

THOMAS ELSAESSER, **Subject Positions, Speaking Positions:**

From HOLOCAUST and HEIMAT to SHOAH and SCHINDLER'S LIST

in Vivian Sobchack, ed., *The Persistence of History* (NY: Routledge 1996), 145-183

History, Representation, Cinema

History, when it is not just the past -a past which cinema and television will master for us, if necessary by digitally re-mastering the archive material -seems to have entered a conceptual twilight zone. While memory, especially when contrasted with history, has gained in value, history has become the very signifier of the inauthentic, merely designating what is left when the site of memory has been vacated by the living. With the audio-visual media effortlessly re`present'ing that site, however, the line where memory passes into history has become uncertain, assigning the label `postmodern' to the fact that the divide is being crossed and recrossed in either direction. For how authentic is memory, even when events are still attached to a subject? "When I say `I remember my fifth birthday', what I mean is: I remember the last time I told about remembering my fifth birthday".¹ Or what of the memory of events which live in the culture because of the images they have left, etched on our retinas, too painful to recall, too disturbing not to remember? `Do you remember the day Kennedy was shot' really means `Do you remember the day you watched Kennedy being shot all day on television?' No longer are stories of help, for a different kind of activity has taken over: obsession, fantasy and trauma, that is, acts of re-telling, re-remembering, repeating. The evidence of civil wars, communal strife, `tribal' violence suggest such a compulsion to repeat, with ethnic and religious memories, rekindled by hatred, re-enacting wrongs suffered, or seeking revenge. But, then, what obscure urge is gratified by the compulsion to repeat of television? Perhaps it is not unconnected with the prevalence of events at once so apparently senseless and so predictably routine that neither narratives nor images seem able to encompass them.²

What part has the cinema played in this? In the case of the Vietnam War, movies have not given us the history, or even histories, but *THE DEER HUNTER* (Michael Cimino, 1978), *APOCALYPSE NOW* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1979), *FULL METAL JACKET* (Stanley Kubrick, 1987), *PLATOON* (Oliver Stone, 1986) and *DEAR AMERICA- LETTERS FROM VIETNAM* (William Couturie, 1987): traumatic spectacles, re-enactments without closure, attempts at exorcism without promise of redemption. Yet not least because of these films and others, the 'Vietnam experience' has taken on a shape, an identity and a texture (for the United States, at least) that makes its history both possible and `academic', in the sense that the legend has established its own reality alongside the `truth', as in John Ford's *THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE* (1962).

In this respect, the United States have been fortunate to have a public art (the cinema) that may be said to have done 'mourning work' on behalf of the nation and thus allowed the Vietnam war to enter 'history' and not just the history books. Not all peoples are either as lucky or as bold. One only has to think of Japan, a country that appears until recently not even to have begun reflecting on the fact that the memory others have of it requires opening up its 'history' to outside scrutiny. A comparable case, Germany, has often invited such scrutiny or has not been allowed to forget events that still refuse either to be contained in consensus accounts or exempt from contested representation. The crimes of Nazism have demanded voicing and recollecting, be it by giving testimony, or by acts of commemoration.³

Hence the larger questions Steven Spielberg's *SCHINDLER'S LIST* (1993) raises -made into a cultural event partly by coming so shortly after the opening of the Holocaust Museum in Washington. They exceed the semantic field insinuated by the director's mega-hit *JURASSIC PARK* (1992): that the Holocaust might have become history's last theme-park. One's response could also try and understand the gesture of deference extended by Spielberg's film towards Claude Lanzmann's *SHOAH* (1985), and link it to Lanzmann's violent rejection of both Spielberg's film and gesture. The collision implies aesthetic, moral as well as religious differences, but it also includes that almost constitutive division in film history between Hollywood and Europe, itself a scene where the same drama seems destined to be played out over and over again. I want to take this case, and look once more at the relationship between historical events and their representations, but also at what it means to bear witness and -especially when public history has inevitably superseded personal memory- to be speaking for someone, or finding oneself spoken by someone, in the medium of cinema.

If a need for speaking, for rendering accounts beyond any hope of settling them imposes itself, this century, above all for 'Auschwitz', it is because the name has come to stand for so many questions relative to both history and the 'end of history'. But one of the most persistent question has been, paradoxically, whether Auschwitz can stand for anything at all, other than itself, in its stark, ungraspable singularity. As such, it has become the touchstone in a number of debates around representation, or rather, it stands at the centre of representation, because it marks its limits.⁴ The *SCHINDLER'S LIST*/*SHOAH* controversy is thus not merely about to show or not to show (no pun intended).

