. He said after watching the film: "Now when I think of Rommel, I shall always have a picture of Mason in my head."<sup>381</sup> This shows how Mason's representation of Rommel replaced the historical figure Rommel in the British cultural memory shortly after the end of the war, even in the personal memory of people who have met the real historical figure.

James Mason emerged as a star during the the Second World War through films such as *Fanny by Gaslight* (Anthony Asquith, 1944, UK) and *They Were Sisters* (Arthur Cabtree, 1945, UK). David Thomson claims in an article in the liberal-leaning newspaper *The Guardian* on Mason's career with the title 'Every Word a Poison Dart' that Mason defined a new type in British pictures as the handsome cruel mastermind, who is irresistible to women through films such as *The Seventh Veil* (Compton Bennett, 1945, UK).<sup>382</sup>

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<sup>377</sup> Crowther, B., 'Curious Twist; Now a German General is heroized on screen', *The New York Times*, 28.10.1951, [Accessed: <https://www.nytimes.com/1951/10/28/archives/curious-twist-now-a-german-general-is-heroized-on-screen.html>, 13.7.20]

<sup>378</sup> Caddick-Adams, P., *Monty and Rommel: Parallel Lives*, Arrow, 2012, p. 480.

<sup>379</sup> Lev, P., *Twentieth, Century Fox- The Zanuck-Skouras Years 1935-1965*, University of Texas Press, 2013, p. 187.

<sup>380</sup> Mosley L., 'Mason's Rommel will fan up the fire again', *Daily Express*, 1.10.1951.

<sup>381</sup> Mosley L., 'Mason's Rommel will fan up the fire again', *Daily Express*, 1.10.1951.

<sup>382</sup> Thomson, D., 'Every Word a poison dart', *The Guardian*, 15.5.2009 [Accessed: <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2009/may/15/james-mason>, 13.2.18]

Thomson mentions the unique and languid voice of this man. He argues that Mason could say something to another person that one word seemed like a lash or a curare dart delivered in slow motion.<sup>383</sup> The author of *Screenonline* Brian McFarlane claims that Mason became 'Everywoman's favourite brute' through his performance in these films. These films made Mason the top box office male star between 1944 and 1947.<sup>384</sup> Post-war Mason starred in *Odd Man Out* (Carol Reed, 1947, UK), where he portrayed a wounded gunman pursued relentlessly through the night-time city to his inevitably end. According to the BFI this might be Mason's greatest performance. Mason embarked after this on the American phase of his stardom and struggled to advance his career until *Caught* (Max Ophüls 1949, USA) and *Madame Bovary* (Vincent Minnelli 1949, USA), before he starred in *The Desert Fox* in 1951.<sup>385</sup> The BFI claims Mason should be regarded for contemporary audience as one of the greatest British male stars, tall, dark and saturnine.<sup>386</sup> Therefore, I will also focus on how the star James Mason created meaning for the character of Rommel in *The Desert Fox*.

Peter Cadick-Adams argues in his book *Monty and Rommel: Parallel Lives* that the film was a shock for the world because Mason's Rommel was the first time in any film that a German officer had been portrayed with sympathy. Cadick-Adams argues that Rommel's early close association with Hitler is left out and his part in the 20 July plot is exaggerated.<sup>387</sup> This casting choice and the focus on Rommel's part in the plot to assassinate Hitler could be due to the production company as this film was aimed to generate profit and to appeal to a large audience. A harsh review in *The New York Times* by Bosley Crowther, which I will discuss in length later in this chapter, points out the subtle device of using James Mason as Rommel makes this historical character more sympathetic.<sup>388</sup> Long after the film was distributed and released, the author Charles P. Mitchell argues in his book *Hitler Filmography: World Wide Feature Films and Television Miniseries Portrayals 1940 through 2000* that James Mason creates a sensitive portrait of an honourable man, who is forced to confront the madness of the Nazi regime.<sup>389</sup> According to Mitchell the crux of the film shows how Rommel abandons his military code

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<sup>383</sup> Thomson, D, 15.5.2009.

<sup>384</sup> Aldgate, T. and Richards, J., *Britain Can Take It! British Cinema in the Second World War*, Second Edition, I B. Tauris, 2007. P. 162.

<sup>385</sup> McFarlane, B., 'Mason, James (1909-1984)', *Screenonline*, [Accessed: <http://www.screenonline.org.uk/people/id/447497/index.html>], 3.7.19].

<sup>386</sup> McFarlane, B., 'Mason, James (1909-1984)', *Screenonline*, [Accessed: <http://www.screenonline.org.uk/people/id/447497/index.html>], 3.7.19].

<sup>387</sup> Caddick-Adams, P., *Monty and Rommel: Parallel Lives*, Arrow, 2012, p. 480.

<sup>388</sup> Crowther, B., 'Curious Twist; Now a German General is heroized on screen', *The New York Times*, 28.10.1951, [Accessed: <https://www.nytimes.com/1951/10/28/archives/curious-twist-now-a-german-general-is-heroized-on-screen.html>], 13.7.20].

<sup>389</sup> Mitchell, C. P., *Hitler Filmography: World Wide Feature Film and Television Miniseries Portrayals 1940 through 2000*, McFarland & Co Inc., 2002, p. 43.



of conduct to apply a higher ethical standard, even if it is treason.<sup>390</sup> He believes that this film could be made so close to the war as a tribute to Rommel, who was regarded with respect, even before word of his participation in the conspiracy against Hitler became public knowledge. In the following paragraph I will give a brief overview of the structure of the film to outline how Rommel is represented in this fictional narrative.

Not only did the casting choice of Mason as Rommel influence the meaning of this fictional narrative, but also the director Henry Hathaway, who decided on the opening of *The Desert Fox*. The screenwriter Johnson had two possible openings and he wrote both of them in the script, as he was unable to decide which one to use. The first scene was a meeting with Rommel and the author Desmond Young, as a British officer, after he had been taken prisoner. Johnson included this scene to provide a certain documentary authenticity. The other scene was an exciting raid by British commandos attempting to assassinate Rommel in his North African headquarters. Hathaway decided to place this scene of the raid, as an action set piece, before the main credits of the film. This idea had been used in a few previous films, but these pre-credit introductions were usually very short. The notion of a large pre-credit scene was relatively new at this time. The other scene was still included later in the film to add authenticity. Therefore, it could be argued that through placing the raid as an opening scene, Hathaway's conscious decision represents Rommel as a very important historical figure in *The Desert Fox*, because the British commandos are trying to assassinate Rommel.<sup>391</sup>

Furthermore, the autocratic movie mogul Darryl F. Zanuck of Twentieth Century-Fox, who bought the film rights of Young's book *The Desert Fox: The Story of Rommel*, also shaped the meaning of this film. The first area of synchronic studies linked to cinematic practices is film production. Klinger asks, "what factors within this arena affected the ultimate constitution of the film(s) in question?"<sup>392</sup> Major states in his research on the *Desert Fox* that Zanuck won a third Best Picture Oscar for *All About Eve* (Joseph L. Mankiewicz, 1950, USA) and believed the era of the gangster movie and western was over. Even though a war film was not innovative, the idea of focusing on an enemy as a protagonist was new. The initial idea for the Rommel biopic was a combat movie, but the costs of sourcing enough wartime material to re-enact the war in the desert had proven to be too expensive. The film chose to focus instead on the final years of Rommel's life and

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<sup>390</sup>Mitchell, C. P., 2002, p. 43.

<sup>391</sup> Stempel J., *Screenwriter Nunnally Johnson*, from *Hollywood Classics- Title Index to All Movies Reviewed in Books 1-24*, Reid, J. H., (ED), Lulu Press, 2010, p. 186-187.

<sup>392</sup> Klinger, B., summer 1997, p. 115.

portraying a resistance tale.<sup>393</sup> This shows how the production of this film influenced the meaning of this media text. Through focusing on the last years of Rommel's life, the fictional narrative portrays Rommel's involvement in the plot to assassinate Hitler and his suicide. The conscious decision to focus on the end of Rommel's life due to financial constraints could create a positive representation of this historical character for the viewers of this media text.<sup>394</sup> These factors align itself with Klinger's question of how the studio's house style governs the selection of producers, directors, stars, scriptwriters and other personnel. *The Desert Fox* opened in New York on November 18 in 1951 and within days ad hoc groups of veterans were out picketing against the positive representation of Rommel. A woman was arrested for demonstrating too violently outside a cinema.<sup>395</sup> A few weeks after the premiere the Warner theatre chain cancelled all bookings and terminated some runs.<sup>396</sup> However, *The Desert Fox* was successful enough to finish twenty-fifth successful film of the year.<sup>397</sup> This shows that Zanuck managed to create a successful Hollywood film in terms of revenue at the box office in America through focusing on the enemy a protagonist.

### **3.4 The reception in relation to the release of *The Desert Fox* in the UK**

In comparison, the reactions to the film's screening were also not always positive in Britain. After a showing of *The Desert Fox* at the Odeon Cinema in Romford, four ex-servicemen walked on stage carrying posters protesting against the film. After delivering a short speech, the audience applauded.<sup>398</sup> Posters throughout Glasgow advertising the showing of the Rommel film were plastered with printed strips bearing the word "Nazi propaganda". The Manchester branch of the Union of Jewish Ex-Servicemen passed a resolution condemning the film.<sup>399</sup> However, the screenings were not cancelled. In the Odeon Cinema at Tottenham Court Road in London, four ex-servicemen also protested against the film, which was met with applause from the audience. They walked on stage when the lights came up at the end of the showing holding posters. One of the servicemen shouted: "Rommel was our enemy. He died as lived, an unrepentant Nazi. We protest against these attempts to glorify him. And we protest against the rearmament of the Germans." The speech was met with applause from the audience and there was only one

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<sup>393</sup> Major, P., 'Shooting Rommel: The Desert Fox 1951 and Hollywood's public private diplomacy', *Historical Journal of Radio, Film and Television*, Vol 39, Issue 2, pp. 209-232, Published Online 30.10.2018, p. 212. [Accessed: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01439685.2018.1522791>, 11.1.19].

<sup>394</sup> Major, P., 30.10.2018, p. 212.

<sup>395</sup> Connely, M., in *Rommel: A Reappraisal* by Becket, I. F., (ED), Pen & Sword Military, 2013, p. 171.

<sup>396</sup> Hoberman, J., *An Army of Phantoms: American Movies and the Making of the Cold War*, The New Press, 2012, p.223.

<sup>397</sup> Hoberman J., 2012, p.223.

<sup>398</sup> Daily Worker, *Daily Worker*, 3.12.1951.

<sup>399</sup> Daily Worker, 'Nazi strips on Posters', *Daily Worker*, 11.12.1951.

discordant voice from a man. The audience responded with shouting, “Get out yourself”.<sup>400</sup> Furthermore, the MP David Weitzman asked the Home Secretary whether he is aware that *The Desert Fox*, which glorifies the Nazi general, has led to incidents likely to induce a breach of the peace and what actions he proposed to take. The Home Secretary Sir David Maxwell Fyfe responded that he has no power to take any action in the matter. He stated that licensing authorities have power to attach conditions about the character of films exhibited in theatres licensed by them.<sup>401</sup>

### 3.5 The influence of the producer Darryl F. Zanuck on the representation of Rommel in *The Desert Fox*

The film production of *The Desert Fox* also shaped the meaning of this film through the studio head of Twenty Century Fox Darryl F. Zanuck, who bought the rights for the Young’s book *The Desert Fox*. Film scholar Peter Lev argues that the problem with the later part of the film *Desert Fox* is that there is very little action. He states that Darryl Zanuck addressed this with an ending sequence of Rommel driving off with two officers and recalling his North African battles, which are shown in brief clips from documentary combat footage. Lev believes that despite its high action beginning most of *The Desert Fox* is about a moral dilemma. According to him, Zanuck came up with an excellent final voiceover for the film, which is a long quote from Winston Churchill spoken in a Churchill-like voice. This quote recounts the British prime minister’s deep admiration and respect for Rommel.<sup>402</sup> Churchill claims Rommel deserves respect for his hatred of Hitler and all his works, as well as his efforts to save Germany by joining the movement to overthrow the Nazi regime.<sup>403</sup> This voice-over at the ending of this fictional narrative depicting Rommel’s life also creates meaning linked with this fictional character adding to the sense of documentary-style authenticity.

Janet Staiger argues in her book *Perverse Spectators-The Practices of Film Reception* that a masculine voice of a narrator could imply authority.<sup>404</sup> Churchill does not appear in this media text, but his voice-over reassures the audience of the sympathetic depiction of Rommel and gives credibility to his representation in this fictional narrative, because of the connotations linked to Winston Churchill for a western audience. Patrick Major argues in ‘Shooting Rommel: The Desert Fox (1951) and Hollywood’s public private diplomacy’ that

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<sup>400</sup> Daily Worker Reporter, ‘Demand Peace’, *The Daily Worker*, 19.11.1951

<sup>401</sup> Daily Worker, ‘Rommel: MP asks for action’, *The Daily Worker*, 30.11.1951

<sup>402</sup> Lev, P., *Twentieth, Century Fox- The Zanuck-Skouras Years 1935-1965*, University of Texas Press, 2013, p. 188.

<sup>403</sup> Lev, P., 2013, p. 188.

<sup>404</sup> Staiger, J. *Perverse Spectators-The Practices of Film Reception*, New York University Press, 2000, p. 199-200.

Zanuck decided to include Churchill's positive statement about Rommel to solve the problematic ending of the film. Churchill's words are delivered against a montage of newsreel footage from the war featuring Allied and Axis soldiers. Zanuck admitted this was to give the audience an effective but artificial simulation so that the audience leaves the theatre feeling that they have seen a lot more action and battle stuff than they actually have.<sup>405</sup> This conscious decision by Zanuck shaped the meaning attached to the fictional representation of Rommel in this media text. Through this voiceover, Rommel is represented as a sympathetic character, who tried to save Germany.

Zanuck's character is described in the book *Memory of Darryl F. Zanuck: The Golden Years of Twentieth Century Fox*. Zanuck was responsible for casting decisions, producer, writer and director assignments. As a former writer, he was a strong believer in story conferences, following the completion of each draft of an outline, treatment and screenplay. It was his custom to have his script coordinator attend these conferences; type notes and then distributes them to each person at the conference, such as the writers, staff producer and director. This shows Zanuck's strong input regarding story construction and script detail. He also concentrated on editorial changes after a feature film was finished.<sup>406</sup> In terms of reception studies, the production practice of Twentieth Century-Fox and the head of production Zanuck shaped the meaning associated with Rommel's fictional representation in *The Desert Fox*.

This fictional narrative begins with a long pre-credit sequence of a commando raid by British commandos on Rommel's headquarters with the purpose of killing Rommel. After a combat scene in and around the house that is Rommel's headquarters, a dying English soldier asks a nearby German "Did we get him". The German soldier answers, "Are you serious Englishman?" Film scholar Peter Lev states in his book *Twentieth Century Fox: The Zanuck-Sokares Years 1935-1964* that this scene could establish Rommel as someone special and a leader of mythic qualities.<sup>407</sup> In terms of reception studies, this example shows how the conscious decision to start this fictional narrative with this scene by the director Henry Hathaway and writer and producer Nunnally Johnson creates meaning for the fictional representation of Erwin Rommel. This battle scene shows the audience how important Rommel is for the war and also creates anticipation for the audience for the appearance of Rommel himself in this fictional narrative. The comment

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<sup>405</sup> Major, P., 'Shooting Rommel: The Desert Fox 1951 and Hollywood's public private diplomacy', *Historical Journal of Radio, Film and Television*, Vol 39, Issue 2, pp. 209-232, Published Online 30.10.2018, p. 219. [Accessed: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01439685.2018.1522791>, 11.1.19].

<sup>406</sup> Behlmer, R., (ED), *Memory from Darryl F. Zanuck- The Golden Years at Twentieth Century Fox*, Grove Press, 1993. xx.

<sup>407</sup> Lev, P., 2013, p. 188.

by the German soldier signifies for the audience that Rommel is a great general, who cannot be captured so easily by the Allies. The interpretation of this scene longer after the release of this film also demonstrates how an academic discourse such as Lev's study of Twentieth Century-Fox can attach meaning to this opening scene of *Desert Fox*.

After the credits, the film focuses on Lieutenant Colonel Desmond Young, on whose biography of Rommel the film is based. Young plays himself in the scenes depicting his encounter with Rommel. A German officer commands Young to tell the British troops that they are shooting British prisoners and should therefore withdraw. Young declines and states that a prisoner of war is only required to state name and rank. As the German threatens to shoot Young, Rommel intervenes and informs the German that Young is correct. This scene shows Rommel in a sympathetic way, as he saves Young's life.<sup>408</sup> Afterwards, the film flashback to a number of key moments in Rommel's career during the last half of the war. At the battle of El Alamein, he still defends Hitler orders to his subordinates, but his words sound hollow and without conviction. Later, Rommel is in a hospital in Germany, when his army in North Africa is abandoned by Hitler, who makes no effort to evacuate them. Rommel lost faith in Hitler, whom he feels has betrayed his man. Rommel is visited in hospital by Dr. Strolin, Mayor of Stuttgart who asks him about his opinion of Hitler. Later, he visits Rommel at his home and explains to him that a large group of conspirators are planning to overthrow Hitler. He asks Rommel to join the cause and Rommel agrees to think it over. Rommel visits Hitler after the invasion of the Normandy. Rommel attempts to reason with him. However, Hitler claims that he is on the verge of unleashing weapons that will bring the Allies to its knees within week. This behaviour convinces Rommel even more that Hitler needs to be removed.

After the failed assassination attempt on Hitler by Stauffenberg, Rommel recuperates from his injuries. He receives a call from General Keitel ordering him to come to Berlin. Rommel insists he is too unwell to travel and Keitel send general Bergdorf to meet with him. Bergdorf informs Rommel that he is charged with treason. Rommel vows to fight the charges in open court. However, when his family is threatened he agrees to take poison instead. He informs his wife about his imminent death and after a last embrace, she sees him off. The narrator reports that the Nazis gave Rommel a hero's funeral claiming he died of the injuries in the Allied air attack. The final shot of Rommel in this fictional narrative is his face superimposed over the clouds and his gaze directed upwards as the voice-over proclaims him to be a true hero who paid the ultimate price for saving his country from Hitler. Film Scholar Sabine Hake argues that this ending relies on the formal

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<sup>408</sup> Lev, P., 2013, p. 188.

conventions of the Second World War film, as it shows the character's acceptance of his imminent death as an act of martyrdom. Following her argument, the main protagonist's precarious position between power and knowledge is articulated through the tension between looking and being looked at that identifies him at once as the subject and the object of post fascist gaze.<sup>409</sup> Rommel's character is framed by the last words of Churchill's voice-over and reassures the audience of the credibility regarding this sympathetically portrayal of Rommel.

A review of the liberal *New York Times* with the title 'Curious Twist: Now a German General is Heroized on Screen' published in 1951 criticised the film for its portrayal of Rommel as a devoted family and nobleman. Bosley Crowther argues in this review that through the subtle device of using a sympathetic actor such as James Mason and angling the action so that the general and his companions are put in the most favourable light this film represents Rommel as a type which apart from the uniform, is indistinguishable from the conventional representations of the heroic officers on the side of the Allies.<sup>410</sup> Crowther remarks that Manson portrays Rommel as staunch leader, who was considerate of all his man, truly loved his wife and conceived a grave distrust of Hitler.<sup>411</sup> He states:

The only thing we have learned about Rommel of any historical significance since the war is that he joined the plot against Hitler when he ultimately realized that the latter was leading Germany to military ruin. The only support for any opinion of him other than a cold one that we have is a few magnanimous words by Winston Churchill and an ardent biography by Brigadier Desmond Young. Yet with no other moral justification than this-and, of course the fact that Rommel was one of the most familiar and legend-loaded generals of the war-Twentieth Century-Fox through Nunnally Johnson, has made this picture, "The Desert Fox", about the man, which builds up the illusion of his having been one nature's truest nobleman.<sup>412</sup>

According to Crowther, *The Desert Fox* is an example for Hollywood prioritising to make a rousing picture over moral judgment and good taste, by idolizing and creating sympathy for a general who fought for Hitler through the structuring of the facts, which are substantially true. Through highlighting the feelings Rommel has for his wife before

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<sup>409</sup> Hake, S., 2012, p. 72.

<sup>410</sup> Crowther, B., 'Curious Twist; Now a German General is heroized on screen', *The New York Times*, 28.10.1951, [Accessed: <https://www.nytimes.com/1951/10/28/archives/curious-twist-now-a-german-general-is-heroized-on-screen.html>], 13.7.19].

<sup>411</sup> Crowther, B., 28.10.1951.

<sup>412</sup> Crowther, B., 28.10.1951.

leaving for his final martyrdom, Crowther's review could shape the public understanding of Rommel's character as a sympathetic historical figure. However, he also points out that this film should be watched critically as it is idolizing a high ranking Nazi general and fails to enhance the understanding of Rommel, as the film only traces vaguely the conspiracy plot against Hitler and reuses war footage. He believes that this positive portrayal of Rommel is due to the facts that this is a Hollywood production.<sup>413</sup> I have chosen this review of *The Desert Fox* for my research to analyse this case study, because it seems that this review is important to understand its meaning, in terms of reception studies at the time of its release and production.

Darryl F Zanuck, the studio head of Twenty Century Fox, commented on this review in a letter to Charles Einfeld, who was in charge of advertising and publicity at Fox in 1951:

Dear Charlie,

I have just seen Bosley Crowther's full review of *Desert Fox* and from a standpoint of company public relations I do not think that we can let it go unchallenged, as this is not a review of a picture, but an attack on the integrity of an American company and the creative workers who are responsible for this film. Crowther begrudgingly admits that the picture has been expertly made but he disapproves of the subject; therefore this great so-called intellectual liberal is guilty of advocating the worst sort of political censorship. He is saying it is a fine picture but you cannot make it because I do not like the subject matter. Furthermore his review is filled with inaccuracies and falsehoods. It actually is a hysterical review which reminds me very much of a performance of Luther Adler (as Hitler) in our film...

After all, we are only saying about Rommel exactly what history has said and in this instance, we are in pretty good company, namely Brigadier General Desmond Young, General Auchinleck and Winston Churchill. Crowther is saying that while a book printed on the subject may be published without criticism we cannot picture that book. Every moment in our picture can be authenticated by existing documents and testimonies at the Nuremberg Trials...Regards,

Darryl<sup>414</sup>

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<sup>413</sup> Crowther, B., 'Curious Twist; Now a German General is heroized on screen', *The New York Times*, 28.10.1951, [Accessed: <https://www.nytimes.com/1951/10/28/archives/curious-twist-now-a-german-general-is-heroized-on-screen.html>, 13.7.20]

<sup>414</sup> Behlmer, R. (ED), 1993, p. 204.

I have chosen to include the full letter in my research, because I think it portrays how reviews and film production personnel can influence the meaning of a media text in terms of reception studies. Darryl F. Zanuck compares the Crowther's review to the performance of Hitler in the *Desert Fox*. Charles P. Mitchell states that Adler's performance as Hitler makes it clear the Führer has taken leave of his senses, both in his denial of reality and his almost mystical conviction that a miracle weapon will soon save him.<sup>415</sup> Zanuck also adds that his film only reaffirms and portrays facts about Rommel, which are proven by history. This line of argument shows in the 1950s that it was expected that a historical film should be historically accurate. He added the voice-over of Churchill at the end of *The Desert Fox* to add credibility to this film. Furthermore, Zanuck mentions an important point about the difference between history narrated by literature and history portrayed in film and television, highlighting that history narrated by literature is more respected than the same narrative on film. In a following letter to Charles Einfeld on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of October 1951 Zanuck commented on the review:

Dear Charlie,

I believe you should tell Crowther that we have decided against answering his hysteria, because he is convinced he knows more about Rommel than the historians and we are convinced that there is no way that we can convince him of the truth. You might also take him up and let him see the lines in front of the Globe Theatre. I cannot for the life of me understand why certain people inadvertently insist on playing the Commie game. Regards,

Darryl.<sup>416</sup>

Even though both of these letters are personal letters from Zanuck to Einfeld, I believe these letters show how Zanuck's persona and his influence shaped the representation of Rommel, after all Zanuck decided to turn Desmond Young's biography of Rommel into a film, without Zanuck *The Desert Fox* would not exist. Patrick Major claims in his research on the film that the screenplay largely followed Young's biography.<sup>417</sup> Desmond Young claims:

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<sup>415</sup> Mitchell, C. P., 2002, p. 43.

<sup>416</sup> Behlmer, R., (ED), 1993, p. 204.

<sup>417</sup> Major, P., 'Shooting Rommel: The Desert Fox 1951 and Hollywood's public private diplomacy', *Historical Journal of Radio, Film and Television*, Vol 39, Issue 2, pp. 209-232, Published Online 30.10.2018, p. 216, [Accessed: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01439685.2018.1522791>, 11.1.19].



Having no affections for the Germans after fighting two wars against them, and with no feelings about Rommel himself, except that he was an outstanding professional soldier, I wrote what I still believe to be a perfectly honest and objective account. That I ended with respect for him as a man worthy of respect was because all the evidence shows him to my mind, to have been a man worthy of respect, even if he was an enemy. The book and the film are in reality an indictment of Hitler and his regime and a cautionary tale for the new generation of Germans. I only hope *The Desert Fox* removes some of the bitterness which was left behind.<sup>418</sup>

Desmond Young believes that the film *The Desert Fox* is an indictment of Hitler and a cautionary tale for Germans. In relation to Crowther's review, Zanuck compares the critic to Hitler's hysterical representation in the film. He states that the film is only saying about Rommel exactly what history has said. Zanuck claims that through basing the film on Brigadier General Desmond Young's book it represents Rommel authentically and objectively. This statement could show the notion at this time that a historical film should be accepted as authentic, because it is based on a historical book. Zanuck justifies in this letter that he will not respond to Crowther's review because the critic believes to know more about Rommel than the historians such as Desmond Young. Zanuck argues in the second letter that the financial success of *The Desert Fox* with lines in front of the cinema would prove Crowther wrong, as the American audiences seem to be interested in Rommel's depiction in this fictional narrative, despite the controversy about the authentic representation of Rommel and choosing a leading National Socialist as protagonist in a film in the 1950s. Even though Zanuck added the voice-over of Churchill at the end of *The Desert Fox* to add credibility to this film, it is not proven that Churchill did actually say these words. However, it could have been possible that Churchill might have said something along these lines about Rommel. Zanuck shaped the representation of Rommel in this fictional narrative by adding a voice-over of Churchill to the end of the film.

### **3.6 Reviews of *The Desert Fox* in America**

I will turn now to how the reviews in various American newspapers published soon after the release of the film in 1951 focused on Mason's performance in *The Desert Fox*. The liberal-leaning American *TIME* magazine stated in a review that this film will surprise viewers who have come to accept Hollywood Nazis as guttural sadistic villains, as Rommel played by James Mason speaks flawless English, is kind to his troops and makes

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<sup>418</sup> Young, D, in from *Hollywood Classics- Title Index to All Movies Reviewed in Books 1-24*, John Honda Reid (ED), Lulu Press, 2010, p. 186.

generous foe and a faithful friend.<sup>419</sup> James Mason spoke perfect English without a German accent making Rommel less alien to an English-speaking audience. Mason stated, “German accents would have been out of place since the whole cast consisted of British and American actors pretending to be Germans”.<sup>420</sup> This conscious decision to have Mason represent Rommel without a German accent makes this historical character more sympathetic to an American audience, as they can relate more to Rommel. Paul Ward argues in his research on James Mason’s star persona that Mason’s performance as Rommel brought him to the golden years of his Hollywood career as he starred in the 1950s in a number of high-profile movies including *A Star is Born* (George Cukor, 1954, USA) and *North by Northwest* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1959, USA).<sup>421</sup> After Mason’s performance as Rommel, he was cast as another ambiguous character Nemo in the film *20,000 Leagues under the Sea* (Richard Fleischer, 1954, USA). In the *New York Times* in 1954 Crowther states that Captain, darkly played by James Mason, is a hard and hard-headed sort. He describes Captain Nemo as a misanthropic genius who commands the submarine.<sup>422</sup> This shows how Mason’s performance as Rommel in *The Desert Fox* has influenced his persona as a star as he was cast as the mad inventor Nemo, described as a misanthropic genius, who decides to die at the bottom of the ocean as he is severely injured at the end of the film.

Crowther argues in his review of *The Desert Fox* from the liberal *New York Times* that the producers chose Mason to play the heroic role in full knowledge that Mason is a master of the soulful ‘misunderstood’ type. According to Crowther, the producers made the conscious decision to “lard his portrait of the general with all the recognized attributes of ‘goodness’ on the screen”.<sup>423</sup> A review in *The New Yorker* by John McCarter argues:

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<sup>419</sup> Time Magazine, 15.10.1951 in *Der Kampf gegen Schmutz und Schund-Film, Gesellschaft und die Konstruktion nationaler Identität in Österreich (1946-1970)* by Edith Balschitz, Österreichische Kulturforschung, LIT Verlag, 2014, p. 127.

<sup>420</sup> Mason, J. in ‘Did you see James Mason in town today? A case study in transatlantic and local identities in British stardom’ by Ward, P., *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, 11:4, pp. 403-422, 2013, DOI: 10.1080/14794012.2013.843892. 2013 [Accessed: [http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/id/eprint/16693/1/Ward\\_Did\\_You\\_See\\_James\\_Mason\\_in\\_Town\\_Today\\_pre-2nd\\_review\\_JTS.pdf](http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/id/eprint/16693/1/Ward_Did_You_See_James_Mason_in_Town_Today_pre-2nd_review_JTS.pdf), 15.7.19].

<sup>421</sup>Ward, P., ‘Did you see James Mason in town today? A case study in transatlantic and local identities in British stardom’, *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, 11:4, 403-422, 2013, DOI: 10.1080/14794012.2013.843892, [Accessed: [http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/id/eprint/16693/1/Ward\\_Did\\_You\\_See\\_James\\_Mason\\_in\\_Town\\_Today\\_pre-2nd\\_review\\_JTS.pdf](http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/id/eprint/16693/1/Ward_Did_You_See_James_Mason_in_Town_Today_pre-2nd_review_JTS.pdf), 15.7.19].

<sup>422</sup> Crowther B., ‘The Screen in Review; ‘20, 000 Leagues in 128 Fantastic Minutes’, *The New York Times*, 24.12.1953, [Accessed: <https://www.nytimes.com/1954/12/24/archives/the-screen-in-review-20000-leagues-in-128-fantastic-minutes.html>], 16.7.19].

<sup>423</sup> Crowther, B., ‘Curious Twist; Now a German General is heroized on screen’, *The New York Times*, 28.10.1951, [Accessed: <https://www.nytimes.com/1951/10/28/archives/curious-twist-now-a-german-general-is-heroized-on-screen.html>], 13.7.20]

Without much more than a passing glance at Rommel in action on the battlefield, the picture undertakes to show that he was a decent man and makes much of the circumstance that he turned against Hitler. The facts here may not be violently distorted, but they are distorted enough to make careless spectators forget that Rommel was Hitler's favourite military figure, that he condoned the Nazi atrocities and that he didn't go against the Führer until the German cause looked hopeless.<sup>424</sup>

This review shows that through depicting Rommel as a decent man, the spectators might remember Rommel differently and forget about his involvement in the Third Reich focusing on his involvement in the plot to assassinate Hitler. Otis L. Guernesey Jr. argues in the review of the politically nonpartisan *The New York Herald Tribune* that Mason's performance is concise and substantial. His acting is so energetic and commanding that it will be difficult in the future to think of Rommel as he really looked. According to Gurenese, Rommel's final moment in *The Desert Fox* showing the unwilling suicide is a crescendo of pathos. Philipp K. Scheuer argues in the liberal-leaning *Los Angeles Times* that Mason gives an excellent impression of a troubled man, which is about all what the audience sees of the later Rommel. This notion can also be found in the review by Al Weitschat in conservative-leaning *The Detroit News*. Weitschat states that Mason approximates Rommel physically, but his behaviour has a flair and animation difficult to associate with the methodical Nazi hero. A review in the *Saturday Review of Literature* states that Mason plays Rommel with a noticeably theatrical tinge. Furthermore, this review argues that the audience only sees Rommel in defeat as his victories are merely hinted. According to this review, Rommel is shown as mostly worrying about problems of soldier morality.<sup>425</sup>

### **3.7 The reception in relation to the release of *The Desert Fox* in West Germany**

The US State Department pressed Twentieth Century-Fox not to show the film in Germany on the grounds that it tends to glorify the career of the former Nazi general. However, the department had no power to ban the picture in the American zone and decision whether to show the film or not lied with Twentieth Century-Fox.<sup>426</sup> *The Desert Fox* was a popular hit after its release in 1952 in West Germany. It came in at number eleven in the box office ranking for 1952 and the number one Hollywood import of that

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<sup>424</sup> McCarter, J., 'Rommel The Desert Fox', *The New Yorker*, 27.10.1951.

<sup>425</sup> Reviews in *James Mason: A Bio-bibliography* by Sweeny, K., Greenwood Press, 1999. p. 121.

<sup>426</sup> Burch. S., 'US seeks "Rommel" film ban', *News Chronicle*, 17.10.51.

year.<sup>427</sup> However, the reactions at some screenings were not that positive. The liberal-leaning *The Manchester Guardian* reports that in Duesseldorf and Essen when the film was shown for the first time, as large crowds had to be turned away and the audiences sat throughout the film in tense silence.<sup>428</sup> This article states that the proprietors of the cinemas expect full houses for as long as the film is showing there. Even though police were stationed inside and outside the cinema there was no trouble in contrast to Berlin and “the only sign of emotion was the weeping of few women in the audience.”<sup>429</sup> It is mentioned that the only two moments causing animation were the appearances of Luther Adler as Hitler. The audiences were amused by his strange gestures and the first shot of his absurdly and made-up features caused loud shouts of laughter. However, the article claims that the film will miss having a salutary effect, because it depicts Rommel as an active member of the July plot of 1944, which is still widely regarded in Germany as having been treason of a kind.<sup>430</sup> In contrast to this response, the left-wing newspaper *The Daily Worker*, which was founded in 1930 by the Communist Party of Great Britain, reported that at a screening in West Berlin in 1952 angry crowds shouted: “We don’t want any Nazi films. We had enough in the last war”.<sup>431</sup> According to this article, hundreds demonstrated against the film when it was shown in the Corso Cinema in the Wedding district of Berlin and 200 demonstrators left the cinema in Neukölln loudly protesting and demanding that the film be taken off. Strong reinforcements of police were called and several demonstrators were manhandled.<sup>432</sup> According to this article, the demonstrations are important indications of the temper of the German people in Berlin.<sup>433</sup>

The film was released on 22 August 1952, ten months after the original release in America and three months after West Germany’s entry into the European Defence Community in May, which had been one of the major hurdles to rearmament. Major argues that without the intervention of the German High Commissioner in Germany John J. McCloy (HICOG), the film would have been released at the height of the controversy, but instead appeared during the summer lull. The fact of the release date of the Rommel film is picked up by the below caricature in the left-wing British newspaper *The Daily Worker*. The drawing shows an advertising billboard announcing that the film *Rommel The Desert Fox* will come soon and has been passed by the US Army. At the bottom of the drawing it states: “Of course

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<sup>427</sup> Major, P., ‘Shooting Rommel: The Desert Fox 1951 and Hollywood’s public private diplomacy’, *Historical Journal of Radio, Film and Television*, Vol 39, Issue 2, pp. 209-232, Published Online 30.10.2018, p. 224, [Accessed: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01439685.2018.1522791>, 11.1.19].

