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sen, Andreas/Rabinbach, Anson
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lities*. [forthcoming Camden Pr.]

1 Schindler, Gabriele v.: Vom Han-
deln in mörderischer Zeit. In: Süd-
deutsche Zeitung v. 26/27.02.1994.
Cited in: Weiß, Christoph (Ed.): »Der
Gute Deutsche. Dokumente zur
Diskussion um Steven Spielbergs
Schindlers Liste in Deutschland.
St. Ingbert: Röhrig 1995, pp. 70-
73, here p. 71. asks: »Wie werden
die Deutschen mit »dem Thema«
umgehen? Werden sie, die sich so
ungern dieser sogenannten jün-
gsten Vergangenheit stellen, auch
nichts hören wollen? Oder wird
sich womöglich eine Katharsis à la
Holocaust der Fernsehserie, wieder-
holen?«[»How will the Germans
deal with this theme? Will they
not want to hear about Schindler
the way they would rather not face
this so-called most recent past? Or
will a catharsis à la *Holocaust*, the
television series, repeat itself wher-
ever possible?«]. To enable others
to locate the articles pertaining
to *Schindler's List* which I quote
here, my subsequent citations will
include the article's author, the title
in German, the newspaper and/or
magazine where it appeared, and
the date of publication along with
the page in Weiß from which my
quotation was taken. I am grateful
to Ole Gram for his invaluable help
with revising my translations.

2 Huysen, Andreas: The Politics of
Identification: *Holocaust* and West
German Drama. In: *New German
Critique* 19 (Winter 1980), pp. 117-136,
here p. 135.

3 Petzel, Paul: »...kein Bildnis ma-
chen!« beim Erinnern? Theologische
Überlegungenzur ästhetischen
Repräsentationskritik. In: Banasch,
Bettina (Ed.): *Verbot der Bilder
– Gebot der Erinnerung: Mediale
Repräsentationen der Schoah*. Frank-
furt/M.: Campus 2004, pp. 359-380.
Petzel's analysis is also valuable
because it explores the contested
history of the Second Command-
ment inside and outside of the Tal-
mudic tradition. This contestation
is mostly elided by its circulation in
discussions about the Holocaust.

4 For a valuable article on the
importance of the *Bilderverbot*
[image prohibition] for Adorno's
aesthetic theory cf. Koch, Gertrud:
*Mimesis und Bilderverbot in Ador-
nos Ästhetik*. In: Koch, G. (Ed.): *Die*

As representatives of a former »perpetrator nation«, the members of the German media felt the eyes of the world upon them even before *Schindler's List* began showing in the German theaters in the first week of March 1994.¹ They were therefore sensitive about how their reactions would be read by the public, their colleagues, and, at least virtually, by a host of analysts who would probe their responses for traces of denial, rationalization, and anti-Semitism. This self-consciousness was evinced at all stages of the film's media reception – during the four month promotion period, in the reactions upon the film's release, and in the meta-commentaries on its reception which followed in the summer of 1994 – in the recourse to psychoanalytic concepts such as *repression* and *working through* albeit in popularized and superficial forms.

Film critics and Holocaust scholars in and outside the Federal Republic of Germany were preoccupied with the power of Spielberg's film to help German viewers avoid or fulfill the responsibility of »working through« Holocaust memory. In this respect, the reception in 1993/94 replays the anxieties spurring the »emotional explosion« that attended the 1979 telecasting of four installments of the *Holocaust* miniseries in Germany, which as Andreas Huysen observes, showed »how desperately the Germans needed identification in order to break down the mechanisms of denial and suppression.«² The self-conscious employment of Freudian terms in the reception of Spielberg's film reflects their continuing awareness that critics were discussing a representation of a traumatic event from their national past, one which more than any other in recent German history demanded sensitivity. The desire to honor this demand shaped the aesthetic criteria that they invoked in the process of determining the film's authenticity and propriety as a representation of the Holocaust.

One of the more frequently mentioned protocols involved a modified version of the Second Commandment, which prohibits the construction and worship of images of God. In current discourses of memory both in Germany and in the United States, the image prohibition, or *Bilderverbot*, is typically deployed as a synonym for »unrepresentability«: the magnitude and intensity of the suffering inflicted by the Third Reich is elevated to a divine power that transcends understanding, language, narration, and visualization. As Paul Petzel points out, this conflation is vexed by a reductive understanding of negative theology as its implicit theoretical context. The result is a sacralization of the moral magnitude of the perpetrators' brutality and the irredeemable consequences of their crimes that only witnesses can understand and even these are too traumatized by what they saw to translate it adequately.³ Such a figuration idealizes the horror that limns it and paralyzes its personal and collective interpretation. This is an important problem for critics committed to examining the politics of memory particularly where episodes of persecution and/or genocide are concerned. For if one meaning of a traumatic history becomes positively or negatively entrenched as a source of personal or collective identity, then defenses will be mobilized against its critical redefinition. Though this protective impulse may be valuable in combating Holocaust deniers, it also ensures that an open-ended consideration of the genocide will remain at once impossible and undesirable for those who live in its aura. Sacralization thus serves the forces of repression and hinders the process of working through the significance of genocide.

Gertrud Koch has highlighted the complex relationship between the Second Commandment and Theodor W. Adorno's secular delimitation of aesthetic experience as a negative encounter with art's failure to resist the forces of domination inscribed in it.⁴ This *topos* also inflects Adorno's reading of critical truth and utopia, which can only be recognized dialectically through a determinate negation of these reifying forces.⁵ Though his negative aesthetic extends to the heritage of metaphysics and culture as a whole, in his 1949 essay *Cultural Criticism and Society*, Adorno drops an apparent *non sequitur* to the effect that lyrical poetry is »barbaric« after Auschwitz. He subsequently modified this claim in *Negative Dialectics* (1966), where he grants perennial suffering »as much right to expression as a tortured man to scream.«⁶

As his readings of Stefan George and Eduard Mörike in *Lyrical Poetry and Society* indicate, Adorno's sally of 1949 was not targeting the lyric or poetry *tout court*, but challenging the ostensive purity of artistic expressions of individual resistance in light of their complicity with a reified society that spawned anonymous mass murder in the death factories. Despite their complex-
ity, in his various claims about poetry, art, culture, and metaphysics after Auschwitz Adorno

Einstellung ist die Einstellung. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp 1992, pp. 16-29.

5 Notably, Bertolt Brecht's *Writing Truth: Five Difficulties (Dichter sollen die Wahrheit schreiben, 1934)* seemingly retains a philosophically positive notion of critical truth as opposed to its recognition through determinate negation in Adorno's understanding: »Nowadays, anyone who wishes to combat lies and ignorance and to write the truth must overcome at least five difficulties. He must have the courage to write the truth when truth is everywhere opposed; the keenness to recognize it, although it is everywhere concealed; the skill to manipulate it as a weapon; the judgment to select those in whose hands it will be effective; and the cunning to spread the truth among such persons. These are formidable problems for writers living under Fascism, but they exist also for those writers who have fled or been exiled; they exist even for writers working in countries where civil liberty prevails.« In: Brecht, Bertolt: Galileo. Ed. and with an introduction by Eric Bentley, English version by Charles Laughton. New York/NY: Grove Pr. 1966; essay transl. by Richard Winston, Appendix A, pp. 133-150, here p. 133.

6 Adorno, Theodor W.: *Negative Dialectics*. Transl. by E.B. Ashton. New York: Continuum 1973, p. 362.

7 Hofmann, Klaus: *Poetry After Auschwitz – Adorno's Dictum: German Life and Letters 58/2 (April 2005)*, pp. 182-94, here p. 185 writes, »the radical polemics were, in 1966, meant to provoke a reaction from a complacent restorative culture in Germany. They are not free of a certain disingenuousness in view of the high claims and the high prestige of Adorno's activities as a critic of culture« (185).

8 Loshitzky Yosefa: *Holocaust Others: Spielberg's Schindler's List versus Lanzmann's Shoah*. In Loshitzky, Y. (Ed): *Spielberg's Holocaust: Critical Perspectives on Schindler's List*. Bloomington: Indiana UP 1997, pp. 104-118, here p. 111. Horowitz, Sarah: *But Is It Good for the Jews? Spielberg's Schindler and the Aesthetics of Atrocity*. In: Loshitzky 1997, pp. 119-139, here p. 128: »The anticipated enactment of genocide is thrilling, because it is forbidden and at the same time permitted because it is artifice«.

9 Buchka, Peter: *Der Schwarzmarkt des Todes: Das Unfilmbare filmen: Steven Spielbergs Schindlers Liste*. In: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 03.03.1994, p.13. Cited in: Weiß 1995, pp. 119f: »Selbst wenn man in Amerika schwerlich von Adornos Verdikt

inadvertently contributed to a rhetoric of unrepresentability surrounding the Holocaust.⁷ This rhetoric was not limited to Germany and the United States. Though his commitments lie with Sartre over Adorno, Claude Lanzmann reinforced a sublime aesthetic for the Holocaust in *Shoah* (1985), an epic documentary punctuated by sustained shots of the evacuated yet affectively saturated locations of mass murder. His film has become paradigmatic for its adherence to a »dramatization prohibition« respecting the mass murders.

In the context of the 1993/94 reception of *Schindler's List* in Germany and the United States, the prohibition against film dramatizations of the Holocaust frequently adjudicated the moral and historical value of Spielberg's film. Because of their history, it is tempting to read the German critics' references to Adorno, Lanzmann, and the image prohibition as an expression of a defensive desire to distance themselves and others from the genocide through a sacralization of the shock that it affects. Yet, the debate reveals both the constructive and repressive influence of a negative aesthetic in defining morally proper representations of the Nazi mass murders for Germans.

My analysis will examine this influence upon the German media's debate about the historical and moral value of Spielberg's film as a dramatic narrative representation of the Holocaust. One peculiar by-product of the negative aesthetic is the occasional comparison among the critics between scenes from the film and post-war weekly newsreels in laudatory evaluations of *Schindler's List's* authenticity. Ultimately, I want to theorize the implications of such comparisons, which shed light on the relationship between unconscious repression and remediation in the formation of collective memory about the Nazi crimes in a newly reunified Germany.