<sup>428</sup> Manchester Guardian, “‘Rommel’ Film in Germany-Serious Audiences’, *Manchester Guardian*, 25.8.52.

<sup>429</sup> Manchester Guardian, “‘Rommel’ Film in Germany-Serious Audiences’, *Manchester Guardian*, 25.8.52.

<sup>430</sup> Manchester Guardian, “‘Rommel’ Film in Germany-Serious Audiences’, *Manchester Guardian*, 25.8.52.

<sup>431</sup> Rosner, P., ‘Rommel film cried down’, *The Daily Worker*, 19.11.52.

<sup>432</sup> Rosner, P., ‘Rommel film cried down’, *The Daily Worker*, 19.11.52.

<sup>433</sup> Rosner, P., ‘Rommel film cried down’, *The Daily Worker*, 19.11.52.

we want you in a European Army. You little foxes you.” In the corner of the drawing and in front the billboard an American general greets a group German generals with an inviting hand gesture. This drawing implies that the Americans wanted West Germany to enter the European Defence Community and might have delayed the film so that this would happen. The drawing also indicates that the Americans released the film to show the Wehrmacht in a more positive way in order to justify their entry into the European Defence Community.



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Figure 5 Caricature from *The Daily Worker* regarding the release of *The Desert Fox* in Germany.

McCloy previewed the film in 1951 and claimed that neither pro-Nazis nor anti-Nazis would be satisfied. According to him, the film would stir deep reactions and might cause real disturbances in Germany. McCloy met the president of Twentieth Century-Fox Spyros Skouras in November 1951 and a verbal agreement was reached that the production studio would not release the film in Germany until McCloy deemed the time was right. However, the HICOG had no formal banning powers and it was calculated the lost German box-office revenue was 1.2 million dollars. Therefore, Twentieth Century-Fox changed some lines for Rommel in the films such as that his character is not allowed to utter the word treason and screened the newly dubbed film to the clandestine office overseeing the Federal Republic's rearmament in May 1952.

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<sup>434</sup> Daily Worker, 16.11.1952

The Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle der Filmwirtschaft (FSK) deliberated the pros and cons for this film in July 1952. Even though a heroisation of Rommel was feared, the FSK felt that the documentary style of the film was far more suitable for eradicating National Socialism than books and the film incorporated a rehabilitation of the German soldier. The West German censorship body also reasoned that it would be anomalous if *The Desert Fox* was screened around the world but not in Germany. FSK decided to cut some frontal shots of Hitler and to remove a line of dialogue claiming that Hitler had started the bombing war against United Kingdom. The imported film was passed unanimously, and the film premiered in West Germany in August 1952. Therefore, it could be argued that the release date of *The Desert Fox* created meaning for this film, because an earlier release would have been during the controversy of West Germany's entry into the European Defence Community and the reception in Germany regarding this American film portraying a leading Nazi general might have been completely different.

### 3.8 German language reviews of *The Desert Fox*

A review in the liberal German news magazine *Spiegel* argues that the director Henry Hathaway offers a polished film document to the viewers as it lays the blame for the Third Reich with Hitler and other generals such as Keitel. According to this review, the film director Hathaway skilfully mixes the original footage from the war with the fictional sequences, the Rommel myth and the Churchill quote to offer the viewer a coherent fictional narrative, as well as a general absolution for the German military. However, this review believes that the film is unsure regarding its meaning, because it could be meant to correct a propaganda image, seek to win sympathy for Rommel or rake in profits for the film production studio in Germany.<sup>435</sup> One of the most vehement critics was novelist and later Nobel-prize-winner Heinrich Böll, who was dismissive of Rommel as 'the sonny boy, ideal for magazine covers', who had been naïve in the extreme to trust Hitler. He states, 'the German are flocking in to rediscover chemically dry-cleaned on screen their sensitive honour (that supposedly barely blemished honour which was so insensitive to murders of the Jews, concentration camps and deportations)'. This statement by Böll regarding the film seems a bit extreme compared to the representation of Rommel in *The Desert Fox*. However, Böll's statement is correct regarding the popularity of the film in German, as *The Desert Fox* was number eleven in the box office ranking for 1952 and the number one Hollywood import of that year.<sup>436</sup>

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<sup>435</sup> Der Spiegel, 'Rommel der Wüstenfuchs', *Der Spiegel*, 03.9.52 [Accessed: <https://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-21977593.html>, 18.7.19].

<sup>436</sup> Major, P., 'Shooting Rommel: The Desert Fox 1951 and Hollywood's public private diplomacy', *Historical Journal of Radio, Film and Television*, Vol 39, Issue 2, pp. 209-232, Published Online 30.10.2018, p. 224, [Accessed: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01439685.2018.1522791>, 11.1.19].

The conservative German newspaper *Die Welt* accused the film of reinforcing the legend that the war was only lost on account of Hitler's false astrologers and the General Staff consisted of numerous honourable wise men.<sup>437</sup> However, *The Desert Fox* was also greeted positively by several reviews for setting the record straight, as this was a film, which could not have been made in Germany. The liberal German-speaking newspaper *Kurier* argued, 'foreigners are opening a page of German history which gives even the hardened doubters proof of the existence of the "Other Germany" which turned against the Hitler terror- a venture which from our own pen would hardly have had the necessary distance and objective persuasiveness.'<sup>438</sup> In contrast to this the conservative German tabloid *Bild-Zeitung* regretted the 'American method of making Rommel a hero, when at the same time other German generals are still held in prison'. This reception in the German public sphere after the release of *The Desert Fox* in 1952, ten months after the original release, is an example for the transnational reach of Hollywood portraying a leading national socialist such as Rommel. *The Desert Fox* shows Hollywood protean capacity to enter a national space and not be seen as 'other' due to the popularity of many of its offerings, even though Rommel is represented by the British actor James Mason.<sup>439</sup>

### 3.9 The reception in relation to the release of *The Desert Fox* in Austria

In comparison to reception in West Germany, where it was the number one Hollywood import of that year 1951, the reception to the fictional depiction of Rommel in *Desert Fox* in Austria was less positive.<sup>440</sup> As the Austrian viewers would have seen the same German-language version as the West German viewers, I would argue that it is relevant to compare these two reactions to the same version of *Desert Fox*. A lot of communists in Austria labelled the film a 'war criminal film' (Kriegsverbrecherfilm).<sup>441</sup> The first screening of the film was in the Gartenbau cinema in Vienna, which was owned by the left-wing party SPÖ.<sup>442</sup> This led to protests by communists. The Austrian communist newspaper *Der Abend* argued before the first screening of the film "the Americans needs such film to

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<sup>437</sup> Major, P., 30.10.2018, p. 224.

<sup>438</sup> Major, P., 'Shooting Rommel: The Desert Fox 1951 and Hollywood's public private diplomacy', *Historical Journal of Radio, Film and Television*, Vol 39, Issue 2, pp. 209-232, Published Online 30.10.2018, p. 223, [Accessed: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01439685.2018.1522791>, 11.1.19].

<sup>439</sup> Schlesinger, P. *The Sociological Scope of 'National Cinema'*, in *Cinema and Nation* by Hjort, M. and Mackenzie, S., (Eds), Routledge, 2000, p. 26. National cinema, p. 26

<sup>440</sup> Major, P., 'Shooting Rommel: The Desert Fox 1951 and Hollywood's public private diplomacy', *Historical Journal of Radio, Film and Television*, Vol 39, Issue 2, pp. 209-232, Published Online 30.10.2018, p. 224, [Accessed: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01439685.2018.1522791>, 11.1.19].

<sup>441</sup> Balschitz, E., *Der Kampf gegen Schmutz und Schund-Film, Gesellschaft und die Konstruktion nationaler Identität in Österreich (1946-1970)* by Edith Balschitz, Österreichische Kulturforschung, LIT Verlag, 2014, p. 128.

<sup>442</sup> Balschitz, E., 2014, p. 128.

justify the rearmament of West Germany under the control of unrigged old Nazis and to make this idea tempting".<sup>443</sup> One the day of the first screening, there were protests in front of the cinema. According to the Austrian newspaper *Der Abend* hundred people protested, while the screening of the film was sold out.<sup>444</sup> The police tried to keep the protests under control and arrested a couple of people. The protests continued in front of the cinema and escalated on the third day. The left-wing newspaper *Der Abend* claims that 400 police officers were in front of the cinema to protect the screening. The police used excessive force and violence towards the people protesting against the film.<sup>445</sup> A young boy and reporter from the left-wing newspaper *Der Abend* were injured. The police chased demonstrators through the streets and 19 people were arrested, out of which 4 were kept in police custody. The demonstrators escaped into a concert hall. The police tried force an entry into the concert hall unsuccessfully. The behaviour of the police started a political debate in Austria regarding the screening of American war films in Austrian cinemas.<sup>446</sup> The political party SPÖ was accused showing propaganda films for war criminals to profit financially from it.<sup>447</sup> The left-wing newspaper *Der Abend* claimed 'this is all about money and profit and there are no morals involved in this process'.<sup>448</sup>

The conservative British newspaper *The Daily Telegraph* reported that 29 policemen were hurt, and 30 arrests were made when police charged demonstrators outside a cinema showing *The Desert Fox*. Even though the cinema is not named, I suspect the article discusses further the protests than the ones mentioned in the Austrian newspapers, as it was published in the UK on 20.9.52 and the left-wing newspaper *Der Abend* reported protests on 17.9.52. The conservative newspaper *The Daily Telegraph* states that the demonstrators smashed the cinema entrance with stones and shop windows on either side of the cinema were broken. The article mentions that following the incident a protest meeting was held in the Konzerthaus called by the victims of Concentration Camp Association, which was attended by more than 1,800 people.<sup>449</sup> After a meeting with the ministry of interior, the police, and the representatives of the cinema, it was decided to remove *The Desert Fox* from the programme of the cinema. The left-wing Austrian newspaper *Der jugendliche Arbeiter* argued that the film did not deserve this much

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<sup>443</sup> Der Abend, 17.9.1952, in *Der Kampf gegen Schmutz und Schund-Film, Gesellschaft und die Konstruktion nationaler Identität in Österreich (1946-1970)* by Edith Balschitz, Österreichische Kulturforschung, LIT Verlag, 2014, (translated by the author from German), p. 128.

<sup>444</sup> Balschitz, E., 2014, p. 128-129.

<sup>445</sup> Balschitz, E., 2014, p. 128-129

<sup>446</sup> Balschitz, E., 2014, p. 128-129.

<sup>447</sup> Balschitz, E., 2014, p. 129.

<sup>448</sup> Der Abend, 22.9.1952, in *Der Kampf gegen Schmutz und Schund-Film, Gesellschaft und die Konstruktion nationaler Identität in Österreich (1946-1970)* by Edith Balschitz, Österreichische Kulturforschung, LIT Verlag, 2014, (translated by the author from German), p. 128.

<sup>449</sup>The Daily Telegraph, 'Vienna Riot in Rommel Film-29 Police hurt', *The Daily Telegraph*, 20.9.52



attention, which was created by the communists protesting against its screening. The article defends the brave police officers, which defended themselves against demonstrators throwing stones at them.<sup>450</sup> The left-wing British newspaper *The Daily Worker* reports that film, which glorifies Rommel, was withdrawn from the Gartenbau cinema in central Vienna, as twenty-one demonstrators were still in prison.<sup>451</sup> Mark Connelly in the *Rommel: A Reappraisal* argues that the disturbances in Vienna represent a significant illustration of Rommel's importance as a political symbol in the new Europe.<sup>452</sup> Whereas the reception the film in Germany mostly positive apart from a few protests in Berlin, the reception by the Austrian audiences was completely different. The protests in Vienna in front of the screening led to the removal of the films from cinema programmes. However, it could be debated that not the film itself and the fictional representation of Rommel, but the reaction from the Austrian police influenced this decision.

### 3.10 Higson's concept of national cinema in relation to *The Desert Fox and Rommel*

Before I analyse and critically engage with the fictional representation of the historical character in the contemporary German television production *Rommel*, I will outline the definitions of national cinema by film scholar Andrew Higson in order to show why I have chosen these two media texts as my case studies, which are from different areas and different cultures. Andrew Higson states that there is the possibility of defining national cinema in economic terms. This would mean that location of the production and the production of the media itself in terms of who owns, controls the industrial infrastructures, the production companies, the distributors, and the exhibition circuits define the concept of national cinema. In relation to my case studies *The Desert Fox* and *Rommel*, this definition would be straight forward as the first media text was produced in Hollywood and the production company was American, whereas the second media text was produced in Germany and distributed on German national television. However, the other approach to national cinema is a text-based approach. According to Higson, the key questions are: what are these films about? Do they share a common style or worldview? What sort of projections of the national character do they offer? To what extent are they engaged in 'exploring, questioning and constructing a notion of nationhood in the films themselves

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<sup>450</sup> Der jugendliche Arbeiter, November 1952, in *Der Kampf gegen Schmutz und Schund-Film, Gesellschaft und die Konstruktion nationaler Identität in Österreich (1946-1970)* by Edith Balschitz, Österreichische Kulturforschung, LIT Verlag, 2014, p. 129.

<sup>451</sup> Daily Worker, 'Rommel film is withdrawn', *The Daily Worker*, 22.9.52.

<sup>452</sup> Connelly, M., in *Rommel: A Reappraisal* by Becket, I. F., (ED), Pen & Sword Military, 2013, p. 174

and in the consciousness of the viewer?<sup>453</sup> In comparison, these questions regarding a text-based approach to national cinema could be applied to *Rommel: The Desert Fox* and *Rommel*, as they share a common narrative through focusing on the historical character Rommel and a common style, as they narrate Rommel's life in a realistic representation, even though these case studies were produced in different cultures and different areas. Both case studies offer a positive representation of Rommel to the different audiences and explore the nationhood of Germany through the historical character of Rommel.

Higson states that "to identify a national cinema is first of all to specific a coherence and unity; it is to proclaim unique identity and a stable set of meanings".<sup>454</sup> This notion can be found in Rommel's representation in *Rommel: The Desert Fox* as Rommel is shown to be involved in the plot to assassinate Hitler and he protects his family through committing suicide. This shows that this fictional representation offers the audience a stable set of meanings portraying Rommel as sympathetic character. In contrast to this representation, Rommel is portrayed differently in *Rommel*, as in this media text Rommel admits in the end to the generals who inform him about his death sentence that he was not involved in the plot to assassinate Hitler.<sup>455</sup> However, Rommel is also portrayed as a sympathetic character in this fictional narrative, which focuses on the last months of his life. One example for this representation is a scene with a British soldier. In this scene, a German SS general want to torture a British soldier, who was captured, to death in order to retrieve some information. Rommel saves this soldier and says that he has different methods to retrieve information. In the following scene, he drinks tea with the British soldier and talks with him about the developments of the war. This scene could portray as Rommel as sympathetic character with humane values, who did not commit war crimes during the war as he respects the British soldier as a prisoner of war.<sup>456</sup> Higson argues:

The concept of a national cinema has almost invariably been mobilised as strategy of cultural (and economic) resistance; a means of asserting autonomy in the face of usually Hollywood's international domination. The process of nationalist myth-making is not simply an insidious (or celebratory) work of ideological production, but it is also at the same time a means of setting one body of images and value against another, which will very often threaten to overwhelm the first. The search

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<sup>453</sup> Higson, A, *The concept of national cinema*, in *Film and Nationalism* by Williams, A., (ED), Rutger University Press, 2002, p. 53.

<sup>454</sup> Higson, A, *The concept of national cinema*, in *Film and Nationalism* by Williams, A., (ED), Rutger University Press, 2002, p. 53-54.

<sup>455</sup> Kilb, A., 'Seine historische Stunde ging vorbei', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 28.19.2012, [Accessed: <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/rommel-film-im-ersten-seine-historische-stunde-ging-vorbei-11941647-p2.html>], 25.7.19]

<sup>456</sup> Kilb, A., 28.19.2012.

for a unique and stable identity, the assertion of national specificity does then have some meaning, some usefulness. Histories of national cinema can only therefore, be really understood as histories of crisis and conflicts, of resistance and negotiation.<sup>457</sup>

This statement could be applied to my case studies the American production *The Desert Fox* and the German production *Rommel*, as this American media text has dominated the fictional representation of Rommel through James Mason's portrayal the German television production attempts to assert an autonomy over the fictional representation of Rommel. Even though, I would argue that Rommel is not involved in the process of nationalist myth-making, this media is still an example of setting the body of images against the established and well-known representations of Rommel in American and British media texts. The contemporary representation of Rommel could overwhelm Mason's Rommel in *The Desert Fox* in Germany. However, it is debatable if this will be the same case for an international audience in Britain or America due to its limited exhibition and distribution.

As my other case study *Rommel* is a German television production with a German director, producer and actors, I will discuss the national cinema according to Higson in the following paragraph in relation to Benedict Anderson's idea that the modern nation is an imagined community. Anderson takes mediated communication to be of central importance in the formation of a nationalist consciousness. Anderson's key contention is that print-language is what invents nationalism, not a particular language per se. This highlights the importance of the media of communication in the constructions of an imagined community, given the appropriate material conditions. According to Anderson "print language was the means whereby given vernaculars became standardised, being disseminated through the market for books and newspapers".<sup>458</sup> Anderson does not address the impact of the moving image on the formation of a national consciousness. I would argue that the moving image has replaced the print such as newspaper and the nationalist novel to form a national identity. I agree with Anderson that the mediated communication through media texts such as *The Desert Fox* and *Rommel* representing the past and historical characters form a nationalist consciousness and create an imagined community.

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<sup>457</sup> Higson, A, *The concept of national cinema*, in *Film and Nationalism* by Williams, A., (ED), Rutger University Press, 2002, p. 54.

<sup>458</sup> Higson, A, *The Limiting Imagination of National Cinema*, in *Cinema and Nation* by Hjort, M. & Mackenzie, S., (ED), Routledge, 2000 p. 64.

Higson argues that in relation to Anderson's term it is now conventional to define the nation as the mapping of an imagined community with a secure and shared identity and a sense of belonging, on to a carefully demarcated geo-political space.<sup>459</sup> The nation from this perspective is forged and then maintained as a bounded public sphere. The public debate gives the nation meaning and media systems with a particular geographical reach that give it shape. The fictional representation of Rommel in the German television production gives meaning to the German identity and the public debate around it through newspaper articles and reviews shape its meaning. David Morely and Kevin Robins argues, 'the idea of the "nation" involves people in a common sense of identity and works as an inclusive symbol which provides "integration and meaning".<sup>460</sup> Higson believes that national identity is about the experience is about the experience of a community being stepped in its traditions, its rituals and its characteristic mode of discussed. The public sphere of the nation and the discourses of patriotism are thus bound up in a constant struggle to transform the facts of dispersal, variegation and homelessness into the experience of rooted community. However, Higson argues that there are always dissenters in relation to a national phenomenon. Some members of a community will not participate in a media event or recognise themselves in films. There is also no guarantee that all audiences will make sense of experiences in the same way, since audiences will translate each experience into their own cultural frame of reference, using them in different context and for different ends.<sup>461</sup> Anderson's term imagines the nation as limited with finite and meaningful boundaries. Higson recognises this problem when describing a national cinema as there is a tendency to focus on those films that narrate the nation as just this finite limited space, inhabited by a tightly, coherent and unified community, closed off to other identities besides national identity. The focus is on films that seem amenable to such an interpretation. The 'imagined community' argument thus sometimes seem unable to acknowledge the cultural difference and diversity that invariably marks both the inhabitants of a particular nation-state and the members of more geographically dispersed 'national' community. The experience and diversity and acceptance of diversity is closed off.<sup>462</sup>

Higson believes that the media are vital to the argument that modern nations are imagined communities. However, contemporary media activity is also clearly one of the main ways

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<sup>459</sup> Higson, A, *The Limiting Imagination of National Cinema*, in *Cinema and Nation* by Hjort, M. & Mackenzie, S., (ED), Routledge, 2000 p. 64.

<sup>460</sup> Higson, A, *The Limiting Imagination of National Cinema*, in *Cinema and Nation* by Hjort, M. & Mackenzie, S., (ED), Routledge, 2000 p. 65.

<sup>461</sup> Higson, A, *The Limiting Imagination of National Cinema*, in *Cinema and Nation* by Hjort, M. & Mackenzie, S., (ED), Routledge, 2000 p. 65.

<sup>462</sup> Higson, A, *The Limiting Imagination of National Cinema*, in *Cinema and Nation* by Hjort, M. & Mackenzie, S., (ED), Routledge, 2000 p. 66.

in which transnational cultural connections are established. Hollywood is one of the longest standing and best organised media institutions with a transnational reach capable of penetrating even the most heavily policed national spaces.<sup>463</sup> This transnational reach is evident in my case study *The Desert Fox*, as Mason's performance of Rommel defined how this historical character was remembered for a long time period in the public sphere, not only in America. *The Desert Fox* was a popular hit after its release in 1952 in West Germany. It came in at number eleven in the box office ranking for 1952 and the number one Hollywood import of that year.<sup>464</sup> A review in the liberal German news magazine *Spiegel* was confused if the film as meant to correct a propaganda image, seek to win sympathy or rake in profits. The conservative German newspaper *Die Welt* accused the film of reinforcing the legend that the war was only lost on account of Hitler's false astrologers and the General Staff consisted of numerous honourable wise men. However, *The Desert Fox* was also greeted by several for setting the record straight, as this was a film, which could not have been made in Germany. A German language newspaper argued, 'foreigners are opening a page of German history which gives even the hardened doubters proof of the existence of the "Other Germany which turned against the Hitler terror- a venture which from our own pen would hardly have had the necessary distance and objective persuasiveness.'<sup>465</sup> This reception in the German public sphere after the release of *The Desert Fox* in Germany is an example for the transnational reach of Hollywood portraying a leading national socialist such as Rommel. *The Desert Fox* shows Hollywood protean capacity to enter a national space and not be seen as 'other' due to the popularity of many of its offerings.<sup>466</sup>

Higson claims that the search for a stable identity and the assertion of national specificity has some usefulness and meaningfulness. This notion can also be found in Susan Hayward's writing about French national cinema. However, I believe that this can also be applied to my research and the representation of Rommel in film and television. In relation to the process 'whereby myths are erected about a nation's various and particular institutions, Hayward argues:

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<sup>463</sup> Higson, A, *The Limiting Imagination of National Cinema*, in *Cinema and Nation* by Hjort, M. & Mackenzie, S., (ED), Routledge, 2000 p. 67.

<sup>464</sup> Major, P., 'Shooting Rommel: The Desert Fox 1951 and Hollywood's public private diplomacy', *Historical Journal of Radio, Film and Television*, Vol 39, Issue 2, pp. 209-232, Published Online 30.10.2018, p. 224, [Accessed: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01439685.2018.1522791>, 11.1.19].

<sup>465</sup> Major, P., 30.10.2018, p. 224.

<sup>466</sup> Schlesinger, P. *The Sociological Scope of 'National Cinema'*, in *Cinema and Nation* by Hjort, M. & Mackenzie, S., (ED), Routledge, 2000 p. 26. National cinema, p. 26

Film functions, as a cultural articulation of a nation, it textualises the nation and subsequently constructs a series of relations around the concepts, first of state and citizens, then of state, citizen and other...a 'national' cinema is ineluctably 'reduced' to a series of enunciations that reverberate around two fundamental concepts: identity and difference.<sup>467</sup>

The fictional representation of Rommel in the German television production *Rommel* incorporates both these concepts for the German audience. On one hand, this media text creates an identity because the German audience might be able to identify with Rommel on a human level and attempt to understand his actions and behaviour. On the other hand, this media text creates a difference because it chooses a high-ranking Nazi, who must have known of the Holocaust, as the main character and this time period of the Third Reich seems removed from the modern German culture. The national identity of Germany was symbolised in this American production *The Desert Fox* through the fictional representation of Rommel and its meaningfulness was to rehabilitate the Wehrmacht after the war. Matthew McGinn's discusses in his thesis "*Rommel, you magnificent Bastard*": *The Desert Fox and the Rehabilitation of Germany in Post-war Media* the usefulness of the media text *Rommel: The Desert Fox*, as it could show that the German military was an honourable organization unblemished by Nazi ideology.<sup>468</sup> In contrast to this media text, the German assertion of the fictional representation of this historical character in *Rommel* could be meaningful and useful to portray Rommel in a realistic manner in order to debunk the 'Rommel myth'. Patrick Major argues in his article *Shooting Rommel: The Desert Fox 1951 and Hollywood's public private diplomacy* that Rommel is depicted in the German television production as an ambivalent character, who cannot quiet break completely with Hitler, and often seems a hapless pawn in Machiavellian resistance game.<sup>469</sup> Through the production values of €6 million for this media text and the distribution, the representation of this historical character in *Rommel* could define for a contemporary audience how Rommel is remembered in the German cultural memory, as 6.83 million viewers watched it on German national television. Astrid Erll states, "films that are not watched may provide intriguing images of the past, yet they will not have any effect in memory cultures"<sup>470</sup>. Therefore, it seems evident why I have chosen this media text as my case study because

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<sup>467</sup> Hayward. S. in *Cinema and Nation* by Hjort, M. & Mackenzie, S., (ED), Routledge, 2000 p. 25.

<sup>468</sup> McGinn M., 2013, p. 28,

<sup>469</sup> Major, P., 'Shooting Rommel: The Desert Fox 1951 and Hollywood's public private diplomacy', *Historical Journal of Radio, Film and Television*, Vol 39, Issue 2, pp. 209-232, Published Online 30.10.2018, p. 227, [Accessed: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01439685.2018.1522791>, 11.1.19].

<sup>470</sup> Erll, A, *Literature, Film, and the Mediality of Cultural Memory*, in *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies* edited by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, De Gruyter, 2010, pp. 389-398, p. 395.

this fictional representation will have an effect on how Rommel is remembered in the German cultural memory.

The German television production *Rommel* is an example for crisis, conflicts and negotiations in national cinema and the portrayal of a historical character in a contemporary media text. 'History', as Benedict Anderson put it, 'is the necessary basis of the national narrative'.<sup>471</sup> The German media text *Rommel* depicts the historical time period of the Third Reich and narrates the last months of Rommel's life in a 'realistic' manner, through the set design, costumes, acting, camera positions and structure of the narrative. Stephen Heath suggest that 'nationhood is not a given, it is always something to be gained'.<sup>472</sup> Higson belies that cinema needs to be understood as one of the means by which it 'is gained'.<sup>473</sup> I agree with this argument and I would add that also television productions are one of the means through which nationhood can be gained. Furthermore, Higson states:

Individual films will often serve to represent the national to itself, as a nation. Inserted into the general framework of the cinematic experience, such films will construct imaginary bonds which work to hold the peoples of a nation together as a community by dramatizing their current fears, anxieties, pleasures and aspirations. A diverse and often antagonistic group of peoples are thus invited to recognise themselves as a singular body with a common culture, and to oppose themselves to other cultures and communities. Of course this work is never completely achieved.<sup>474</sup>

Following from this argument, I would argue that the individual film *Rommel* serves to represent the German nation and a different aspect of the leading national socialists of the Third Reich, as Rommel is shown to be involved in the plot to assassinate Hitler, even though it is debatable to what extent. The audience watching this German television production could recognise themselves as a singular body with a common culture through the historical figure of Rommel. Even though I would argue that this media text does not lead the German audience to oppose themselves to other cultures and communities, as this fictional narrative reminds the audience of the crimes of the Third Reich. In the next paragraph, I will outline Rommel's representation in *Rommel* discussing how the production company teamWorx shaped the meaning associated with this representation.

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<sup>471</sup> Anderson, B., 'Narrating the nation', *Times Literary Supplement*, 13.6.1985, p 659.

<sup>472</sup> Heath, S., 'Questions of property: film and nationhood', *Cinetracts*, Vol 1, no 4 spring/summer 1978, p. 10.

<sup>473</sup> Higson, A, in *Cinema and Nation* by Hjort, M. & Mackenzie, S., (ED), Routledge, 2000 p. 23.

<sup>474</sup> Higson, A, in *Cinema and Nation* by Hjort, M. & Mackenzie, S., (ED), Routledge, 2000 p. 23.

Regarding the concept of reception studies, I will concentrate on the reviews in the United Kingdom and Germany and how these reviews shape the meaning of this media text.

### 3.11 **The fictional representation of Rommel in the German television production *Rommel***

The German television production *Rommel*, which was produced sixty years after *The Desert Fox* begins with a quote from Hanna Arendt, which states that: "Wir sind auch für unseren Gehorsam verantwortlich" (We are also responsible for our obedience). This could imply that Rommel was responsible and guilty for not disobeying Hitler earlier and not playing a more active part in the plot to assassinate Hitler. This quote could also mean that Rommel did not do enough against the regime of the Third Reich even though he might have known about the Holocaust, to be seen as a sympathetic character and as a man, who was torn by his loyalty and the realization that he might be serving a devil.<sup>475</sup>

The first scene before the title of the film foreshadows the ending of this fictional narrative, as it shows Rommel being accused of having an active part in the assassination attempt on Hitler's life. The scene is introduced with a statement informing the audience that this film will narrate the last seven months of Rommel's life. An old car prestigious Mercedes car drives along a road in a forest. An insert on the bottom of the screen states that this scene is set in Herrling bei Ulm on the 14<sup>th</sup> of October 1994. This date implies for audience members with a prior historical knowledge that this scene is set after the assassination attempt on Hitler on the 20<sup>th</sup> of July 1994. Through this insert it is stated clearly that this scene is set in Germany during the Second World War. The car drives past a soldier giving a Hitler salute and passes a military roadblock. The car is allowed to pass and arrives at a gate for an extensive house. As the car arrives at a house, the two generals are greeted at the house and enter. They enter and they are asked if they would like to hand over their jackets. However, they decline and state that they will not stay for very long. The two generals wait for Rommel in the living room until he enters and show their respect by greeting him with Heil Hitler. The first entrance of Rommel is shot in a long shot showing the whole room and Rommel is shown from behind greeting the two soldiers. Rommel's wife invites the two generals for lunch at their house and the generals reject the invitation. Rommel is shown in a medium shot with wife during this part of the dialogue. Rommel's wife is informed that they are at their house for official business and is asked to leave the room. Rommel gently touches his wife on her arm and guides her out

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<sup>475</sup> Chambers, M., 'The Devil's General? German film seeks to debunk Rommel myth', *Reuters*, 1<sup>st</sup> November 2012 [Accessed: <http://www.reuters.com/article/entertainment-us-germany-rommel-idUSBRE8A00RM20121101>, 25.2.2017]



of the room. He tells her that he will let her know if they need anything. After Rommel's wife left the room, Rommel orders a soldier to get the documents for the Normandy, because he believes that the generals are at his house to accuse him of being guilty for the failure of defending the military west front in France. The two generals exchange a confused look, before informing Rommel that he is accused of being involved in the plot to assassinate Hitler. The last shot this scene is a close-up of Rommel's face and he says: "Was?" (What). This could imply that he is surprised about this accusation and that he might not have been involved in the plot to assassinate Hitler. After this camera position, a black screen is shown and the title of the film *Rommel* appears.

After I have explained the detail the opening scene of this fictional narrative, I will focus in the following paragraph on specific scenes from the television production *Rommel*. The first scene after the title shows in black and white a newsreel, which would have been shown in cinemas in Germany during the Third Reich, where the film is set. In this newsreel, a narrator claims that the great Desert Fox, the winner of the battle of El Agheila, the hero of Torbuk and the conqueror of North Africa is visiting the defence line in France under the order of the Fuehrer. The narrator claims it is the best and most modern defence line at the Atlantic coast. The newsreel shows German soldiers, tanks and military vehicles preparing for the invasion of the enemy. The narrator claims that these are the soldiers who are ready to fight for the defence of the freedom and culture of Europe. Rommel appears on a military defence building on the sea front and looks with binoculars in the distance. The fictional representation of Rommel through the actor Ulrich Tukur is positioned in this newsreel, which gives the fictional narrative historical authenticity. The narrator claims that Germany can sleep well with such a good general leading the defence in Europe. The same shot of Rommel turns from black and white to a coloured scene. A male voice from off screen tells Rommel that they got all the shots they need for the newsreel. An insert states that this scene is set in France and seven months before the opening scene, which happened before the title. The same character informs Rommel that he can stay on the defence building to shoot the close-ups for the newsreel and the camera crew will join him up there. Rommel answers that they can do what they want with him so that the English soldiers are scared when they seem him on camera. A group of soldiers can be heard laughing in the back. This scene portrays Rommel as sympathetic character who can joke about his persona.

I will focus now how Rommel's knowledge of the Holocaust and his part in the plot to assassinate Hitler are represented in this fictional narrative. Sabine Hake quotes critic Georg Sesslen in her study *Screen Nazis* and I believe that his statement also fits into my research. Sesslen states:

The history of images of fascism is, among other things, the history of our growing doubts about the present, but it is also the history of our desire for images and stories of democracy and the kind of identifications that make possible a relationship to politics and the political in the broader sense.<sup>476</sup>

This statement resonates in the representation of the historical character of Rommel in my case study, as the identification with this historical character offers the audience a story of democracy as he disobeyed Hitler in the end and was involved in the plot to assassinate Hitler. However, it is debatable how much this media text symbolises our growing doubts in the present, even though *Rommel* offers the audience the life of Rommel and the past of this time period in linear narrative. It could be argued that this media text gives a casual order for the past, making it more explicable than its usual coincidences for an audience, who did not live through this time period.<sup>477</sup> I will first discuss how this media text represents the question if Rommel knew of the extermination of the Jews. Therefore, I will focus on a domestic scene portraying Rommel with his wife. In this scene, Rommel returns home to celebrate his wife's birthday. In their living room, she mentions again that her son was upset about not being allowed to join the SS. Rommel replies that he has not changed his mind about this. He states that he has to see urgently Hitler to inform him about the situation about France. His wife insists that she should sit down because he looks uncomfortable. He mentions to his wife that he heard from the major of Stuttgart about the gassing of Jews in the East. His wife asks him to stop and lectures him that the major is also a Nazi and is responsible for sending Jews to the East. Rommel informs her that this also happens in France under his own eyes. He states that the people at the top are dirty. This line shows that Rommel believes the Wehrmacht and the army to be separate from other leading National Socialists. His wife inquires, whom he means with the people at the top implying that Rommel himself is also one of the people at the top. She reminds him where they live, as their house used to be a Jewish school. She adds that they would have to move out of their house if the stories about the extermination of the Jews were true. Rommel remains silent at the end of this scene. The last lines of this dialogue are shot in a two shot of Rommel and his wife, where Rommel is out of focus and his wife is in focus. His wife states at the end of the scene that he should stop listening to these stories showing that she does not believe in the mass extermination of the Jewish population. This scene also shows that Rommel might have known about the Holocaust but he did not believe that these crimes happened in the East because these crimes were

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<sup>476</sup> Sessler, G. in *Screen Nazis- Cinema, History and Democracy*, by Hake, S., University of Wisconsin Press, 2012, p. 25.

<sup>477</sup> Lowenthal, D., 2015 p. 340.

too horrible to be possible. Rommel's wife shows in this scene that she does not believe that these crimes happen in the east.

After I have discussed how Rommel's knowledge of the Holocaust is represented in this domestic scene, I will now discuss how Rommel's involvement in the plot to assassinate Hitler was represented in *Rommel*. In a scene with Rommel and Hans Speidel, who was Rommel's adjutant in Normandy, tries to force Rommel in a private discussion to resign to show that the war cannot be won anymore. However, Rommel cuts him off showing his loyalty to Hitler. In an arranged meeting at christening of a child, Carl Heinrich von Stuelpenagel tries to convince Rommel in a private conversation to join the plot to assassinate Hitler. However, Rommel rejects this heavily as this would be high treason and reminds Stuelpenagel that he also swore an oath. These scenes show that Hitler was still loyal to Hitler at this point of the fictional narrative. Rommel agrees later in this fictional narrative to meet general von Hofacker, who was a cousin of Staufenberg. Speidel arranged this meeting in order to convince Rommel to join the plot to assassinate Hitler. Rommel meets the general in the forest and they discuss how long the front will hold under the attack. Rommel believes the German front will not hold longer than three to six weeks. The general asks Rommel if he believes that the war is lost. Rommel wants to know why the general wanted to meet him and he asks Rommel if he would devote himself to a different Germany under a different government. The scene then cuts to the viewpoint of binocular of an English spy, who is hiding in the forest. Even though the discussion is depicted visually it is not possible to hear Rommel's answer to the general's question.

During the failed assassination attempt, Rommel is in hospital due to a car accident. After his injury, Rommel is informed that he is being accused of an active part in the plot due to a meeting with von Hofacker and he answers that he does not remember this. In one of the last scenes of this fictional narrative the scene from the start is recreated. It starts with the generals arriving at Rommel's house and the voice-over informs Rommel that he is being accused of the involvement in the assassination plot before cutting into Rommel's living room. The general states that they have statements from von Stülpenagel, von Hofacker and Speidel confirming Rommel's part in the plot. According to the generals, Speidel states that Rommel knew about the plan to assassinate Hitler. Rommel takes a moment and holds his breath before confirming that he was involved in the plot to assassinate Hitler. He says that he made a mistake and will take responsibility for his actions. Rommel is shown in a close-up and behind him on the wall is a picture of Hitler. The general informs Rommel that the German population will not know about his involvement, he will receive a state funeral and his family will receive a pension. The

general offers Rommel poison to end his life. Rommel says goodbye to his wife and informs her about his death. Even as he is led away to his death, a bewildered Rommel protests: 'I am innocent. I did not participate in the plot to assassinate Hitler.' Patrick Major argues in his study on *The Desert Fox* that in the German television production *Rommel* innocence and guilt in a dictatorship are never black and white, as there many shades of grey shown through the fictional depiction of Rommel.<sup>478</sup> I would agree that Rommel as depicted in this fictional narrative was not involved in the plot and might have only known part of it, but he was not innocent of being one of the leading National socialists in the Third Reich, fighting for Hitler in the war with the knowledge of the Holocaust. Outside the house he says goodbye to his son and asks him to look after Speidel's wife. He hands over his wallet and his keys to his son before saying goodbye and entering the car. The camera shows this in an over the shoulder shot from his son's perspective aligning the audience with this young German boy. He tries to run after the car as it drives off. The car drives off with Rommel inside. The fictional narrative ends with a newsreel narrating the state funeral of Rommel. The audience is informed with an insert that the German population was told that Rommel died of his injuries in a car accident. His wife and son had to keep quiet that Rommel was forced to take poison.

### **3.12 How did the influence of producer Nico Hofmann and his production company teamWorx shape *Rommel*?**

Barbara Klinger argues in her study on reception studies that the cinematic practices, which are part of synchronic areas of study, represent a powerful source with which to historicize the impact one contextual area had on creating a preferred reading of a film. One area, which affects the constitution of a case study such as Rommel, is the film production. Klinger argues that economic structure and production practices of a studio in terms of style shape the film product. The producer and production company influence the genre stars, scriptwriters and style of its production.<sup>479</sup> After I have discussed in detail how this media text depicts Rommel's knowledge of the Holocaust and his involvement in the plot to assassinate Hitler, I will now analyse the role of the producer of *Rommel*, Nico Hofmann, in relation to reception studies. As I have discussed in an earlier part of this chapter the role, which Zanuck played on the production and the meaning of *The Desert Fox*, I will discuss in detail the influence Hofmann and his production company teamWorx had on the fictional representation of Rommel in my case study and how this shaped the

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<sup>478</sup> Major, P., 'Shooting Rommel: The Desert Fox 1951 and Hollywood's public private diplomacy', *Historical Journal of Radio, Film and Television*, Vol 39, Issue 2, pp. 209-232, Published Online 30.10.2018, p. 227, [Accessed: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01439685.2018.1522791>, 11.1.19].

<sup>479</sup> Klinger, B. summer 1997, p. 115.

meaning of this media text. Before producing with his production company teamWorx *Rommel* in 2012, Hofmann produced *Dresden* (Roland Suso Richter, 2006, Germany) and *March of Millions* (Kai Wessel, 2007, Germany).

Axel Bangert argues in his study *Nazis in Contemporary Cinema* that the German television production *Dresden* was a point of culmination in the filmic preoccupation with German victimhood. This television production had a budget of around €10 million and became an enormous success when it was screened on German television, as an estimated 12.7 million viewers or 32.6 per cent of the German television audience followed the transmission of the first part alone.<sup>480</sup> *Dresden* was awarded the German television award in the category “Best Television Drama/Miniseries” making it the first event movie about the victimization of the Germans during the Second World War an overall success. Bangert argues that the part that most empathically stimulates the experience of trauma is that of the firestorm. *Dresden* represents the bombing of the city as a trauma both of individual and collective impact. Hofmann described in an interview that the bombing of Dresden is significant far beyond the destruction of the city, standing moreover for the breakdown of an entire society. He argues that the apocalyptic image of the absolute zero point in a moral respect and the destructions represent those moments about which his parents spoke, the experience that nothing is right and nothing is left anymore.<sup>481</sup> In contrast to *Dresden*, *Rommel* does not represent the breakdown of society through the destruction of a city, but this fictional narrative shows how leading national socialists such as Rommel still believed in Hitler and the Third Reich at the end of the war. It could be argued that *Rommel* shows what led to the destruction of Dresden, as the Wehrmacht believed in Hitler and fought for him.

*March of Millions* was the second teamWorx event movie, which portrayed a major incident of German victimhood. The director Wessel emphasized that *March of Millions* was the first re-enactment of the flight, an undertaking he deemed in the early 1990s would still have been considered politically unacceptable.<sup>482</sup> The producer Gabriela Sperl, who also wrote the script argued that you give the people the memories back through addressing a national catastrophe long absent from public consciousness. *March of Millions* was also like *Dresden*, extremely popular with the German television audience, as the first broadcast of the first episode on the German television channel ARD was seen by

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<sup>480</sup> Bangert. A., 2014, p. 109.

<sup>481</sup> Klinger, B., summer 1997, p. 115.

<sup>481</sup> Bangert. A., 2014, p. 114.

<sup>482</sup> Bangert. A., 2014, p. 117.

13.55 million viewers.<sup>483</sup> For this TV channel *March of Millions* was the most successful drama in ten years.<sup>484</sup> The film represents a melodramatic plot structured around the classic constellation of a love triangle, as the protagonist Lena stands between two men representing different attitudes toward the Third Reich. She finds herself torn between her old admirer Heinrich, a conformist military judge, and the French forced labourer Francois, who stands in opposition not only to the Nazi regime, but also to the East Prussian society.

Bangert states that *March of Millions* presents public history in an epic tone suggesting the traversing of vast spaces, long periods of time and intense emotional states, accommodating features of the historical drama and heritage film within the format of the event movie. He argues that the cinematography of *March of Millions* expands both space and time by placing bodies against landscape, bringing out the proportions of each other.<sup>485</sup> In contrast to this cinematography, *Rommel* focuses on the historical character of Rommel and stays mostly in close-ups. Most of the key scenes, which I discussed before in this chapter and which define how Rommel is remembered in the German cultural memory, are set in a single location and shot in close-ups so that the viewer can identify with Rommel. This media text focuses on the struggle of the leading national socialists apart from Rommel such as von Stülpnagel and von Hofacker to resist against Hitler. The fight at the Western front is rarely shown and kept to a minimum in order to focus solely on the protagonist Rommel. The sense of time and space is given to the viewers through inserts, which inform the audience where the scenes are taking place and on what date. The viewers are informed before the start of the fictional narrative that this media text will focus on the last seven months of Rommel's life. However, *March of Millions* and *Rommel* can also be compared, as both were event movies because they focused on immense emotional states of the protagonists accommodating features of the historical drama through their focus on the Third Reich.

According to Bangert, both teamWorx productions *Dresden* and *March of Millions* refer to the victims of the Nazi crimes. However, their mobilization of home cinema effectively centres on German experience of suffering, as these event movies aim to create the impression of a public media event, whose epic proportions are meant to reflect the enormity of the historical experience portrayed.<sup>486</sup> These events movies dramatizing instances of German victimhood were in the first instance targeted to a domestic market.

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<sup>483</sup> Bangert. A., 2014, p. 117.

<sup>484</sup> Bangert. A., 2014, p. 118.

<sup>485</sup> Bangert. A., 2014, p. 122.

<sup>486</sup> Bangert. A., 2014, p. 132.

The producer Nico Hofmann states that the company follows the principle of securing the basic funding for its event productions in Germany, insisting that these productions break even with the first broadcast. The international marketing of an event movie such as *Dresden*, which was sold to more than one hundred countries represented a lucrative additional business. Bangert argues that re-enacting and reworking the traumatic experience of the war generation through these event movies such as *March of Millions* confirms the credo as the producer Hofmann put it, “the time of television experience as a the ‘campfire’ of the nation is far from being over. Bangert believes that the Nazi past is among the few topics that have the potential of achieving the increasingly difficult feat of a national television event.<sup>487</sup>

In an interview with the liberal German news magazine *Spiegel*, Hofmann claims that he did not represent Rommel as a hero and demystifies this historical character. He decided consciously to not show him as the glorious ‘Desert Fox’, instead focusing on Rommel’s last seven month of his life. In this interview Hofmann rejects the argument that he portrays Rommel as hero with morals and values, who did not know about the Holocaust, He claims that the television represents Rommel as master in suppression, who must have known of the extermination of the Jews in the East. He wanted to portray Rommel as an ambivalent character who turns against Hitler slowly, but at the same time remains hesitant to disobey Hitler completely. According to Hofmann, Rommel was a tragic hero, who symbolised a generation of soldiers, who were convinced to act morally according to their values. He claims that his father belonged to this generation and his father’s understanding of the world and his values were destroyed when he discovered the first pictures from the concentration camps. His representation of Rommel is a soldier, who is trapped in a set of morals and values of this time period. The television production wanted to portray this ethical code as authentic as possible and ninety per cent of the dialogue was from protocols, which were dramatized. In this interview Hofmann mentions the critique he received from Rommel’s family. He states that he met the grandchild Catherine Rommel, but they disagreed on the representation of Rommel’s involvement in the plot to assassinate Hitler, as for his family Rommel was an honest resister against Hitler’s regime.<sup>488</sup> Furthermore Hofmann stated to the centrist news agency *Reuters* in the article ‘The Devil’s General? German film seeks to debunk the Rommel myth’:

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<sup>487</sup> Bangert. A., 2014, p. 169.

<sup>488</sup> Der Spiegel, ‘Hofmann-Interview zu “Rommel” Film: “Hitler im Bett, nein danke”, *Spiegel*, 25.10.2012, [Accessed: <http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/tv/nico-hofmann-interview-zu-rommel-und-hitler-projekt-a-862890.html>], 20.2.19].

The idea is to demystify Rommel. There is a lot of speculation surrounding the myth of Rommel. To some he is a brave, proud soldier, the 'Desert Fox. Some people do not know that he committed suicide under pressure from Hitler and think he perished in the war and there are many questions about how close he was to the resistance. There are taboos, subjects for discussion and historical evaluation.<sup>489</sup>

The interview in *Spiegel* and Hofmann's statement to *Reuters* show how he influenced the meaning associated to Rommel's representation in this media text. However, also the style of the production company teamWorx through event movies *Dresden* and *March of Millions* focusing on the German victimization and suffering during the war influenced Rommel's representation, as he could be seen a tragic and broken hero or an ambivalent character who could not decide completely to join the resistance against Hitler due to his morals and values as a soldier.

### **3.13 Analysing the marketing material of Rommel on the website of the international distributor Betafilm**

In this part of the chapter dealing with the fictional representation of Rommel in film and television, I discuss a different part of reception studies, which also creates meaning for a media text. Klinger categorises reviews as part of the practise and zones of reception studies. She argues that reviewers comment directly on revived films, evaluating them against whatever aesthetic canons dominate journalism at the time to renovate the film's appeal for new audiences within existing systems of professional taste and social and aesthetic ideologies.<sup>490</sup> The public debate gives the nation meaning and media systems with a particular geographical reach that give it shape.<sup>491</sup> Therefore, I will analyse in the following part of this chapter how the meaning associated with the media text *Rommel* is created through reviews in the public spheres of Germany and other cultures. Janet Staiger argues that communication can function as tool of domination, as signs and their signified are not neutral but sides of power. According to her, representations are developed in social circumstances and bear the ideological marks of the class or groups that control the meaning.<sup>492</sup> Therefore, I will first how the preferred meaning of the

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<sup>489</sup> Chambers, M., 'The Devil's General? German film seeks to debunk Rommel Myth', *Reuters*, 2012, [Accessed: <http://www.reuters.com/article/entertainment-us-germany-rommel-idUSBRE8A00RM20121101>, 10.2.17].

<sup>490</sup> Klinger, B. summer 1997, p. 124.

<sup>491</sup> Higson, A, *The concept of national cinema*, in *Film and Nationalism* by Williams, A., (ED), Rutger University Press, 2002, p. 58.

<sup>492</sup>Staiger. J., 'Film Reception and Cultural Studies', *The Centennial Review*, Vol 36 No 1, Winter 1992, p. 90 [Accessed: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/23739835.pdf>, 6.1.18]



television production *Rommel* is displayed on the website of the international distributor Betafilm.



Figure 6 Poster of the film *Rommel* on the website of the distributor Betafilm.

On this website, the poster of *Rommel* is displayed with additional information to running time, title, cast and director next to it. Below the poster, a synopsis of the film is outlined. The synopsis starts with the quote:

We're soldiers. We have nothing to do with politics" (*Rommel*).<sup>493</sup>

This quote could already imply that even though Rommel was a leading general in the Wehrmacht and part of the Third Reich, he should not be compared with other leading

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<sup>493</sup> Betafilm, *Rommel*, [Accessed: <https://www.betafilm.com/en/product/d/rommel.html>, 20.1.19]

national socialists. The synopsis of the plot ends with outlining that Rommel was accused of being involved in the plot and that Hitler could not afford to put the Reich's most popular general on trial. The synopsis leaves out Rommel's death. This could make the reader more interested in the story as some vital information is not mentioned. On this webpage it is possible to download a brochure and a press clipping. The brochure contains the poster of the film with Ulrich Tukur as Rommel on the front and the beach with soldiers in the back. On this poster, a quote from Churchill is added: "We have a very daring and skilful opponent against us...and a great general."<sup>494</sup> Through the utilisation of this quote, the importance of Rommel's character is shown as Churchill showed respect for him. This quote could lead viewers to watch this film because they want to enhance their knowledge regarding this great general. Furthermore, the language used in this quote set Rommel apart from Hitler and other leading Nazis, because Rommel was a daring, skilful and great general. The synopsis in this brochure highlights that Rommel was willing to join the plotters, which could mean that the audience might be able to identify more with this historical character. In the press clipping on this website three English reviews are mentioned from *BBC*, *The Independent* and *Reuters*.<sup>495</sup> In the following paragraph I will analyse these reviews in depth.

### 3.14 Reviews of Rommel in the UK

The first review from the British centric public service broadcaster *The BBC* 'German film looks at ties between Rommel and Hitler' mentions that the German TV film questions depictions of Rommel as a tragic anti-Nazi hero. It also quotes the producer Nico Hofmann starting 'the idea is to demystify Rommel'. The review argues that the film leaves open to question whether Rommel was part of the 20 July Plot to assassinate Hitler with a bomb and his wife Lucia denied he played a role in it. However, his son Manfred wrote to the producers to protest that this fictional narrative underplays Rommel's role in the resistance. This review quotes two historians to frame the media text in relation to its representation of this historical character. The British military historian Robert Lyman states that "he did not accept that Rommel was a Nazi, but he does believe that Rommel was a man and a brilliant field tactician, who used the Nazi apparatus to secure a military rank which he would have not otherwise have got". He believes the suggestion that Rommel plotted to assassinate Hitler absurd, arguing that Rommel was loyal soldier. According to Lyman this is shown through Rommel committing suicide, as he obeyed his Fuehrer. However, the traditional view is that he swallowed poison to avoid a public trial

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<sup>494</sup> Betafilm, *Rommel*, [Accessed: <https://www.betafilm.com/en/product/d/rommel.html>, 20.1.19]

<sup>495</sup> Betafilm, *Rommel-Press*, November 2012, [Accessed: <https://www.betafilm.com/media/files/proddata/a8/146637.pdf>, 20.1.19].

and retaliation against his family. This is also depicted in this manner in the television production *Rommel*. This review also mentions the topic if Rommel knew about the Holocaust claiming that the film brushes over this topic, as an offer of his rank must have known about it. The review quotes the German history professor Sönke Neitzel who advised the filmmakers argue that Rommel did not commit war crimes. However, he took huge German casualties during the war and was as servant of the regime. According to Neitzel, Rommel was not a shining liberal or Social Democrat, but mostly interested in his career.<sup>496</sup>

The second review from the liberal-leaning *The Independent* 'Row over film that portrays Rommel as more rat than fox' opens with two questions for the reader: "Was Germany's Second World War general, Erwin Rommel, really the chivalrous 'Desert Fox' commander who is reputed to have plotted against Hitler? Or was he a deeply convinced Nazi and anti-Semite driven by an egotistical desire for fame?" The review claims that Rommel's family wrote to the filmmakers that this fictional narrative depicts lies about Rommel. It is also mentioned that Churchill described Rommel as a "great general". The opening paragraph of this review mentions that a German historian walked out on the production, the production relied on the work of the Holocaust-denying British historian David Irving and the production infuriated the relatives of Rommel. This could lead the viewer to question this fictional representation of Rommel. Later in this review, Rommel is described as a Hamlet like figure, who is conscious of the prospect of Germany's immanent defeat, but too weak to throw his weight behind the plot to assassinate Hitler. The only historian quoted in this review is the German historian Cornelian von Hecht, who was employed as an adviser until she decided to leave the production. She claims that the film left out several important details about Rommel's involvement in the German resistance and that dialogue was lifted from a biography of Rommel by the historian David Irving. The producer Nico Hoffman held a meeting with Rommel's family, which he described in the review as emotional and confrontational. This review argues that it is impossible to know to what extent Rommel was prepared to oppose Hitler and the true extent of his involvement in the plot, even though his name was mentioned in connections with the plotters.<sup>497</sup>

The third review from the centrist news agency *Reuters* 'The Devil's General? German film seeks to debunk Rommel myth' describes Rommel the brilliant and humane 'The

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<sup>496</sup> Betafilm, *Rommel-Press*, November 2012, [Accessed: <https://www.betafilm.com/media/files/proddata/a8/146637.pdf>, 20.1.19].

<sup>497</sup> Betafilm, *Rommel-Press*, November 2012, [Accessed: <https://www.betafilm.com/media/files/proddata/a8/146637.pdf>, 20.1.19].

Desert Fox' is depicted in *Rommel* as a weak man torn by his loyalty to Hitler and the dawning realization that he was serving a devil. This review recounts mostly Rommel's life and the historical facts about his involvement in the war. It does mention that the drama angered Rommel's son and granddaughter because it underplays Rommel's role in the resistance. Churchill's quote is used again to describe the historical character Rommel and this review claims that Rommel's standing among enemies was enhanced by his human treatment of prisoners. Film director Niki Stein describes Rommel in this review as weak man who chose to look away. Rommel's family denounced the script of the six-million-euro film, which focuses on Rommel's internal conflict during the seven months of his life leading up to his death. According to this review, Rommel's son Manfred and his granddaughter wrote to the producers and accused the script of *Rommel* of representing lies, as they argue that Rommel played a greater role in the resistance than the producers believed. Through these statements of Rommel's family, the reader could maybe believe that the fictional representation of Rommel is not accurate and does not represent Rommel in a realistic manner. Rommel's son accused the producers of presenting lies regarding Rommel's involvement in the 20 July Plot, but he did not accuse them of representing lies about his father's knowledge about the Holocaust.<sup>498</sup>

### 3.15 Reviews of *Rommel* in Germany

After I have discussed these three reviews of *Rommel* in the UK, I will now turn to the reviews of Rommel in the German press. In an article in the left-liberal German news magazine *Stern* with the title 'Der arme arme Feldmarschall' (The poor poor general) the film is described as portraying Rommel to sympathetically through focusing too much on his human side disregarding the historical facts.<sup>499</sup> This review focuses on how the fictional narrative dramatizes Rommel's death and his involvement in the war, offering the viewer an event. It is mentioned that Rommel was responsible for a great number of casualties among his soldiers, as he loved the war and always wanted to win. However, this review points out that the director and scriptwriter Niki Stein made a conscious decision to focus on the last seven months of Rommel's life instead of showing Rommel fighting in Africa. According to this review, it sends shivers down the spine of the viewer when the generals make jokes, while millions of soldiers die at the front. The director Stein states in this review that it is allowed to dramatize the Third Reich and lead the viewer to identify with Rommel. Nico Hoffman believes that the representation of Rommel in this

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<sup>498</sup> Betafilm, *Rommel-Press*, November 2012, [Accessed: <https://www.betafilm.com/media/files/proddata/a8/146637.pdf>, 20.1.19].

<sup>499</sup> Schmitz, S., "Der arme, arme Feldmarschall," *Stern*, 1.9.2012, [Accessed: <https://www.stern.de/kultur/tv/-rommel-film-in-der-ard-der-arme--arme-feldmarschall-3868896.html>, 17.5.19]

television production will define how Rommel is remembered for a very long time. The review argues that the generals of the Third Reich are the wrong characters to identify with from this time period in historical dramas on television. This review focuses on the structure of this media text and the representation of Rommel by the actor Ulrich Tukur, who humanises Rommel too much. It does not discuss Rommel's involvement in the 20 July Plot, nor Rommel's knowledge of the Holocaust.

The review in the conservative German newspaper *Frankfurt Allgemeine Zeitung* with the title 'Sein historische Stunde ging vorbei' (His historic hour passed) also focuses on the structure of the media text.<sup>500</sup> The title refers to the argument of this review that Rommel passed his historical hour to become an active member in the plot to assassinate Hitler due to his injuries, which he obtained through a car accident caused by an attack of Western military plane. This review argues that a historical character cannot be understood through representing only the end of his life. According to this review, it cannot show the whole inner life of a man who was a soldier for thirty years and fought for nine years in a war. Through concentrating on the last seven months of his life this fictional narrative becomes dramatic and does not claim to be documentary. This review discusses that the Rommel's family disapproved of his representation in Rommel and argues that they misunderstood the media text as a documentary and not a dramatization of Rommel's life. According to this review, this fictional narrative leaves the question open if Rommel knew about the plot showing his discussion with von Hofacker through the binoculars of a British agent. The review states that Rommel was accused of knowing of the plot to assassinate Hitler not of playing an active part in it. It is argued that the cinematography as well as the casting helps the audience to understand this time period and create a realistic representation of the historical characters such as Rommel and Speidel. This review ends with discussing Speidel's role in Rommel's death as this media text only suggests that Speidel gave up his superior in order to live. Rommel is characterised as a tragic hero and compared to Hamlet.

The review in the liberal German newspaper magazine *Spiegel* 'Hitlers Hamlet' (Hitler's Hamlet) argues that Rommel is represented as a tragic hero, who is humanised too much through the decision of focusing on the last month of his life.<sup>501</sup> The first sentences of this review question who Rommel was and how he is represented in this television production. The review asks if Rommel was seduced by Hitler, if he was a doubter or if he was

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<sup>500</sup> Kilb, A., 'Seine historische Stunde ging vorbei', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 28.19.2012, [Accessed: <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/rommel-film-im-ersten-seine-historische-stunde-ging-vorbei-11941647-p2.html>], 25.7.19]

<sup>501</sup> Buss, C., 'Hitlers Hamlet', *Der Spiegel*, 2012 [Accessed: <http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/tv/rommel-ulrich-tukur-als-hitlers-wuestenfuchs-in-der-ard-a-863956.html>], 11.8.2016].

confidant through his involvement in the regime and the war. It is argued that *Rommel* represents this historical character as tragic hero, who is depicted too well by Ulrich Tukur so that the viewer cannot associate him with the other leading national socialists, as he is depicted as 'super soldier'. The review criticises that the fictional narrative does not show the war to a great extent and focuses solely on the generals and their inner and psychological turmoil removed from the crimes of the Third Reich. It is also mentioned that this fictional narrative shows the Wehrmacht in a very positive light and portray the SS as the being responsible for the Holocaust and the crimes of the Third Reich. Through representing Rommel with scenes such as saving a British soldier from the SS and caring for his soldiers, the fictional narrative represents Rommel as a sympathetic character with morals and values. The review ends with discussing the last line of Rommel's character who realises that his life is ending. According to this review, the viewer might want to hug Rommel in the end, and it might be dangerous to create these feelings for a leading national socialist. This review focuses more on how Rommel is represented in the television production through focusing on specific scenes, instead of his involvement in the 20 July plot. Therefore, it could be argued that this review despite praising the structure of the narrative and the performance of Ulrich Tukur as Rommel creates the argument that Rommel must have known about the extermination of the Jews due to his position in the military of the Third Reich.

Through analysing and discussing these reviews from the international and German press in depth, I am demonstrating how the meaning of this media text is created in the public sphere. In these reviews some common themes can be discovered, which are Rommel's involvement in the plot to assassinate Hitler, Rommel's knowledge of the Holocaust and Rommel's representation as a tragic hero. Rommel is compared in most of these reviews to Hamlet, which could mean that he was a tragic historical character who could not decide what to do. Furthermore, in the international reviews Churchill's description of Rommel as a great general is quoted and this is also utilised on the poster of the television production. This quote sets Rommel apart from the other leading national socialists. This could connote to the viewer that Rommel was humane general with values and that the viewers can identify with this leading national socialist, because even Churchill praised him. The producer Nico Hofmann is quoted in various reviews that he wanted to demystify Rommel through this media text. However, this is debatable through the fictional representation of Rommel's involvement in the plot to assassinate Hitler and his knowledge of the extermination of the Jews. In the German press, only one review by the liberal newsmagazine *Der Spiegel* questions that Rommel portrays the Wehrmacht too positively through the depiction the SS as being responsible. According to this review in the liberal newsmagazine *Der Spiegel*, Rommel is shown in this fictional narrative as

being oblivious to the Holocaust or the crimes of the Third Reich. I would argue that all these reviews as material for reception studies show that Rommel was not demystified through *Rommel*, as he is portrayed as historical character with morals and values, who was involved in the 20 July plot and did not know anything of the Holocaust as a high ranking general in the Third Reich.

### 3.16 Conclusion

Alison Lansberg claims that:

Cinema in particular, as an institution which makes available images for mass consumption has long been aware of its ability to generate experiences and to install memories of them-memories which become experiences that film consumers bot possesses and feel possessed by.<sup>502</sup>

This statement can be applied to my research as the representations of Rommel in *Desert Fox* and *Rommel* make the image of the Third Reich and the Second World War available for mass consumption. The representations of Rommel in these fictional narratives could define how this historical character is remembered in the cultural memory in different time periods and cultures. James Mason has defined how Rommel was remembered in the cultural memory of Hollywood through the sequel *The Desert Rats* which appeared within two years of *The Desert Fox*. However, Mason spoke his dialogue in German in this fictional narrative.<sup>503</sup> Furthermore, the academic discussion of Mason's performance in academic articles such as 'Shooting Rommel: The Desert Fox 1951 and Hollywood's public private diplomacy' by Patrick Major shows the importance of Rommel's fictional representation. Sabine Hake also discussed the representation of Rommel in her book *Screen Nazis* and chooses to focus on Rommel's representation in *Desert Fox*. In comparison, the fictional representation of Rommel in *Rommel* could define how Rommel is remembered in the German cultural memory for a contemporary German audience watching this event movie on television, shown through the high ratings. Robert Bygone expects that readers will be troubled by the idea that fact and fiction as presented in the media would be indistinguishable to a future generation. He believes though that this distinction will not be so crucial, as a visual history that mixes fictional, factual and speculative discourses might give viewers a history of the future that is in some ways like

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<sup>502</sup> Landsberg, A., in *Memory and Popular film*, Crainge, P., (ED), Manchester University Press, 2003, p. 102-103.

<sup>503</sup> Major, P., 'Shooting Rommel: The Desert Fox 1951 and Hollywood's public private diplomacy', *Historical Journal of Radio, Film and Television*, Vol 39, Issue 2, pp. 209-232, Published Online 30.10.2018, p. 224 [Accessed: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01439685.2018.1522791>, 11.1.19].

the mythic histories of the past.<sup>504</sup> Burgoyne argues that documentary images in the future may no longer signify the facticity of past events, but rather convey the sense that they are representation of the past, a representation that may be employed for the purpose of metaphor, irony, analogy, argument, and that may be used in such a way, that a certain poetic truth may emerge in the telling.<sup>505</sup> I agree with Burgoyne's argument and I would take it further by arguing that not only documentary images might no longer signify facts of past events, but also that the fictional representations of past events and historical characters in film and television replace the documentary images and are accepted as the facts by the viewers.

In relation to both fictional representations of Rommel in *The Desert Fox* and *Rommel*, he is represented in a sympathetic manner and his involvement in the plot to assassinate Hitler is exaggerated, in order for the viewers to be able to identify with this historical character. Therefore, these fictional representations could be employed to make the argument that the Wehrmacht was not involved in war crimes and that Rommel did not know about the Holocaust. Rommel states in the German television production that he is innocent and that he was not involved in the plot to assassinate Hitler before he leaves his wife and his house for the last time. These lines of dialogue represent Rommel in a different way than Mason's Rommel in *The Desert Fox*, who represented Rommel as a hero who distanced himself from Hitler and was involved in the 20 July Plot.<sup>506</sup> Therefore, it could be argued that the fictional representation in *Rommel* shows that this historical character could not decide between resisting Hitler and being loyal. According to the article 'Rommel-The hero, who was not one' in the conservative magazine *Cicero* from Germany, Rommel was a typical German in the year 1944 representing the German middle class, as he could not decide between resisting against Hitler or being loyal. This article argues that Rommel is a symbol for the German population, who were scared of losing their stability, wealth and privileges with a resistance against Hitler and were loyal until the end.<sup>507</sup> In relation to Bygone's statement, this media text could employ the fictional representation of Rommel as a metaphor for the German population at the end of the war.

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<sup>504</sup> Burgoyne, E., 'Memory, history and the digital imagery in contemporary film' in *Memory and Popular film*, Crainge, P., (ED), Manchester University Press, 2003, p. 233-234

<sup>505</sup> Burgoyne, E., 'Memory, history and the digital imagery in contemporary film' in *Memory and Popular film*, Crainge, P., (ED), Manchester University Press, 2003, p. 234

<sup>506</sup> Cicero, 'Erwin Rommel,-Der Held, der keiner war', *Cicero*, 2012 [Accessed: <https://www.cicero.de/kultur/der-held-der-keiner-war/52374>, 10.2.17].

<sup>507</sup> Cicero, 'Erwin Rommel,-Der Held, der keiner war', *Cicero*, 2012 [Accessed: <https://www.cicero.de/kultur/der-held-der-keiner-war/52374>, 10.2.17].



In terms of reception studies, I would like to return to the statement by the producer of *Rommel* Nico Hofmann. He claims in various German and international articles that his aim was to demystify Rommel through portraying him in a more realistic manner than other film productions such as *The Desert Fox* regarding Rommel's involvement in the plot to assassinate Hitler. I would argue that he depicted the Wehrmacht positively through the historical character such as Speidel, the SS being responsible for war crimes in France and scenes of the SS torturing prisoners. Therefore, it could be argued that Hofmann created a new myth about the involvement of the Wehrmacht in the crimes of the Third Reich. Furthermore, Hofmann created a new myth about Rommel's knowledge about the extermination of the Jews, as this media text represents Rommel being oblivious of the Holocaust. In *Rommel* he states that he only heard stories about the gassing of the Jews in the East. Through the performance of Ulrich Tukur as Rommel, the high value production recreating this historical time and the realistic and chronological structure of the narrative, this media text could define how Rommel is remembered in the German and other cultural memories.