I. *Schindler's List* Between Adorno and Lanzmann

The rhetoric of unrepresentability clearly informed some of the condemnations of *Schindler's List*, which attacked its »presumption« in dramatizing (and thus trivializing) the Holocaust by attempting to »recreate« it in a fictional rather than a documentary venue. This criticism typically arose in discussions about the notorious shower scene in Auschwitz where we watch a build-up of fear among the Jewish women on *Schindler's list* undressing and with cropped heads quivering in terror in the showers before water comes down instead of gas. The scene plays out a conventional suspense sequence. As Yosefa Loshitzky observes, in allowing the camera to »penetrate« the gas chambers, Spielberg »was the first mainstream Hollywood Jewish filmmaker to violate the ancient Jewish biblical prohibition against creating images as it had been unconsciously resurrected in the moral taboo on representing the Holocaust.« Some perceived this penetration into the »ultimate sacred center of the Holocaust« as »a violation of the Holy of Holies (*Kodesh Hakodashim* in Hebrew)« which satisfied a scopophilic desire among an audience »hungry for a spectacle of atrocity.«⁸ Peter Buchka explains this protocol as follows:

Even if Adorno's statement concerning the impossibility of writing poetry after Auschwitz likely was not well known in America, the otherwise unsqueamish Hollywood nevertheless has silently maintained that this place of nameless horror is actually unfilmbable. From that perspective, Spielberg's venturing all the way into the gas chambers of Auschwitz is downright hubristic. And naturally he could trust himself to do this only because Schindler's protégés, in the sequence in question, would be rescued in the last second. Only a vague intimation remains of the unshowable atrocities. That suffices to fulfill Spielberg's intention.⁹ [Transl. KB].

Rainer Rother comments that the Auschwitz shower scene is »the supreme manipulation« because of the spectator's relief as water pours out of the showers instead of Zyklon B. For Rother, this suspense structure suggests that

The relief, as water comes out of the shower, no Zyklon B is thrown into the room, suggests that anything at all from the murder factory Auschwitz is representable after all. In (Lanzmann's) *Shoah* the camera approaches the door of Auschwitz again and again. The murder within is only present in the survivors' telling. Spielberg directs the place of death. He lets it be reproduced because: film images can show all. But even a rescue – the certified exception – out of the extermination camps becomes spurious when staged for the camera. It continues to be impossible to manufacture consumable images about Auschwitz.¹⁰ [Transl. KB]

gehört hat, nach Auschwitz sei kein Gedicht mehr möglich, hat sich doch sogar das sonst nicht zimperliche Hollywood stillschweigend daran gehalten, daß dieser Ort des namenlosen Schreckens eigentlich unverfilmbar ist. Insofern ist Spielbergs Wagnis, bis in die Gas-kammern von Auschwitz hineinzugehen, geradezu hybrid. Und selbstverständlich traut er sich dies nur, weil in der fraglichen Sequenz Schindlers Schützlinge in letzter Sekunde gerettet werden. Vom unzeigbaren Grauen bleibt da nur eine vage Andeutung. Sie genügt, um Spielbergs Intention zu erfüllen.«

10 Rother, Rainer: Die Hölle als Inszenierung. Hollywood-Regisseur Steven Spielberg versucht, den Holocaust in Spielfilm-Bilder zu bannen. In: Berliner Zeitung, 02.03.1994. Cited in: Weiß 1995, p. 108: »Die Erleichterung, als Wasser aus den Duschen kommt, kein Zyklon B in den Raum geworfen wird, suggeriert, irgendetwas aus der Mordfabrik Auschwitz sei doch darstellbar. In *Schoah* nähert sich die Kamera wieder und wieder dem Tor von Auschwitz. Das Morden drinnen ist allein in den Erzählungen der Überlebenden präsent. Spielberg inszeniert den Ort des Todes. Er hat ihn nachbauen lassen, denn: Filmbilder können alles zeigen. Aber selbst eine Rettung aus dem Vernichtungslager, die bezeugte Ausnahme, wird als inszenierte falsch. Man kann auch weiterhin keine konsumierbaren Bilder über Auschwitz herstellen.«

11 Hofmann 2005, pp. 182-194, here p. 182.

12 Adorno, T.W.: Cultural Criticism and Society. In: Prisms. Trans. by Samuel and Shierry Weber. Cambridge: MIT 1997, p. 34. In the German (originally written in 1949 and publ. in *Soziologische Forschung in unserer Zeit*. Leopold von Wiese zum 75. Geburtstag, 1951), this observation reads: »Je totaler die Gesellschaft, um so verdinglichter auch der Geist und um so paradoxer sein Beginnen, der Verdinglichung aus eigenem zu entwenden. Noch das äußerste Bewußtsein vom Verhängnis droht zum Geschwätz, zu entarten. Kulturkritik findet sich auf der letzten Stufe der Dialektik von Kultur und Barberei gegenüber: nach Auschwitz ein Gedicht zu schreiben, ist barbarisch, und das frißt auch die Erkenntnis an, die ausspricht, warum es unmöglich ward, heute Gedichte zu schreiben. Der absoluten Verdinglichung, die den Fortschritt des Geistes als eines ihrer Elemente voraussetzte und die ihn heute gänzlich aufzusaugen sich anschickt, ist der kritische Geist nicht gewachsen, solange er bei sich bleibt in selbstgenügsamer

While Buchka explicitly cites Adorno's so-called *dictum*, Rother's criticism of Spielberg's »hubris« also reflects the influence of his critique of redemptive culture, which goes beyond rejecting the prospect of representing the gas chambers. As Klaus Hofmann has recently noted, the reductive recitation of segments from sentences taken out of context from *Cultural Criticism and Society* and *Negative Dialectics* provide »a diplomatic way of avoiding a discussion of what Adorno actually wrote.«¹¹ While the »lyric prohibition« is often deployed in order to police representations of the Holocaust, Hofmann demonstrates various inconsistent permutations of Adorno's so-called 1949 *dictum* from *Cultural Criticism and Society* that declares lyric poetry alternately »barbaric« and »impossible« after Auschwitz. Adorno writes:

The more total society becomes, the greater the reification of the mind and the more paradoxical its effort to escape reification on its own. Even the most extreme consciousness of doom threatens to degenerate into idle chatter. Cultural criticism finds itself faced with the final stage of the dialectic of culture and barbarism. To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric. And this corrodes even the knowledge of why it has become impossible to write poetry today. Absolute reification, which presupposed intellectual progress as one of its elements, is now preparing to absorb the mind entirely. Critical intelligence cannot be equal to this challenge as long as it confines itself to self-satisfied contemplation.¹²

The odd placement of this acerbic sally toward the end of his essay, invites a reflection on its status in Adorno's complex analysis of the pervasive reification of all cultural phenomena, including art and critique. Michael Rothberg observes that poetry »presents a particular aesthetic case that should not be subsumed under Adorno's general view of culture under late capitalism.«¹³ The lyric's elevated status as a redress against barbarism must be specifically targeted because it is nurtured by a complacent investment in art as a spontaneous and thus genuine mode of resistance against the loss of individuality. For Adorno, it is precisely by virtue of the lyric's luxuriously delicate spontaneity in defiance of mass conformity and the harshness of economic necessity that it cannot avoid affirming the conditions for an overall subjection to a modern, pervasively rationalized society.

In *On Lyric Poetry and Society*, Adorno specifies in Marxist terms the implications of Hegel's dialectic, which enjoins that the particular is mediated by the universal and *vice versa*. By extension, »even resistance to social pressure is not something absolutely individual.«¹⁴ The lyric work »is always the subjective expression of a social antagonism«, Adorno writes, yet it is »indebted to privilege: the pressures of the struggle for survival allow only a few human beings to grasp the universal through immersion in the self or to develop as autonomous subjects freely expressing themselves.«¹⁵ In other words, the lyric's »withdrawal into itself, its self-absorption, its detachment from the social surface, is socially motivated behind the author's back.«¹⁶ Adorno's apparent repudiation of lyric poetry is therefore a synecdoche for a more devastating critique of »the real power of reification, which can no longer be gilded with a lyrical halo and brought back within the sphere of meaning.«¹⁷

Given the persistence of the socio-economic formations that made the Holocaust possible, Adorno questions, but does not altogether neutralize the possibility of an autonomous and thus authentically resistant art. As Hofmann suggests, in Adorno's essay *Commitment* as well as in the *Aesthetic Theory*, the question of art's potential for resistance cannot be closed off as the inflexibly asserted *dictum* attributed to him implies.¹⁸ Nevertheless, art merely reverts to a »secondary blindness« when claims continue to be made about its autonomy after the ideas of freedom and humanism have both been consigned to the refuse heap.¹⁹

In *Meditations on Metaphysics*, the third and final section of *Negative Dialectics*,²⁰ Adorno modulates previous pronouncements about lyric poetry's barbarism or impossibility. He decries the claims of authentic individual resistance affected in the lyric and, indeed, in all cultural production including the most pressing critique of it [»samt der dringlichen Kritik daran«], which stinks because its »palace« is built out of dog shit [»gebaut ist aus Hundsscheiße«].²¹ If all culture after Auschwitz is trash, then it is because the death camps demonstrated beyond the shadow of a doubt that art is only »authentic« in its *failure* to resist the very conditions that negate it, thereby making the metaphysical consolation it seems to offer not only false, but also complicit with continued suffering, even where it is shown.²² The beautiful fragility of the lyric is emblematic of the breakdown of autonomous art rather than opposed to it. After the death camps, the idea of unrestrained individuation buys itself time from the elevating effect of pathos that drowned out the screams. By the same token, the death camps radically



Kontemplation.« In: Adorno, T.W.: Kultur und Gesellschaft. In: Prismen. München: Beck 1963, p. 26. For an explanation of the significance of Adorno's writings about Auschwitz in relation to the debate on the representation of the Holocaust, cf. Laermann, Klaus: Denken nach Auschwitz. »Nach Auschwitz ein Gedicht zu schreiben, ist barbarisch.« Überlegungen zu einem Darstellungsverbot. In: Köppen, Manuel (Ed.): Kunst und Literatur nach Auschwitz. Berlin: Erich Schmidt 1993, pp. 11-15 and Claussen, Detlev: Nach Auschwitz. Über die Aktualität Adornos. In: *ibid.*, pp. 16-22. For more recent analyses, cf. Rothberg, Michael: After Adorno: Culture in the Wake of Catastrophe, chapter in: Rothberg, M.: Traumatic Realism: The Demands of Holocaust Representation. Minneapolis: Minnesota UP 2000 and Hofmann 2005.

13 Rothberg 2000, p. 38. Rothberg's chapter [previously publ. in: *New German Critique* 72 (Fall 1997), pp. 45-81] provides an excellent assessment of the nuances that differentiate Adorno's various statements about art, culture, lyric poetry, metaphysics, and education that cite the chronotope »after Auschwitz«.

14 Adorno, T.W.: On Lyric Poetry and Society. Notes to Literature. Vol. 1. Trans. by Shiery Weber Nicholse. New York: Columbia UP 1991, pp. 37-54, here p. 43.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 45.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 43.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 42.