Robert Rosenstone writes that "it is possible that such history on screen is the history of the future". According to Rosenstone, the truth of the individual facts is less important in a visual culture than the overall truth of a metaphors we create to help us understand the past. He believes that the visual media might represent a major shift in consciousness about how we think about our past.<sup>508</sup> I agree with Rosenstone that the history on screen of the Third Reich and Rommel could be the history of the future. However, I disagree with Rosenstone that the truth of the individual facts is less important than the overall truth of the metaphors in order to understand the past. In relation to my case study *Rommel*, I would argue that the individual fact if Rommel knew of the Holocaust or not is an important fact to understand this historical character. Through the sympathetic portrayal of Rommel in the German television production *Rommel* with scenes involving his family and saving an English spy from the torture of the SS, the metaphor is created that the Wehrmacht was not involved in the crimes of the Third Reich. I agree with Rosenstone that not every individual fact can be portrayed accurately in visual culture, but the metaphors, which help the viewers to understand the Third Reich through the fictional depiction of historical characters such as Rommel, need to be critically investigated and analysed.

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<sup>508</sup> Rosenstone, R., in 'Memory, history and the digital imagery in contemporary film' by Burgoyne, E., in *Memory and Popular film*, Crainge, P., (ED), Manchester University Press, 2003, p. 233.

Through the decision to focus on the last seven months in Rommel's life in *Rommel*, this fictional narrative gives the viewer a coherent narrative showing how Rommel begins to doubt Hitler's orders and was interested in supporting a plot to remove Hitler from power. Returning to my introduction of this chapter, historian David Lowenthal argues that we impose a casual order on the past, making it more explicable and coherent.<sup>509</sup> This notion can be seen in both my case studies *The Desert Fox* and *Rommel*. In relation to *The Desert Fox*, Major argues that through invoking military honours in this media text labelled by Karl Jaspers as the purely soldierly at the same time human values common to all people, the Rommel myth achieved a form of praetorian internationalism capable of transcending national borders shortly after the Second World War.<sup>510</sup> Major believes that every filmmaker faced difficulties making a film about Rommel because this historical character had been the darling of the 'other side' as Göbbel's Ministry of Propaganda had singled him out for elevation to mythic status. According to Major, Rommel was probably the biggest household name in the Third Reich after Hitler.<sup>511</sup> Not only was Rommel as household name in the Third Reich, he seems still to be of some relevance for the German population, as 6.83 million viewers watched Rommel on German national television. However, this high rating could also be due to the high production values, the production company TeamWorx, the producer Nico Hofmann and the actor Ulrich Tukur depicting Rommel, who is well known in Germany.

As it was suggested that there might be more suitable candidates for resistance biopics in comparison with Rommel, because he turned against the regime very late, screenwriter and producer of *The Desert Fox* Nunnally Johnson explained that the others were completely unknown to the public, whereas Rommel was known to everyone.<sup>512</sup> It is also stated in a review in the conservative German newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine* that the director of *Rommel* Niki Stein wanted to choose Speidel as the protagonist and portray him as a hero. Speidel is portrayed as Rommel's consciousness in the German television production *Rommel*, as he convinces Rommel to become involved in the plot to assassinate Hitler. However, Stein realised that Rommel would be a better protagonist because of the debate surrounding this historical character in relation to his involvement in the 20 July Plot and his knowledge of the Holocaust. I would argue that *Rommel* shows that there is still a demand to understand the Third Reich and a fascination with leading national socialists. The meaning associated with this fictional narrative could be linked to

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<sup>509</sup> Lowenthal, D., 2015 p. 340.

<sup>510</sup> Major, P., 'Shooting Rommel: The Desert Fox 1951 and Hollywood's public private diplomacy', *Historical Journal of Radio, Film and Television*, Vol 39, Issue 2, pp. 209-232, Published Online 30.10.2018, p. 224, [Accessed: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01439685.2018.1522791>, 11.1.19].

<sup>511</sup> Major, P., 30.10.2018, p. 219.

<sup>512</sup> Major, P., 30.10.2018, p. 219.

the fact that the Third Reich and Rommel will not be forgotten in the German cultural memory. However, there is the danger that *Rommel* becomes the only trace for viewers, who did not experience this time period, to interpret the past of the Third Reich and the historical character Rommel.<sup>513</sup>

The German television production *Rommel* depicts Rommel less involved in the resistance to Hitler and opposed to a violent assassination. This fictional narrative shows Rommel's discussion with von Hofacker, who might have informed Rommel about the plan to assassinate Hitler, through the binoculars of a British spy from the distance. The viewer is not able to hear the dialogue between the two characters. Rommel states in one of the last scenes before his death that he was innocent and not involved in the plot. The producer of *Rommel* Nico Hofmann might have been able to demystify Rommel regarding his involvement in the resistance against Hitler. However, this fictional narrative creates at the same time different myths such as about the involvement of the Wehrmacht in the crimes of the Third Reich and Rommel's knowledge about the extermination of the Jews, as this media text represents Rommel being oblivious of the Holocaust. According to Erll, film and television production seem to have become the leading mediums of popular cultural memory".<sup>514</sup> Therefore, it seems important to analyse critically the representations of historical characters such as Rommel in film and television production. The historical character Rommel might at some point only be remembered in the German cultural memory through the fictional representation in *Rommel* and viewers will accept this depiction because this media text offers the past as a coherent narrative with an interesting protagonist, who was oblivious to the Holocaust, played an active part in the resistance and opposed Hitler in the end, even though the opposite was the truth.

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<sup>513</sup> Lowenthal, D., 2015, p. 25.

<sup>514</sup> Erll, A, *Literature, Film, and the Mediality of Cultural Memory*, in *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies* edited by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, De Gruyter, pp. 389-398, p. 395



## Chapter 4 'The Young Evil God of Death': Reinhard Heydrich in Film and Television

### 4.1 Introduction

In the book *The Epitome of Evil: Hitler in the American fiction 1939-2002* Michael Butter argues that the figure of Hitler has become a rhetorical device, a figure of speech and trope of American culture. He believes that based on the associations Hitler evokes this historical figure is used in cultural texts and political discourses to address American issues. Furthermore, he states that the figure of Hitler has become part of the American cultural imaginary and the question of historical accuracy is not relevant for these representations. According to Butter, the Hitler of American culture is not a historical persona, but a free-floating signifier, which can be filled with shifting meaning, depending on the exigencies of the historical moment.<sup>515</sup> I would take Butter's argument further and argue that also Heydrich has become a historical figure to address different issues in various cultures. Similar to Hitler in the American culture, Heydrich has become a signifier through his representations in film and television, which can be filled with shifting meaning depending on the production of the media text, the time period and the culture. I have chosen the representations of Heydrich in *Die Wannseekonferenz* (Heinz Schirck, West Germany, 1984), *Conspiracy* (Frank Pierson, US & UK, 2001) and *The Man with the Iron Heart* (Cédric Jimenez, France & US, 2017) because each representation of Heydrich has a different meaning at the time. I will show in this chapter how the representation of Heydrich changed in each of my case studies and the meaning associated with these representations, through the focus on the production and the reviews of these media texts in Germany, America, and the United Kingdom.

According to Landsberg, the cinema has the capacity to create shared social frameworks for people, who inhabit literally and figuratively different social practices and beliefs.<sup>516</sup> Therefore, it is important to analyse critically the representations of Heydrich in my case studies, as these fictional depictions will define how viewers, who did not experience this time period will remember Heydrich. The resulting prosthetic memory from watching films such as *Conspiracy* and *The Man with the Iron Heart* has the ability to shape the person's

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<sup>515</sup> Butter, M., *The Epitome of Evil: Hitler in the American fiction 1939-2002*, Palgrave and Macmillan, 2009, p. 4-5.

<sup>516</sup> Landsberg, A., *Prosthetic Memory-The transformation of American Remembrance in the age of mass culture*, Columbia University Press, 2004, p. 8.

subjectivity and politics.<sup>517</sup> *Die Wannseekonferenz* can be seen as an example of Germany coming to terms with the past and representing perpetrators in German national television. This media text which was co-produced by television network ORF and the West German television network Bayerischer Rundfunk in 1984 can be seen as an early attempt by the German television to understand the Third Reich and to come to terms with the past. The historical event of the Wannsee conference was utilised as a symbol to portray the Final Solution and to depict leading National Socialists such as Heydrich in West German television. *Conspiracy* can be seen as an example of how the event of the Wannsee Conference and Heydrich was utilized to show that HBO could produce serious and difficult media products. Furthermore, *Conspiracy* shows how the casting of an international star such as Kenneth Branagh can change the meaning associated with Heydrich. He received an Emmy Award for Lead Actor in a Miniseries or a Movie for his performance as Heydrich in *Conspiracy*.<sup>518</sup> The international film production *The Man with the Iron Heart* can be seen as an example of how the understanding of this time period has changed, as Heydrich's wife Lina von Osten is represented as the driving force behind Heydrich's career and his main influence to join the Nazi party. The film is based on the best selling novel *HHhH* by Lauren Binet, which could mean that this film is not only made to portray Heydrich differently, but mostly because of financial reasons to gain a profit from showing Heydrich's assassination again on screen. I will discuss in a later part of this chapter how the casting of Rosamund Pike as Lina von Osten and of Jason Clarke as Heydrich influences the meaning associated with the fictional representations of these historical figures. I believe that it is vital to critically analyse the most recent representation of Heydrich in *The Man with the Iron Heart*, because at some point Clarke's representation of Heydrich might define how this the historical figure is remembered, as this film offers the Third Reich and the persona Heydrich in a compelling, coherent and simplified fictional narrative.

Petra Rau states in her book *Our Nazis: Representation of Fascism in Contemporary Literature and Film* that citing or portraying the Nazis in fictional narratives would remind a German, British and America culture or an audience of who they were and who they wanted to be.<sup>519</sup> This relates back to my analysis of Heydrich in film and television, as my case studies offer the viewers a representation of Heydrich, which was influenced by the production of the media texts and cultures they were produced in. The representations of Nazis in my case studies *Die Wannseekonferenz*, *Conspiracy* and *The Man with the Iron*

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<sup>517</sup> Landsberg, A., 2004, p. 2.

<sup>518</sup> Golden Globes, 'Winner and Nominees-TV Show Conspiracy', *Golden Globe Awards* [Accessed: <https://www.goldenglobes.com/tv-show/conspiracy>, 1.11.19].

<sup>519</sup> Rau, P., *Our Nazis: Representation of Fascism in Contemporary Literature and Film*, Edinburgh University Press, 2013, p. 3.

*Heart* tell us less about historical fascism than about the cultures that have imagined them in these films. In order to frame my chapter, I will first discuss the first depiction of the historical event the Wannsee conference in the West German television production from 1984, *Die Wannseekonferenz*, in relation to reception studies and cultural memory. However, this German TV production has not defined the fictional representation of Heydrich as much as the Anglo-American dramatization, *Conspiracy*, casting Kenneth Branagh as Heydrich. Furthermore, it also features international stars such as Stanley Tucci as Eichmann and Colin Firth as Wilhelm Stuckart. This fictional narrative was produced by HBO in English in 2001, which adds further meaning to it through the connotations associated with HBO during this time period, as HBO was known for the production of controversial media texts such as *Oz* (Tom Fontana, 1997, USA) and *The Sopranos* (David Chase, 1999, USA). I will compare these two case studies in relation of their representation of Heydrich. Furthermore, I will analyse how the casting of Kenneth Branagh in *Conspiracy* has influenced the meaning of this fictional representation of the Wannsee Conference through reviews in the United Kingdom and America. Branagh shaped the meaning of Heydrich's representation through statements in a review in the liberal-leaning *Los Angeles Times* with the title 'When the Job is Odious' in 2001:

I found it disturbing to portray the man. There's a spiritual revulsion against playing him. You do not want to be saying the things he was saying, or be part of his psyche. I found it got under the skin in an invasive way.<sup>520</sup>

This statement shows that Branagh was not comfortable to portray this historical figure and tries to distance his persona with his character in *Conspiracy*. Furthermore, it shows that the well-known actor Branagh is aware that his persona could be associated with this role. This fictional depiction of the Wannsee Conference in *Conspiracy* could be the defining representation of this historical event for an international audience, as he plays Heydrich with an English accent in a high-value production. David Gritten argues in this review that Branagh plays Heydrich with verve. His hair dyed blond and swept back sleekly, as he runs the Wannsee Conference like the chairman of a corporation.<sup>521</sup> The fictional representation of Heydrich in *Conspiracy* could define how viewers, who did not experience this time period, remember this historical character, which would mean that Branagh's representation of Heydrich would replace the historical figure in the cultural memory.

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<sup>520</sup> Branagh, K., in 'When the Job is Odious' by Gritten, D., *Los Angeles Times*, 13.5.2001, [Accessed: <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2001-may-13-ca-62810-story.html>, 11.11.2019]

<sup>521</sup> Gritten, D., 'When the Job is Odious', *Los Angeles Times*, 13.5.2001, [Accessed: <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2001-may-13-ca-62810-story.html>, 11.11.19].



Figure 7 Kenneth Branagh as Heydrich in *Conspiracy*.

Furthermore, the recent representation of Heydrich in *The Man with The Iron Heart* from 2017, based on the bestseller *HHhH*, shows that there is still interest in this historical character focusing on Heydrich's rise through the ranks of the Nazi party in the first part of this film. A review in the *Hollywood Reporter* states that there are not many English-language films, where for almost 50 minutes, the only people on screen are Nazis, leaving the audience with no hero to identify with and showing Heydrich, represented by the Australian actor Jason Clarke with a German accent, in domestic scenes with his family.<sup>522</sup> The title of the film refers to Heydrich's nickname. At a party scene in this film at his house, Heydrich's wife is told by one of her husband's colleagues that Hitler has nicknamed Heydrich 'the man with the iron heart', while in the background Heydrich lifts up a baby. This action by Heydrich contradicts the information about Heydrich's nickname, which is given to his wife in this moment by one her husband colleagues. Heydrich shows his affections towards a baby, even though his nickname is 'the man with the iron heart'. This could be seen as an example for the use of irony in this fictional narrative. I have chosen this case study for my research because in contrast to *Die Wannseekonferenz* and *Conspiracy* this film focuses not only on one historic event but offers the viewers an overview of Heydrich's life from the beginning in the Nazi party until his assassination in Prague. Furthermore, the *Man with the Iron Heart* focuses on Heydrich's wife Lina's influence on her husband and his career, as a fallen figure from the German aristocracy in

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<sup>522</sup> van Hoeji, B., 'The Man with the Iron Heart (HHhH): Film Review', *The Hollywood Reporter*, 16.5.2017, [Accessed: <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/review/man-iron-heart-1003943>, 12.11.19].



search for revenge and the reason for Heydrich's ascension. The director Jimenez argues:

Heydrich was not a big anti-Semite. He only believed that Germany should be a great country again. Lina opened the road for him to become the monster. She believed in the Nazi Party and she studied politics.<sup>523</sup>

Rosamund Pike states about her role as Lina von Osten in *The Man with the Iron Heart*:

People have heard about the project and asked me, 'Did she know about what was going on? Was she just the woman at home and not really understanding what was happening as her husband made his rise through the Nazi Party?' But the interesting thing for me about her is that she's the architect. Reinhard Heydrich would have never become who he became without Lina Von Osten and her own grandiosity and her own appetite for power.<sup>524</sup>

This case study symbolises through the more prominent role of Heydrich's wife Lina, represented by the actress Rosamund Pike, a change in the contemporary representation of Heydrich, as women are absent from my other two case studies in *Die Wannseekonferenz* and *Conspiracy*, or do not play a significant part in the fictional narratives. This change in the representation of the Third Reich and the role of female figures during this time period shows that my case studies representing Heydrich in film and television are influenced by the views of the areas and societies they were produced in. *Die Wannseekonferenz* can be seen as an example of how Germany tried to understand this time period and portray the leading perpetrators on national television after the war coming to terms with the past. *Conspiracy* can be seen as an example of how the Nazis responsible for the Final Solution are represented by leading international stars such as Branagh as Heydrich and how this fictional narrative of the Wannsee Conference fitted to the brand of HBO at the time of its production. *The Man with the Iron Heart* can be seen as an example of how the assassination and the life of Heydrich is still relevant of our modern time through its box office success and how the modern interpretation of the Third Reich can change as our values change through the representation of Heydrich's wife and her influence on his life.

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<sup>523</sup> Jimenez, C., in 'The Man With The Iron Heart- a story about one of the most dangerous figures in the Nazi regime' by Dercksen, D., *The Writing Studio*, 18.11.2017, [Accessed: <https://writingstudio.co.za/the-man-with-the-iron-heart-a-story-about-one-of-the-most-dangerous-figures-in-the-nazi-regime/>, 20.11.19].

<sup>524</sup> Pike, R in in 'The Man With The Iron Heart- a story about one of the most dangerous figures in the Nazi regime' by Dercksen, D., *The Writing Studio*, 18.11.2017 [Accessed: <https://writingstudio.co.za/the-man-with-the-iron-heart-a-story-about-one-of-the-most-dangerous-figures-in-the-nazi-regime/>, 20.11.19].

Film scholar Sabine Hake argues in her book *Screen Nazis* that the historical film might function like a mirror or a window of the past.<sup>525</sup> *Die Wannseekonferenz* and *Conspiracy* could be seen as a mirror and a window of the historical event of the Wannsee conference, as the viewer's understanding of this event and the Third Reich might be enhanced through these fictional narratives. Hake states that a historical film could also function like a telescope.<sup>526</sup> In relation to my other case study *The Man with the Iron Heart*, this fictional narrative could function like a telescope focusing on Heydrich's personal life in a fictional narrative and enhancing the viewer's understanding of this leading National Socialist. Hake believes that one of the problems brought into the space of historical and political representation is that of textuality, contextuality and intertextuality and their respective affective economies, which is related to the production of perceptions, emotions and sensations within the signification systems and discourse networks associated within the cinema.<sup>527</sup> I will analyse in a later part of this chapter how the signification systems such as stars and discourse networks such as reviews shape the perception and reception of Heydrich's representation in my case studies. Hake believes that the Nazis on screen allow us to control and preserve the threat of their otherness, in which lays the enduring appeal of those we "love to hate." As two of my contemporary case studies *Conspiracy* and *The Man with the Iron Heart* are international productions with British and American stars representing Heydrich, I would argue that these representations of Heydrich preserve and control the threat of the Nazis and show the appeal this leading National Socialist has on the viewers.

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<sup>525</sup> Hake S., 2012, p. 7.

<sup>526</sup> Hake S, 2012, p. 7.

<sup>527</sup> Hake S, 2012, p. 7.

#### 4.2 Dyer's concept of whiteness in relation to *Conspiracy* and *The Man with the Iron Heart*



Figure 8 Jason Clarke as Heydrich in *The Man with the Iron Heart*.

As Heydrich is represented in *Conspiracy* and *The Man with the Iron Heart* by white international stars in these case studies, I will discuss the concept of whiteness by Richard Dyer and the whiteness in these films is seen as superior to other races. Heydrich is a white male, who is a leading National Socialist in the Third Reich, believing in the Aryans and in the superiority of the white race. Dyer argues that white genealogy has focused on the Aryan or Caucasians.<sup>528</sup> In *Conspiracy*, Heydrich does have the appearance of the Aryan race with his blonde hair through the representation by the British actor Kenneth Branagh. In an article in the liberal-leaning newspaper *The Independent* about Branagh's role in British TV production *Shackleton* (Charles Sturridge, 2002, UK), his representation of Heydrich is mentioned because he won an Emmy for this role. Branagh's depiction of Heydrich is described in this article as 'his hair is Aryan blond with a razor-sharp side parting'.<sup>529</sup> Gary Arnold states in a review of *Conspiracy* in the liberal newspaper *The Washington Post* from 2009 that 'Branagh proved to be a disarming embodiment of Nazi authority and malevolence'.<sup>530</sup> Heydrich is the key factor at this meeting to complete the annihilation of the Jewish population in the Third Reich with his persuasion and arguments convincing other participants at the Wannsee Conference.

<sup>528</sup> Dyer, R., *White*, Twentieth Anniversary Edition, 2017, p. 20.

<sup>529</sup> Ross, D., 'Kenneth Branagh: Luvvie in a cold climate', *The Independent*, 31.21.2001, [Accessed: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/media/kenneth-branagh-luvvie-in-a-cold-climate-9198634.html>], 26.5.20].

<sup>530</sup> Arnold, G., 'From The Vaults: Branagh shines in 'Conspiracy'', *The Washington Post*, 11.1.2009 [Accessed: <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/jan/11/branagh-shines-in-conspiracy/>], 26.5.20]

Laura Fries states in a review in the magazine *Variety* that Branagh 'oozes malevolence as the manipulative and dismissive SS general Reinhard Heydrich'.<sup>531</sup> The Australian actor Jason Clarke also represents Heydrich in *The Man with the Iron Heart* with blond hair and this film shows Heydrich's ascent to power in the Third Reich. At the start of the film, Heydrich is at the Navy Academy and the story follows his upward progress through the Nazi part, the SS, the Wehrmacht and finally his assassination during the period of the peak of German domination and World War II. Clarke states in an interview that he believes that Heydrich was a very dangerous man who committed one of the most devastating acts in the history of mankind. According to Clarke, Heydrich was the epitome of what Hitler was trying to achieve and a symbol of Nazism. Heydrich had children, he played piano and he liked to have a cup of tea with a piece of cake like every ordinary man. Clarke believes that none of us should think that real monsters are completely different to us or that any of us could not be such a monster.<sup>532</sup>

Furthermore, the influential role of Heydrich's wife Lina in *The Man with the Iron Heart* in Heydrich's ascent to power shows an evolution regarding the representation of white women in films about the Third Reich. Dyer argues that the model for white women is the Virgin Mary, a pure vessel for reproduction who is unsullied by the dark drives that reproduction entails.<sup>533</sup> According to Dyer, white women are the indispensable means by which the group and the race is in every sense reproduced, as the literal bearers of children and being responsible for their initial raising.<sup>534</sup>

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<sup>531</sup>Fries, L. 'Conspiracy', *Variety*, 15.5.01 [Accessed: <https://variety.com/2001/tv/reviews/conspiracy-1200468305/>, 20.3.20].

<sup>532</sup> Pirodsky, J., 'Interview: Aussie Actor Jason Clarke on his Darkest Role yet', *Expats.cz*, 12.6.2017, [Accessed: <http://news.expats.cz/movies-tv/interview-actor-jason-clarke-on-his-darkest-role-yet/>, 20.3.20].

<sup>533</sup> Dyer, R., 2017, p. 29.

<sup>534</sup> Dyer, R., 2017, p. 29.



Figure 9 Rosamund Pike as Lina von Osten in *The Man with the Iron Heart*.

Whereas women are completely absent from the fictional representation of the Wannsee Conference in *Conspiracy*, Lina is represented in *The Man with the Iron Heart* as the driving figure behind Heydrich's career. Lina pushed her husband into the Nazi party until he finally became this unimaginable figure of power.<sup>535</sup> Clarke states that Lina knew from the first moment she saw him that he would take care of her family, give her what she wanted and return Germany to its original state, as Reinhard was the type of man who had succeeded in everything he had done.<sup>536</sup> Dyer states that the white woman's role in reproduction makes them at once privileged and subordinated in relation to the operation of white power in the world. He believes that white women carry the hopes achievements and character of the white race.<sup>537</sup> Even though Lina does reproduce the white race and is a mother to Heydrich's children, she does not seem subordinated to her husband in this fictional narrative, as she is the one who suggests that he joins the Nazi Party, which subsequently leads to Heydrich's appointment as the leader of the Nazi intelligence agency by Himmler. She is represented as a Nazi sympathiser who believes that the party can bring Germany back to its former glory. She also recreates her husband's career after he was dismissed from the navy into a lucrative Nazi career.<sup>538</sup> However, later on in the

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<sup>535</sup> Pirodsky, J., 'Interview: Aussie Actor Jason Clarke on his Darkest Role yet', *Expats.cz*, 12.6.2017, [Accessed: <http://news.expats.cz/movies-tv/interview-actor-jason-clarke-on-his-darkest-role-yet/>, 20.3.20].

<sup>536</sup> Pirodsky, J., *Expats.cz*, 12.6.2017.

<sup>537</sup> Dyer, R., 2017, p. 29.

<sup>538</sup> van Hoeij, B., 'The Man with the Iron Heart' (HHhH): Film Review', *The Hollywood Reporter*, 16.5.2017, [Accessed: <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/review/man-iron-heart-1003943>, 12.11.19]

film Lina finds herself married to a man, who is always absent and treats her like a glorified caretaker of his children.<sup>539</sup>

Pike states in an article discussing her recent roles that none of these are leading roles. She is either playing the wife or a supporting character to a male lead. Pike agrees in this article that the role of Amy Dunne in *Gone Girl* (David Fincher, 2014, USA) as a compelling female lead was a rarity. However, she is comfortable being number two and she likes that place. She states that she is not that easy with being the number one in a film, as the lead is carrying the movie. She feels that there is more freedom and somewhere to go with being the number two.<sup>540</sup> Pike does not give a clear answer in this interview why she prefers not being the lead in a film. She explains that she does not feel ready for this step, even though she should be.<sup>541</sup> The writer of the article, Emine Saner, reminds Pike that she carried *Gone Girl* on her own or at least did it equally with Ben Affleck. Pike disagrees and says that Ben Affleck was still the number one on the call sheet, as the guy is usually number one in a film.<sup>542</sup> I would argue that Pike is not critical of her roles in these films as a number two because she is selling these films such as *Gone Girl* and trying to get further roles. If she is openly critical of a film and the producers, she is supposed to be selling in interviews, she might not get further roles. In *The Man with the Iron Heart*, Pike is also not the lead of the film, as Heydrich is portrayed by Jason Clarke, even though Pike might be more known through her role in *Gone Girl*. Therefore, it could be argued that Lina is still subordinate to her white husband in *The Man with the Iron Heart* as a bearer of children and raising them, even though she was a major factor for him becoming a leading National Socialist in the Third Reich. This shows that *The Man with Iron Heart* not only depicts the Heydrich's life and the Third Reich, but it is also an example that the lead actor in high-value film productions are still male, even though Heydrich's wife plays a more prominent role than in *Conspiracy*, which solely focuses on the Wannsee Conference.

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<sup>539</sup> van Hoeij, B., 16.5.2017.

<sup>540</sup> Saner, E., 'Interview-Rosamund Pike: I'm happy being No2. The guy's usually No1', *The Guardian*, 23.11.2016 [Accessed: <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2016/nov/23/rosamund-pike-interview-a-united-kingdom>, 21.3.20]

<sup>541</sup> Saner, E., 23.11.2016.

<sup>542</sup> Saner, E., 23.11.2016.



Figure 10 Jason Clarke as Heydrich and Rosamund Pike as Lina von Osten in *The Man with the Iron Heart*.

Dyer states that racial imagery is central to the organisation of the modern world. He believes that myriad minute decisions, which constitute the practices of the world, are informed by judgement about people's capacities based on what they look like, where they come from, how they speak and even what they eat.<sup>543</sup> Dyer argues:

White people have power and believe that they think, feel and act like and for all people; white people unable to see their particularity, cannot take account of other people's; white people create the dominant images of the world and don't quite see that they thus construct the world in their own image; white people set standards for humanity by which they are bound to succeed and others bound to fail.<sup>544</sup>

Dyer states that whiteness as a coalition also incites the notion that some whites are whiter than others with the Anglo-Saxons, Germans and Scandinavians usually proving the apex of whiteness under British imperialism, US development and Nazism. He believes that even though we have a moral vocabulary such that white is associated with good and black is associated with bad, we do not necessarily equate white people with goodness and black with evil. According to Dyer, a white person who is bad is failing to be 'white', whereas a black person who is good is a surprise and one who is bad merely fulfils expectations.<sup>545</sup> Heydrich is a white person, who is bad because of his

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<sup>543</sup> Dyer, R., 2017, p. 1.

<sup>544</sup> Dyer, R., 2017, p. 9.

<sup>545</sup> Dyer, R., 2017, p. 63.

determination to plan the mass murder of the Jews. However, in the fictional representation of the Wannsee conference *Conspiracy*, Heydrich does not commit any physical violence and does not kill any Jews. He is well spoken and well dressed in a clean uniform. He asserts his power over the meeting in a clean, white and impressive villa at the Wannsee through his persuasion and his arguments against other leading Nation Socialists at the meeting:

“We will not sterilize every Jew and wait for the race to die. We will not sterilize every Jew and then exterminate them that’s farcical. Dead men don’t hump, dead women don’t get pregnant; death is the most reliable form of sterilization, put it that way”

Dyer believes that Goethe’s *Farbenlehre* provides a link between the perception of white as non-particular and as beautiful, since for him white people are beautiful because their colouring is the least particular.<sup>546</sup> According to Goethe, the white man, whose surface appears most neutral in hue and at least inclines to any particular, is the most beautiful.<sup>547</sup> Dyer believes that this statement implies that white people’s whiteness enables them to inhabit without visual contradiction the highest point in the Enlightenment’s understanding of human development, as the beauty of their skin, because it is nothing in particular and positive, is the beauty of this intellectual ideal.<sup>548</sup> In Western tradition white is beautiful because it is the colour of virtue. All lists of the moral connotations of white as symbol in Western cultures are the same: purity, spirituality, transcendence, cleanliness, virtue, simplicity and chastity.<sup>549</sup> What is absent from white is any material reality. Cleanliness is the absence of dirt, spirituality is the absence of flesh and virtue is the absence of sin.<sup>550</sup>

The visual representation of the Wannsee Conference in *Die Wannseekonferenz* and *Conspiracy* shows no sign of dirt and everything in the villa is very clean. All white male characters representing leading National Socialists in *Conspiracy* wear clean uniforms and indulge in sophisticated food and drinks during the meeting. The setting of the Wannsee Conference is also noted in a review in the liberal-leaning *The Independent* with the title ‘An Appetite for Destruction BBC2 Re-enacts the Chilling Dinner that Sealed the Fate of Thousands of Jews’ by James Rampton. He states that in *Conspiracy*, excellent canapés are being prepared and fine wines decanted before the arrival of 15 esteemed

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<sup>546</sup> Goethe, W. in *White* by Dyer. R., Twentieth Anniversary Edition, Routledge, 2017, p. 70.

<sup>547</sup> Goethe, W. in *White* by Dyer. R., Twentieth Anniversary Edition, Routledge, 2017, p. 70.

<sup>548</sup> Dyer, R., 2017, p. 70-71

<sup>549</sup> Dyer, R., 2017, p. 72.

<sup>550</sup> Dyer, R., 2017, p. 75.



guests at an elegant mansion.<sup>551</sup> Alison Graham mentions a review in the weekly listing magazine *Radio Times* from the UK that the Wannsee Conference could be mistaken for a dinner party, as there is much emphasis on the perfection of food and the fineness of the wines. She believes that *Conspiracy* defies the imagination, because she cannot understand how fifteen apparently intelligent and rational men could countenance such a grotesque project and allude to the murder of millions.<sup>552</sup> The elegant setting, the clean uniforms and the sophisticated atmosphere linked to a dinner party could create the impression that these leading National Socialists are intelligent and rational, because death is never mentioned and the word evacuation is used instead.<sup>553</sup> This demonstrates Dyer's concept of whiteness in the reviews of *Conspiracy*, as the white National Socialists are portrayed as the highest point in the Enlightenment's understanding of human development, as the beauty of their skin, because it is nothing in particular and positive, is the beauty of this intellectual ideal, even though these men discuss the mass murder of the Jews.<sup>554</sup> This connects back to the use of counterpoint and irony to throw into the relief the horrors that the dinner party, the setting and uneasy politeness is masking.

In *Conspiracy* Heydrich uses a mixture of charm and intimidation to quell dissenting voices of men, who are not opposed to genocide, but rather the implementation. At the end of *Conspiracy*, Heydrich, Eichmann, and the Gestapo chief Heinrich Mueller retire to the study for drinks and to discuss the meeting. The men seem happy and are relieved about the outcome of the meeting. When all men have departed Eichmann puts on a record, which is Franz Schubert's String Quintet. Rampton also mentions in review that the immaculately suave Heydrich suggests the guests unwind by listening to Schubert's Quintet in C major, as "the adagio will tear your heart out". Eichmann refers to the music as "Schubert's sentimental Viennese shit" after Heydrich has left the villa. This comment on the classical music shows his preference in classical music but also associates the white male with the high culture of classical music.<sup>555</sup>

Heydrich organised the meeting at Wannsee, which is near Berlin, when the administrative apparatus of the Third Reich set in motion the detailed plans for the Final

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<sup>551</sup> Rampton, J., 'Staying In: An appetite for Destruction. BBC2 Re-enacts the Chilling Dinner that Sealed the Fate of Thousands of Jews', *The Independent*, 19.1.2002, [Accessed: <https://www.branaghcompendium.com/conspiracy.html>, 20.2.20].

<sup>552</sup> Graham, A., 'Today's Choices: Conspiracy', *Radio Times*, 25.1.2002, [Accessed: <https://www.branaghcompendium.com/conspiracy.html>, 20.2.20].

<sup>553</sup> Graham, A., 25.1.2002.

<sup>554</sup> Dyer, R., 2017, p. 70-71.

<sup>555</sup> Rampton, J., 19.1.2002.

Solution.<sup>556</sup> One of my main case studies to analyse the fictional representation of Heydrich is *Conspiracy*. This film is based on the sole surviving copy of the Wannsee Protocol, which is one of the few written proofs of the extent of Hitler's plans to annihilate all of European Jewry.<sup>557</sup> Carl Jacob Burckhardt, a Swiss diplomat and historian, said after their first meeting that Heydrich was 'a young, evil god of death'.<sup>558</sup> In an article in the liberal German magazine *Der Spiegel*, historian Robert Gerwarth, who is a professor of European History, argues that Heydrich was not born a "young evil god of death", but was rather not an anti-Semite from the start of his life. He believes that Heydrich became part of Hitler's Nazi party through the influence of his fiancée.<sup>559</sup> I have chosen this recent representation of Heydrich in *The Man with the Iron Heart* to analyse if the representation of this leading National Socialist has changed over the years in Western cultures, but also because this case study changes his fictional representation, through humanising him as a family man and focusing more on his wife Lina von Osten as an influence on Heydrich's ascent to power in the Third Reich.