18 Adorno, T.W.: Aesthetic Theory. Trans. by Robert Hullot-Kentor. Minneapolis: Minnesota UP 1997 [German: *Ästhetische Theorie*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp 1973]. In Koch's reading, the »autonomous freedom of the imagination, which does not allow itself to be confined by any concept of meaning, seems far less burdened with the tendency to suffocate, through affirmation, the claims to expression made by the oppressed and tormented«. In: Koch 1989, p. 18.

19 Hofman 2005, p. 186.

20 Adorno T.W.: *Negative Dialektik*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp 1966.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 357.

22 Sabine Horst echoes this sentiment in her ambivalent review of *Schindler's List* that appeared in the leftist journal *konkret*: »Die Dramaturgie in *Schindlers Liste*, die Perfektion, mit der über drei Stun-

negated a Western ideal of a graceful or meaningful closure to a citizen's life. Auschwitz becomes the symbol of this radical negation that destroyed commonplace and metaphysical understandings of experience and death. Adorno writes:

After Auschwitz, our feelings resist any claim of the positivity of existence as sanctimonious, as wronging the victims; they balk at squeezing any kind of sense, however bleached, out of the victims' fate. And these feelings do have an objective side after events that make a mockery of the construction of immanence as endowed with a meaning radiated by an affirmatively posited transcendence.²³

Adorno's comment targets metaphysical concepts of experience that construct it as a means of attaining a *Sinnstiftung*: an identity-affirming provision of higher meaning that ultimately permits a redemptive or cathartic sense of closure. Death camp existence and mass death annihilated the complacent prospect of viewing life as a narration of experiences »completed« by a dignified and collectively mourned end that redeems the individual's existence by affirming her membership in a community.

As his observations in *Meditations on Metaphysics* suggest, neither the metaphysical nor Christian purchase on redemption could save the Jews from the anonymity of mass murder, which is a fate worse than death.²⁴ Indeed, such narratives actually exacerbate the pitiless climate that led up to the »Final Solution« and fomented its disavowal among German bystanders during and after the liberation of the Nazi Period. Instead, Adorno's materialism (under Benjamin's influence) secularizes the Jewish-Messianic ban on positively picturing utopia, which is, in any case, impossible in the status quo. Utopian images must be deferred to a world, which has not yet arrived because it will only take place with the destruction of the current order. As Rothberg notes, this world is merely indicated through Celan's »imageless image and Beckett's wordless expression«, as »the discursive and artistic correlates of utopia«. ²⁵ But while Benjamin is invested in blasting open the continuum of universal history, »Adorno's rather different concern« as Rothberg asserts, »is to exhibit the continuity that underlies a superficially discontinuous German history«. ²⁶

This continuity is the object of Adorno's repudiation of the identitarian, metaphysical, and Christian logics that converged in the death camps. First, the Holocaust exposes the violence and hypocrisy of Christian narratives of redemption, which cannot be extracted from its history of pernicious anti-Semitism that aided and abetted the genocide. The stubborn persistence of redemption narratives betrays the desire to transcend the mass deaths of Jews by bestowing them with a »higher meaning«. Second, the gas chambers were the consequence of a capitalistic and instrumental logic that requires a clear end-product as a profitable and consumable result of labor and exchange. By extension, the prospect of redemption is merely another avenue of moral capitalization. Third, the capitalist-Christian profit motive is consonant with the synthetic logic of the Hegelian dialectic that results in the unification of particulars (which is why Adorno advocates for a micrological standpoint in *Negative Dialectics*). Fourth, after Auschwitz, we can no longer indulge in the luxury of a romantic, bourgeois-humanist conception of experience as the story of a meaningful life that culminates in a uniquely mourned death.

Previously, Adorno's collaboration with Max Horkheimer in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944) suggests that the Final Solution was not the betrayal of the narrative of progress, but rather its ultimate negative fulfillment.²⁷ In Auschwitz, technology was adapted to the task of murdering as many Jews as quickly and systematically as possible. The gas chambers and crematoria consequently exposed the danger of scientific and bureaucratic systematicity that all too quickly lent itself to the nightmare efficiency of the death »factories«.

The lyric prohibition is therefore salient in the context of Adorno's war-time and post-war writings because it polemically resonates with the *Frankfurt School* critique of instrumental reason as a result-driven, efficient, and aggrandizing logic. Instrumental reason so conceived is connected in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* with the Enlightenment ideal of progress as the fetish of a post-industrialized society that showed its bad conscience in anti-Semitic scapegoating conjoined with a full-scale apparatus of mass death. One of the principal themes associated with Enlightenment rhetoric is the idea of historical progress – that Western societies necessarily improve in the course of history by becoming increasingly reasonable, secular, and thus civilized. Scientific development, new technologies, and the promise of increa-

den hinweg so etwas wie Spannung gehalten wird, der Versuch, eine tröstliche Geschichte aus trostloser Zeit zu überliefern, das Pathos des Finales und schließlich die Zeichnung des Protagonisten, der in seinem dynamischen Pragmatismus ein typisch amerikanischer Held ist, verbinden den Film mit der Kultur, die ihn hervorgebracht hat.« [»The dramaturgy in *Schindler's List*, the perfection with which it sustains something like suspense throughout more than three hours, the attempt to deliver a consoling story from a time without consolation, the pathos of the finale, and, finally, the depiction of the protagonist who, in his dynamic pragmatism is a typical American hero, connects the film with the culture that produced it.«] In: Horst, Sabine: »We couldn't show that.« In: konkret 3 (März 1994). Cited in: Weiß 1995, pp. 73-80, here p. 74.

23 Adorno, T.W.: *Negative Dialectics*. Trans. by E.B. Ashton. New York: Continuum 1973, p. 361.

24 In this connection, it is worth reiterating Art Spiegelman's judgments in the context of a roundtable on *Schindler's List* with Wanda Bershen, Richard Goldstein, J. Hoberman, Annette Insdorf, Ken Jacobs, Gertrud Koch, and James Young, that the Jews in the film »function as an occasion for a Christian redemption«. In contrasting his own standpoint in *Maus* with Spielberg's, he later asserts that »survival mustn't be seen in terms of divine retribution or martyrology«. Cf. *Schindler's List: Myth, Movie, and Memory*. In: *Village Voice* 39/13 (March 29, 1994), pp. 24-31, here p. 27.

25 Rothberg 2000, p. 50, citing Adorno's *Negative Dialectics*, p. 207.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 44.

27 Horkheimer, Max/Adorno, Theodor W.: *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. Ed. by Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. by Edmund Jephcott. Stanford: Stanford UP 2002 [German: *Dialektik der Aufklärung: Philosophische Fragmente*. Frankfurt/M.: Fischer 2000].

28 I am alluding here to arguments in *The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception* chapter, pp. 94-136 in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* cited above.

29 Rothberg 2000, p. 49.

30 Adorno, T.W.: *Commitment*. In: Adorno, T.W.: *Notes to Literature*. Vol. 2. Trans. by Shierry Weber Nicholsen. New York: Columbia UP 1992, pp. 76-94, here p. 90.

singly effective systems of social organization all presumably fall within the parameters of »progress«. For the exiled Horkheimer and Adorno, however, the Nazi genocide of the Jews revealed that progress as such does not necessarily lead to a more civilized society. Auschwitz is thus a »tain«, or unreflecting blotch, in the West's brightly benign mirror reflection of itself and its future.

It is also in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* that Horkheimer and Adorno repudiate a redemptive and cathartic closure of meaning as the cheap aim of melodrama, which has displaced tragedy in the age of the »culture industry«. ²⁸ This polemic carries over to Adorno's lectures and radio addresses on *The Meaning of Working Through the Past* (1959) and *Education After Auschwitz* (1966) where he castigates postwar Germans for various *Schlussstrich* [line of closure] rationalizations that allow them to hide behind images of their own victimization, to repent briefly and call it a day, and thereby deflect the interminable and unredeemable consequences of the mass murders. Clearly, Adorno wanted to protect the Nazi genocide of the Jews from such short-circuiting and self-serving rationalizations when he forbade a *Sinnstiftung* in relation to it. As Rothberg observes, »the categorical imperative not to repeat Auschwitz – here considered the primary goal of education – is necessary precisely because such a break has not taken place«. ²⁹ Viewed from this perspective, the repudiation of lyric poetry after Auschwitz underscores the historical specificity of Adorno's commitment to a negative aesthetic that would retain the singularity of the particular through a determinate negation. Adorno's take on the dialectic is that it forces thought to recognize the unthematizability of the particular rather than converting it into an exemplar of a collective logic. In this respect, Adorno's postwar materialist adaptation of the theological image ban is not merely aimed at lyrical poetry or even at the sentimental tendencies of mass entertainment. The »lyrical« representation of experience that affirms the significance of the »I« that frames it is imbricated in a metaphysical heritage, a commodity economy, and a universal history narrated as progress. As such, it may function rhetorically for Adorno as a synecdoche for all cultural and social forms of identitarian or synthetic logic.

The attempt to break representations down isomorphically into symbols and themes or adequate them to a referent participates in what Adorno condemns as narcissistic arrogance, or the »return to the same« following Nietzsche's rejection of the circular logic of the »truth drive« in the *Will to Power*. Adorno's critique of the trivialization of art, music, and drama through the culture industry is offset by his praise of Samuel Beckett's reflections of an »extremely concrete historical state of affairs« as evinced in his »dismantling of the subject«. ³⁰ Adorno grants a critical dialectical potential to modernist literature that does not reproduce »the harmonious narrative of traditional realist forms«, but rather »the rifts that realist mimesis represses«. ³¹ The writings of Beckett, Franz Kafka, and Paul Celan simultaneously recapitulate and repudiate the forces of subjection at the level of form, and thereby affect a negative aesthetic experience of what exceeds or resists them. Art's unintelligible or visceral element refracts the social domination of inner and outer nature affected by an increasingly rationalized capitalist society. If »the work of art's detachment from empirical reality is at the same time mediated by that reality«, ³² then the very possibility of art's existence is an element negatively determined by an encounter with the materiality of domination itself. By definition, then, this element cannot be assimilated to an axiomatic »meaning« or to an intuition of any kind that reduces the work to the consolation of individual freedom that betrays the continuity and unremediability of suffering.

The differing permutations of Adorno's challenge to the possibility of authentically resistant art after Auschwitz are bracketed out in the course of the lyric prohibition's circulation in popular and some academic discussions about the Holocaust since the 1960's. For some West German critics prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall, especially those on the left, Adorno's repudiation of redemptive cultural forms translated into a conviction that film dramatizations of the Holocaust capitulate to an arrogance of representation in assuming that adequate »recreations« of the Final Solution are possible and desirable as a means of moral enlightenment.