### 4.3 **Petra Rau's *Our Nazi-Representations of Fascism in Contemporary Film and Television in relation to Die Wannseekonferenz, Conspiracy and The Man with the Iron Heart***

Petra Rau argues in *Our Nazi-Representations of Fascism in Contemporary Film and Television* that the cultural production of fascism is fundamentally different from the historiography of fascism, as cultural products such as film enable viewers to inhabit that era of the Third Reich in contrast to historiographical narratives. She believes that the only way to access fascism is by engaging in another country's history, because American and mainland British culture have no experience of fascism or any other form of totalitarianism or dictatorship, which could be retrieved through family history testimony or recollection.<sup>560</sup> According to Rau, 'fascism' is as exotic and exoticised as the Orient or Africa: barbarous, strange and alien; and equally eroticised and glamorised in its otherness. Fascism refers to a foreign evil, an ideological otherness onto which those desires incompatible with democratic values can easily be projected. However, the Nazis also become integral to the self on those moments when culture casts them as other. The insistence on the alterity of fascism and on its exotic nature could allow the audience to dramatise and

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<sup>556</sup> BBC Press Office, 'Kenneth Branagh, Stanley Tucci and Colin Firth star in Conspiracy, an award-winning HBO Films/BBC Films co-production for BBC TWO', *BBC*, 2002, [Accessed:

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2002/01\\_january/15/conspiracy.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2002/01_january/15/conspiracy.shtml), 12.6.20]

<sup>557</sup> BBC Press Office, 2002.

<sup>558</sup> Burckhardt, C. J., in *Heydrich the Face of Evil* by Dederichs, M. R., Casemate, 2009, p. 73.

<sup>559</sup> Boenisch, G., 'The first In-depth Look at a Nazi 'God of Death'', *Der Spiegel*, 2011, [Accessed: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/spiegel/reinhard-heydrich-biography-the-first-in-depth-look-at-a-nazi-god-of-death-a-787747.html>, 1.8.2016]

<sup>560</sup> Rau, P., 2013, p. 8.

inhabit the fascist longing they habitually disown. Fascism fills an experiential gap in Anglo-American history and culture.<sup>561</sup> The renowned historian Richard J. Evans argues regarding historical fascism and foreign dictatorships:

It appeals to teenagers for the same reason that it appeals to adults: the collapse of Germany democracy in the early 1930s, the misery of the Depression, the rise of Hitler, the racism, sexism and criminality of the Nazi regime, the Holocaust, the drive to war—all of this raises critical questions of politics and human behaviour in a dramatic form that has no parallel in British history. Stalin, Mao and other dictators pose similar challenges to the adolescent mind. The nearest thing British history has to offer in comparison is Henry VIII ('England's Stalin', as the Tudor historian W.G. Hoskins once called him), but otherwise to teenagers it all seems relatively dull.<sup>562</sup>

Rau argues that technologies of memory make it harder to own history or to claim heritage. Therefore, it is easier to empathise with, appropriate and inhabit other's history. She uses the American film *Valkyrie* (Bryan Singer, 2008, USA) as an example for the most recent trend toward a pluralistic representation of the Second World War, which hopes to eschew the tired clichés of cardboard villains in SS uniforms. This film symbolises the phenomenon that high production values create visual spectacles that reduce even the darkest history to heritage. However, *Valkyrie* starring Tom Cruise as Claus von Stauffenberg among a star-studded cast of American, German and British actors was a commercial and critical failure grossing merely \$200 million worldwide.<sup>563</sup> Rau uses Kenneth Branagh comment on portraying a Nazi in *Valkyrie*, which was released a couple of years after *Conspiracy*, as an example on the complex relationship Anglo-American culture has to the pursuit of power. This shows that Branagh argued that it was really the uniform that transformed the actor rather than the actor who fleshed out the costume.<sup>564</sup> Branagh argues:

Many of the German military had a very strong sense of how important their look was; how important the uniform was. Aside from pride in the uniform there was sense of how good they looked and what an impact it made. You start to feel that

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<sup>561</sup> Rau P., 2013, p. 8.

<sup>562</sup> Evans, R. J. in *Our Nazis: Representation of Fascism in Contemporary Literature and Film*, by Rau, P., Edinburgh University Press, 2013, p. 8-9.

<sup>563</sup> Rau P., 2013, p. 126.

<sup>564</sup> Rau, P., 2013, p. 10.

once you put those boots on, and once you see the detailed attention they took with how they represented themselves<sup>565</sup>

Rau believes that the actors needed to explain to the audience the wearing of a Nazi uniform on a film set in Nazi Germany in order to reassure that they were not real Nazis irrespective of how convincingly they managed to inhabit their characters.<sup>566</sup> I believe that this aspect of needing to assert the gap between character and actor becomes more pressing when there is a star performer in the role such as Branagh. Rau's statement echoes my notion that the representation of the Nazis such as Kenneth Branagh could replace the real historical figures in the cultural memory.

*Conspiracy* released in 2001 by HBO and *The Man with the Iron Heart* released in 2017 in the United Kingdom were produced a long time after the historical events of the Wannsee Conference and the assassination of Heydrich took place. It could be argued that most of the viewers of these fictional narratives might have not experienced these time periods themselves. As *Conspiracy* depicts a meeting of high-ranking members of the Third Reich discussing the mass murder of the Jews and *the Man with Iron Heart* focuses on Heydrich's personal life as well as his assassination in Prague, I would argue that these fictional narratives could define how these historical events and characters are remembered and how the viewers experience the Third Reich. Alison Landsberg argues that films, which facilitate our engagement with the past, create 'prosthetic memories':

This new form of memory emerges at the interface between a person and a historical narrative about the past, at an experiential site such as a movie theatre or a museum. In this moment of contact, an experience occurs through which the person sutures himself or herself onto a larger history. The person does not simply apprehend a historical narrative but takes on a more personal, deeply felt memory of the past event through which he or she did not live. The resulting prosthetic memory has the ability to shape that person's subjectivity or politics.<sup>567</sup>

This mass technology can structure "imagined communities" that are not necessarily geographically or nationally bounded.<sup>568</sup> However, the spectator does not simply

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<sup>565</sup> Branagh, K., in *Our Nazis: Representation of Fascism in Contemporary Literature and Film* by Rau, P., Edinburgh University Press, 2013, p. 141.

<sup>566</sup> Rau, P., 2013, p. 141.

<sup>567</sup> Landsberg, A., 2004, p. 8

<sup>568</sup> Landsberg, A., 2004, p. 8

apprehend a historical narrative but takes on a more personal, deeply felt memory of a past event like the Third Reich.<sup>569</sup>

Film scholar Russell Kilbourn argues that prosthetic memory represents a theory of artificial memory, in which representations in effect precede reality. This notion can be seen throughout my thesis as the fictional representations of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich precede the real historical figures. According to Kilbourn, prosthetic memory is less concerned with questions of historical 'accuracy' or the recuperation of an authentic past and more with the ethically empowering potential for the individual of an expanded mnemonic dimension.<sup>570</sup> Kilbourn argues that the theory of prosthetic memory implies that the individual has been empowered by technology to simultaneously witness and experience historically significant events. He believes that this part of the prosthetic memory is not possible to achieve, as the process to feel or experience in relation to cinema would entail a mode of technical mediation beyond the capacities of conventional cinema.<sup>571</sup> However, I would argue that through the concept of prosthetic memory viewers are able to experience the Third Reich and the question of historical accuracy is less important, because the viewers accept the representation of Heydrich in *Conspiracy* or *The Man with the Iron Heart* as the past is offered as a coherent and compelling narrative. Even though, I believe that the actors portraying Heydrich in these media texts will replace the historical figure in the cultural memory, it vital not to forget this time period and the Nazis.

#### **4.4 Johnson's analysis of Conspiracy in his thesis HBO and the Holocaust: Conspiracy, The Historical Film and Public History at Wannsee**

Before I analyse *Die Wannseekonferenz*, I will demonstrate how my research builds on previous research and how my research progresses further with the analysis of Heydrich in film and television. Nicholas K. Johnson analyses *Conspiracy* in his thesis *HBO and the Holocaust: Conspiracy, The Historical Film and Public History at Wannsee*. He focuses on three main areas of this fictional narrative, the depiction of the historical event of the Wannsee Conference, *Conspiracy's* production, and a comparison between *Die Wannseekonferenz* and *Conspiracy* regarding the reception of both films. As Johnson utilizes in his thesis email interviews with the screenwriter of *Die Wannseekonferenz* Paul Mommertz, I will discuss the reception of *Die Wannseekonferenz* in a later part of this

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<sup>569</sup> Landsberg, A., 2004, p. 2

<sup>570</sup> Kilbourn, R. J. A., *Cinema, Memory, Modernity- The Representation of Memory from the Art Film to Transnational Cinema*, Routledge, 2010, p. 27

<sup>571</sup> Kilbourn, R. J. A., 2010, p. 159.

chapter. Johnson argues that films are significant for public historians because they attract large audiences, spawn public debates, and often serve as the gateway to history for their audiences. He believes that historians can miss out on how films can enter historiographical conversations and ignore how it influences mass audiences.<sup>572</sup>

According to Johnson, dramatic films do not compete with or replace traditional history but complement it.<sup>573</sup> I agree with Johnson that films can server as a gateway to history for viewers, but in contrast to Johnson I disagree that dramatic films will complement traditional history. I would argue that *Conspiracy* will replace the traditional history and that Heydrich will only be remembered through the representation of the British star Kenneth Branagh in the cultural memory of younger generations, which did not experience the Third Reich or the Second World War.

Johnson analyses in the first chapter of his thesis the concepts of historical cinema in relation to the scholars Rosenstone and Toplin. I will focus on a concept of informed speculation by Toplin mentioned in Johnson's thesis, as film has to condense history out of necessity and take audiences behind closed doors to examine the silences between the history sources.<sup>574</sup> Toplin argues that invention helps with the problem of showing history on screen. He believes that a movie can offer informed speculation in fictional scenes with educated guesses how the ideas and behaviour found expression in unrecorded settings.<sup>575</sup> Johnson states in his thesis that informed speculation is a cornerstone of historical filmmaking like historians who write about events or people that have scarce primary sources such as the Wannsee Conference. Therefore, informed speculation can be a useful tool for historians and artists. I agree with Johnson that informed speculation about certain parts of the Wannsee Conference does not devalue the fictional representation of this historical event. Johnson argues that *Conspiracy* succeeds in examining the Holocaust from a detached point of view, which avoids the depiction of physical violence in any form.<sup>576</sup>

According to Johnson, *Conspiracy* is an unusual historical film, because it places the viewer in the middle of one of the most infamous meetings in the history of the Third Reich and shows this event in real time. The film *Conspiracy* lasts 90 minutes and the real historical event also lasted the same amount of time. The Nazis are terrifying because

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<sup>572</sup> Johnson, N.K., *HBO and the Holocaust: Conspiracy, The Historical Film and Public History at Wannsee*, Master of Arts Degree in the Department of History, Indiana University, December 2016, , p. 4., [Accessed: <https://scholarworks.iupui.edu/bitstream/handle/1805/11878/NJohnsonThesisFormatCheck3.pdf?sequence=6,10.1.20>].

<sup>573</sup> Johnson, N.K., December 2016, p. 4.

<sup>574</sup> Johnson, N.K., December 2016, p. 21-22.

<sup>575</sup> Johnson, N.K., December 2016, p. 22.

<sup>576</sup> Johnson, N.K., December 2016, p. p. 27

they do not embody stereotypes; in contrast they come across as 'normal' human beings. The actors speak English with their native or British accents instead of German accents.<sup>577</sup> Johnson believes that *Conspiracy* is a more than a dramatic film for entertainment purpose and it is a work of public history with its own historiographical argument.<sup>578</sup> *Conspiracy* is not a standard WWII or Holocaust film, as no-one is killed on screen and no action takes place. The filmmaker's challenge was how to make a ninety-minute meeting capture and hold an audience's attention.

The meaning associated with this representation was heightened through the decision by the BBC to show *Conspiracy* as part of the BBC's commemoration of Holocaust Day in 2002. The journalist James Rampton mentions this fact in his review of *Conspiracy* in the liberal-leaning British newspaper *The Independent*. He argues that the film 'underscores the old maxim that evil prospers when good men do nothing'.<sup>579</sup> I would argue that through the screening as part of the Holocaust Memorial Day this fictional representation of Heydrich receives more credibility and could be seen as the authentic representation of this historical event and Heydrich. An article with the title 'Branagh's Nazi draws 4m to BBC2' from liberal-leaning *The Guardian* states that *Conspiracy* had 4.4 million viewers between 9pm and 10:30pm on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> of January on BBC2.<sup>580</sup> The title of this article shows that it is more important that the British actor Branagh represents the leading Nazi than the fact who the leading Nazi from the film is. It is not Heydrich, who attracts over 4 million viewers to BBC2, but Branagh's representation of Heydrich and the attraction of this star performing as a Nazi on screen. It also mentioned in this article that Branagh won an Emmy for his performance as Heydrich, which gives more credibility to this fictional representation of Heydrich. The chilling historical drama attracted one in five of all viewers watching television while it was on air. This was a very good audience share at this time for BBC2, which normally attracts one in ten viewers.<sup>581</sup> The ratings success might mean that British viewers, who did not live through this time period, will only remember Heydrich through his fictional representation in *Conspiracy*, because of the screening at the Holocaust Memorial Day on British television. Furthermore, the importance of this fictional representation of Heydrich and the Wannsee Conference is shown through the repeated

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<sup>577</sup> Johnson, N.K, December 2016, p. 33.

<sup>578</sup> Johnson, N.K, December 2016, p. 33-34

<sup>579</sup> Rampton, J., 'Staying In: An appetite for Destruction. BBC2 Re-enacts the Chilling Dinner that Sealed the Fate of Thousands of Jews', *The Independent*, 19.1.2002, [Accessed: <https://www.branaghcompendium.com/conspiracy.html>, 20.2.20].

<sup>580</sup> Deans, J., 'Branagh's Nazi draws 4m to BBC2', *The Guardian*, 28.2.2002 [Accessed: <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2002/jan/28/overnights>, 31.5.2020].

<sup>581</sup> Deans, J., 28.2.2002.

screening on the Holocaust Memorial Day by the BBC in 2003.<sup>582</sup> The conscious decision by the BBC to screen *Conspiracy* on the Holocaust Memorial day in 2002 and 2003 adds importance to this fictional representation of Heydrich. This could lead to Branagh's representation of Heydrich defining how this historical figure is remembered in the cultural memory of Britain. According to Johnson, one of the filmmaker's historiographical argument was that Wannsee was the moment where Eichmann became a major player in the Third Reich and in the planning of the Final Solution.<sup>583</sup> In contrast to this, I believe the film can be seen as an example of how a well-known actor might define how the historical figure is remembered in the cultural memory of a British TV audience, instead of supporting historiographical arguments. I would disagree with Johnson's statement, because *Conspiracy* did not represent historiographical arguments, as this film was made because it suited the public image of HBO at the time, when this docu-drama was produced.

#### 4.5 **The influence of HBO on the representation of Heydrich in *Conspiracy***

Colin Callender, head of HBO NYC Productions, stated in 1996 the two historiographical arguments of *Conspiracy* are that the Wannsee Conference was a way to consolidate Heydrich's power carrying out the Final Solution and Wannsee was a turning point in the career of Adolf Eichmann.<sup>584</sup> Even though I agree that *Conspiracy* manages to show Heydrich's consolidation of power and to portray Eichmann as an influential figure at this conference, I would argue that it cannot be stated that one fictional narrative is able to put forward historiographical arguments, when it offers the historical event as a simplified narrative with well-known actors speaking in English or British accent to make the leading Nazis less alien to an international audience. Kenneth Branagh, who plays Heydrich in *Conspiracy*, mentions the importance of HBO in the article 'When the Job is Odious' from the liberal-leaning *Los Angeles Times*. Branagh was impressed by the attitude of HBO Films as this company is tackling substantial stories that might have once found a natural home at a major movie studio. He believes that it is hard to imagine *Conspiracy* being financed in a feature context with the cast and the kind of actors this film had, as it was not trying to be starry or about grab attention. According to Branagh, there is an audience for these kinds of serious stories and HBO has found a creative identity, which is drawing

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<sup>582</sup> BBC, 'The BBC commemorates Holocaust Memorial Day 2003', *Press Office BBC*, 19.12.02, [Accessed: [http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2002/12\\_december/19\\_holocaust\\_memorial\\_2003.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2002/12_december/19_holocaust_memorial_2003.shtml)], 31.5.20].

<sup>583</sup> Johnson, N.K, December 2016, p. 33-34.

<sup>584</sup> Johnson, N.K, December 2016, p. 51.



filmmakers and actors because of the freedom it offers and the originality of the material.<sup>585</sup>

In 1977, HBO turned its first profit for its parent company Time Inc. With this stable financial position, the cable network began shifting its business model from one of programme brokering to programme development and production. In 1978, HBO began “pre-buy financing” of Hollywood movies, which meant that HBO would have exclusive rights to the film’s run-on cable television. Through this business model, HBO became the single largest financier of Hollywood films. In 1980, HBO’s financial position was threatened by the market penetration of the video cassette recorder, which could render HBO, largely a movie supplier obsolete. Therefore, HBO rebuilt its business model intensifying in the production of feature length films, moving in the video business itself and increasing its role in original television production. In 1997, HBO premiered its first foray into hour-long drama with Tom Fontana’s *Oz*, a violent and graphic depiction of life inside a prison. In 1999 HBO’s *Sopranos* brought the cinematic genre of the gangster film to television hybridizing this with a melodrama about the private lives of a mafia family. HBO used the breakout success of the show to announce itself as delivering a product distinct from network television with their motto, “It’s not TV. It’s HBO.” At the 2000 Emmy Awards, 42 percentages of all nominations went to HBO shows.<sup>586</sup>

Dana Heller argues in *The Essential HBO Reader* that HBO’s eagerness to take risks prompted one critic to dub it “the auteur studio of the nineties”.<sup>587</sup> She argues that HBO’s ground-breaking material is often narrativized within the familiar, prevailing genres and subgenres of mainstream dramatic television entertainment such as the thriller, espionage, historical romance, and the biopic. She states that HBO’s heavy reliance on the biopic champions the cultural value of celebrity, notoriety, and individual heroism in the cinematic. HBO’s most noticeable dramatic features are those that negotiate the past and interrogate the cultural memory through the depiction of individuals that are positioned at the centre of national struggles, social movements, and scandals.<sup>588</sup> In relation to *Conspiracy*, HBO dramatizes a historical event such as the Wannsee Conference and takes a risk by focusing solely on Nazis as protagonist, not offering the viewer a positive figure in this dramatic feature. Furthermore, HBO negotiates the past of the Third Reich with this film and interrogates the cultural memory of this time period

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<sup>585</sup> Gritten, D., ‘When the Job is Odious’, *Los Angeles Times*, 13.5.2001, [Accessed: <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2001-may-13-ca-62810-story.html>, 11.11.2019].

<sup>586</sup> Newcomb, H., (ED), *Encyclopaedia of Television*, Second Edition, Routledge, 2013, p. 1114.

<sup>587</sup> Heller, D., ‘Producing an Aristocracy of Culture in American Television’, in *The Essential HBO Reader* by Edgerton, G. R. & Jones, J. P., (EDs), University Press of Kentucky, 2008, p.45.

<sup>588</sup> Heller, D., 2008, p.46.

through the depiction of the historical individual figure of Heydrich by the well-known British actor Kenneth Branagh at the centre of an important historical event, which was influential in the planning and execution of the mass murder of the European Jewish population. Dana Heller quotes Oscar Wilde's assumption that "it is personalities not principles that move the age", which can be applied to my case study because without Heydrich the Wannsee Conference would have not taken place and the Final Solution would have not been executed successfully.<sup>589</sup> According to Heller, the traditional biopics offer live models for admiration. They also communicate to viewers that the times we live in are better or are getting better thanks to triumphs or failures of individual agents.<sup>590</sup> Even though, the Wannsee Conference depicted in *Conspiracy* is successful in the planning of the mass murder of the European Jews, this film communicates to the viewers that the times they live are better because the Third Reich does not exist anymore, and Hitler was defeated. Furthermore, Christopher Anderson argues in *The Essential HBO Reader* that HBO has earned his reputation for quality through lavishing more money on its production of its drama series than any of the broadcast networks can afford.<sup>591</sup> This notion can also be seen in *Conspiracy* through the authentic setting of the villa at Wannsee, the realistic uniforms of the leading Nazis and the casting of international stars such as Kenneth Branagh, Stanley Tucci and Colin Firth. Therefore, I would argue that *Conspiracy* shows more the importance of HBO at this time to produce serious and difficult media products than to move forward historiographical arguments about the Wannsee Conference or Heydrich's role in the Third Reich.

Johnson focuses in his thesis mostly on the production of *Conspiracy* in terms of the writing process of this fictional narrative and does not focus on the implications and the ideology, which is supported through the structure of *Conspiracy* and *Die Wannseekonferenz*. Johnson emphasizes in the last part of his thesis the different historical arguments put forward by these two fictional narratives. In contrast to his research, I will analyse how my case studies define how Heydrich is remembered in the cultural memory in different eras and cultures in relation to reception studies focussing on reviews and the discussions in the public sphere, as these areas of reception studies create meaning for the media texts after the production. I will demonstrate how the meaning surrounding these media texts is created through discussions in the public sphere and reviews, as these film and television productions tell us less about historical fascism than about the cultures that have imagined them in these fictional narratives.

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<sup>589</sup> Heller, D, 2008, p.46.

<sup>590</sup> Heller, D, 2008, p.46.

<sup>591</sup> Anderson, C. 'Producing an Aristocracy of Culture in American Television', in *The Essential HBO Reader* by Edgerton, G. J. & Jones, J. P., (ED), University Press of Kentucky, 2008, p.35.

#### 4.6 The production of the West German television film *Die Wannseekonferenz*

The first fictional depiction of the Wannsee Conference was in the co-production *Die Wannseekonferenz* by the Austrian television network ORF and the West German television network Bayerischer Rundfunk in 1984. The film re-enacts the Wannsee Conference in real time. Johnson argues in his research that the film portrays the meeting was about Heydrich and the SS asserting their power of the implementation of the Final Solution. Except for an off-screen voice that introduces the villa and the purpose of the meeting, there is no narrator or text to help viewers navigate the sometimes intricate arguments in the debate. Instead, viewers are like flies on the wall, eavesdropping on men who discuss the annihilation of the European Jews as if discussing a company takeover.<sup>592</sup> Most of the conference attendees have already arrived by the film's beginning and members of the SS tell jokes while getting drunk on cognac. The writer Paul Mommertz and the director Heinz Schirk were faced with the difficult task of turning the actual Wannsee Conference into surreal and sinister high drama. The filmmakers decided to devote the first 20 minutes of the film to scene setting, exposition and establishment of mood, as the participants arrive at the villa, drink cognac, make vulgar jokes and chat amiably.<sup>593</sup> The leading National Socialists discuss the mass murder of the Jews almost immediately and the SS Major Lange mentions gas vans. Once Heydrich arrives, he orders Lange, Eichmann and Luther to another room and holds a pre-meeting to discuss the Final Solution. Lange has also brought his German shepherd dog along to the meeting and the animal interrupts the meeting constantly providing comic relief. Johnson argues that humour is ever-present in this film.<sup>594</sup> Heydrich often tells jokes and laughs throughout the film coming across as a humorous playboy in many scenes. The meeting itself takes place in the actual dining room of the historical location. All of the SS representatives sit on one side of the table and this seating arrangement in addition with the camerawork emphasises the domination of the SS over the proceedings. A large map of Europe is placed at the end of the table and Heydrich often rises from the table to use it as a visual aid. A female stenotypist interjects at various points of the narrative. She acts an audience surrogate, as Heydrich's answers to her questions explain complicated issues to the audience. She and Heydrich flirt throughout the film and this dynamic confirms Heydrich's historical reputation as a womanizer. German actor Dietrich Mattausch portrays Heydrich as a solid bank director, cracking the occasional joke, flirting mildly with a secretary and letting others speak, even though the conclusion is forgone in

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<sup>592</sup> Reimer, J.C and Reimer, C.J., *Historical Dictionary of Holocaust Cinema*, The Scarecrow Press, 2012, p. 176.

<sup>593</sup> Niemi, R., *Inspired by True Events-An Illustrated Guide to More Than 500 History-Based Films*, Second Edition, (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2013).

<sup>594</sup> Johnson, N.K, December 2016, p. 67.

his mind.<sup>595</sup> The final shot of the film shows a soldier playing with his dog. The image is frozen to underline the normality that could exist along mass murder.<sup>596</sup>

Johnson believes that *Die Wannseekonferenz* is in line with intentionalist historiography, which is a school of thought characterized by an emphasis on Hitler and top-down decision making illustrated through the presence of Hitler in this fictional narrative.<sup>597</sup> A bust of Hitler looms behind Kitzinger and Hitler's presence overshadows the entire film. Heydrich points out that Hitler's verbal orders are worth more than any written statements showing that the Final Solution is a plan directed by Hitler himself.<sup>598</sup> Heydrich refers to Hitler's speech of January 1930, in which he prophesized the destruction of the Jews:

'Today I want to be a prophet again: If international finance Jewry inside and outside Europe again succeeds in precipitating the nations into a world war, the result will not be the Bolshevization of the earth and with it the victory of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe.'<sup>599</sup>

The use of Hitler's quote shows the filmmakers argument for Holocaust as a plan designed by Hitler.

#### **4.7 Reception of *Die Wannseekonferenz*-Reviews in America**

Vincent Canby argues in a review in the liberal *New York Times* that the director Schirk and writer Mommertz are clearly intentionalists.<sup>600</sup> He states that the historians who belong to the intentionalists" see a direct connection between Hitler's ideology expressed in his speeches and the eventual implementation of the Final Solution. In contrast to this the historians, who belong to the functionalists believe that the systematic murder of the European Jews was initially the result of practical considerations rather than consistent ideology. Canby argues that despite the contradicting school of thoughts the Wannsee Conference was a key date to understand the Holocaust.<sup>601</sup>

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<sup>595</sup> Reimer, J.C and Reimer, C.J., 2012, p.176.

<sup>596</sup> Wolfram, M. A., "*Getting History Right*"- *East and West German Collective Memories of the Holocaust and War*, Bucknell, University Press, 2011, p. 98.

<sup>597</sup> Johnson, N.K, December 2016, p. 68.

<sup>598</sup> Johnson, N.K, December 2016, p. 68.

<sup>599</sup> Adolf Hitler, Speech of 20 January 1939, quoted in Friedländer, S., *Nazi Germany and the Jews: Volume 1: The Years of Persecution 1933-1939*, Harper Perennial, 1998, p. 310.

<sup>600</sup>Canby, V., 'Film: Holocaust Birth, 'Wannsee Conference', *The New York Times*, 18.11.1987 [Accessed: <https://www.nytimes.com/1987/11/18/movies/film-holocaust-s-birth-wannsee-conference.html>, 1.12.19].

<sup>601</sup> Canby, V., 18.11.1987.

According to Canby, the short feature depicting the Wannsee Conference is unlike any other Holocaust film he has ever seen, because it is mesmerizing for seeming to be so commonplace and at the same time finding a voice for dealing with matters that are unspeakable. He states, “it has the slightly unreal, breathless pacing of a Broadway comedy about a convention of soft-drink bottlers considering new distribution procedures”.<sup>602</sup> There are jokes and sardonic asides that produce laughter. The meeting is dominated by the charm and efficiency of Heydrich as the camera stays mostly in the conference room, after the principal characters are established. However, Heydrich flirts with a stenographer and offers her a job on the staff. Canby states in this review:

Mr. Schirk has directed Mr. Mommertz’s packed screenplay with immense self-assurance and authority. His camera is not a passive observer. It roams the room with a will of its own. It pans from one shot with ever-increasing assertiveness. Though the manners and camaraderie of the participants are quite ordinary, the camera is not. Its movement are those of a restless impotent ghost who sees all and can do nothing.<sup>603</sup>

The review in the liberal *Washington Post* in 1987 ends with the statement that *Die Wannseekonferenz* avoids any “You are There” portentousness for American viewers. It argues that this film being seemingly breezy finds a voice for dealing with matters that are not unspeakable, which is the film’s sorrowful accomplishment.<sup>604</sup>

Furthermore, this film is also discussed in the liberal-leaning *Los Angeles Times* in 1987 with the title ‘Movie Review: Chilling Conference of Nazi Exterminators’ by Kevin Thomas. He states that in the fictional narrative Eichmann admits in shame that he was sickened after witnessing the gassing of Polish Jews and the experiments using carbon monoxide. Heydrich laughs and states that Eichmann’s reaction shows that “Germans are humans”.<sup>605</sup> This line could be a reminder for the viewers that these leading National Socialists are human beings and not evil monsters. Eichmann shows weakness through his vomiting in this fictional narrative. He also shows some form of emotion for the Jews and repulsion against the gassing. Thomas also mentions that the entire conference is marked by heavy-handed, virtually anti-Semitic humour, deftly underlined by the film’s brisk pacing and subtly ironic tone, running only a minute longer for the credits than the actual gathering did. Thomas also notes that the film recreates the meeting with a you-

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<sup>602</sup> Canby, V., 18.11.1987.

<sup>603</sup> Canby, V., 18.11.1987.

<sup>604</sup> Canby, V., 18.11.1987.

<sup>605</sup> Thomas, K., ‘Movie Reviews: Chilling ‘Conference of Nazi Exterminators’, *The Los Angeles Times*, 25.2.1987 [Accessed: <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1987-02-25-ca-5645-story.html>, 1.12.19].

are-there immediacy that is mesmerizing as it is meticulous.<sup>606</sup> He believes that even though the fictional narrative is mostly driven by the dialogue, the meeting is the most chilling discussion imaginable, because it takes place in casual and *gemuetlich* atmosphere, as everyone in attendance had long before stopped thinking of Jews as human beings. Therefore, the Final Solution of the Jewish Question is entirely a question of logistic and public relations. Thomas states that Mattausch's smug, arrogant, handsome yet cruel looking Heydrich dominates the meeting easily, while flirting with his secretary as the embodiment of the blond Aryan ideal.<sup>607</sup>



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Figure 11 Dietrich Mattausch as Heydrich in *Die Wannseekonferenz*.

This review mentions that none of the other leading National Socialists are identified, which might be distracting for an American audience. Thomas believes that this does not matter a great deal in the face of so much pure seamless evil. According to him the film *Die Wannseekonferenz* is a portrait of individuals caught up in a collective self-deception, as a microcosm of their nation. The leading Nazis in this fictional narrative firmly believe that the Jews owed the German population a 'debt' that could only be paid with their lives laying the blame for every ill in German society on others. Thomas states in the review:

*The Wannsee Conference* is a fine example of the art that conceals itself and represents six years of research on the part of co-producer Manfred Korytowski. Mommertz's script allows for natural seeming-shifts and pauses, which permits director Heinz Schirk and cinematographer Horst Schier to create and sustain a

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<sup>606</sup> Thomas, K., 25.2.1987

<sup>607</sup> Thomas, K., 25.2.1987

<sup>608</sup> Dietrich Mattausch as Heydrich in *Die Wannseekonferenz*. Image from: <https://sandrafirstruleoffilmclubharris.wordpress.com/2019/04/10/the-wannsee-conference-1984-a-chilling-nazi-vision-reviewed-by-sandra-harris/>

sense of rhythm, variety and movement through all that talk. The ensemble performances are impeccable. *The Wannsee Conference* is almost perversely, a very handsome film with luxurious tasteful interiors providing an appropriately subdued background for grandiose Nazi uniforms.<sup>609</sup>

This shows the contradiction of the set design of the luxurious tasteful interiors with the subject matter of the German film as the characters in this film were discussing the mass murder of the European Jews in grandiose Nazi uniforms. The review ends with the reminder that even though the historical event of the Wannsee Conference seems to have happened a very long time ago, the last surviving member of the conference SS general Gerhardt Klopfer died in 1987 at the age of 81.<sup>610</sup> This could mean that Thomas believes that it is important to not forget this historical event through the fictional representation in *Die Wannseekonferenz*. These two reviews show that in the American public sphere the fictional depiction was seen as an important film to remember this historical event. Whereas Canby's review focuses on the historical argument put forward by the director Schirk and screenwriter Mommertz, Thomas's review of the film focused more on the fictional representation of the Wannsee Conference itself through the acting, dialogue and set design.

*Die Wannseekonferenz* arrived in the midst of a wave of German and Austrian television productions, which dealt with and explored the legacies of the Third Reich. West Germany had started to face the difficult past after the 1968 Student Movement and a series of Holocaust-themed television productions during the 1970s, most notably NBC's *Holocaust*. The process of exploring and uncovering the previously hidden or whitewashed past is a key concept in German history and known as *Vergangensheitsbewältigung* or "coming to terms with the past. The historian Wulf Katzensteiner argued that West German television popularized the task of *Vergangensheitsbewältigung* and shaped the collective memory of the Holocaust. Katzensteiner argues that German television portrayed the Holocaust as genocide without perpetrators avoiding difficult aspects of the Nazi past focusing on stories about rescuing persecuted Jews.<sup>611</sup> In contrast to this *Die Wannseekonferenz* focuses solely on the perpetrators and the Final Solution. It was produced and shown on German television during the historical controversy in post war Germany the *Historikerstreit*. This political-charged historiographical argument focused on whether the Holocaust was unique or if it

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<sup>609</sup> Thomas, K., 25.2.1987

<sup>610</sup> Thomas, K., 25.2.1987

<sup>611</sup> Kantsteiner W. in *HBO and the Holocaust: Conspiracy, The Historical Film and Public History at Wannsee* by Johnson, N.K, December 2016, p. 69-70.

could be compared to other genocides in history. This debate also included the intentionalism against the functionalism debate, Johnson believe that some historians saw the functionalist attempt to relativize the Holocaust through its historicization, as functionalists argue that the focus on Hitler at the centre absolves the actual perpetrators of guilt. Johnson believes that the internationalist stance of *Die Wannseekonferenz* places it as one of the early products of the *Historikerstreit*.<sup>612</sup> As a trained historian, the writer Mommertz intended to create a historical film, which avoided exaggeration, over-dramatization and sought to present an important historical event as objectively as possible. He argues:

I saw it as my task to dramatically abstain from filmic effects, because I see it as absolutely inappropriate for this subject. I restrained myself completely, let the facts speak for themselves and left the judgement up to the viewer. I see that as the only possibility to reasonable do justice to the subject matter.<sup>613</sup>

Mommertz might have let the facts speak for themselves regarding the structure of the narrative, but he did decide to include Lang's German shepherd to add irony to the narrative. This could show that Mommertz believed that there needed to be humour if the audience watches only the perpetrators discussing the mass murder of the Jews throughout the entire narrative. Mommertz also included Heydrich telling jokes, laughing and flirting with a female stenotypist. This representation and humanisation of Heydrich could be due to the time of the production in Germany and the cultural implication, as this fictional narrative focused solely on the perpetrators without offering the audience a positive character to identify with. Even though the narrative is set at the original location and lasts as long as the original historical event, Mommertz admitted to inventing dialogue grounded in historical research. He argued that each of the groups present at the Wannsee Conference had their own manner to talk about the Jews. The SS discussed the Jew cynically, the representatives of the ministries discussed the Jews bureaucratically and the representatives of the Party were vulgar and plebeian regarding the Jews. Mommertz invented these different styles of dialogue to emphasize the different spheres of power in the Third Reich.