Attesting to the influence of this perspective, public discourse about the Holocaust in and outside Germany during the 1980's and 1990's has variably sacralized it by insisting upon the genocide's alleged »unrepresentability.« This rhetoric is re-inscribed in the work of French philosophers such as Jean-François Lyotard and Maurice Blanchot, whose references to Auschwitz are explicitly influenced by Adorno. While Lyotard's reading of *Negative Dialectics*

31 Rothberg 2000, p. 39.

32 Adorno 1992 (*Commitment*), p. 91.

33 Cf. Lyotard, Jean-François: *Discussions, or Phrasing »after Auschwitz«*. In: Benjamin, Andrew (Ed.): *The Lyotard Reader*. Cambridge: Blackwell 1989, pp. 360-392 and Blanchot, Maurice: *Vicious Circles*. Trans. by Paul Auster. Barrytown/NY: Station Hill Pr. 1985. Cf. also Rothberg, Michael: *Before Auschwitz*; Maurice Blanchot, *From Now On*, chapter in: Rothberg, M.: *Traumatic Realism: The Demands of Holocaust Representation*. Minneapolis: Minnesota UP 2000, pp. 59-96.

34 Cf. Steiner, George: *Language and Silence: Essays on Language, Literature, and the Inhuman*. New Haven: Yale UP 1998 and Steiner, G.: *The Death of Tragedy*. New Haven: Yale UP 1996.

35 As is well known, Adenauer successfully pressured the French government to withdraw *Night and Fog* from the *Sélection Officielle* at the *Cannes Film Festival*.

36 Lanzmann, Claude: *Ihr sollt nicht weinen. Einspruch gegen Schindlers Liste*. In: *FAZ*, 05.03.1994. Cited in: Weiß 1995. Transl. by Grete Osterwald from the 03.03.1994 ed. of *le Monde*, p. 175.

37 Loshitzky 1997, p. 107f.

38 *Ibid.*, p. 108.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 111.

40 Rothberg, M.: *»Touch an Event to Begin«: Americanizing the Holocaust*, chapter in: Rothberg 2000, pp. 221-264, here p. 232..

41 Adorno 1992 (*Commitment*), p. 91.

42 Loshitzky 1997, p. 123.

draws on Adorno's critique of Hegelian logic to link Auschwitz to the aporetic »wound of nihilism« that skepticism opened in philosophy, Blanchot translates Adorno into the *dictum* that »there can be no fiction narrative about Auschwitz«.33 George Steiner contributed to the popularization of Adorno as a mouthpiece for the difficulties undermining the possibility of art after Auschwitz, a catastrophe that hastened the downfall of tragedy proper in Steiner's terms.34 Resonating with Adorno's argument in *Negative Dialectics* that Auschwitz simultaneously falls outside of and breaks down commonplace, metaphysical, and synthetic notions of experience, the concentration camp »universe« has sometimes been constructed as »incommensurable« with everyday life and, consequently, as »unrepresentable« in its terms.

The translation of Adorno's critique of redemptive culture into the »lyric prohibition« over the decades across a variety of academic and popular contexts reduced it to a negative aesthetic that specifically targets fictional films dramatizing the Final Solution (but not so much plays or documentaries). As a result of this circulation of this reductive version of Adorno's critique, the German media's debate over *Schindler's List* recurrently thematizes an intense suspicion concerning dramatic films about the mass murders. Such films are problematic because of their power to entertain and their tendency to »instrumentalize« suffering and death as a tool for identifying with the victims and as a means of achieving easy catharsis in relation to the past. Spielberg's *Schindler's List* nevertheless challenged the rhetoric of unrepresentability that upheld documentaries such as Alain Resnais' *Night and Fog* (1956)35 and Lanzmann's *Shoah* as appropriate representations of the Holocaust. Lanzmann's film in particular was treated as the model for a secularized image prohibition, which guards against the anxiety about enjoying dramatic Holocaust films with the moral injunction to respect the dead. It is this injunction that, in Lanzmann's words, should maintain a »circle of fire« around the atrocities perpetrated by Germans and in their name.36

In her analysis of Lanzmann's impact on the debate about *Schindler's List*, Loshitzky notes that Lanzmann himself defined his film as a »fiction of reality« in opposition to Spielberg's effort, which was based on a real story, but simulated many documentary traditions (including *cinéma vérité* features) in order to make the events of his film look more real.37 In this respect, Lanzmann, as Loshitzky observes, echoes Godard's definition of cinema as »the fiction of reality and the reality of fiction«. Lanzmann shares Godard's distrust of »verisimilitude as a means of rendering reality«. His *modus operandi* is not to pursue »a crude transformation of reality into cinematography, but rather a presentation of representation. It is a documentation of the process of producing events in front of a camera«. It is thus a style that assumes the value of the »camera as a catalytic agent, a revealer of inner truth«, even as the witnesses become »characters« whose testimony Lanzmann aggressively elicited and assiduously edited. Moreover, his approach is historically marked by the events of 1968, which cemented the existentialist valuation of *cinéma vérité* as a mode of »engaged art«.38

Loshitzky and Koch appreciate Lanzmann's respect for »the boundary between what is aesthetically and humanly imaginable and the unimaginable dimension of the annihilation«.39 Ultimately, however, Loshitzky seemingly buys into Lanzmann's notion of authenticity that utilizes oral testimony and »the evocation of expressive faces and landscapes« in contrast to the post-historical cinematic memory-image repertoire »recycled by the movie industry« that Spielberg enlists. Rothberg, in contrast, emphasizes the inconsistencies in Lanzmann's theory of representation as evinced in his criticism of Spielberg: »On the one hand, he demands historical authenticity... On the other hand, historical authenticity is not what Lanzmann really demands«, since there is »something radically *antihistorical* about his position that the Holocaust is unique«, that its absoluteness cannot be transmitted, fictionalized, or breached.40 Rothberg's analysis suggests that both Lanzmann and Spielberg lend credence to Adorno's declaration in *Commitment*: »Those works that through their very existence become the advocates of the victims of a nature-dominating rationality are in their protest by their very nature also always interwoven with the process of rationalization.«41 Even if it favors the »evocation« of the imagined versus Spielberg's »real-like« images, Lanzmann's activation of the »relived« (esp. when it is orchestrated and edited), actually stylizes unrepresentability.42

Lanzmann's existentialist commitment to a self-conscious marking of the limits of imagination reinforces the conflation between the *Bilderverbot* and unrepresentability noted by Petzel. It also separates Lanzmann's modification of the image prohibition from Adorno's, which targeted the morality that forbids art to forget, even for a second, that pleasure can be squeezed from »the so-called artistic rendering of the naked physical pain of those who were

43 Adorno, T.W.: Notes to Literature. Vol. 2. Transl. Shierry Weber Nicholsen. In: Adorno 1992 (*Commitment*), pp. 76-94, here p. 88.

44 Likewise, as Rothberg 2000, p. 243 astutely observes: »The struggle between *Schindler's List* and *Shoah* for control over the Holocaust's ›image‹ – staged primarily, it should be noted, by Lanzmann himself and other middlebrow and highbrow critics – derives in part from the misguided totalizing ambitions of each film to tell the ›definitive‹ story of the Nazi genocide.« Rothberg goes on to cite the 1993 GATT controversy in France over the import of Hollywood films and American culture. This controversy renewed the focus on the asymmetrical »cultural and economic power of the U.S. culture industry«, which partially explains how *Schindler's List* was able to sweep the globe (ibid., p. 243).

45 Koch, Gertrud: The Aesthetic Transformation of the Image of the Unimaginable: Notes on Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*. Trans. by Jamie Owen Daniel and Miriam Hansen. In: October 48 (Spring 1989), pp. 15-24, here p. 16.

46 Cf. ibid., p. 17 and Adorno 1992 (*Commitment*), p. 88f.

47 Koch 1989, p. 21.

48 Löffler, Sigrid: Kino als Abfaß. Spielbergs mißlungener Holocaustfilm. In: Wochenpost (February 24, 1994). Cited in: Weiß 1995, p. 59f.

49 Later on, in the course of the film's run, meta-commentaries began appearing in which these fears were openly declared. Critics noted that people were not only afraid to criticize *Schindler's List*; such criticism also sometimes provoked the heated charge that it manifested an explicit or dormant unwillingness to face the past. Cf., for example, Broder, Henryk M.: Kritik der dummen Kerls. Spielbergs Widersacher. In: FAZ, 15.03.1994. Cited in: Weiß 1995, pp. 183-188. Broder's tokenization as a Jewish writer is worth remarking. As Weissberg, Lilliane: The Tale of a Good German: Reflections on the German Reception of *Schindler's List*. In: Loshitzky 1997, pp. 171-192, here p. 182 observes, he has »become a critical voice on German affairs«. German critics look to him for guidance in framing their own responses about sensitive Jewish-German issues. His condemnation of Löffler thus became something of a refrain among other critics who felt enjoined to distance themselves from her by giving the film the respect it deserved as a con-

beaten down with rifle butts.«⁴³ Adorno writes that such didacticism »slides into the abyss of its opposite« since even »the sound of desperation pays tribute to a heinous affirmation.«⁴⁴ As Koch implies in her prelude to a reading of Lanzmann's *Shoah*, Auschwitz from Adorno's standpoint, radically exposes the emptiness of moral claims based on the »bad metaphysics« that presumes an individual's »inner potential« for resistance in »situations that eliminate every human measure of freedom.«⁴⁵ The implication is that no art or representation can claim to redeem freedom as a measure of dignity even if it is »engaged« following Sartre's model, in reflecting on boundary situations that reveal human authenticity.⁴⁶ In cajoling his witness-characters into »doing and saying things which would otherwise remain hidden«, Lanzmann is, as Koch observes, a »loyal Sartrean«, committed to expressing rather than communicating the »presence of an absence which is located outside the spatiotemporal continuum of the image.«⁴⁷

Lanzmann's model of marking the limits of what can be imagined, and particularly where the mass murders are concerned, affected the standards goading reviewers, such as Sigrid Löffler, to excoriate Spielberg's elision of these boundaries:

Claude Lanzmann's Dokumentar-Epos *Shoah* folgte dem ästhetischen Prinzip, keine einzige Greulität zu zeigen. Das Ungeheuerliche, das nicht zu sehen war, entstand desto entsetzlicher in der Phantasie des Zuschauers und prägte sich ein, für immer. Wie sollte es Steven Spielberg in seiner gutgemeinten und geschmackssicheren Bebilderungssucht mit den Shoahbildern im Kopf je aufnehmen können?⁴⁸

[Claude Lanzmann's epic documentary *Shoah* followed the aesthetic principle not to show a single abomination. The monstrous that was not seen sprang up all the more horrendously in the spectator's imagination and impressed it upon him forever. How could Steven Spielberg in his well-meaning and tasteful pursuit of images be a match for the images of Shoah in our heads?]

Among the more controversial reviews, Löffler's perhaps too cynical blasting of the film as an instant absolution or »feeling-quickly« [*Gefühls-Quickie*] in the February 24th edition of the *Wochenpost* was harshly criticized in a few articles such as Henryk Broder's, which hinted at her anti-Semitism.⁴⁹ Yet Löffler's question speaks to the impetus of my own analysis here. For it is the images ›in one's head‹ that implicitly orient both positive and negative responses to Spielberg's effort. Such images also mediate how the criterion of authenticity was delineated by reviewers who wanted to proclaim *Schindler's List* an appropriate and valuable representation of the Holocaust.

II. ›The Images in One's Head‹

It is remarkable that moderate and exaggerated endorsements of *Schindler's List* evinced reviewers' needs to address a version of the renunciatory aesthetic that led other critics to repudiate the film. These positive reviews defended the film against charges that it is merely entertaining or argued for an unavoidable breaking of the taboo against dramatic films about the Holocaust, with Spielberg's »masterpiece« providing a successful model thereof. Writing for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Frank Schirrmacher, argues for the breaking of this taboo by invoking art's consciousness-raising potential, a self-satisfying assumption that Adorno's critical aesthetics suspends:

Spielberg shows that art functions to enlighten and, even in a time dulled by images, is able to exercise an amazing power. Maybe such a film could emerge only in America because European artists have given up their belief in this power.⁵⁰ [Transl. KB]

What is paradoxical about many of the positive reviews is that they react against the formal repression that the prohibition of fiction films has imposed; nevertheless, the criteria that they cite tend to confirm its power in deciding their evaluations of the »authenticity« of *Schindler's List*. For if reviewers commend Spielberg's willingness to refrain from his usual »Hollywood tricks« (no dollies, no cranes, no color, no big stars), then they also appreciate his employment of original locations, black and white film, hand-held camera, and the »*Wochenschau* effect« associated with the interplay among these elements. Jürgen Koar thus describes Spielberg's new sobriety in the following terms:

frontation with the Holocaust that the Germans themselves had failed to produce on their own behalf.

50 Schirrmacher, Frank: Schindlers Liste. In: FAZ, 01.03.1994. Cited in: Weiß 1995, p. 105f.: »Spielberg zeigt, daß Kunst aufklärend wirkt und selbst in einer durch Bilder abgestumpften Zeit eine erstaunliche Kraft auszuüben vermag. Vielleicht weil den europäischen Künstlern der Glaube daran abhanden gekommen ist, konnte ein solcher Film nur in Amerika entstehen.« Cf. also Andreas Kilb's remarks already quoted.

51 Koar, Jürgen: Grauen in schlichtem Schwarzweiß. Steven Spielbergs Film *Schindlers Liste* beschwört dokumentarisch die Wirklichkeit des Holocaust. In: SZ, 18.12.1993. Cited in: Weiß 1995, p. 24: »Der überaus unterhaltsame Erzähler phantastischer Film-Geschichten voller Spezialeffekte hat mit *Schindlers Liste* nichts dergleichen geschafft. Er hat vielmehr den Versuch gewagt, ohne in seine Hollywood-Trickkiste zu greifen, die Unglaubliche Wirklichkeit des Holocaust in Schwarzweiß nachzuzeichnen. Der Versuch ist so sehr gelungen, daß mancher Zuschauer in der Hoffnung, seine Benommenheit loszuwerden, länger als üblich im Kinodunkel verharrt. [...] Spielberg, der selbst Jude ist, beschreibt den Holocaust mit dokumentarischer Nüchternheit, was die Bilder um so eindringlicher wirken läßt.«

52 Hansen, Miriam: *Schindler's List* Is Not Schoah: The Second Commandment, Popular Modernism, and Public Memory. In: *Critical Inquiry* 22 (Winter 1996), pp. 292-312 identifies a division among the adherents of a »democratic« vs. »high art« mode of representation in the reception of *Schindler's List*. My examination supports her characterization of this opposition.

53 For an illustration and explanation of this reception in West Germany, cf. Knilli, Friedrich/Zielinski, Siegfried (Eds.): *Betrifft Holocaust: Zuschauer schreiben an den WDR*. Berlin: Volker Spiess 1983. Cf. also the special issue of *New German Critique* 19 (Winter 1980) on *Germans and Jews*, and particularly the essays by Jeffrey Herf (pp. 30-52), Andrei S. Markovits / Rebecca S. Hayden (pp. 53-80), Siegfried Zielinsky (pp. 81-96), and Huyssen (pp. 117-136) resp.

54 Since then, as Art Spiegelman caustically observes, »[w]e have had 15 years to streamline our narratives«. Art Spiegelman in *Village Voice* 39/13 (29.03.1994), p. 30.

55 Kilb, Andreas: Des Teufels Saboteur. Steven Spielbergs Film-Epos

The exceedingly entertaining story-teller of fantasy films full of special effects has created nothing of that kind with *Schindler's List*. He has rather dared trace the reality of the Holocaust in black and white without resorting to his Hollywood box of tricks. The attempt is so very successful that some spectators remained longer than usual in the theater darkness in the hope of losing their numbness... Spielberg, who is himself a Jew, describes the Holocaust with documentary sobriety, which all the more is what lends the images such a penetrating effect.⁵¹ [Transl. KB]

Reviewers such as Koar who praised *Schindler's List's* authenticity tended to talk about the film as a legitimate and appropriate representation of the Holocaust with a range of potential moral benefits for a German audience. The film, in their view, offers a discreet yet *democratic* or accessible means of »working through« the Jewish genocide for Germans previously deprived of serious dramatizations of their past.⁵²

It might be remembered that this is one of the principal issues dividing the West German critical response to the 1978 *Holocaust* miniseries, which aired in Germany in 1979.⁵³ The controversial reception of *Holocaust* focused West German critics' attention on the dangers of »mass-consuming« the Jewish genocide, especially when it is rendered in the form of a sentimental narrative aimed at eliciting »cathartic« weeping. Critics of the miniseries deemed the series mawkish melodrama; yet there was also an acknowledgment that it was precisely by virtue of its trite conventionality and mass-cultural appeal that *Holocaust* was able to elicit intense reactions from West German audiences of varying backgrounds. The principal question was whether the miniseries was not, perhaps, still valuable because of rather than despite of its sentimentality.

Since the *Holocaust* miniseries aired in Germany, some critics have become more predisposed to be suspicious of films produced by the Hollywood culture industry, thereby dooming them to preemptive dismissal. In this respect, the criticism of the miniseries reinforced a highbrow repudiation of melodrama.⁵⁴ The reception of *Schindler's List* is remarkable by contrast to the extent that so many critics were willing to embrace it despite of its status as an entertaining drama staged by the ubiquitous Spielberg.

Memories of the reception of the miniseries resurfaced in the debate among film critics in the newly reunified Germany about the moral-aesthetic propriety of Spielberg's *Schindler's List* portrayed as another attempt to bring the lessons of the Holocaust to the masses. Critics were split on whether or not to align Spielberg's film with its trivializing Hollywood forebear, the *Holocaust* miniseries of 1978. From his detractors' standpoint, Spielberg's artistic subtleties were seen as unconvincing Hollywood manipulations. Other points in the film's disfavor were the melodramatic departure scene, the treatment of the Jews as an anonymous mass (a portrayal which is considered additionally problematic because it echoes their dehumanizing treatment), the emphasis on the »good« Nazi rather than the complicit majority, and the sentimental overlay of music by John Williams. Yet, the impact of the miniseries also functioned to reinforce reviewers' recommendations. Before the film was even released in Germany, Andreas Kilb wrote in his March 3, 1994 review for *Die Zeit*:

The typical German taboo, which forbids the enlightenment of the people through fictions, was petrified in [films adopting the documentary style of Alain Resnais' and Jean Cayrol's *Night and Fog* as their model; KB]: the inaccessibility of feeling was their law of form. Until *Holocaust* came along, the most trivial of all Auschwitz stories – and the most successful... Nevertheless who still remembers *Holocaust* today, despite so many repetitions? As quickly as the emotion and the mourning came, as easily it was to forget it again. Precisely because the series so perfectly conformed to the conventional pattern of television dramas, it blended quickly again into the general television mush. Today, it rests somewhere between *Roots* and *Dallas* in those image memories, which are none anymore, but only a pile of rubble. No one needs to dig them out again. Because with *Schindler's List*, we are redeemed from *Holocaust*.⁵⁵ [Transl. KB]

It is significant that Kilb not only criticizes the reification of the arguably unsentimental style modeled by Resnais and Cayrol in *Night and Fog*, but also cites a taboo against fictional films as a cultural commonplace before praising Spielberg's effort. For Kilb, the petrification of this style authorizes a breaking of this taboo that would provide a welcome high art alternative to the melodramatic manipulations of *Holocaust*. Kilb even praises Spielberg's direction of the controversial shower scene at Auschwitz in the following terms: »he does not show it [the

über den Völkermord an den europäischen Juden – *Schindlers Liste*. In: Die Zeit, 03.03.1994. Cited in: Weiß 1995, p. 154f.: »Das typische deutsche Tabu, welches Volksaufklärung durch Fiktionen verbietet, war in ihnen versteinert, die Unzulänglichkeit des Fühlens war ihr Formgesetz. Bis *Holocaust* kam, die trivialste aller Auschwitz-Geschichten – und die erfolgreichste... Doch wer erinnert sich heute noch, trotz der vielen Wiederholungen, an *Holocaust*? So schnell die Rührung und die Trauer kamen, so leicht war es auch, sie wieder zu vergessen. Gerade weil die Serie so perfekt an die Strickmuster der Fernseh-dramaturgie angepaßt war, ging sie rasch wieder unter im allgemeinen Fernsehbrei. Heute ruht sie irgendwo zwischen *Roots* und *Dallas* in jenem Bildgedächtnis, das keins mehr ist, nur eine Haufen Schutt. Niemand muß sie dort mehr ausgraben. Denn mit *Schindlers Liste* sind wir von *Holocaust* erlöst.«

56 Kilb, Andreas: Warten bis Spielberg kommt. Von *Holocaust* bis *Schindlers Liste*: Hollywood bewältigt die deutsche Vergangenheit. Und wir? In: Die Zeit, 21.01.1994. Cited in: Weiß 1995, p. 31.

57 Koar in: Weiß 1995, p. 24: »Er erzählt die Geschichte der Vernichtung fast nebenbei, auf dem Umweg sozusagen über die Schilderung eine guten Tat« [Spielberg »relates the story of the extermination almost casually, indirectly so to speak, in the course of describing a good deed«].