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<sup>612</sup> Johnson, N.K, December 2016, p. 71.

<sup>613</sup> Mommertz, P., in *HBO and the Holocaust: Conspiracy, The Historical Film and Public History at Wannsee* by Johnson, N.K, December 2016, p. 72.



#### 4.8 Reception of *Die Wannseekonferenz*-Reviews in Germany

*Die Wannseekonferenz* provoked a debate the liberal German newsmagazine *Der Spiegel* in which the writer Mommertz took part. In 1984, the *Spiegel* editor Heinz Höhne reviewed the film and argued that this film is obsessed with the Vergangenheitsbewältigung (coming to terms with the past). According to Höhne, too many Holocaust films have been released and *Die Wannseekonferenz* adds nothing new of value to the debate. As this was the first fictional depiction of the Wannsee Conference on German television, it could be argued that the film does add new value to the debate about the Third Reich. The review praises the director Schirk and the portrayal of Heydrich by Dietrich Mattausch. Höhne states: "This is not the Wannsee conference that the historians know. It is the Wannsee conference a la Paul Mommertz."<sup>614</sup> He believes that there is not enough source material on the Wannsee Conference to create a feature length film. Mommertz as allowed by *Der Spiegel* to reply to this review with a full-length article in January 1985. Mommertz responds to the review point by point and recounts evidence that each of the participants having known about the Holocaust, a point which was contested by the review. At the end of the article Mommertz states:

I have six folders with original documents from the Conference environment at my disposal. I am also a historian. Perhaps it is conceivable that a historian, after fourteen months of specialised study in a particular subject area is a bit ahead of other historians.<sup>615</sup>

Mommertz also wrote later in 1985 a response to his critics in *Der Spiegel* arguing that the film is the first and furthermore historically-grounded portrayal of the conference. He stated that there was not a single monograph about the Wannsee Conference before the creation of his fictional narrative.<sup>616</sup> Johnson argues in his thesis that it is important to remember that historical monographs do not invent dialogue and that the film medium requires a certain degree of fictionalization.<sup>617</sup>

The article 'Eiskalter Engel in der Herrenrunde' (An ice cold angel in the convivial group of men) in the liberal-conservative German newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* in 1984 also discusses the television film *Die Wannseekonferenz* and criticises the

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<sup>614</sup> Höhne, H. 'Eine Falle der Betroffenheit', *Der Spiegel*, 17.12.1984, [Accessed: <https://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-13511955.html>], 1.12.19]

<sup>615</sup> Mommertz, P., in *HBO and the Holocaust: Conspiracy, The Historical Film and Public History at Wannsee* by Johnson, N.K, December 2016, p. 75.

<sup>616</sup> Mommertz, P., in *HBO and the Holocaust: Conspiracy, The Historical Film and Public History at Wannsee* by Johnson, N.K, December 2016, p. 76.

<sup>617</sup> Johnson, N.K, December 2016, p. 76.

statements Mommertz made about the authenticity of the film.<sup>618</sup> The author Karl-Ludwig Baader mentions the beginning of *Die Wannseekonferenz*, where a voice from off-screen tells the viewer that the following ninety minutes decided the fate of the Jews.<sup>619</sup> This conscious beginning of the film creates an importance for the fictional representation of this historical event and the viewers understanding of the Third Reich might be altered through the voice-over. The film is set in the original location and kept to the same duration as the historical event, which could lead to the viewers accepting the fictional film as historically authentic, as the screenwriter Mommertz states that it was possible to recreate the conference with a great accuracy. Baader questions how authentic a recreation of the historical event on film can be, as Mommertz could only access the protocols of the Wannsee Conference not knowing how the characters at the meeting behaved or talked. According to Baader, the pace of the film takes the breath of the audience away and could overwhelm the audience, which might be intended by the filmmakers. Baader states:

The talk of domestic-, foreign- and quarter-Jew, expressions like 'Jew will be put away in wagons' and afterwards 'they will get through them like an amount of work' create a feeling of trepidation for the viewers. It is depressing and bone-crushing to see this group of convivial men eating appetizers and drinking cognac good-humoured, though preparing a gigantic work of destruction.<sup>620</sup>

Baader states that Heydrich is represented in this fictional narrative as a dominant figure, which jokes with the other historical characters present at the conference, but can, also hurt their feelings at times. He argues that through the German viewers will accept the images of this television production depicting the historical event as an authentic representation without questioning them. Baader claims that the viewers will not learn any new facts about the perpetrators and *Schreibtischtäter* (desk murderer) through this film. In the end of the review, Baader asks if the audience is able to observe through a keyhole perspective the perpetrators and believes that instead of understanding Heydrich or the other leading Nazis, the film only offers the audience a sense of being present at this historical event. He states:

The spectacular scenario, which gives away triumphantly to the fascination of the historical instant, satisfies the viewer's interest in the sensation and the need for a

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<sup>618</sup> Baader, K-L., 'Eiskalter Engel in der Herrenrunde', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 21.12. 1984, p. 26, (Author's translation).

<sup>619</sup> Baader, K-L., 21.12. 1984, p. 26, (Author's translation).

<sup>620</sup> Baader, K-L., 21.12. 1984, p. 26, (Author's translation).

safe perception, but it only give the illusion to have been present at this event in retrospective.<sup>621</sup>

This review focuses mostly on the historical authenticity of the *Die Wannseekonferenz* and discusses if the film can add a new perspective to the debate surrounding the perpetrators. The review criticises the pace of the film, which could overwhelm the audience. Furthermore, Baader states that the film cannot show the viewers the inner psychology of the perpetrators or answer the question how these men could morally justify their behaviour, but Baader also claims that these questions cannot be answered with a feature film. Baader argues that the film only offers the viewers the Wannsee Conference as a coherent story and gives the viewers the feeling that they have been present at the conference, without answering any questions about the perpetrators. However, I would argue that this review also shows that Baader understands the need for a representation of this historical event, so that the Final Solution and the Wannsee Conference are not forgotten by future generations in Germany.

#### **4.9 The production of the HBO film *Conspiracy***

The areas of the production, which defined the meaning associated with the representation of Heydrich in *Conspiracy*, are the casting of international stars such as Branagh and Tucci, the stylistic choices of the director Frank Pierson regarding the camera positions, the British accent of the actors and the production by HBO. The casting choice of Kenneth Branagh as Heydrich is mentioned in a review of *Conspiracy* in the *American Historical Review* by Alan E. Steinweis.<sup>622</sup> He states that the HBO and BBC production features high production values and well-known actors. Steinweis argues that Branagh dominates the film with his characterization of Heydrich. He states:

Branagh evokes the culture yet swashbuckling image that Heydrich cultivated, so I wonder whether the film makes Heydrich into a more compelling figure than he actually was. Moreover, Branagh comes off as seeming a good deal older than Heydrich, who was thirty-seven years old when he presided at Wannsee. Stanley Tucci's interpretation of Adolf Eichmann as a proactive anti-Semite represents a refreshing departure from the old, and inaccurate cliché of the 'banal' bureaucrat.<sup>623</sup>

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<sup>621</sup> Baader, K-L., 21.12. 1984, p. 26, (Author's translation).

<sup>622</sup> Steinweis, A. R., 'Review of *Conspiracy* (BBC/HBO Films), directed by Frank Pierson from a script by Loring Mandel', *American Historical Review*, Vol. 107, No. 2, April 2002, p.675. [Accessed: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/historyfacpub/89>, 11.6.20]

<sup>623</sup> Steinweis, A. R., April 2002, p.675.

This review of *Conspiracy* shows the appeal the casting choice of Branagh has of Heydrich, but also the danger as this historical character might be more compelling than the real historical character. The review mentions the ending of *Conspiracy*, where the viewers are informed in the closing credits that the film is based on a true story with some scenes, events or characters created or changed for dramatic purposes. Steinweis believes that this film does not stray very far from what is factual plausible. However, he believes that the main danger is that most viewers will not be able to tell the difference between plausible, speculation and documented fact, which could mean that Branagh's performance will replace the historical figure of Heydrich for the viewers of *Conspiracy*.<sup>624</sup>

The director Frank Pierson claimed that he did not want to create a traditional dramatization of history and offer the viewers the experience of being there at the Wannsee Conference, as if it were a live event. Pierson won an Oscar for the Best Original Screenplay for the film *Dog Day Afternoon* (Sidney Lumet, 1975, USA) and he directed *Truman* (Frank Pierson, 1995, USA) and *Citizen Cohn* (Frank Pierson, 1992, USA) for HBO. He places most of the action in *Conspiracy* inside the meeting room, which was constructed at Shepperton Studios to the exact dimensions of the original at Wannsee. The eye-level camera angles underline the feeling of viewers being in the room and the film could feel like a play being filmed. The film was shot in a short amount of time in 21 days after rehearsing.<sup>625</sup> Pierson explained:

The camera was never above or below eye level. The film required the presence of all 15 actors for the entire length of the production. All of our actors were experienced in rehearsing, which is a technique in itself and is very seldom done in movies-at least not in the sense of having extended rehearsals where we get into long, sometimes 10 minutes takes. The actors had an opportunity to truly act as an ensemble rather than breaking everything up into a few lines at a time and assembling it in the edit room.<sup>626</sup>

An important and conscious decision for the representation of the leading National Socialists was to use the regular speaking voice of the actors instead of German accents to portray the leading National Socialists in *Conspiracy*. The director Pierson and the cast

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<sup>624</sup> Steinweis, A., April 2002, p.675.

<sup>625</sup> Gritten, D., 'When the Job is Odious', *Los Angeles Times*, 13.5.2001, [Accessed: <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2001-may-13-ca-62810-story.html>, 11.11.2019]

<sup>626</sup> Time Warner, 'Kenneth Branagh and Stanley Tucci Star In HBO Film's Conspiracy, Debuting May 19', *Time Warner*, 5.4.01, [Accessed: <http://www.timewarner.com/newsroom/press-releases/2001/04/05/kenneth-branagh-and-stanley-tucci-star-in-hbo-films-conspiracy>, 7.8.20]

felt that the German accent would have interfered with the intimacy of the performance and it would distract the audience from the emotional truth of the material.<sup>627</sup> This decision to use the regular speaking voices of the actors would make the Nazis less alien to an English-speaking audience.

Johnson argues in his thesis on *Conspiracy* that this film is also a historical artefact, a snapshot of HBO programming during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Johnson argues that *Conspiracy* was part of a larger development within American television during the mid-1990s and early-2000s with the rise of complicated and adult orientated premium-cable drama. Home Box Office (HBO) was a pioneer in this movement with the influential dramatic series *Oz* and *The Sopranos*. HBO's small subscriber revenue model freed filmmakers from restrictions of broadcast networks, which depended on advertising and large audience numbers. Johnson believes this fostered a climate of creative freedom and experimentation.<sup>628</sup> He states that HBO continues to produce thought-provoking historical dramas, but has recently shifted towards more blockbuster-style, special-effects driven series.<sup>629</sup>

Alan Sepinaell noted, "if you wanted thoughtful drama for adults, you didn't go to the multiplex; you went to your living room couch".<sup>630</sup> HBO further invested in original film by forming HBO NYC Productions, a company whose goal was to produce edgier and more diverse programming. HBO NYC produced *Conspiracy* during the early stages of the writing process and continued to do so until it eventual merged with HBO Films.<sup>631</sup> HBO Films made a name for itself by producing quality original programming and subverted established genres. Johnson claims that HBO Films sought to make the viewers nervous with fearless and provocative programming, through examining controversial issues that traditional broadcasters avoided such as a film about Nazi perpetrators planning the mass murder of the European Jews. *The Essential HBO Reader*, a scholarly examination of HBO's history, states HBO most notable productions negotiate the past and interrogate the cultural memory through the depiction of individual lives that are positioned at the centre of national struggles, community conflicts, social movements and scandals. The productions usually avoid the uplifting moral lessons and happy endings. HBO historical productions often use history to impart lessons to the audience.<sup>632</sup> It seems that *Conspiracy* fits this description and could be a typical example of HBO's output at the

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<sup>627</sup> Time Warner, 5.4.2001.

<sup>628</sup> Johnson, N.K, December 2016, p. 76.

<sup>629</sup> Johnson, N.K, December 2016, p. 95.

<sup>630</sup> *The Essential HBO Reader* in Johnson, N.K, December 2016, p. 36.

<sup>631</sup> *The Essential HBO Reader* in Johnson, N.K, December 2016, p. 36.

<sup>632</sup> *The Essential HBO Reader* in Johnson, N.K, December 2016, p. 36.

beginning of the millennium. Therefore, it could be argued that viewers associated certain qualities with *Conspiracy* as it was produced by HBO, but also HBO shaped the meaning of *Conspiracy* as it wanted to attract viewers through provocative programmes without clichés and happy endings.<sup>633</sup>

This also reflected in a review in *Variety* with the title 'HBO takes hard line with *Conspiracy*' in 2001 by Army Archer. He describes the film as journey into the heart of evil and describes the film as riveting, while highlighting the outstanding performance of Tucci as Eichmann and Branagh as Heydrich. Stanley Tucci, who plays Eichmann in the HBO film, claims about HBO: "They have the biggest balls in the business."<sup>634</sup> This review mentions that the film was eight years in the making according to the director Pierson and he credits head of HBO NYC Productions Collin Callender for giving the green light for the film. This shows how the label of HBO influences the meaning associated with the film *Conspiracy* representing Heydrich and the Wannsee Conference.<sup>635</sup> Furthermore, *Conspiracy* was on a wave of television and film productions during this time period because of the fiftieth anniversary of World War II, including HBO's miniseries *Band of Brothers*, which aired in 2001.<sup>636</sup>

#### **4.10 Reception study of *Conspiracy*- Reviews in America and the United Kingdom**

First of all, I will focus on the marketing of *Conspiracy* through the press release of the Warner Group Media, before looking at the reception of this film in various reviews in the UK and USA. The press release gives a brief overview of the historical event before focusing on the production of *Conspiracy*. It states that after ninety minutes the blueprint for Hitler's Final Solution was in place and the fate of the European Jewish population was sealed. According to the press release, *Conspiracy* recreates one of the most infamous gatherings in world history to implement the extermination of the Jews and is based on the Wannsee Protocol, which is the only document, where Hitler's maniacal plan was codified.<sup>637</sup> These statements show that the marketing of the film wants the viewers to accept the authenticity of the film, as the Wannsee Protocol serves as a basis for the fictional representation of the historical event.

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<sup>633</sup> *The Essential HBO Reader* in Johnson, N.K, December 2016, p. 36.

<sup>634</sup> Archer, A., 'HBO takes hard line with 'Conspiracy'', *Variety*, 7.5.2001, [Accessed: <https://variety.com/2001/tv/columns/hbo-takes-hard-line-with-conspiracy-1117798795/>, 1.12.19].

<sup>635</sup> Archer, A., 7.5.2001.

<sup>636</sup> Johnson, N.K, December 2016, p. 36

<sup>637</sup>Time Warner, 5.4.2001.

In the introduction of the press release, the film *Conspiracy* is introduced by focusing on the stars such as Kenneth Branagh as Heydrich and Stanley Tucci as Eichmann. The press release mentions the awards these actors received for other roles before starring in *Conspiracy*, showing the importance of these stars. This shows that the persona of these stars plays an important role in shaping the meaning and reception of *Conspiracy*. Kenneth Branagh claims in this press release that the role of playing Heydrich was challenging and one of the most disturbing experiences of his acting career. He states:

Even among a group of men who committed the most extraordinary crimes, Heydrich was unique for the ferocity and the cruelty of what he did, and the ruthless efficiency with which he did it. Playing such a character, I didn't want to say these lines. I didn't want to be connected with this moral vacuum that seems to be the man himself. He was an absolutely extraordinary mind, a fantastic manager but also an absolutely ghastly human being. There is something purely evil about him that is absolutely repellent and I will be very happy not wear his uniform or ever play him again.<sup>638</sup>



Figure 12 Kenneth Branagh as Heydrich in *Conspiracy*

Branagh focuses in this quote on the persona of Heydrich and his personal experience of portraying this role in *Conspiracy*. He outlines the difficulties he had to portray this character and to understand Heydrich as a human being. Branagh does not discuss the

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<sup>638</sup> Time Warner, 5.4.2001.

decision to portray Heydrich without a German accent in the press release. Branagh claims that Heydrich is evil, and he mentions that he is happy not to wear this uniform again. This statement shows that Branagh understands the danger of his persona being associated with the role of Heydrich. However, Branagh states that Heydrich was an extraordinary mind and a fantastic manager despite the Final Solution. Through claiming that Heydrich was unique regarding his cruelty and labelling this historical character as evil, Branagh implies that this leading National Socialist cannot be judged as a human being or by moral standards, as Heydrich seems soulless and there is no childhood trauma or hatred of parents which might illuminate his motives. These statements by Branagh regarding his representation of Heydrich in this film could also imply that this historical character was responsible for the Holocaust in contrast to the German population.

After other statements by other stars of *Conspiracy* such as Stanley Tucci as Eichmann and Colin Firth as Doctor Wilhelm Stuckart, the press release describes the plot of the film in a synopsis. The synopsis points out that Heydrich is not proposing a Final Solution at the end of the meeting but telling the group that this solution is already in place. Heydrich concludes:

History will mark us for having the vision and the gift and the will to advance the human race to the greater purity in a space of time so short that Charles Darwin would be astonished.

After the meeting finished Heydrich has a celebratory drink with Eichmann and the chief of the Gestapo Heinrich Mueller. The synopsis in the press release concludes that the meeting has ended but the Final Solution has just begun. This last statement shows how the press release wants to show that this historical event was very important and shaped the Holocaust to a great extent.<sup>639</sup>

Kenneth Branagh states in a review of *Conspiracy* in the conservative tabloid newspaper *New York Daily News* in 2001 with the title 'Hatred on Agenda in Conspiracy Kenneth Branagh plays the man who initiated the Holocaust':

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<sup>639</sup> Time Warner, 5.4.2001.



It was a practical meeting in which these bureaucrats wished to facilitate the physical process of exterminating a race. It seems incredible, yet they were pressing the button that started the Holocaust.<sup>640</sup>

This statement by Branagh could imply that the Wannsee Conference was a very important meeting and these leading National Socialists started the Holocaust, which would mean that they would be responsible for it and bear the guilt of it, instead of the German population. In contrast to Branagh's statement, Melvin Blackman argues in his review 'Conspiracy, a Withering Study of the Bureaucracy of the Holocaust' in *The New Yorker* that the film is a statement to the power of meeting and that Wannsee was not where the Holocaust's if became when, but rather where when became how soon.<sup>641</sup>

According to Branagh in the review of the conservative tabloid newspaper *New York Daily News*, he read the script with horror, while remaining almost dumbstruck that it is not fiction. He describes Heydrich, "as a man without friends, but with incriminating information on every high-ranking Nazi and unafraid to use it." Branagh believes that Heydrich could be superficially charming, but his capacity for human pity seemed to have been removed. He had never been in his 20 years of acting being involved with a character so disturbing to his own peace of mind. He found it hard to get away from Heydrich during the shooting of the film and he did not sleep well.<sup>642</sup> Branagh claims in a review in the liberal leaning UK newspaper *The Independent* in 2002 that Heydrich's superb management skills ensured that most catastrophic event of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was initiated in just 90 minutes. This review points out that the Branagh's chilling performance won him the Best Lead Actor Awards at the Emmys and a nomination for a gong at the Golden Globes, when the review was released. The review in the weekly listing magazine *Radio Times* from the UK by Alison Graham also focuses on the portrayal of Heydrich. She claims that out of all the performances in *Conspiracy*, Kenneth Branagh as Heydrich will be remembered by the viewers and might haunt their nightmares. She argues that Branagh is flawless and has re-created a monster as the viewers watch Heydrich's smooth charm slip when he threatens those who are not completely on his side.<sup>643</sup> In another review in the weekly listing magazine *The Radio Times* from the UK with the title

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<sup>640</sup> Branagh, K. in 'Hatred on the Agenda in 'Conspiracy', Kenneth Branagh plays the man who initiated the Holocaust' by Mills, N., *New York Daily News*, 13.5.01, [Accessed: <https://www.nydailynews.com/hatred-agenda-conspiracy-kenneth-branagh-plays-man-initiated-holocaust-article-1.897824> , 3.12.19].

<sup>641</sup> Backman, M., 'Conspiracy', a Withering Study of the Bureaucracy of the Holocaust', *The New Yorker*, 22.8.2018, [Accessed: <https://www.newyorker.com/recommends/watch/conspiracy-a-withering-study-of-nazis-in-a-room>, 4.12.19]

<sup>642</sup> Mills, N., 'Hatred on the Agenda in 'Conspiracy', Kenneth Branagh plays the man who initiated the Holocaust', *New York Daily News*, 13.5.2001 [Accessed: <https://www.nydailynews.com/hatred-agenda-conspiracy-kenneth-branagh-plays-man-initiated-holocaust-article-1.897824>, 3.12.20]

<sup>643</sup> Gritten, D., 'And the Motion before us is Genocide', *Radio Times*, 19–25 January 2002.

'And the Motion Before Us is Genocide' by David Gritten in 2002, the focus is also on Branagh's representation of Heydrich, instead of the fictional representation of the historical event or other leading National Socialists at the Wannsee Conference. The review does describe the event briefly demonstrating the importance of Heydrich, whose job was it to set in motion the Final Solution and the extermination of millions of Jews. Gritten states in his review that Branagh portrays Heydrich with real verve in a role that won him a coveted Emmy Award following the drama's airing in America. According to Gritten, Branagh's hair is dyed blond and sleekly swept back, he is the last person to arrive at Wannsee, and makes a flamboyant entrance, immediately demonstrating his superiority. Gritten believes that Heydrich shows deference and courtesy to other points of view, and frequently calls for drinks and lunch to defuse tension, but ruthlessly proceeding towards a point, where 14 colleagues agree to the grim solution of genocide.<sup>644</sup> Branagh states in a review by Gritten from 2001 in the *Los Angeles Times* about Heydrich:

There was no compassion inside Heydrich. Anything no one else wanted to do, delving into moral backwaters, he had no problem with. Playing him, I felt that he had been asked to eradicate Eskimos, cabinet makers or gymnasts, he would have proceeded with the task in the same way, with the same passionless, soulless quality.<sup>645</sup>

This review also mentions Branagh's persona and his star image before he played Heydrich in *Conspiracy*. Branagh first received world-claim in 1989 before he turned 30, as the director and star of *Henry V* (Kenneth Branagh, 1989, UK) film adaption of Shakespeare's historic play that critics compared favourably to the Laurence Olivier version. Gritten claims that this success earned Branagh the label wunderkind and an expectation that he would join the pantheon of film greats. Branagh's film production company produced the well-received movie versions of Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* (Kenneth Branagh, 1993, UK) and *Hamlet* (Kenneth Branagh, 1996, UK). Apart from his Shakespeare's films he starred in self-produced films with ensemble casts such as the comedy *Peter's Friends* (Kenneth Branagh, 1992, UK) and the romantic comedy *A Midwinter's Tales* (Kenneth Branagh, 1995, UK). However, Gritten believes that Branagh's film career seemed to stumble three years before *Conspiracy* in 2001, because he appeared in movies that either failed artistically or did not showcase his talents such as Robert Altman's *The Gingerbread Man* (Robert Altman, 1998, USA), Woody Allen's

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<sup>644</sup> Gritten, D., 'When the Job is Odious', *Los Angeles Times*, 13.5.2001, [Accessed: <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2001-may-13-ca-62810-story.html>, 11.11.19].

<sup>645</sup> Gritten, D., 13.5.2001.

*Celebrity* (Woody Allen, 1998, USA) or *Wild Wild West* (Barry Sonnenfeld, 1999, USA). Branagh's film version of Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* (Kenneth Branagh, 2000, UK, France & USA) staged like a classic MGM musical did not receive positive reviews by the press and was not successful at the box office. Gritten believes that Branagh can no longer be classified as any sort of wunderkind and he is in a transitional mid-career period. However, it seems that *Conspiracy* showed Branagh's talent and did not fail artistically as Branagh received an Emmy Award for Lead Actor in a Miniseries or a Movie and Loring Mendel received an Emmy Award for Writing a Miniseries or a Movie in 2001. Furthermore, Stanley Tucci won a Golden Globe for Best Performance by an actor in a Supporting Role in a Miniseries or Motion Picture in 2002. *Conspiracy* was also nominated for Best Television Limited Series or Motion Picture made for Television and Best Performance by an Actor in a Miniseries or Motion Picture for Television.<sup>646</sup>

Nancy Mills quotes in the review of *Conspiracy* in the conservative tabloid newspaper *New York Daily News* the historian Michael Berenbaum, who is a Holocaust scholar and one of the founders of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum. Berenbaum believes that the average American does not know much about the Wannsee Conference.<sup>647</sup> Berenbaum describes the film as the most important presentation of the perpetrators of the Holocaust, as the film is different from any other film presentation of the Holocaust, because it gives you the evil and it does not sweeten it. According to Berenbaum it does not have the redeeming social value of the nobility of the human spirit, as for example *Schindler's List* (Steven Spielberg, 1993, USA). This review mentions the German film 'Wannsee Conference', but claims that this film went largely unnoticed.<sup>648</sup> This shows that *Conspiracy* could become the defining fictional representation of the historical event of the Wannsee conference and could define how Heydrich will be remembered in America. Even though Berenbaum criticises the plot of this fictional representation of the Wannsee Conference, he states that this is the most important representation of the leading National Socialists responsible for the Holocaust.<sup>649</sup> This statement shows that the fictional representation of Heydrich by Kenneth Branagh could replace the real Heydrich in the cultural memory of American viewers. Even Branagh stated that he accepted the role because he was shocked to discover that he knew nothing about the Wannsee

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<sup>646</sup> Golden Globes, 'Winner and Nominees-TV Show Conspiracy', *Golden Globe Awards*, [Accessed: <https://www.goldenglobes.com/tv-show/conspiracy>, 1.11.19].

<sup>647</sup> Mills, N., 'Hatred on the Agenda in 'Conspiracy', Kenneth Branagh plays the man who initiated the Holocaust' *New York Daily News*, 13.5.2001 [Accessed: <https://www.nydailynews.com/hatred-agenda-conspiracy-kenneth-branagh-plays-man-initiated-holocaust-article-1.897824>, 3.12.19].

<sup>648</sup> Mills, N., 13.5.2001.

<sup>649</sup> Berenbaum M., in 'Hatred on the Agenda in 'Conspiracy', Kenneth Branagh plays the man who initiated the Holocaust' by Mills, N., *New York Daily News*, 13.5.2001 [Accessed: <https://www.nydailynews.com/hatred-agenda-conspiracy-kenneth-branagh-plays-man-initiated-holocaust-article-1.897824>, 3.12.19].

Conference, even though he felt himself to be reasonably well informed about the Holocaust.<sup>650</sup> Branagh states:

For those like me who were unaware of the of the Wannsee Conference, this story should be appalling, astonishing and fascinating at the same time. Everyone knows the horrors of the actual execution of the Holocaust, but I did not know of the actual moment when it was set in motion, or of the nature and brevity of the conference.<sup>651</sup>

Branagh shows with this statement that it is important to remember this time period with films such as *Conspiracy* to educate viewers about the Third Reich. However, through offering the viewers this historical event in a fascinating and astonishing 90-minute film, the viewers are offered a simplified version of history and might accept the fictional representation as the actual truth of the Wannsee Conference. The review with the title 'The Evil of Wannsee' from the *Tribune Media Services* states that the top-secret meeting in Wannsee determined the potential fates of millions of European Jews, as this meeting of Third Reich officials set the groundwork for one of history's most heinous crimes of mass murder. This shows how *Conspiracy* could shape the meaning of this historical event and transform it into an event, which shaped the Holocaust. According to this review, *Conspiracy* represents the most important historical event to understand the leading National Socialists, The Third Reich and the mass murder of the Jews.<sup>652</sup> Branagh states in this review that Heydrich seemed to be without pity or conscience. He never encountered anything like Heydrich's relish of the pursuit of power without coming across some kind of comprehensible human dimension.<sup>653</sup> This statement by Branagh shows the danger of his representation of Heydrich, as he believes that Heydrich did not have a human dimension and lacked pity or conscious. This could mean that even though the viewer's knowledge of the historical event is enhanced through this film, they are not able to understand Heydrich because he does not have a human dimension. According to Branagh, Heydrich is evil and cannot be understood.<sup>654</sup> Furthermore, through making this stark contrast between the viewers and Heydrich through his lack of pity and conscious without a comprehensible human dimension, he takes away the guilt from the German population, as Heydrich is responsible for the Holocaust and argues that no 'normal'

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<sup>650</sup> Branagh, K., in 'Hatred on the Agenda in 'Conspiracy'', Kenneth Branagh plays the man who initiated the Holocaust' by Mills, N., *New York Daily News*, 13.5.2001, [Accessed: <https://www.nydailynews.com/hatred-agenda-conspiracy-kenneth-branagh-plays-man-initiated-holocaust-article-1.897824>, 3.12.19].

<sup>651</sup> Tribune Media Services, 'The Evil of Wannsee,' 13.5.2001, [Accessed: <https://www.branaghcompendium.com/conspiracy.html>, 4.12.19].

<sup>652</sup> Tribune Media Services, 13.5.2001.

<sup>653</sup> Tribune Media Services, 13.5.2001.

<sup>654</sup> Tribune Media Services, 13.5.2001.

human being with a conscious or pity could plan the extermination of the Jewish population making this historical character alien to the audience.

#### 4.11 Heydrich's representation in *The Man with the Iron Heart*

*The Man with the Iron Heart* is based on the novel *HHhH* by Lauren Binet. The title of the book means 'Himmler's Hirn heisst Heydrich' which translates to Himmler's brain is called Heydrich and refers to a quip about Heydrich that circulated in Germany during the Third Reich. Jimenez read the book for pleasure while working on his film *The Connection* (Cédric Jimenez, 2014, France). The book has been a bestseller, culminating in a New York Times Award for Notable book of the year and he assumed that the rights had been snapped up a long time ago. The rights had been bought by Alain Goldman, the president of Legende, who was also the producer of Jimenez's film *The Connection*. Goldman sent the script to Jimenez to read and Jimenez accepted. Jimenez asked if he could redraft the script with Audrey Diwan, with whom he had co-written *The Connection* Jimenez states:

What I loved about the story was the historical significance of the rising of a big, high-ranking Nazi officer and what it means in this century. How could this happen? How could something so crazy and insane happen? How could people go so wrong in terms of ideology and beliefs? We think of the Second World War as a nightmare, but it was a true nightmare. And everybody wants to answer the question but nobody can.<sup>655</sup>

The power of the book lies in the splitting of the story between the rise of Heydrich and the background of the group of Czech Resistance fighters, who assassinated Heydrich.

Jimenez states:

The two sides of the story are really important to me, because they are evolving in a very bad way and evolving in a really good way. And it is about changing the world. The Nazis wanted to change the world in their own image, whereas the resistance wanted to change the world and restore order.<sup>656</sup>

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<sup>655</sup> Dercksen, D., 'The Man With The Iron Heart- a story about one of the most dangerous figures in the Nazi regime,' *The Writing Studio*, 18.11.2017, [Accessed: <https://writingstudio.co.za/the-man-with-the-iron-heart-a-story-about-one-of-the-most-dangerous-figures-in-the-nazi-regime/>]

<sup>656</sup> Jimenez, C. in 'The Man With The Iron Heart- a story about one of the most dangerous figures in the Nazi regime' by Dercksen, D., *The Writing Studio*, 18.11.2017, [Accessed: <https://writingstudio.co.za/the-man-with-the-iron-heart-a-story-about-one-of-the-most-dangerous-figures-in-the-nazi-regime>, 20.11.19].

The narrative first follows the ascend of Heydrich and then focuses on the group of young Czechs, who embark on the impossible mission to assassinate Heydrich. Jimenez argues that the unique structure of the script allows the viewers to penetrate deeply into the trajectories of the three main characters: Heydrich and the two Czech resistance fighters Jan and Josef. According to Jimenez, this structure adds originality and modernity by playing with the historical genre offering a kaleidoscope vision to the decisive moment of Heydrich's assassination. Jimenez's aim was to completely and passionately immerse the viewer so that they would feel the same strength and conviction that the men and women of the Czech resistance felt at the time to stop the "Butcher of Prague". This decision to split the story in two sections is also mentioned in the review in the conservative *The Sunday Times* by Tymon Smith. He criticises the structure of the film and believes that strips the novel from its self-referential humour and forces the unique aspects of its source material into a straight play offering not much new in the take on a new story.<sup>657</sup> Smith states:

Just as we have spent 50 minutes immersed in the story of a Nazi and getting interested in the tension leading up to his imminent demise, we are extracted from Heydrich's saga and drawn into the other side of the tale, which isn't quiet compelling because of its similarity to so many other stories we've been exposed to.<sup>658</sup>

The review ends with Smith's statement that even though the film is not quite the same as hundreds of other war films it fails to deliver on its unique potential. He believes that Binet's book and Heydrich deserve a better film.<sup>659</sup> The review in the *Prague Reporter* claims that first half of the film could be compared to montage-level material running down key events in Heydrich's life without offering significant detail or context for the viewer to understand the bigger picture. According to this review, key events such Heydrich's court and his dismissal from the Navy, his rise through the Gestapo or the Wannsee Conference all fly by without much continuity from scene to scene. It argues that *The Man with the Iron Heart* does not want to get too far inside the central character because of the fear of humanizing Heydrich. However this review states that the film achieves the opposite effect and as it distances itself from the character, Heydrich's inhumanity is only

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<sup>657</sup> Smith, T., 'The Man with the Iron Heart: this war film falls flat', *Sunday Times*, Originally published in *The Times*, 18.11.2017 [Accessed: <https://www.timeslive.co.za/sunday-times/lifestyle/2017-11-17-the-man-with-the-iron-heart-this-war-film-falls-flat/>, 12.11.19].

<sup>658</sup> Smith, T., 18.11.2017

<sup>659</sup> Smith, T., 18.11.2017

blurred.<sup>660</sup> In contrast, the review in *The Hollywood Reporter* argues that the cutting between Heydrich's private and professional life, which takes a montage-collage approach shows the depth of this character. This review uses the court-material scene as an example for this structure and editing style. This scene in the court is intercut with Heydrich's violent outburst of anger afterwards. The narrative structure lends the proceedings jagged edges from the start, installing a feeling of unease and feeding into realization that underneath the placid, untelling exterior, an unfeeling monster might not only be lurking, but seething.<sup>661</sup>

Furthermore, this review claims that it is unique for an English-language film to focus for such a long time only on Nazis without offering the audience a hero to identify with or any conflict to be solved in the narrative.<sup>662</sup> It states that Jimenez is a talented director, who almost manages to overcome the structural weakness of the narrative with his directorial verve and visual impressive style, getting the most out of each shot in terms of production value.<sup>663</sup> The review of the film in the *Radio Times* claims that the first hour focusing on Heydrich is the most effective of the film, as it is an unusual perspective to see a high-ranking Nazi official as a family man and giving the viewers at the same time access to dark deeds of his military office.<sup>664</sup> This review argues that the second part feels rushed focusing on the Czech assassins. However, the review states that despite the flaws the drama takes the brave step of showing a familiar period of history from a new perspective.<sup>665</sup>

Jimenez also made the conscious decision to shoot the film on 35mm film in order to give more life to the image and to better characterize the era in which the story takes place. He argues that through shooting on this film stock he achieved an organic texture and it did not feel right for him to shoot this periodic drama digitally.<sup>666</sup> The review in the *Hollywood Reporter* also mentions the cinematography of the film. It states that Jimenez reinforces the impression of the story being told from the inside out through working mostly with

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<sup>660</sup> Pirodsky, J., 'Movie Review: The Butcher of Prague gets his due in 'The Man with the Iron Heart (aka HHhH)', *The Prague Reporter*, 8.6.17, [Accessed: <https://www.praguereporter.com/home/2017/6/8/movie-review-the-butcher-of-prague-gets-his-due-in-the-man-with-the-iron-heart-aka-hhhh>, 12.11.19].

<sup>661</sup> van Hoeji, B., 'The Man with the Iron Heart (HHhH): Film Review', *The Hollywood Reporter*, 16.5.2017, [Accessed: <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/review/man-iron-heart-1003943>, 13.11.19]

<sup>662</sup> van Hoeji, B., 16.5.17.

<sup>663</sup> van Hoeji, B., 16.5.17.

<sup>664</sup> Luxford, J., 'The Man with the Iron Heart,' Review, *Radio Times*, 2017, [Accessed: <https://www.radiotimes.com/film/fr8ybm/the-man-with-the-iron-heart/>, 13.11.19].

<sup>665</sup> Luxford, J., 2017.

<sup>666</sup> Dercksen, D., 'The Man With The Iron Heart- a story about one of the most dangerous figures in the Nazi regime,' *The Writing Studio*, 18.11.2017, [Accessed: <https://writingstudio.co.za/the-man-with-the-iron-heart-a-story-about-one-of-the-most-dangerous-figures-in-the-nazi-regime/>, 13.11.19].

handheld cameras, after telling the first half of the film from the point of view of Heydrich.<sup>667</sup>

#### 4.12 **The effect of casting Jason Clarke as Heydrich in the *Man with the Iron Heart***

The casting choice of Jason Clarke as Heydrich in *The Man with the Iron Heart* would also influence the meaning associated with this fictional representation of this historical character. Clarke played Heydrich with a German accent in contrast to Branagh in *Conspiracy*, who used his clear English acting voice without a German accent, making Heydrich less alien to English speaking viewers. Tymon Smith argues in a review of this film in *The Sunday Times* that Clarke manages to portray Heydrich in a convincing manner, even though his German accent is not believable.<sup>668</sup> A review of the film in the online journal *Prague Reporter*, which covers the Prague cinema scene, states that Clarke creates a strong characterization of Heydrich, even though he does not look like the historical character. According to this review, Clarke's psychotic brute is an intimidating presence throughout. However, it argues that the presentation of Heydrich feels weak in comparison with Branagh's performance in *Conspiracy*, where Branagh offers a more chilling portrayal of Heydrich, even though his performance is confined entirely to the Wannsee Conference.<sup>669</sup> Jimenez believes that Jason Clarke was the only actor with the power and presence to embody Heydrich. Jimenez stated:

It is brave to accept a character like that because you accept to be someone that you hate. It is very hard for an actor to be the one everyone will hate. He (Clarke) did not want to save him (Heydrich), but he wanted to dig into every single weakness of the character to make it as complex as possible. He did not want to us to forget that this is a man. He wasn't a Marvel villain: he was a man that existed with parents and siblings and a real human heart in his chest.<sup>670</sup>

Clarke describes that he did a lot of research before playing this role. According to Clarke, he tried to establish a feeling of intimidation and constant aggression on the set. He was not a nice man to be around on this set, because he could not just find the feeling in every

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<sup>667</sup> van Hoeji, B., 16.5.17.

<sup>668</sup> Smith, T., "The Man with the Iron Heart: this war film falls flat", *Sunday Times*, Originally published in The Times, 18.11.2017, Accessed: <https://www.timeslive.co.za/sunday-times/lifestyle/2017-11-17-the-man-with-the-iron-heart-this-war-film-falls-flat/>, 12.11.2019].

<sup>669</sup> Pirodsky, J., 8.6.17.

<sup>670</sup> Jimenez, C in 'The Man With The Iron Heart- a story about one of the most dangerous figures in the Nazi regime' by Dercksen, D., *The Writing Studio*, 18.11.2017, [Accessed: <https://writingstudio.co.za/the-man-with-the-iron-heart-a-story-about-one-of-the-most-dangerous-figures-in-the-nazi-regime/>, 13.11.2019].



new scene and had to stay in character to get into the mode for portraying Heydrich. He was also very aware of walking around in a Nazi uniform.<sup>671</sup> Clarke states that likes to prepare for a role by reading everything that can be read. He tried to inspire the atmosphere of fear and infinite aggression. He states that there is only a fine line between where you are in the place where you want to get into the role and hold it in yourself and when to let it go, while performing in a Nazi uniform.<sup>672</sup>

A review states that Clarke gives a strong performance as Heydrich and manages to depict him as more than a Nazi caricature, after his role in *Terminator Genisys* (Allan Taylor, 2015, USA). This review states that *Terminator Genisys* was a mess.<sup>673</sup> Film critic Peter Bradshaw stated in liberal-leaning *The Guardian* that Jason Clarke is on boring form and even 67-year-old Arnold Schwarzenegger is under par. He argues in this review that the whole dreary business drags on with not a single or ingenious idea in its echoing metal head describing it as a cynical franchise reboot, machine tooled to clank into cinemas and gouge money out of people.<sup>674</sup> Even though the producer David Ellison managed to recruit Schwarzenegger to return to the iconic T800 cyborg role he first played in 1984 *The Terminator* (James Cameron, 1984, USA) and casted high profile actors such as Emilia Clarke from *Game of Thrones* (David Benioff and D.B Weiss, 2011, USA) and Jason Clarke from *Zero Dark Thirty* (Kathryn Bigelow, 2012, USA & United Arab Emirates). The Terminator movies were put on hold after the US box office failure in 2015.<sup>675</sup> *Terminator Genisys* underperformed at the US box office bringing in less than \$90 million and in January 2016 Paramount removed the planned Terminator sequel from its release schedule for 2017.<sup>676</sup> Even though this film was not financially successful, Clarke is remembered for this role, which is shown in the review of *The Man with the Iron Heart*. This means that viewers who would watch Clarke's performance as Heydrich will remember him from his role in *Terminator Genisys*.

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<sup>671</sup> Dercksen, D., 18.11.17.

<sup>672</sup> Expats, 'Interview: Aussie Actor Jason Clarke On His Darkest Role Yet', *Expats.cz*, 12.6.17 [Accessed: <http://news.expats.cz/movies-tv/interview-actor-jason-clarke-on-his-darkest-role-yet/>, 20.3.20].

<sup>673</sup> Hughes, K., 'Home Entertainment: 'The Man With The Iron Heart' Blue-Ray Review,' *The Hollywood News*, 1.8.18 [Accessed: <http://www.thehollywoodnews.com/2018/01/08/the-man-with-the-iron-heart-review/>, 15.2.20].

<sup>674</sup> Bradshaw, P., 'Terminator Genisys Review- Arnie's back, in a cynical franchisebot', *The Guardian*, 2.7.2015 [Accessed: <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2015/jul/02/terminator-genisys-review-arnies-back-in-a-cynical-franchisebot>, 25.3.20].

<sup>675</sup> Child, B., 'Terminator saga 'terminated' by Genisys box office failure', *The Guardian*, 2.10.15, [Accessed: <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2015/oct/02/terminator-saga-terminated-by-genisys-box-office-failure>, 26.3.20].

<sup>676</sup> Lee, B., 'Terminator sequel terminated', *The Guardian*, 21.1.16 [Accessed: <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2016/jan/21/terminator-sequel-paramount-removed-2017-release-schedule>, 26.3.20].

However, Jason Clarke might also be known to viewers through his role in *Zero Dark Thirty*, which was released before *Terminator Genisys*. Journalist Hermoine Hoby describes in an article in the liberal-leaning *The Guardian* that the nastiest, hardest, and most disturbing scene that viewers would see in 2013 is the opening scene of *Zero Dark Thirty*.<sup>677</sup> The film begins with a half-dead detainee being beaten, waterboarded, sexually humiliated and finally locked in a tiny box. Jason Clarke portrays the perpetrator, the tattooed, Wu-Tang-loving CIA operative Dan, who introduces the main character Maya, a young CIA officer, to the brutal working of a US military black site in Pakistan. Even though Clarke had reservations about the integrity of the film, he was pleased that the torture scenes were shown. He underwent a simulated waterboarding experience in preparation for the role. Even though he claimed that it is very different to the real thing, because there is a stop point, he described the simulation as similar to surfing and being dumped under a big wave, as there is a lot of water coming in and filling the body up.<sup>678</sup> He states that “he is able to find the requisite brutality for this role without getting to him the same way as someone would prepare to bake a cake in reducing it to something simple.” According to him, “it starts with the facts on the page and your reward as an actor is scenes like this”. Clarke states that he has now opinion on torture and the only opinion he has is on the screen in the character he chooses to play. He believes that it is up to the people to research it and reach their own conclusion, because as an actor it is not his job and the film should speak for itself. Furthermore, Clarke starred in 2013 in 5 major films including the Baz Luhrmann’s adaption of *Gatsby*, in which he plays Wilson, the cuckolded mechanic, who brings the story to its climax, to Leonardo DiCaprio’s *Gatsby* and Carey Mulligan’s *Daisy*. Luhrmann’s adaption *The Great Gatsby* (Baz Luhrmann, 2013, Australia & USA) crossed the 100 million US dollar mark after 14 days in release at the domestic box office and it opened at the top of the international box office taking \$43 million in 49 territories scoring the number one spot in France, Italy, Spain, Germany, Russia and Taiwan.<sup>679</sup> Clarke states that he is in the dust and dirt and slog and none of the glamour in this film. He argues that he wanted this part because Wilson is the only decent man in the story.<sup>680</sup> Clarke stated in article about the film *Everest* (Baltasar Kormákur, 2015, UK, USA & Iceland) that he learnt to play the violin and to fence to

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<sup>677</sup> Hoby, H., ‘Zero Dark Thirty: Jason Clarke confesses,’ *The Guardian*, 18.1.13 [Accessed: <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2013/jan/18/zero-dark-thirty-jason-clarke>, 27.3.20].

<sup>678</sup> Ford, R., ‘Jason Clarke Describes Undergoing a Simulated Waterboarding Experience for Zero Dark Thirty (Video),’ *The Hollywood Reporter*, 1.8.13, [Accessed: <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/zero-dark-thirty-jason-clarke-409853>, 26.3.20].

<sup>679</sup> Business Wire, ‘The Great Gatsby’ Does Great Box Office, Hitting the \$100 Million Mark’, *The Business Wire*, 24.3.20 [Accessed: <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20130524005707/en/%E2%80%9CThe-Great-Gatsby%E2%80%9D-Great-Box-Office-Hitting>, 27.3.20].

<sup>680</sup> Hoby, H., ‘Zero Dark Thirty: Jason Clarke confesses,’ *The Guardian*, 18.1.13 [Accessed: <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2013/jan/18/zero-dark-thirty-jason-clarke>, 27.3.20].

portray Heydrich.<sup>681</sup> Clarke describes the torture scene of a suspect whose confession is instrumental to find Osama Bin Laden:

The two days we spent shooting the interrogation stuff, yeah they were upsetting. But it would have been upsetting not to have done it-to say we are gonna do it in a clean way, or not quiet show it properly. It is the same with Heydrich. I believe it is worth observing terrible things people have done as clearly and rationally as we can to show that our monsters are not caricatures. The things they did are not far from the surface.<sup>682</sup>

This shows how the casting choice of Clarke through his acting style and his persona influenced the meaning associated with this fictional representation of Heydrich.

Furthermore, Clarke states for him Heydrich had to be a three-dimensional character. He portrays Heydrich as a father and keen musician, which might be unsettling for the viewers to see such a historic monster in such ordinary setting. He states that “Heydrich was a serious man who committed some of the most heinous acts in human history and there must be point for him for doing it, as there has to be some reason lay down the track”.<sup>683</sup> One of the reasons, which the film offers to its viewers, is Heydrich’s wife Lina, who according to this film was an important influence on Heydrich and his career. This is a contrast to earlier representations of Heydrich as women were not present as main character in *Die Wannseekonferenz* or *Conspiracy*. Furthermore, through focusing on one historical event, the Wannsee Conference, in the fictional representations of Heydrich in my other two case studies, the viewers were not offered any explanation how Heydrich became the ‘Young Evil Good of Death’ or the ‘Butcher of Prague’.

#### **4.13 Heydrich’s wife Lina von Osten in *The Man with the Iron Heart*- The Women behind the Monster**

Frank Scheck states in *The Hollywood Reporter* that Lina’s character is more complex because Heydrich can be reduced to his placid exterior and monstrous interior duality. He argues that Lina starts off as an early Nazi sympathiser who genuinely believed the party could turn her country around. She managed to transform her husband’s failing career into

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<sup>681</sup> Gilbey, R., ‘From Home Away to Everest, Jason Clarke is reaching new peaks’, *The Guardian*, 17.9.16 [Accessed: <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2015/sep/17/from-home-and-away-to-everest-jason-clarke-is-reaching-new-peaks>, 27.3.20].

<sup>682</sup> Gilbey, R., 17.9.16.

<sup>683</sup> Dercksen, D., 18.11.17.

a lucrative Nazi career, but finally finds herself married to a man who is always absent and treats her as glorified caretaker of his children.<sup>684</sup> Schenk believes that Lina emerges as the unlikely central character infusing her with some icy toughness but softening her as her disappointment with her situation in her marriage grows. This review does mention that the director Jimenez does not focus on the topic of how she feels about the atrocities committed by her husband.<sup>685</sup> Rosamund Pike states in an interview in the French film magazine *Mondociné*:

My character Lina fell in love with something that dysfunctional with Heydrich and the way Jimenez filmed this was very relevant. He was to show that Lina saw that energy and violence in Heydrich and she loved that. It is hard to say that Heydrich was created by the one who became his wife. She recovered him at a time when he was a destroyed man and yet she rebuilt him piece by piece. She made him the monster he has become in this film.<sup>686</sup>



Figure 13 Jason Clarke as Heydrich and Rosamund Pike as Lina von Osten in *The Man with the Iron Heart*.

The review in the *Prague Reporter* argues that Pike as Lina Heydrich has more of a character arc than Heydrich, which is rarely seen in film with the topic of the Third Reich. According to this review, she is the initial force behind Heydrich's career with the SS, but eventually looks in horror at the monster she created.<sup>687</sup> This review argues that the film's failure is to not focus on her anymore after Heydrich's death. She lived on to live forty more years in Germany receiving a substantial pension due to her husband's ranking in

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<sup>684</sup> van Hoeji, B., 'The Man with the Iron Heart (HHhH): Film Review', *The Hollywood Reporter*, 16.5.17 [Accessed: <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/review/man-iron-heart-1003943>, 6.12.19]

<sup>685</sup> van Hoeji, B., 16.5.17.

<sup>686</sup> Pike, R., in an interview with the title 'HHhH: Interview de Jason Clarke and Rosamund Pike', *Mondociné*, 7.6.2017 [Accessed: <http://mondocine.net/hhh-interview-de-jason-clarke-et-rosamund-pike/>, 27.3.20].

<sup>687</sup> Pirodsky, J., 1.7.20.

the military and defended her husband until her death in 1985. However, none of this information is mentioned at the end in an end title scrawl.<sup>688</sup> Rosamund Pike states about her role in *The Man with the Iron Heart*:

She is someone who would have wanted to be powerful herself, but as a woman at that time that wasn't really possible. In a way, you had to live vicariously through your man. I think she seized this man and saw something in him that was kind of available for manipulation. She took him and made him in a way her puppet. She creates the monster. And when you create a monster, the monster will bite you, because that is what it does. She gets what she wanted and for me Lina represented the mistake for people who saw the Nazi system as a solution.<sup>689</sup>

This statement by the actress Pike how she understood the role and how our perception of Heydrich has changed, as the values in the Western contemporary society changed too.

Pike starred as the missing wife Amy with Ben Affleck as Nick in the dark mystery thriller *Gone Girl*, which had an impressive debut haul of \$38 million based on the bestseller with the same title.<sup>690</sup> The film casts the British actress opposite Ben Affleck as a married couple in meltdown, pitting Amy's cool panache against her husband's boorish blundering.<sup>691</sup> On the day of his fifth wedding anniversary bar owner Nick Dunne finds his Missouri home theatrically violated; the front door open; a glass table overturned and smashed; his wife unaccountably missing.<sup>692</sup> Pike, who portrays Amy, states in the liberal-leaning *The Guardian* that "the thing about Amy is that she could never have been a man. She is purely female. People don't like me saying it, but it's true".<sup>693</sup> The author of the book *Gone Girl*, Gillian Flynn, who also wrote the script for the film, argues that "women have spent so many years girl-powering ourselves to the point of almost parodic encouragement-we have left no room to acknowledge our dark side. Dark sides are

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<sup>688</sup> Pirodosky, J., 1.7.20.

<sup>689</sup> Dercksen, D., 18.11.17.

<sup>690</sup> Child, B., 'Gone Girl scare up \$38m to top US box office and stalk past horror prequel Annabelle', *The Guardian*, 6.10.14, [Accessed: <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2014/oct/06/gone-girl-tops-us-box-office-beats-horror-prequel-annabelle>, 27.3.20].

<sup>691</sup> Brooks, X., 'Gone Girl unleashes battle of the sexes at New York Film festival', *The Guardian*, 27.9.14 [Accessed: <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2014/sep/27/gone-girl-battle-of-sexes-new-york-film-festival-premiere>, 28.3.20].

<sup>692</sup> Kermodé, M., 'Gone Girl review-two different readings of a modern marriage', *The Guardian*, 5.10.14 [Accessed: <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2014/oct/05/gone-girl-review-two-different-readings-modern-marriage>, 28.3.20]

<sup>693</sup> Pike, R. in 'Gone Girl unleashes battle of the sexes at New York Film festival' by Brooks, X., *The Guardian*, 27.9.14 [Accessed: <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2014/sep/27/gone-girl-battle-of-sexes-new-york-film-festival-premiere>, 28.3.20]

important They should be nurtured like dark orchids.”<sup>694</sup> David Cox states in the liberal-leaning *The Guardian* that the character Amy does not only kill in this film, but she also makes false allegations of rape and she is believed. Amy also traps a man by stealing his sperm to make herself pregnant. She plans with much malice aforethought to treat her husband and her own children as mere instruments of her will.<sup>695</sup> Pike states “her reaction to Amy goes beyond like or dislike, as I understand her.”<sup>696</sup> Pike was nominated for an Oscar as best actress for the film in 2015.<sup>697</sup> This would mean that viewers watching *The Man with Iron Heart* would associate the actress Pike with her performance in *Gone Girl*.

Before *The Man with the Iron Heart*, Pike starred in the film *A United Kingdom* (Amma Asante, 2016, UK & USA) as Ruth Williams, a clerk from Blackheath in 1947, who is swept of her feet by handsome law student Seretse Khama. Ruth does not know that Serete is an African King in waiting.<sup>698</sup> They get married and propose returning in uxorious triumph to his homeland. However, Khama is required to stay in long exile in London, while Ruth remains behind in Africa as a kind of hostage. Film critic Peter Bradshaw argues that the fact that Pike is tall makes her interestingly of equal height with her lead, which could symbolise a pleasing visual approximation of their equal partnership in this morganatic marriage.<sup>699</sup> Geoffrey Macnab states in a review in the liberal-leaning *The Independent* that Pike captures her character’s steeliness, her refusal to be browbeaten by either her own family or by Seret’s disapproving relatives and her determination to adjust to life in Africa.<sup>700</sup> *A United Kingdom* had box office revenue of over \$14 million worldwide and nearly 3 million US dollar in the United Kingdom. This means that viewers could associate the actress Pike with her positive performance as Ruth Williams in *A United Kingdom*, while watching her as Heydrich’s wife Lina in *The Man with the Iron Heart*.

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<sup>694</sup> Flynn, G. in ‘Gone Girl revamps gender stereotypes for the worst’, by Cox, D., *The Guardian*, 6.10.2014, [Accessed: <https://www.theguardian.com/film/filmblog/2014/oct/06/gone-girl-female-stereotype-women>, 28.3.20].

<sup>695</sup> Cox, D., ‘Gone Girl revamps gender stereotypes for the worst’, *The Guardian*, 6.10.2014, [Accessed: <https://www.theguardian.com/film/filmblog/2014/oct/06/gone-girl-female-stereotype-women>, 28.3.20].

<sup>696</sup> Pike, R., in ‘Gone Girl revamps gender stereotypes for the worst’ by Cox, D., *The Guardian*, 6.10.14, [Accessed: <https://www.theguardian.com/film/filmblog/2014/oct/06/gone-girl-female-stereotype-women>, 28.3.20].

<sup>697</sup> Rich, K., ‘Oscar Nominations 2015: The Complete List’, *Vanity Fair*, 15.1.15 [Accessed: <https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2015/01/2015-oscar-nominations-list>, 28.3.20].

<sup>698</sup> Kermodé, M., ‘A United Kingdom review-black king to white queen’, *The Guardian*, 27.11.2016 [Accessed: <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2016/nov/27/a-united-kingdom-review-love-story-amma-asante-david-oyelowo-rosamund-pike>, 29.3.2020]

<sup>699</sup> Bradshaw, P., ‘A United Kingdom review: Rosamund Pike and David Oyelowo in fine romance’, *The Guardian*, 9.11.16 [Accessed: <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2016/sep/09/a-united-kingdom-review-rosamund-pike-david-oyelowo-toronto>, 29.3.20]

<sup>700</sup> Macnab, G., ‘A United Kingdom, London Film Festival review: A likeable film reminiscent of old Richard Attenborough movies’, *The Independent*, 5.10.16 [Accessed: <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/reviews/a-united-kingdom-london-film-festival-review-david-oyelowo-rosamund-pike-racism-oscar-release-date-a7346576.html>, 29.3.20].

Pike argues that Heydrich's wife Lina created the monster Heydrich and he would have not become the architect of the Final Solution or the 'Butcher of Prague' without her.<sup>701</sup> The representation of Heydrich in *The Man with the Iron Heart* is different in comparison to *Conspiracy*, not only because *The Man with the Iron Heart* portrays on Heydrich's life and his rise in the SS, instead of only focusing on the historical event of the Wannsee Conference, but also because his wife plays a more prominent role and is represented as a main influence on his career and how he became a leading National Socialist in the Third Reich.

#### 4.14 Conclusion

In the book *Ethics of Memory*, Avishai Margalit argues that humanity should remember striking examples of radical evil and crimes against humanity such as mass exterminations. Margalit argues that radical evil consists of acts that undermine the very foundation of humanity itself. She states that Nazi eliminative biologism, as exercised in the elimination of the Jews and Gypsies was a direct onslaught on the very idea of shared humanity. Therefore, it was a direct onslaught on morality itself. She believes that such an attack on morality should be recorded and remembered.<sup>702</sup> *Die Wannseekonferenz*, *Conspiracy* and *The Man with the Iron Heart* created in different cultures and time periods remember the Third Reich and the historical character of Heydrich through the recorded images for film and television. Margalit states that it is impossible to undo what has been done, since the past cannot be changed, it is possible to change our interpretation of the past. I would argue that the interpretation of the Wannsee Conference has been changed from 1984 with the West German television production *Die Wannseekonferenz* to the American HBO production *Conspiracy* in 2001, as well as the interpretation of Heydrich in 2017 with *The Man with the Iron Heart*. As much as these fictional narratives enhance the viewers understanding of this time period, Fascism and Nazis, I would argue that my case studies offer more insight on the cultures and time periods, which produced these media texts.

*Die Wannseekonferenz* was produced by the Austrian television network ORF and the West German television network Bayerischer Rundfunk in 1984. Therefore, it could be argued that this representation of this historical event and Heydrich should be the preferred interpretation during this time period, because a German state television channel, which is funded with money from the German government, and the Austrian

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<sup>701</sup> Pirodsky, J., 8.6.2017.

<sup>702</sup> Margalit, A., *The Ethics of Memory*, Harvard University Press, 2002, p. 78.

television network, which is funded with money from the Austrian government, produced it. Johnson believes in his thesis that the film is in line with intentionalist historiography, which is a school of thought characterized by an emphasis on Hitler and top-down decision making illustrated through the presence of Hitler in this fictional narrative. The film starts with a voice-over claiming that 90 minutes of the Wannsee Conference were authentically reconstructed from documents and testimonials from witnesses, as these 90 minutes decided the fate of the Jews.

Heinz Hoehne claims in a review in the German magazine *Der Spiegel* that this not the Wannsee Conference as known by the historians, but the interpretation of the Wannsee Conference by the screenwriter Paul Mommertz. Hoehne uses an example of a scene, where Heydrich is criticised by another member of the conference, who states that they would need too much ammunition to execute eleven million Jews. Heydrich claims that there are more human methods to execute the Jews. He states conference member should read Hitler's book *Mein Kampf* on page 772 in the first edition and take Hitler's word for it. Hoehne states that this a great visual scene to show that Heydrich knows Hitler's words very well, but the page 772 never existed in the first edition of *Mein Kampf*. This could be seen as an example of how *Die Wannseekonferenz* recreates this historical event, adding details such as quoting parts from *Mein Kampf*, which do not exist.

Even though Hoehne praises the director's work and the performance of the actors, he criticises the fantasy of the screenwriter, who has to invent large parts of the narrative, because this historical event is not representable in a detailed manner due to the lack of historical sources. Hoehne believes that this film does not offer any new insight regarding the leading National Socialists present at the conference or offers any explanations for the Final Solution or the role of SS or Wehrmacht in the extermination of the Jews.<sup>703</sup>

However, I would argue that this film is an example of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming to terms with the past) in Germany in the 1980s to try to understand the leading National Socialists responsible for the Final Solution. The film represents six years of research on the part of co-producer Manfred Korytowski. Mommertz's script allows for natural seeming-shifts and pauses, which permits director Heinz Schirk and cinematographer Horst Schier to create and sustain a sense of rhythm, variety and movement through all that talk.<sup>704</sup> Canby argues in his review in the liberal newspaper *The Washington Post* in 1987 that this film being seemingly breezy finds a voice for dealing with matters that are not unspeakable, which is the film's sorrowful accomplishment, as

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<sup>703</sup> Hoehne, H., 17.12.84.

<sup>704</sup> Thomas, K., 25.2.87.



the Wannsee Conference was a key date to understand the Holocaust. However, he also mentions that the film has the unreal, breathless pacing of a Broadway comedy with some jokes.<sup>705</sup> Thomas states in his review in the liberal-leaning *Los Angeles Times* that 'The Wannsee Conference' is a portrait of individuals caught up in a collective self-deception, as a microcosm of their nation.<sup>706</sup> In comparison the review in the liberal-conservative German newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* asks if the audience is able to observe through a keyhole perspective these perpetrators and believes that instead of understanding Heydrich or the other leading Nazis, the film only offers the audience a sense of being present at this historical event.<sup>707</sup> Even though it can be debated how much *Die Wannseekonferenz* adds to the understanding of Heydrich or the Wannsee Conference, it reminds the audience that this event happened and can be seen as an example for Germany to come to terms with this difficult past through dealing with the perpetrators and the Final Solution in West Germany. The historical event of the Wannsee conference was utilised a symbol to portray the Final Solution and to depict leading National Socialists such as Heydrich in West German television.

The American HBO production *Conspiracy* represented Heydrich and the Wannsee Conference in 2001. HBO most notable productions negotiate the past and interrogate the cultural memory through the depiction of individual lives that are positioned at the centre of national struggles, community conflicts, social movements and scandals. The productions usually avoid the uplifting moral lessons and happy endings. HBO historical productions often use history to impart lessons to the audience.<sup>708</sup> Therefore, it could be argued that meaning associated with *Conspiracy* was also influenced by the label of a HBO production. The screenwriter Loring Mandel claims the director Pierson and editor Zinner became interested in working on this movie, after they saw the sub-titled Austrian-German docudrama 'The Wannsee Conference'.<sup>709</sup> The director made the conscious decision to place most of the narrative inside the meeting room, which was reconstructed at Shepperton Studios near London. The extended scenes, the long tracking shots and the eye-level camera angles underline the feeling for the viewers to be present in that room.<sup>710</sup> The film was produced in a very short amount of time and once filming started all the actors spent every day sitting around a conference table, delivering or listening to

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<sup>705</sup> Canby, V., 18.11.87.

<sup>706</sup> Thomas, K., 25.2.87.

<sup>707</sup> Baader, K-L., 21.12. 84.

<sup>708</sup> *The Essential HBO Reader* in Johnson, N.K, December 2016, p. 36.

<sup>709</sup> Gritten, D., 13.5.01.

<sup>710</sup> Gritten, D., 13.5.01.

inhuman dialogue.<sup>711</sup> Branagh states in a review of *Conspiracy* in an American newspaper:

Toward the end when Heydrich is wrapping up the meeting, there is a ghastly moment, when he says, 'Right this is what we are going to do. If anyone has a problem, get in touch with Col. Eichmann. Is everybody in agreement?' I remember finishing this line and thinking I want to be sick. It is like 'Nice meal, 11 million dead in a year. Glad we have accomplished something. It's almost incomprehensible, yet it happened. Maybe the film offers some perspective that wasn't possible before.'<sup>712</sup>

A review in the liberal weekly magazine *The New Yorker* claims that HBO's production is a testament to the power of meetings, as evil even requires the banality of coordination.<sup>713</sup>

This review also mentions Branagh's performance as Heydrich, who represents this historical character with an icy suavity. As I have demonstrated through my analyses of various reviews in the American and British media, it seems clear that the Branagh's persona and performance shaped the meaning associated with Heydrich in *Conspiracy*.<sup>714</sup>

In a review in the conservative tabloid newspaper *New York Daily News*, the historian Berenbaum claims that *Conspiracy* is the most important presentation of the Holocaust because it shows the meeting without toning down the language or subject matter. However, he also believes that the average American does not know about the Wannsee Conference. Therefore, I would agree that it is important to remember this historical event and Heydrich through a high-production value and English-language film such as *Conspiracy*, which would reach a wider audience than the German TV production *Die Wannseekonferenz*, due to the cast of international stars, the production by HBO and the decision to have all the actors use their British accent to make the Nazis less alien to an English-speaking audience. However, it could also mean that the representation of this historical even will only be remembered through the HBO production *Conspiracy* and Branagh's representation of Heydrich will replace the historical figure in the cultural memory. The Holocaust scholar Michael Berenbaum claims:

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<sup>711</sup> Mills, N., 13.5.01.

<sup>712</sup> Branagh, K. in 'Hatred on the Agenda in 'Conspiracy', Kenneth Branagh plays the man who initiated the Holocaust' by Mills, N., *New York Daily News*, 13.5.01 [Accessed: <https://www.nydailynews.com/hatred-agenda-conspiracy-kenneth-branagh-plays-man-initiated-holocaust-article-1.897824>, 3.12.19].

<sup>713</sup> Backman, M., 22.8.18.

<sup>714</sup> Backman, M., 22.8.18.

You have all this evil but there is no graphic image of death and barely anyone raises voice. The meeting is not unlike meetings we have all attended. But the power depends on the audience's knowledge of what happened afterwards.<sup>715</sup>

I agree with Berenbaum that it is important to represent this historical event so that it will not be forgotten by future generations. *Conspiracy* offers the past a coherent story with engaging performances by international stars such as Colin Firth and Stanley Tucci. This could mean that Branagh's performance might define how Heydrich is remembered in the cultural memory.

The contemporary representation of Heydrich in *The Man with the Iron Heart* in 2017 shows a shift in our understanding of this historical character, but it also shows a shift in the Western cultures regarding the role of women in fictional narratives, as Heydrich's wife Lina plays a more prominent role in this media text. Whereas women are not the main characters in my other two case studies, Lina is represented as one of the main influences of Heydrich's life and his career. The director Jimenez argues that Heydrich was introduced to Nazi ideology through his wife Lina, portrayed by Rosamund Pike, who was a high aristocrat. She accompanied him throughout his rise to power, as Heydrich was the principal architect of the Final Solution and an unstoppable force.<sup>716</sup> Therefore, I believe that it was a conscious decision by the director to portray Lina Heydrich in this manner. Her representation as a main influence on Heydrich's life and his career shapes the meaning associated with Heydrich's representation in this fictional narrative. Jimenez argued in an interview with the French film magazine *Mondociné* that Europe was marked by the Second World War and we still want to understand and delve into this subject. According to him, the story is still close and fresh, but it is also important to continue to remind viewers of these events regularly so they are not forgotten.<sup>717</sup> He stated on the production of the film:

Every day we get up and we see the arrival of actors and extras in Nazi uniforms. We repeat the scenes of killings several times a day, or even several days. It is also morally demanding, After all, making a film is also creating and recreating, so we do not logically feel thing, as we were living them. But it is true that it is cloudy. There is the responsibility that goes with it and we try to do it with tact and respect.