58 Kilb in: Weiß 1995, p. 156: »Es ist nicht die Ästhetik der alten Wochenschauen, die da wiederkehrt, sondern das Prinzip der Fernsehreportage, die Schnapp-Schuss-Realität der Straßenbilder aus Sarajevo und Phnom Penh, zurück gespiegelt in eine Vergangenheit, in der es kein Fernsehen gab.«

59 Uthmann, Jörg v.: Vom Lebemann zum Lebensretter. Premiere im Klima antisemitischer Mißgunst: *Schindler's List*, Steven Spielbergs neuer Film. In: FAZ 14.12.1994. Cited in: Weiß 1995, p. 22: »Nach den Farbortgen der Saurierwelt begnügt sich Spielberg diesmal mit keuschem Schwarzweiß. Handkamera und betont nüchterne, manchmal fast unbeholfene *Wochenschau*-Einstellungen tun ein übriges, um den dokumentarischen Charakter des Films zu unterstreichen.«

60 For the purposes of this identification, I consulted and partially translated the 1996 summary and notes published in November 2000 11/2000 and authored by Giannina Wedde from the Hochschule/Schule: Ruhr Universität Bochum about post-war *Wochenschauen*. Cf. *Thesen-*

destruction of people in the gas chambers; KB]. He respects the boundaries that separate the tremendousness that we are able to grasp from the horror that remain unimaginable« [»er zeigt es nicht. Er respektiert die Grenzen, die das Schreckliche, das wir noch begreifen können, vom unvorstellbaren Grauen trennt«].⁵⁶

It is striking, too, that Kilb grants Spielberg's film the power to »redeem« non-Jewish German spectators, not only from the past, but also from »improper« representations of it. Though his article appeared in a weekly newspaper aimed at educated and presumably discerning readers, his response is nevertheless emblematic of the ways in which critics defended *Schindler's List* in light of a commonplace film fiction prohibition intended to safeguard the mass murders against trivialization.⁵⁷ Such reviews reconstructed the film as a democratic intervention that forged a compromise with the documentary aesthetic modeled by Resnais and Lanzmann. This aesthetic guards against an easy or enjoyable encounter with the atrocities perpetrated by the Nazis. In its liberalized version, however, this aesthetic assumes that it is appropriate to create a fictional representation as long as it is serious and tasteful.⁵⁸ Re-enactments of the mass murders may be communicated, but discreetly and incrementally, or, in Koar's description of *Schindler's List*, almost *nebenbei* [casually, in passing].⁵⁷ In this vein, Spielberg's Holocaust entry could be heralded as not »just« a dramatic fiction, but rather as an »almost European« film, whose seriousness is certifiable from its adherence to a documentary asceticism.

Though Kilb praises Spielberg's realism, he is savvy enough to recognize that the reality effect of the Cracow ghetto liquidation scene does not rely on a return to the aesthetic of the weekly newsreels:

It is not the aesthetic of the old newsreels that returns here, but rather the principle of television reportage, the snapshot reality of street pictures from Sarajevo and Phnom Penh, mirrored back into a past, in which there was no television.⁵⁸ [Transl. KB]

In contrast, while Jörg von Uthmann lauds Spielberg's relative modesty, he also elides the technical historicity of the reality effects achieved by the director:

After the color orgies of the Saurian world, this time Spielberg contents himself with chaste black and white. Hand-held camera and emphatically matter-of-fact, sometimes almost clumsy, newsreel-shots additionally underscore the documentary character of the film.⁵⁹ [Transl. KB]

Von Uthmann goes on to acknowledge Spielberg's use of European rather than American actors in the title roles – another testament to Spielberg's commendable reserve. What is striking, however, is Von Uthmann's naïve invocation of »newsreel shots« that reinforce the film's documentary effect, a comparison that recurs in other reviews. It merits further study because it unconsciously conflates the simulated documentary look of a fiction film with »original« period footage appearing in weekly newsreels.

The *Wochenschauen* were 15-minute black and white newsreels shown once or twice a week in theaters. They typically featured news about political and cultural events, sports, and natural catastrophes, but eventually faded from the scene with the rise of television. The first post-war weekly newsreels were produced by the Allies in the American and British sectors between 1945-1952, by the *Defa* – *Der Augenzeuge* in the Soviet sector from 1946-1984 and in the French sectors by *Sur le monde/Les actualites françaises*, and later *Blick in die Welt* from 1946-1976. The American and British newsreel *World in Film* sought to bring about the reeducation and reorientation of the Germans in part by confronting them with Nazi crimes. The first few editions comprised material from war correspondents and were presented in conformity with Eisenhower's »hard peace« agenda.⁶⁰

When I cite the »*Wochenschau* effect«, I am referring to German critics' comparisons between *Schindler's List* and newsreels in order to affirm its authenticity. These comparisons confuse Spielberg's simulation of *cinéma vérité* with the technology of newsreels that was contemporary with actual events from the World War II period and its immediate aftermath. Such a historical confusion between the era of the *Wochenschauen* and contemporary standards of realism indicates that newsreel images have seemingly become a touchstone for post-war Holocaust memory. To generations born after the war, they serve as the simulacra of memory for an event that was never witnessed.⁶¹ What I want to demonstrate is that this

papier <http://www.hausarbeiten.de/faecher/ha>. Cf. also <http://www.ralf-hecht.de/weimar/kap3.html> for the history of the *Wochenschauen* in conjunction with developments in film and camera technology in Germany. In addition, I consulted Bodensieck, Heinrich: *Welt im Film: Origins and Message*. In: Short, K.R.M./Dolezel, Stephen (Eds.): *Hitler's Fall: The News Reel Witness*. London: Croom Helm 1988, pp. 119-147.

61 Cf. Joshua Hirsch's discussion of Nadine Fresco's 1984 article, *Remembering the Unknown*, on second-generation memory cited in Hirsch, J.: *Afterimage: Film, Trauma, and the Holocaust*. Philadelphia: Temple UP 2004, p. 150.

62 Elsaesser, Thomas: *One Train May be Hiding Another: History, Memory, Identity, and the Visual Image*. In: Belau, Linda/Ramadanovic, Petar (Eds.): *Topologies of Trauma: Essays on the Limit of Knowledge and Memory*. New York: Other Pr. 2002, pp. 61-72.

63 Santner, Eric L.: *Stranded Objects: Mourning, Memory, and Film in Postwar Germany*. Ithaca: Cornell UP 1990.

64 Freud, S.: *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. The Standard Ed. of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Vol. 18. Trans. and ed. by James Strachey in coll. with Anna Freud. London: The Hogarth Pr. 1955, pp. 7-64, here p. 28. For a close analysis of this quotation and its implications for Freud's theory of trauma, please consult my forthcoming article, *The Substance of Psychic Life*, appearing in Mowitt, John/Liu, Catherine/Pepper, Thomas (Eds.): *The Interpretation of Dreams/Dreams of Interpretation*. Minneapolis: Minnesota UP 2006.

technologically anachronistic comparison reflects the circulation of an idealized memory of the Holocaust that responds to assumptions about the appropriate manner of representing and remembering it.

From a psychoanalytic standpoint, von Uthmann's comparisons with the *Wochenschauen* raise questions about the technological mediation of unconsciously invested images of the past. This unconscious investment leads to their currency as a mode of a decontextualized post-history as Thomas Elsaesser has conceptualized it.⁶² What I have called the »*Wochenschau* effect« could therefore be read as evidence for the functioning of »timeless« unconscious processes of identification with the past that Freud delimits in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920).

The theory of traumatic repetition presented by Freud in that slim yet dense volume continues to be taken up in studies that are focused on the prospect of employing film to »work through« the traumatic significance of genocide. Eric Santner draws on it in *Stranded Objects* (1990) in order to differentiate between genuine mourning in German films about the Nazi Period and a short-circuited »narrative fetishism« that simply repeats the same images to the point of numbness without critically integrating them.⁶³ My own recourse to *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* has tended to focus on Freud's complex reading of the unconscious and the narcissistic as well as masochistic dimensions of compulsive repetition. The theory of the unconscious undermines a clear-cut moralistic distinction between critical mourning and short-circuited repetition. It also indicates a partial explanation for the *Wochenschau* effect. What interests me in the context of Freud's account of traumatic repression in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is his self-conscious ambiguity in configuring the atemporality of unconscious processes and contents. The German media's debate about *Schindler's List* offers a way of reading this ambiguity by highlighting the idealized remediation of touchstone images for German collective memories of the Shoah that determine judgments of the film's authenticity.

III. The »Timelessness« of Authentic Memory

In the second chapter of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud puts forward the thesis that phenomena are traumatic because the subject was unable to prepare for them with anxiety, which designates the state of expecting danger (as distinguished from fear, which has an object). These unanticipated frightful incidents consequently produce a shock to the psychic economy that over-extends the processing powers of the perceptual-conscious system. The traces of trauma will thereafter come to reside in the unconscious, where they will not overburden and interfere with perceptual operations. The storage function of the unconscious is hereby differentiated in relation to the processing powers of the perceptual-conscious system, which is temporal to the extent that it must be devoted to the rapid intake of sensory stimuli. Freud speculates that unconscious mental processes are, in contrast, *timeless*:

As a result of certain psycho-analytic discoveries, we are to-day in a position to embark on a discussion of the Kantian theorem that time and space are »necessary forms of thought«. We have learnt that unconscious mental processes are in themselves »timeless«. This means in the first place that they are not ordered temporally, that time does not change them in any way and that the idea of time cannot be applied to them. These are negative characteristics which can only be clearly understood if a comparison is made with *conscious* mental processes. On the other hand, our abstract idea of time seems to be wholly derived from the method of working of the system *Pcpt.-Cs.* and to correspond to a perception on its own part of that method of working. This mode of functioning may perhaps constitute another way of providing a shield against stimuli.⁶⁴

It is suggestive that in the course of citing Immanuel Kant's theorem from the *Critique of Pure Reason* respecting the temporality of inner experience, Freud delineates the timelessness of unconscious processes. This speculation spatializes the unconscious by implying that the memory traces located in it are relatively permanent in relation to the transitory contents of the perceptual-conscious. Such traces are therefore not empirical or cognitive in Kant's sense, though they might be temporally mixed, which is to say, detached from their respective historical contexts. In addition, Freud suggests that the abstraction of time may itself serve as a defensive mechanism to the extent that it deflects the impact of tensions stemming from the

65 In consonance with the homeo-static infrastructure of the psychic economy depicted in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, aggravating stimulation, or unpleasure, is connected to variations in Freud's theory of the death-drive. If *unpleasure* is defined as too much stimulation, then pleasure will mean relieving this surplus; however, if unpleasure is equivalent to any form of stimulation (an implication of Freud's theorization of the Nirvana Principle as a radicalized death-drive), then pleasure is the evacuation of *all* stimuli in the service of a primary masochistic urge to regress to a primordial state of inorganic calm.

unconscious. He thereby acknowledges that there is no intuition of the unconscious available to us that is not already apperceptive.

Freud's speculations illuminate two hypotheses about the configuration of authenticity with the prohibition against images in the reception of *Schindler's List*. First, the repression that mediates judgments of the film's authenticity might betray itself in unconscious contents that are not temporally ordered. This implication is paradoxical since the notion of authenticity typically requires a respect for their historical specificity – for the distinctiveness of the moment and context in which they transpire. Second, the investment in the *Bilderverbot* that organizes some assessments of *Schindler's List* suggests an inclination to keep the Holocaust sacred and thus timelessly idealized to safeguard the event from new interpretations and images that could stir up unconscious tensions. This investment closes off the mass murders in a manner that inadvertently repeats Freud's self-conscious delineation of the timelessness of unconscious processes.

If traumatic memories are mediated by timeless unconscious processes according to Freud, then the question arises as to whether they will remain fixed in form. An idealized memory evinces the persistence of a cathexis with anxiety-imbued elements that trigger protective mechanisms, which over-determine a traumatic event's representation by and for consciousness.

The theory of repression proposed in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* cannot be separated from Freud's understanding of *pleasure* as relief from *unpleasure* within a thermodynamic economy where unpleasure alternatively means surplus tension and stimulation in general.⁶⁵ This definition stipulates that when traumatic memories induce shame, they will aggravate the disequilibrium of an already over-stimulated system geared toward soothing the wound that the trauma produced. According to Freud, the reactivation of repressed traumatic memories mobilizes a systemic urge to regulate the tension that they cause. Insofar as spectatorship provides an occasion for sado-masochistic identifications and voyeuristic enjoyment, it can trigger a sense of shame that spurs unpleasure and will need to be »bound«. In instances of sexual trauma or genocide, such enjoyment may be morally unacceptable (i.e., shameful), hence subject to repression in Freud's sense. This sense of impropriety is reinforced by the conventions shared by texts and their audiences that organize the relation between form and content and regulate the effects (enjoyment, dissatisfaction, shock) that it occasions. Moral principles that gauge the propriety of certain representations do not, therefore, unilaterally determine aesthetic criteria since the latter reciprocally shape the affective and libidinal basis of moral standards that dictate how much enjoyment will be »allowed« consciousness in the encounter with representations of trauma.

This connection has significant implications for the debate over the historical-moral value of *Schindler's List*. For it suggests that the aesthetic and ethical criteria informing the reception of films about the Nazi crimes may serve to protect German viewers from new tensions (unpleasure). Such tensions do not merely stem from narcissistically wounding confrontations with atrocities committed in Germany's name; unpleasure in Freud's sense also surrounds the still more shameful prospect of sado-masochistically enjoying and identifying with images of victimization.

While the economy of pleasure and unpleasure might provide a partial explanation for the need to regulate traumatic tension through moral and aesthetic principles, on a theoretical level, it is also important to acknowledge that adopting a Freudian standpoint on trauma from *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* involves taking on the less compelling biologicistic, thermodynamic, and metaphysical aspects of the economic metaphors he employs. I therefore want to sidestep these aspects for the time being in order to reflect on the implications of his attention to the narcissistic and potentially disciplinary dimensions of the »images in one's heads« as Löffler refers to them.

In his *Introduction: On Narcissism* (1914), Freud describes the emergence of an *ideal ego* as a puerile and idealized self-image that orients self-love (primary narcissism). He also refers to the subsequent emergence of a secondary-narcissistic *ego-ideal* as the disciplinary self-standard precipitated by the subject's encounter with and absorption of the critical gaze of others. The concept of the ego-ideal may help us to understand individual and collective investments in particular memories or images of the past as subject formations that are responsive to social standards. Extrapolating from Freud's theorization of the ego-ideal, I would therefore like to suggest the companion term *memory-ideal* defined as the idealized internal locus of

66 Rossner, Heiko in: Cinema 190 (March 1994). Cited in: Weiß 1995, p. 88: »Die Hinrichtungsszenen besitzen eine solche Authentizität, daß sie wie reale Wochenschauaufnahmen wirken, die aber wegen ihrer Brutalität kein Fernsehsender zeigen würde: Nach Kopfschüssen spritzen die Blutfontänen. Bis zum letzten epileptischen Todeszucken bleibt die Kamera dicht am Geschehen. Das düstere Schwarzweiß verstärkt nur den Wahrhaftigkeitseffekt dieser Bilder.«.

67 Loshitzky 1997, p. 109.

68 Hirsch 2004, p. 144.

a diffuse composite anticipation of how other groups, communities, and nations expect Germans to remember and to mourn the Holocaust.

In the case of strict adherents to the prohibition against dramatizing the Nazi genocide of the Jews, this memory-ideal is clearly repressive: Germans are only »allowed« to view subdued, non-fictional, and, most importantly, relatively »unpleasurable« films about the Holocaust. Citing *Night and Fog* or Lanzmann's *Shoah* as paragons of propriety, reviewers who adopted this ideal dogmatically insisted that the Holocaust's dramatization should be renounced in order to prevent a predominantly non-Jewish German public from a trivializing mass consumption of Jewish suffering. This renunciation seemed to be haunted by a related anxiety that such a prospect might allow for a voyeuristic enjoyment of suffering and persecution as well as a morally untenable sense of sado-masochistic scintillation among spectators. So constructed, the Jewish genocide cannot be adequately represented, nor should it be out of respect for the suffering of the innumerable murdered and survivors.

Yet for those attempting to rescue the film's moral-historical value from the dung-heap of critical rejection, *Schindler's List* offers an image of the Holocaust that compels Germans to face their history and yet satisfies the demands of a watered-down prohibition in minimizing the possibilities for voyeuristic enjoyment. This memory-ideal partially explains why judgments of the film's authenticity hinged on its success in approximating a documentary style by presenting a detailed picture of the atrocities. Heiko Rosner thus praises the film for its powerful simulation of graphic fullness:

The execution scenes possess such an authenticity that they have the effect of real *Wochenschauen*, which, however, no television program would show because of their brutality: After shots in the head, blood fountains spray out. Up until the last epileptic death rattle the camera stays in close proximity to what is happening. The dark black and white film only reinforces the veracity effect of these images.⁶⁶
[Transl. KB]

Rosner's delimitation of authenticity demonstrates how a memory-ideal connected to the Holocaust is defined specifically by traits contributing to the alleged documentary quality of *Schindler's List*: the use of black and white film, hand-held camera footage, and the resulting *Wochenschau*-effect cited above. This memory-ideal is temporally mixed in that it includes both the *Wochenschau* comparison and the incorporation of hand-held camera footage as components attesting to *Schindler's List's* realism. To underscore the historicity of the technologies in question, it is important to recognize that audiences during the immediate post-war period when the *Wochenschauen* were being screened would not have viewed the newsreels from the standpoint of today's spectators who *associate* hand-held camera footage with the effect of »gritty« or »rough immediacy«. This collective association between hand-held footage and documentary realism was influenced by the circulation of Italian neo-realist films and, subsequently, by televised news coverage of the Vietnam War; it would have only developed in the intervening period. In contrast, while German soldiers used hand-held cameras in the field during the war and Leni Riefenstahl experimented with movable cameras, this technology did not dominate weekly newsreel footage. Though such footages incorporated into the *Wochenschauen* of the 1930's and 1940's might have employed various forms of moveable cameras, they were also replete with segments shot with still-standing cameras; nevertheless, the defenders of *Schindler's List's* authenticity cite the film's employment of a hand-held camera and black-and-white film as factors contributing to its *Wochenschauen*-effect as though this effect also links *Schindler's List* more intimately with its historical »origin«.

Loshitzky offers a partial account for this slippage in light of Spielberg's and Janusz Kaminski's cinematography as a »pastiche of cinematic styles« that integrates quotations »traditionally coded as belonging to documentary modes« into its narrative. She recognizes citations of styles »as diverse as *film noir*, German Expressionism, Italian Neorealism, World War II newsreels, and CNN news coverage«. ⁶⁷ Likewise, Joshua Hirsch identifies specific citations of *Night and Fog*, *Shoah*, and the resonances between Spielberg's employment of *chiaroscuro* lighting with the Polish films, *Border Street* (1948) and *Kanal* (1956), which dealt with the German occupation. He notes that Spielberg consulted Andrzej Wajda, who directed the 1956 film. ⁶⁸ According to Hirsch, Spielberg's imitation of styles, genres, and modes of film juggles rather than takes sides in the debate about realism versus expressionism as appropriate modes of representing the Holocaust. Hence while the crowd scenes in *Schindler's List* »adopt the rough,

69 Ibid., p. 145 In a 1994 roundtable discussion published in: *Schindler's List: Myth, Movie, and Memory*. In: *Village Voice* 39/13 (29.03.1994), pp. 24-31, here p. 25, Koch goes so far as to declare both historically finalist and authoritarian Spielberg's employment of the aesthetic registers to make strong truth claims: »Wanting to have the last word means wanting to be the summarizing speaker. And I think what the film is doing is pretending that Spielberg has a kind of master narrative of the events and emphasizing that it is a so-called ›realist‹ film. By using all the quotations from European films, it posits itself at the end of film history. I think he recycled every little slip of film that was made before to produce this film. It presents what we seem to know – because we have seen so many of the images – as a higher depiction reality. And, therefore, the whole film has a kind of authoritarian quality to it.«

70 Loshitzky 1997, p. 109..

71 Horowitz 1997, p. 122.

72 Schleier, Curt: Steven Spielberg's New Direction. In: *Jewish Monthly* 108/4 (January/February 1994), p. 12.

73 Shandler, Jeffrey: *Schindler's Discourse: America Discusses the Holocaust and Its Mediation*, from NBC's Miniseries to Spielberg's Film. In: Loshitzky 1997, pp. 153-168, here p. 156.

hand-held documentary style that originated in *cinéma vérité* and direct cinema« that has »become ubiquitous as a signpost of ›realism‹ in contemporary television dramas«, several scenes also utilize »the expressionistic *chiaroscuro* lighting of *film noir*«.69

In addition, Loshitzky calls attention to the fallacy that underlies Spielberg's decision to use black-and-white film. This »nostalgic, stylized, and artificial reference« gives *Schindler's List* an »aura of ›arty‹ glamour« rather than strengthening its claim to »formal authenticity«.70 The film »is not really old and genuine, but merely filmed as if it were so« as Sarah Horowitz observes. It thereby fosters a »false claim to authenticity, much like a contemporary family momentarily donning Victorian garb for a sepia-tinted photo whose truth claims may be readily punctured and debunked«.71 For Spielberg, however, it would seem, that

black and white stands for reality. I don't think color is real. I think certainly color is real to the people who survived the Holocaust, but to people who are going to watch the story for the first time, I think black and white is going to be the real experience for them. My only experience with the Holocaust has been through black-and-white documentaries. I've never seen the Holocaust in color. I don't know what Auschwitz looks like in color. Even though I was there, it's still black and white in my eyes. I think color would have added a veneer of almost farce.72

Jeffrey Shandler notes that Spielberg's defense of his choice of black and white film not only contradicts »conventional notions of color photography as being more ›realistic‹«. They also highlight »the distinctively privileged stature that documentary images recorded during World War II have had for Americans as points of contact with the Holocaust«. According to Shandler, this association »differs from the relationship with the Holocaust of most Europeans – whose physical landscape is strewn with various landmarks of the Nazi era and of the Holocaust...«.73

While Shandler's observations suggest that the newsreel effect is a specifically »American« association, my own analysis indicates that this slippage also transpires in German reviews. The implication is, that in both contexts, the memory-idealization of the Holocaust is not absolutely fixed since changes in the valuation of particular cinematographic styles and technologies apparently affects it; instead, it is »timeless« in Freud's sense because its contents are not temporally ordered. The *Wochenschau*-effect demonstrates that idealized memories are *flexible* composites of temporally mixed elements determined by contemporary standards of realism, prevailing visual technologies, as well as the sedimented traces of outmoded forms.