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<sup>715</sup> Berenbaum M., in 'Hatred on the Agenda in 'Conspiracy', Kenneth Branagh plays the man who initiated the Holocaust' by Mills, N., *New York Daily News*, 13.5.01 [Accessed: <https://www.nydailynews.com/hatred-agenda-conspiracy-kenneth-branagh-plays-man-initiated-holocaust-article-1.897824>, 3.12.19].

<sup>716</sup> Dercksen, D., 18.11.2017.

<sup>717</sup> Jimenez, C., in an interview with the title 'HhhH: Entretien avec le réalisateur Cédric Jimenez', *Modociné*, 7.6.17 [Accessed: <http://mondocine.net/hhhh-interview-cedric-jimenez/>, 6.12.19]

You have to have enough distance to create all this in a realistic way. I did not want there to be any modesty. From the moment we get into Heydrich's position, it is impossible to have modesty, as this man had no modesty. So I had to show things brutally and violently as he was.<sup>718</sup>



Figure 14 Jason Clarke as Heydrich in *The Man with the Iron Heart*.

This statement shows that Jimenez was aware that he was recreating this time period of the Third Reich but also creating a representation of Heydrich, which could influence how Heydrich is remembered, through his directing style and his conscious decision to show things as brutal and violent as Heydrich was. Jason Clarke, who portrayed Heydrich, stated in an interview:

Heydrich thought that he was a good German and that he was doing a good job. He believes that he was doing the right things for the right reasons. This brought him in a particular way close to hell...I cannot imagine today how dark this period may have been. We must not forget even for Germans. In the 1930s, they also arrested Germans they did not like. In this society, if you were not with it, you were against it. All this must not be forgotten.<sup>719</sup>

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<sup>718</sup> Jimenez, C., in an interview with the title 'HhhH: Entretien avec le réalisateur Cédric Jimenez', *Modociné*, 7.6.17 [Accessed: <http://mondocine.net/hhhh-interview-cedric-jimenez/>, 6.12.19]

<sup>719</sup> Clark, J. in an interview with the title 'HHhH: Interview de Jason Clarke and Rosamund Pike', *Mondociné*, 7.6.2017, Accessed: <http://mondocine.net/hhhh-interview-de-jason-clarke-et-rosamund-pike/>, 6.12.2019]

This statement shows how Clarke influenced the representation of Heydrich in this film, through his understanding that Heydrich thought he was a 'good' German doing his job. I agree with Clarke that this time period should not be forgotten. However, Heydrich could be at some point only be remembered through his performance and Clarke's representation of Heydrich could replace the historical figure in the cultural memory. Furthermore, the director Jimenez stated *The Man with the Iron Heart* is a true European film. The actors are English, Irish, French and Hungarian as is the production crew. He believes that each brings a specific and diverse expertise to the film, with the ambition of creating a different kind of film.<sup>720</sup> Randal Halle argues in his book *German Film after Germany* that European filmmaker cannot afford to produce films solely for Europeans in the way that Hollywood can still produce films for the US market, because the European films must orient themselves toward an expanded market across borders.<sup>721</sup> He argues that "the future of any community lies in its ability to imagine a common past".<sup>722</sup> He also believes that the future of the European Union lies in the contemporary production of the past through films such as *The Man with the Iron Heart* from 2017.<sup>723</sup> The tales of open war and conflict can offer narrative material that can cut across national borders.<sup>724</sup> Regarding my case study *The Man with the Iron Heart*, this can be seen in the gross revenue from the theatrical releases in various European countries such as France, UK, Spain, Portugal and the Netherlands, for example. This film had the most gross revenue in France with over \$1,8 million, followed by the Spain with more than \$649 thousand and the UK with more than \$286 thousand. The gross revenue in Portugal for this film was more than \$115 thousand and in the Netherlands the gross revenue was more than \$158 thousand.<sup>725</sup> Furthermore, the historical representation becomes explicitly commodified to achieve broad circulation.<sup>726</sup> This can be seen in *The Man with the Iron Heart* through the casting of international stars such as Rosamund Pike and Jason Clarke and the high production value of the set design with Nazi uniforms and cars from this era, as well as shooting on locations such as Budapest, substituting for the Czech capital, even though

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<sup>720</sup> Jimenez, C., in 'The Man With The Iron Heart- a story about one of the most dangerous figures in the Nazi regime' by Dercksen, D., *The Writing Studio*, 18.11.17 [Accessed: <https://writingstudio.co.za/the-man-with-the-iron-heart-a-story-about-one-of-the-most-dangerous-figures-in-the-nazi-regime/>, 20.11.2019].

<sup>721</sup> Halle, R., *German Films after Germany- Toward a Transnational Aesthetic*, University of Illinois Press, 2008, p. 93.

<sup>722</sup> Halle, R., 2008, p. 89.

<sup>723</sup> Halle, R., 2008, p. 90.

<sup>724</sup> Halle, R., 2008, p. 96.

<sup>725</sup> Box Office Mojo, *The Man with the Iron Heart*, *Box Office Mojo*, [Accessed: [https://www.boxofficemojo.com/releasegroup/gr3169079813/?ref=\\_bo\\_tt\\_gr\\_1](https://www.boxofficemojo.com/releasegroup/gr3169079813/?ref=_bo_tt_gr_1), 20.11.19].

<sup>726</sup> Halle, R., University of Illinois Press, 2008, p. 96.

some exteriors have been shot on location in Prague, recreating an authentic representation of the time period of the Third Reich.<sup>727</sup>



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Figure 15 Jason Clarke as Heydrich in *The Man with the Iron Heart*.

Another aspect of the commodified history on film was that it broke taboos with the depiction of fascism and the Holocaust.<sup>729</sup> I would not argue that *The Man with the Iron Heart* broke taboos, but it represented Heydrich in a different way with the structure of the narrative, as the first half of the film solely focuses on Heydrich offering the viewers no positive characters to identify with. It also portrayed Heydrich in a different manner through focusing on his personal life and shows his wife as a main influence on his ideology and career. Therefore, I agree with Jimenez's statement that *The Man with the Iron Heart* is a European film.

Margalit argues in her book *The Ethics of Memory* that our concepts of sin, forgiveness and forgetting are rooted in religious pictures. She believes that the burden of the sin can be carried by the scapegoat. Wittgenstein states: "The scapegoat one which one lays the one's sins and who runs away into the desert with them- a false picture similar to those which causes error in philosophy."<sup>730</sup> I am not arguing that Heydrich did not commit the

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<sup>727</sup> Pirodsky, J., 'Movie Review: The Butcher of Prague gets his due in 'The Man with the Iron Heart (aka HHHH)', *The Prague Reporter*, 8.6.17 [Accessed: <https://www.praguereporter.com/home/2017/6/8/movie-review-the-butcher-of-prague-gets-his-due-in-the-man-with-the-iron-heart-aka-hhhh>, 12.11.19].

<sup>728</sup> Modociné, 'HhhH: Entretien avec le réalisateur Cédric Jimenez', *Modociné*, 7.6.17 [Accessed: <http://mondocine.net/hhhh-interview-cedric-jimenez/>, 6.12.19].

<sup>729</sup> Halle, R., 2008, p. 96.

<sup>730</sup> Wittgenstein, L., in *The Ethics of Memory* by Margalit, A., Harvard University Press, 2002, p. 186.

crimes and sins depicted in my case studies. However, I would argue that Heydrich could be seen as a scapegoat for the German population. He is portrayed as an evil character in *Die Wannseekonferenz*, *Conspiracy* and *The Man with the Iron Heart*, who was responsible for the extermination of the European Jews. Therefore, it could be argued that through Heydrich's representation in these fictional narratives he represents the radical evil of Nazism and removes the sins from the German population for the Third Reich. Margalit states the scapegoat has entered Western culture as a creature that people blame and punish for sins that it did not commit, which were actually committed by those doing the blaming and the punishing. The process displaces human sins on the head of the goat.<sup>731</sup> Through portraying the Heydrich in fictional narratives such as *Conspiracy* and *The Man with the Iron Heart* Western culture or an audience could be reminded of who they were and who they wanted to be in contrast to the evil character of Heydrich.<sup>732</sup> It is also important that the Wannsee Conference and the historical character Heydrich are not forgotten by future generations, who did not experience this time period through films such as *Conspiracy* and *The Man with The Iron Heart*. Kenneth Branagh's performance in *Conspiracy* or Jason Clarke's performance in *The Man with the Iron Heart* will define how the historical character is remembered in the cultural memory. Furthermore, there still seem to be an interest in this historical character, as *The Man with the Iron Heart* earned more than \$4 million US in the theatrical release worldwide, apart from America.<sup>733</sup> The story of Heydrich is still able to generate money and as long as this situation continues there will be further representations of leading National Socialists and films about the Third Reich, because after all the movie industry's aim is to generate money with narratives, which draws viewers into cinemas, create more subscriptions for channels such as HBO and generate high ratings on TV for German television channels.

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<sup>731</sup> Margalit, A., 2002, p. 188.

<sup>732</sup> Rau, P., 2013, p. 3.

<sup>733</sup> Box Office Mojo, *The Man with the Iron Heart*, *Box Office Mojo*, [Accessed: [https://www.boxofficemojo.com/releasegroup/gr3169079813/?ref=bo\\_tt\\_gr\\_1](https://www.boxofficemojo.com/releasegroup/gr3169079813/?ref=bo_tt_gr_1), 20.11.19].





## Conclusion

This thesis has argued that the fictional representations of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich in film and television need to be analysed in relation to their production context and reviews in Germany, America and Britain in order to comprehend the meaning associated with these fictional narratives. Through the films selected for this analysis, in which these historical figures are represented in different cultures and time periods, this thesis has shown how the time periods they are produced in, the reviews of these media texts and the production context such as filmmakers, producers and actors influence the meaning associated with the depictions of these leading Nazis. The broader questions that the film selection helps to illustrate relate to how the meanings associated with the fictional representations of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich are constructed through the structure of the fictional narratives, the cultures they are produced in, the stars which depict these historical characters, as well as reviews in different countries.

The historian Richard J. Evans believes that Hitler is fascinating because he reappears in retrospect as the ultimate embodiment of evil. Hitler exterminated millions because of their race, sexuality and physical ability using specially constructed gas chambers for his purpose.<sup>734</sup> However, I would argue that also other leading Nazis such as Speer, Rommel and Heydrich became fascinating after the war through their actualized representations in film and television. Adopting a narrower focus on three leading Nazis and specific media texts enabled this thesis to show how each time period conveys a different interpretation of the past through portraying Speer, Rommel and Heydrich in film and television. Throughout this thesis, I have demonstrated that the representations of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich in my case studies and the meaning associated with them can only be completely understood if they are analysed through their production context and reception in Germany, America and Britain. I chose these three historical figures, because their constant actualized representations in film and television show that there is ongoing fascination with these leading National Socialists in various cultures. The common thread throughout this thesis is that the fictional representations of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich are not only films about the Third Reich, but also offer an opportunity to analyse what these constructed versions of the past mean to the cultures they are produced in.

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<sup>734</sup> Evans, R. J., 'Why are we obsessed with Nazis?', *The Guardian*, 6.2.15, [Accessed: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/feb/06/why-obsessed-nazis-third-reich> 1.5.20].

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Film critic Scott claims in a review in *The New York Times* that *Downfall* allows the audience's sympathy to gravitate towards some of the characters such as Speer or Professor Schenck. Scott argues that this is a result of the conventions of film narrative, which invites the viewers to identify with someone on screen, even if nobody is especially admirable. He believes that 'the film is sending its domestic audience the soothing message that ordinary Germans were above all victims of Nazism'.<sup>735</sup> The producer Bernd Eichinger claims that he did not want to make anyone sympathetic or not sympathetic. He stated "that's moviemaking. In real life there is grey."<sup>736</sup> The German director Wim Wenders argued "the lack of narrative position alone takes the audience in a black hole, in which they are led almost unnoticeably, toward looking at this time through the eyes of the perpetrators, and generates a kind of benevolent understanding of them."<sup>737</sup> This example regarding the review of *Downfall* shows that it is vital to examine the fictional representations of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich in relation to the production context and the reviews, because these discussions in the public sphere shape the meaning associated with the representations of these leading Nazis.

In chapter two this thesis explored how Speer's representation in the contemporary German case studies *Downfall* and *Speer and Hitler* has been utilized through the production and reviews as a symbol to explain how the German population followed Hitler. *Downfall* presents many convinced followers of National Socialism not as perpetrators complicit with a barbaric regime, but rather as having been duped by it and consequently as its victims such as Speer.<sup>738</sup> The film was a big hit in Germany with 4.6 million admissions and audiences. It was also nominated for an Oscar in the US as best foreign film.<sup>739</sup> I would argue that *Downfall* was made in 2004 not only to portray the leading Nazis in a German film but also because a film depicting Hitler's last days in the bunker would be financially successful. The German government under chancellor Gerhard Schröder at this time also continued the process of stabilizing Germany's self image and role in the world, as well as normalizing German history, which started during Helmut Kohl's chancellorship after Germany's reunification.<sup>740</sup> Furthermore, the year 2004 was the sixtieth anniversary of the end of World War II. Sebastian Koch portrays Speer in the fictional episodes of the German TV production *Speer and Hitler* sympathetically, as a

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<sup>735</sup> Scott, A.O, 18.2.05.

<sup>736</sup> Salamon, J., 'Hitler, That Fellow With the Nice Little Dog', *The New York Times*, 20.2.2005, [Accessed: <https://www.nytimes.com/2005/02/20/movies/hitler-that-fellow-with-the-nice-little-dog.html>, 1.6.2020]

<sup>737</sup> Salamon, J., 20.2.05.

<sup>738</sup> Cooke, P., 'Der Untergang (2004): Victims, Perpetrator and the Continuing Fascination with Fascism' in *A Nation of Victims? Representations of German Wartime Suffering from 1945 to the Present* by Schmitz, H., (ED), Rodopi B.V., 2007, p. 253.

<sup>739</sup> Summers, S., 'Now the Germans have their say', *The Guardian*, 20.3.05, [Accessed: <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2005/mar/20/features.review1>, 2.6.20].

<sup>740</sup> Bangert, A., 2014, p. 136.

reserved individual driven primarily by his architectural ambitions and then seduced by the attentions and flattery of his leader.<sup>741</sup>

Chapter Three showed how the fictional representation of Rommel changed through focusing on an American film *The Desert Fox*, produced shortly after the end of the war, and a contemporary German TV production *Rommel*. In 1951, Rommel was favourably portrayed in *The Desert Fox* by James Mason, which highlighted his role in the plot to assassinate Hitler.<sup>742</sup> Whereas James Mason portrayed Rommel as a hero, who distanced himself from Hitler, Ulrich Tukur portrays him very differently in the German television production *Rommel*.<sup>743</sup> It could be argued the US government had to re-educate Americans about their attitudes towards Germans after the war and one way was through the fictional depictions of Rommel.<sup>744</sup> The German producer of *Rommel* Hoffmann claims that he did not represent Rommel as a hero and demystifies this historical character. He decided consciously to not show him as the glorious 'Desert Fox', instead focusing on the last seven months of Rommel's life. According to Hofmann, Rommel was a tragic hero, who symbolised a generation of soldiers, who were convinced to act morally according to their values.<sup>745</sup> This representation of Rommel shows how the German television production attempts to assert autonomy over the fictional representation of Rommel in 2012.

Chapter Four compared how the fictional representations of Heydrich in *Die Wannseekonferenz*, *Conspiracy* and *The Man with the Iron Heart* all signify different meanings for this historical figure depending on the time of the production, the culture of the media text and the reviews in Germany, America and Britain. The West German television production *Die Wannseekonferenz* from 1984 can be seen as an attempt to come to terms with this difficult past through dealing with the perpetrators and the Final Solution in West Germany reminding the viewers that this event happened. Heydrich's representation in *Conspiracy* can be seen as an example of how HBO used this historical figure and the Wannsee Conference to increase their brand of creating provoking and controversial media texts. The casting choice of an international star such as Branagh shaped the meaning through interviews and his persona associated with the representation of Heydrich in *Conspiracy*. HBO's production is a testament to the power of

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<sup>741</sup> Guner, F., 6.9.11.

<sup>742</sup> Chambers, M., 1.11.12.

<sup>743</sup> Cicero, 'Erwin Rommel, -Der Held, der keiner war', *Cicero*, 2012. [Accessed: <https://www.cicero.de/kultur/der-held-der-keiner-war/52374>, 10.2.17].

<sup>744</sup> McGinn M., 2013, p. 15.

<sup>745</sup> Spiegel, 'Hofmann-Interview zu "Rommel" Film: "Hitler im Bett, nein danke", *Spiegel*, 25.10.12, [Accessed: <http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/tv/nico-hofmann-interview-zu-rommel-und-hitler-projekt-a-862890.html>, 20.2.19].

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meetings, as evil even requires the banality of coordination.<sup>746</sup> *The Man with the Iron Heart* casting the Australian actor Jason Clarke as Heydrich in 2017 depicts Heydrich's life, his rise in the Nazi party and his assassination. It shows a shift in our understanding of this historical character, but it also shows a shift in the Western cultures regarding the role of women in fictional narratives, as Heydrich's wife Lina, who is portrayed by the international star Rosamund Pike, plays a more prominent role in this media text. Lina is represented as one of the main influences of Heydrich's life and his career. She emerges as the unlikely central character infusing her with some icy toughness, but softening her as her disappointment with her situation in her marriage grows.<sup>747</sup>

*The Hollywood Reporter* claimed that *Downfall* was "one of the best war films ever made and that it will set new standards in the art of committing history to celluloid."<sup>748</sup> As *Downfall* might set new standards in the representation of leading National Socialists and in "the art of committing history on celluloid", this film could define how Albert Speer is remembered. Speer is positioned as Hitler's opponent through his confession about disobeying Hitler's order to implement the 'Scorched Earth' policy, which meant to destroy the complete infrastructure in Germany leaving the German population no chance of survival after the loss of the war.<sup>749</sup> The same could be said about the representation of Rommel in *Rommel* and of Heydrich in *Conspiracy*, as these fictional narratives might define how viewers, who did not experience this time period, remember Rommel and Heydrich. In the end of the German TV production *Rommel*, Rommel says goodbye to his wife and informs her about his death. Even as he is led away to his death, a bewildered Rommel protests: 'I am innocent. I did not participate in the plot to assassinate Hitler.' This television production had a budget of around €10 million and became an enormous success when it was screened on German television, as an estimated 12.7 million viewers or 32.6 per cent of the German television audience followed the transmission of the first part alone.<sup>750</sup> The television production *Rommel* has received criticism by Rommel's family because it might underplay his role in the resistance against Hitler.<sup>751</sup> As there is a lot of speculation surrounding Rommel regarding his image as the brave and proud soldier, but also about how close he was to the resistance, the producer of *Rommel*, Nico

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<sup>746</sup> Backman, M., 22.8.18.

<sup>747</sup> van Hoeij, B., 16.5.17.

<sup>748</sup> Eric Hansen, 'Downfall', *The Hollywood Reporter*, September 16, 2004, in 'Whose Hi/story Is It? The U.S. Reception of Downfall' by Bathrick, D. and Magshamrain, R. L., *New German Critique*, No. 102, Fall 2007, p. 2.

<sup>749</sup> Bathrick, D. and Magshamrain, R. L., Fall 2007, p. 13.

<sup>750</sup> Bangert, A., 2014, p. 109.

<sup>751</sup> Chambers, M., 1.11.12.

Hofmann states that his aim is to demystify Rommel.<sup>752</sup> I would argue that Hoffmann did succeed in depicting a more realistic representation of Rommel's involvement in the plot to assassinate Hitler. However, he depicted the Wehrmacht positively through the historical character such as Speidel and the SS being responsible for war crimes in France with scenes of the SS torturing prisoners. Through the sympathetic portrayal of Rommel in the German television production *Rommel* with scenes involving his family and saving an English spy from the torture of the SS, the metaphor is created that the Wehrmacht was not involved in the crimes of the Third Reich and this fictional representation could be employed to argue that Rommel did not know about the Holocaust. In *Rommel*, he only states to other characters that he heard stories of mass killings by the SS and of the gassing of Jews in the East. Rommel is in this television productions removed from the Holocaust and the war crimes.

The historian Michael Berenbaum, who is a Holocaust scholar and one of the founders of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, believes that the average American does not know much about the Wannsee Conference.<sup>753</sup> Berenbaum describes *Conspiracy* as the most important presentation of the perpetrators of the Holocaust, as the film is different from any other film presentation of the Holocaust, because it gives you the evil and it does not sweeten it.<sup>754</sup> I would argue that through *Conspiracy* the viewers are offered a simplified version of history in a coherent and compelling narrative, which might dominate how the Wannsee Conference is remembered. Branagh received an Emmy Award for Lead Actor in a Miniseries or a Movie and Loring Mendel received an Emmy Award for Writing a Miniseries or a Movie in 2001. Furthermore, Stanley Tucci won a Golden Globe for Best Performance by an actor in a Supporting Role in a Miniseries or Motion Picture in 2002. *Conspiracy* was also nominated for Best Television Limited Series or Motion Picture made for Television and Best Performance by an Actor in a Miniseries or Motion Picture for Television.<sup>755</sup> Alison Graham claims in the weekly listing magazine *Radio Times* from the UK that out of all the performances in *Conspiracy*, Kenneth Branagh as Heydrich will be remembered by the viewers and might haunt their nightmares. She argues that Branagh is flawless and has re-created a monster as the viewers watch Heydrich's smooth charm slip when he threatens those who are not completely on his side.<sup>756</sup> The fictional

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<sup>752</sup> Hofmann N., in 'The Devil's General? German film seeks to debunk Rommel myth' by Chambers, M., *Reuters*, 1.11.12, [Accessed: <http://www.reuters.com/article/entertainment-us-germany-rommel-idUSBRE8A00RM20121101>, 10.2.17]

<sup>753</sup> Mills, N., 13.5.01.

<sup>754</sup> Mills, N., 13.5.01.

<sup>755</sup> BBC Press Office, 'Kenneth Branagh, Stanley Tucci and Colin Firth star in *Conspiracy*, an award-winning HBO Films/BBC Films co-production for BBC TWO', *BBC*, 2002, [Accessed: [http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2002/01\\_january/15/conspiracy.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2002/01_january/15/conspiracy.shtml), 12.6.20].

<sup>756</sup> Graham, A., 25.1.02.

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representation of Heydrich in *Conspiracy* could define how viewers, who did not experience this time period, remember this historical character and the Wannsee Conference.

In a review in the liberal-leaning British newspaper *The Guardian* the historian Kershaw states that *Downfall* is a marvellous historical drama, even though it invented Speer's confession and confirmed his public image as the 'angel who came from hell'. Kershaw ends his review with the question if Germany needs this type of reminder of its past in order not to forget it.<sup>757</sup> I would argue that Germany does need these reminders of the past of the Third Reich shown through films such as *Speer and Hitler: The Devil's Architect* from 2005 and *Rommel* from 2012. Both these films were produced by the German national television showing that there is a need in Germany for new films about the Third Reich after *Downfall*. Kershaw questions Germany's need for new films about the Third Reich and doubts that these films will bring any new insights.<sup>758</sup> Even though *Speer and Hitler: The Devil's Architect* offers the viewers a detailed overview of Speer's life fictional through a three-part docudrama, it also depicts the invented scene of Speer's confession. Throughout the docudrama Speer is portrayed as an intelligent character driven primarily by his architectural ambitions. His representation in *Speer and Hitler* could support the claim that he was Germany's favourite perpetrator, who symbolises the notion that the Germans were seduced by Hitler.<sup>759</sup> *Rommel* focuses on the last seven months of Rommel's life. The review in the liberal German newspaper magazine *Spiegel* 'Hitlers Hamlet' (Hitler's Hamlet) argues that Rommel is represented as a tragic hero, who is humanised too much through the decision of focusing on the last month of his life.<sup>760</sup> It is argued that *Rommel* represents this historical character as tragic hero, who is depicted too well by the German actor Ulrich Tukur so that the viewer cannot associate him with the other leading national socialists, as he is depicted as a 'super soldier'. This review criticises that the fictional narrative does not show the war to a great extent and focuses solely on the generals and their inner and psychological turmoil removed from the crimes of the Third Reich. I would argue that these German films are important to not forget the Third Reich and the Holocaust. However, these films could also change and shape how these leading Nazis are remembered in the cultural memory. The historical character Rommel might at some point only be remembered in the German cultural memory through the fictional representation in *Rommel* and viewers will accept this depiction because this media text offers the past as a coherent narrative with an interesting protagonist, who was

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<sup>757</sup> Kershaw, I., 17.9.04.

<sup>758</sup> Kershaw, I., 17.9.04.

<sup>759</sup> Bangert, A., 2014, p. 94.

<sup>760</sup> Buss, C., 2012.

oblivious to the Holocaust, played an active part in the resistance and opposed Hitler in the end.

Evans argues in the article 'Why are we obsessed with Nazis?' in the liberal-leaning British newspaper *The Guardian* in 2015:

Nazism, the society it created, the world of the Third Reich and the people who lived through it all appear as kind of a moral drama where the issues are laid out starkly before us with a clarity we are no longer to achieve in the morally complex, confusing and compromised world we live in today.<sup>761</sup>

This notion can be seen in my case studies, as the fictional narratives depicting Speer, Rommel and Heydrich have been produced recently in German television such as *Rommel* produced by ZDF in 2012, *Conspiracy* produced by the American cable TV company HBO in 2001 and international feature films such as *The Man with the Iron Heart* in 2017. Especially *The Man with the Iron Heart* shows that there is still an interest in Nazism, because it offers a clearer moral narrative in comparison to our modern complex world. The life of Heydrich and his assassination is depicted in a coherent story with international stars such as Rosamund Pike and Jason Clarke directed by French director Cedric Jimenez with an estimated budget of €27.8 million based on the bestselling novel *HHhH*. However, the film had only a cumulative worldwide gross of over \$4 million. This could have been due to the release of *Anthropoid* in 2016, depicting the same story of Heydrich's assassination, which had a budget of \$9 million and a cumulative worldwide gross of over \$5 million.

At the end of the introduction to this thesis, I utilized the image of the Moebius strip to describe the representation of Nazis in film and television. In his book *Hi Hitler! How the Nazi Past is being Normalized in Contemporary Culture* Gavriel D. Rosenfeld compares the Nazi past to the Moebius strip.<sup>762</sup> One depiction of this invention is M. C. Escher's famous drawing of ants walking indefinitely along the strip's path.<sup>763</sup> Film scholar Halle argues that films such as *Downfall*, *Rommel* and *Conspiracy* offer the audience manageable images of the past that seems to have been overcome in our present.<sup>764</sup> I would agree that my case studies in this thesis offer viewers a coherent narrative of the Third Reich and lay the guilt of this time period on prominent figures such as Speer,

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<sup>761</sup>Evans, R. J., 6.2.15.

<sup>762</sup> Rosenfeld, G., D., 2014, p. 349.

<sup>763</sup> Rosenfeld, G., D., 2014, p. 349.

<sup>764</sup> Halle, R., 2008, p. 127.

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Rommel and Heydrich. However, these films are also important to not forget the Third Reich, the Nazis and the Holocaust. Furthermore, I agree with Halle that there is a danger that viewers engage with the past in the simple act of viewing images of the Third Reich, without the demand to see those images in a network of historic connections and excepting the fictional representation of these Nazis as the historical truth.<sup>765</sup> He believes that there will never be satisfying representation of the Third Reich. I have shown that this statement is true through the analysis of the most recent representations of Speer in *Speer and Hitler* from 2005, of Rommel in *Rommel* from 2012 and of Heydrich in *The Man with the Iron Heart* from 2017. These fictional representations enhance our knowledge of the culture they are produced in, rather than the Third Reich or the Nazis. I believe that it is important to not forget this period as they serve as a point of contact with the Third Reich. However, there is the danger that these fictional representations dominate how the Third Reich is remembered. The fictional narratives of *Rommel* or *The Man with the Iron Heart* as examples will define how this time period is remembered. Halle states that we do not expect any single film or group of films to offer the last word. Therefore, I believe that the case studies I have chosen in this thesis will not be the last film and television productions about Speer, Rommel, or Heydrich. In terms of my research, I think there will always be film and television productions about the Third Reich and Nazis, as the ants in Escher's painting of Moebius strip never arrive at a destination. Regarding further research in this academic area, I believe that it is important to analyse the representations of leading National Socialists, because the fictional depictions will define how this period is remembered. I hope that my thesis can be a starting point for other scholars to investigate the fictional representations of leading Nazis through their production and reviews in different cultures to demonstrate the meaning for the cultures and time periods they are produced in.

As I have finished my introduction of this thesis with a comparison of an art work with the film and television productions depicting Speer, Rommel and Heydrich, I will end the conclusion with a comparison of an artwork, which made a lasting expression on me when I saw it in an art gallery in Venice a couple of years ago. *The Nazis* by Piotr Uklański presents 164 tightly cropped portraits of famous actors portraying German tyrants in Nazi uniforms.

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<sup>765</sup> Halle, R., 2008, p. 127-128.





Figure 16 *The Nazis* by Piotr Uklanski

A description of the artwork states that the collection of glossy images shows how trauma re-emerges through fiction in simple narratives, which shape an understanding of a messy and complex past. This review mentions that the artwork stirred protests when it was first exhibited in London.<sup>766</sup> Even though films about Speer, Rommel and Heydrich do not stir protests anymore and seem to be part of our normal popular culture, I believe that this artwork can be compared to my case studies, as the complex past of these leading Nazis re-emerges in simple and coherent narratives on screen. The Met Museum described the artwork when it was exhibited there that “implicit in Uklanski’s provocation is the uncomfortable fact that more people get their image of the Holocaust from movies and television than historical study and commemoration.” According to the Met, the artwork implies that “the portrayal of evil peddled by Hollywood carries the uncomfortable truth of our inability to face reality without the distorting lens of fantasy.”<sup>767</sup> The viewers experience the Third Reich through films such as *Downfall* and the portrayal of evil through the historical figure of Heydrich in high-production value productions such as *Conspiracy* and *The Man with the Iron Heart*. In this English-language film for almost 50 minutes, the only people on screen are Nazis, leaving the audience with no hero to identify with and showing Heydrich, represented by the Australian actor Jason Clarke with a German accent, in domestic scenes with his family.<sup>768</sup> I would argue that it is important not to forget this time period, even if it is only possible to face reality of the Third Reich

<sup>766</sup> The Broad, ‘The Nazis’, *The Broad*, 27.5.16 [Accessed: <https://www.thebroad.org/art/piotr-uklanski/nazis>, 6.5.20].

<sup>767</sup> The Met, ‘The Nazis-1998-Piotr Uklanski’, *The Met*, 16.8.15 [Accessed: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/680618>, 6.5.20].

<sup>768</sup> van Hoeji, B., 16.5.17.

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and Heydrich through the distorting lens of filmic and televisual narratives. What the research in this thesis underlies is the question: Why these films about Speer, Rommel and Heydrich are continually produced? What meaning do these fictional representations carry for the cultures they are produced in? The process regarding the production of media texts about the Nazi might never end, as filmmakers attempt to answer contemporary questions including what the past might mean for the present. However, I believe, as I have shown throughout the last chapters, that these fictional representations of leading National Socialists will replace the historical figures in our cultural memory. Regarding future research in this area, I hope that my thesis can be a starting point to analyse the representations of leading Nazis through the production context and reviews in Germany, America and the United Kingdom in order to fully comprehend the meaning associated with these fictional depictions.

The book of the artwork *The Nazis* is described in a text on the publisher's website that the film still of Nazis show that it is all about the power of costumes and the customer of power, as well as the glamour of evil. Furthermore, it states the book is about the power of media representations that have shaped and distorted our collective idea of evil. I would argue that my case studies portraying Speer, Rommel and Heydrich in film and television do not distort our collective idea of evil but offer the viewer the past of the Third Reich in coherent and structured fictional narratives. I agree that most people get their image of these leading Nazis from film and television production. I believe that in the near future when the last eyewitnesses of this time period have passed away the actors portraying Speer, Rommel and Heydrich will replace the real historical figures in our cultural memory. The image of the actor Heino Ferch portraying Speer in *Downfall* will replace the historical figure of Speer. The image of the actor Ulrich Tukur in *Rommel* will replace the historical figure of Rommel. The image of Kenneth Branagh in *Conspiracy* or Jason Clarke in *The Man with the Iron Heart* will replace the historical figure of Heydrich.

A special screening of *Conspiracy* as part of the BBC's commemoration of Holocaust Day in 2002 had 4.4 million viewers between 9pm and 10:30pm on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> of January on BBC2.<sup>769</sup> This shows that this fictional depiction of Heydrich was chosen by the BBC as a preferred representation of Heydrich and receives more credibility. Furthermore, through these ratings Branagh's representation of Heydrich could replace the historical figure in the British cultural memory for viewers, who did not experience this time period. A recent poll by the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust in 2019, which found out that one in twenty

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<sup>769</sup> Deans, J., 28.2.02.

British adults do not believe the Holocaust has happened and eight per cent state that the scale of the genocide has been exaggerated.<sup>770</sup> This means that five per cent of UK adults do not believe the Holocaust took place.<sup>771</sup> This poll echoes the findings of a survey carried out in seven European countries in November 2018 by CNN. About one European in twenty in the countries CNN surveyed has never heard of the Holocaust, even though it is less than seventy-five years since the end of World War II and there were still ten thousands of Holocaust survivors alive in 2018.<sup>772</sup> Therefore, it has never been more important to think about the past is constructed through media texts such as *Downfall*, *Rommel*, *Conspiracy* and *The Man with the Iron Heart*. However, these representations of Speer, Rommel and Heydrich need to be critically analysed through the production context and reviews in order to understand the meaning associated with these media texts. Through offering the narratives of these leading Nazis in a closed, complete and simple past, audience members, who did not experience this time period from the UK or other European countries, might accept these representations as a window on to the past. However, a positive aspect of this process is that the Third Reich and these leading Nazis will not be forgotten by future generations, which have not experienced this time period, through the representations in film and television.

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<sup>770</sup> Sherwood, H., 'One in 20 Britons does not believe Holocaust took place, poll finds', *The Guardian*, 27.1.19, [Accessed: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/27/one-in-20-britons-does-not-believe-holocaust-happened>, 1.2.19].

<sup>771</sup> BBC, 'Holocaust Memorial Day: "Shocking" levels of denial remain', *BBC*, 27.1.19, [Accessed: <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-47015184>, 1.2.19].

<sup>772</sup> Geene, R.A., 'A Shadow Over Europe', *CCN*, November 2018, [Accessed: <https://edition.cnn.com/interactive/2018/11/europe/antisemitism-poll-2018-intl/>, 1.2.2019].



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