Moreover, it is worth recalling that the weekly newsreels were far from neutral or »sober«. One of their most striking characteristics was the accompanying voice-over proclaiming the meaning of the events flickering across the screen from the perspective of the moment. During the war, German newsreels were narrated at a staccato clip that promoted a sense of suspense comparable to the effect of a play-by-play sportscast. After the war, the Germans viewed Allied newsreels and sometimes footage shot by the Allies of the camp liberations that included highly charged images of emaciated, hollow-eyed survivors in filthy, ragged uniforms, and piles of naked, skeletal corpses, which was shown to Germans as part of the *Entnazifizierung* program. These images presumably would have deepened their already wounded national narcissism. For those who witnessed the radical changes between the Third Reich and the Allied Occupation, the contrast between the identifications respectively assumed by the presiding voice-overs between wartime National Socialist and post-war Allied newsreels should have been painfully obvious. When German film critics of the early 1990's praise the documentary effect of *Schindler's List* by virtue of its resemblance in certain scenes to *Wochenschauen*, they bracket out the ways in which the voice-overs supplemented the montage and reinforced suspenseful fascination and nationalist or anti-nationalist identifications. Their forgetting of these voice-overs suggests that the ideal of authenticity associated with the *Wochenschau*-effect of *Schindler's List* is not qualified by a memory of the propaganda function that they subtly and overtly served.

The repression of this function is not limited to non-Jewish reviewers. It also surfaces in the Jewish German director Billy Wilder's celebration of the film:

After the first ten minutes, I had already forgotten that it was a film. I no longer concentrated on the camera angle and all the technical stuff – I was only spellbound by this total realism. It began like a *Wochenschau* newsreel from that time – very difficult to direct, so that it really achieves a true effect. And believe me; these scenes are

74 Wilder, Billy: Man sah überall nur Taschentücher. In: *SZ*, 18.02.1994. Cited in: Weiß 1995, p. 43: »Schon nach den ersten zehn Minuten hatte ich vergessen, daß es sich um einen Film handelt. Ich achtete nicht mehr auf den Winkel der Kamera und all das technische Zeug – ich war nur gebannt von diesem totalen Realismus. Es fängt an wie eine Wochenschau damals – sehr schwer zu inszenieren, daß das wirklich wahr wirkt. Und glauben Sie mir, diese Szenen sind so authentisch, es läuft einem kalt den Rücken runter. Ich habe einen großen Teil meiner Familie in Auschwitz verloren, meine Mutter, meinen Stiefvater, meine Großmutter – das ganze Elend kam wieder in mir hoch. Ich saß da und sah auf der Leinwand, wie die Juden zusammengetrieben wurden, rein in die Züge, die sie zur Vergasung deportierten – und meine Augen richteten sich auf die Menschenschlangen, irgendwo in der Menge muß meine Mutter sein, aber ich konnte sie nicht finden. Ich hätte längst vergessen, daß es ja bloß ein Film ist. Und es ist ja tatsächlich mehr als bloß ein Film: *Schindlers Liste* ist ein Meilenstein.«

75 Weissberg 1997, p. 183. Weissberg is borrowing this quotation from Kilb, Andreas: *Des Teufels Saboteur*. In: *Die Zeit*, 04.03.1994. Cited in: Weiß 1995, p. 58.

76 Eisenstein, Paul: *Obsession and the Meaning of Jewish Rescue: Oskar Schindler as Spirit*. In: Eisenstein, P.: *Traumatic Encounters: Holocaust Representation and the Hegelian Subject*. Albany: SUNY 2003, p. 88. Friedrich Knilli, one of the most prominent researchers into the German reception of the miniseries *Holocaust*, referred in conversation to *Schindler's List* as »Zionist propaganda« in light of the final scene featuring the surviving members of the »list« placing stones on Schindler's grave while accompanied by their corresponding actors from the film.

so authentic that a cold chill runs down one's back. I lost a great part of my family in Auschwitz, my mother, my stepfather, my grandmother – the whole misery came back up in me. I sat there and watched how, on the screen, the Jews were driven into the trains together, which were deporting them for gassing – and my eyes focused on the lines of people, my mother must be somewhere in the crowds, but I could not find her. I had long forgotten that it was merely a film. And it is, in fact, actually more than a film: *Schindler's List* is a milestone.⁷⁴ [Transl. KB]

Wilder's excitement attests to a sense of immediacy and suspense that *Schindler's List* produces, an effect that was so overwhelming in his case that he lost his sense of space and time and returned to the period before his mother's death was certain. This observation is particularly odd in light of his enlistment by the American forces as a film specialist, who remembers the footage of camp liberations, which documented the atrocities as well as the soldiers' shocked reactions. Liliane Weissberg paraphrases Wilder's recollection »that some of these films were screened to a German public as part of reeducation efforts and that food stamps could only be acquired after having seen these films«.⁷⁵ Yet like the other critics, Wilder's memory of the newsreels is seemingly »timeless«: he does not mention the voice-overs that accompanied them; nor does he identify the actual context of those images that *Schindler's List* putatively resurrects.

Rosner's and Wilder's lapse in marking the newsreels' changing ideological perspectives points to a hierarchical reception structure whereby film sound, in contrast to image, is more likely to be taken for granted, forgotten, and/or repressed – to remain unconscious in the process of remembering the technologically recorded past and the past as such. Based on Freud's hypothesis concerning the timelessness of unconscious processes, one might speculate that voice-overs are too »temporalizing« to be included in a memory-ideal; however, this silencing of the recorded past may be endemic to the sense of immediacy that charged the *Wochenschauen* themselves as »news of the day« for the war generations. It is worth pointing out that post-war generation film reviewers would not have experienced this immediacy, but might nevertheless associate it with the weekly newsreels as an »origina« venue for initial encounters with the events of that time.

In a similar manner, one might speculate about the reasons for war generation non-Jewish Germans' forgetting of the »voice of ideology« in their reconvenings of *Wochenschauen* memories. For it was during the viewing of these films among others where they risked complicity with Nazi ideology at the level of spectator fascination alone in becoming identified with the camera's view. Moreover, with respect to the post-war footage featuring news of the death-camp liberations, it was certainly in the interests of the occupied western parts of Germany to view the American perspective as non-ideological insofar as a seamless transition into this »de-Nazifying« ethos provided them with a foundation for rebuilding their shattered economic and social infrastructure and with a means of seeking reacceptance from a shocked and condemning world. If, as Paul Eisenstein observes, Hollywood realism »is almost always about well-framed certainty, linearity, and the maintaining of a consistent social reality«, then *Schindler's List* is an eminently successful example of this genre: it achieves a transcendental position of knowledge by appearing to move beyond the contingencies of nationalist identification and desire even as it re-entrenches an American-style liberal investment in the »meaningful narrative« of the individual's power to promote justice.⁷⁶ It is, in any case, ironic that these post-war newsreel images have, in German collective memory, been seemingly silenced and thereby »cleansed« of their link to that other voice of ideology that dominated the Nazi period.

To summarize, the German media's dissemination of Adorno's prohibition of redemptive representations clearly affects a repressive aesthetic for the Holocaust that is evinced in both film critics' rejections and affirmations of *Schindler's List*. First, in the case of the film's rejection, the prohibition prevents the memory traces from leaving the unconscious for the public arena of changing images. Because it thereby remains a traumatic stimulus unaffected by time and, by implication, history, the prohibition blocks representations that might critically reshape emotionally charged memories. The prohibition against fictional films dramatizing the Holocaust would thus seem to impede working through by keeping the charged aspects under wraps as it were. This thesis might explain the desire to forbid images of mass death by gassing above all insofar as these elicit the highest degree of tension and fascination.



In the second place, an orthodox adherence to the prohibition seemingly forecloses the unacceptable possibility of enjoying the traumatic object; it therefore protects audiences from acknowledging the shameful pleasures of spectatorship that, in a Freudian schema, aggravate an over-charged system. Freud posits a systemic injunction to control the amount of tension reintroduced into the psychic economy. By extension, the criteria employed by the film's endorsers allow them to read it as renouncing the pleasures of representation to justify their acclaim.

It would therefore seem that the injunction to respect the prohibition against dramatizations of the Holocaust maintains a state of affairs partly consistent with the Freudian theory of the ideal character of the traumatic memory traces situated in the unconscious. Yet, it is also important to understand the reciprocity between consumption and production corresponds with the vicissitudes of collective repression and the formation of a memory-ideal. To this end, Freud's understanding of narcissistic identification may have more explanatory power than the thermodynamic economy of trauma presented in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. In general, Freud's theory of narcissism offers a structure for mapping the relations between identity and the cultural production of memory whereby film images can themselves become memory traces. These traces subsequently inform the standards by which future cinematic mediations of historical events are evaluated. Indeed, as my analysis of the *Wochenschau*-effect demonstrates, films clearly obtain the power to circulate standards by which even the authenticity of personal memories may be gauged; however, insofar as the Holocaust's traumatic aura has until recently blocked German domestic production of dramatic films treating it, the resulting memory-ideal cannot simply be viewed as the vehicle and effect of repression. It is also a limited mode of working through the repression of the genocide and the national shame that surrounds it.



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