Literary theorists have long argued the paradox of an event that defies representation and demands it with equal finality.⁵ Even when agreed that conventional narrative 'emplotments'⁶ are inappropriate to an experience so unique and extreme as Auschwitz, the question remains whether its singularity is betrayed by any account other than one of uncompromising literalness, where only the survivors' testimony, only names, dates can be allowed to speak, along with the documentary records of numbers and chronology. Does not the very meaning-

defying dimension of these horrors and their place in history entail a duty to find ways of speaking about them, new discourses?⁷ On one side are those who believe that in order to preserve the silence of respect, of honour to the dead, and in order to record the 'permanent scar on the face of humanity' (Habermas), all forms of fictional narrative, dramatization and figurative speech must be qualified as *misrepresentations*,⁸ not least because they put a presence where there can only be absence. On the other side, there is the fear that such literalness might itself be merely a mode of representation, a rhetoric, which -more worrying still- will confine the events to a fast receding point in time, powerless to invoke their actuality when similar barbarities of ethnic cleansing once more defy understanding and defeat the will to action.

This dilemma, between representation and its limits, has also been part of a philosophical issue. In a now-famous simile, Jean François Lyotard compared Auschwitz to 'an earthquake [that] destroys not only lives, buildings, and objects but also the instruments used to measure earthquakes directly or indirectly.'⁹ Lyotard seems to suggest that between the hope of safeguarding the reality of Auschwitz through a form like realism, however epistemologically compromised, and the despair of remaining silent in the face of the incomprehensible, there may have to be a 'sublation', or double negation: the effort to 'preserve the fact that the unrepresentable exists'.¹⁰

Given the gravity of this directive, it would seem sheer presumption even to ask whether the cinema has a part to play in mapping out the moral or conceptual space of the unrepresentable.¹¹ Much of the force of the injunction against misrepresentation, for instance, relies implicitly on a religiously grounded 'Bilderverbot' (iconomachy), where images, irrespective of their origins as 'historical', documentary or fictional, are always liable to elicit 'effects of melodrama, sentimentality, prurience'.¹² It is this injunction that SCHINDLER'S LIST has transgressed, by the very fact of its existence.¹³ One critic concluded his review by urging 'we should never forget that in its short history [the cinema] has regularly appealed to fascists, the ideology that treasured showmanship'.¹⁴ Similarly, the most incisive and critical study of the 'new discourse' on fascism, Saul Friedlander's *Reflections of Fascism* relies for its negative examples heavily (though not exclusively) on the cinema.¹⁵ And yet, not only have films by European filmmakers tried to grapple with fascism and the Holocaust, from Alain Resnais' NIGHT AND FOG (1955) to Hans Jürgen Syberberg's OUR HITLER (1977), in a spirit of critical commitment and even moral anguish. Many of them have done so precisely by focussing on the issue of representation. Jean Marie Straub's NOT RECONCILED (1965), for instance, and Edgardo Cozarinsky's ONE MAN'S WAR (1981) painstakingly juxtapose sound and image in order to mark the gaps between the represented, the spoken and the referential.

The overtly commercial or popular films that have, during the last twenty years and in different ways, dared to represent the horrors of Nazism, have not all been sensationalist. SCHINDLER'S LIST may be a rare example of a dramatization of ghetto life, or the 'reality' of the camps, but it is not unique. Czech (Zbynek Brynych's TRANSPORT FROM PARADISE, 1962), Polish (Andrzej Munk's THE PASSENGER, 1963), East (Konrad Wolf's STERNE, 1966) and West German films (Peter Lilienthal's DAVID, 1978) come to mind¹⁶ and, as many commentators have noted, had SCHINDLER'S LIST been made in any of the Eastern European countries, by anyone other than Spielberg, it probably would have passed unnoticed.¹⁷

More to the point, perhaps, is the question whether the 'effects of melodrama, sentimentality and prurience' do indeed constitute 'limits' which any discussion of representation may have to confront, including one that takes Auschwitz as its starting point. However colored by negative judgements of taste and decorum these effects are, they connote affectivity, and therefore an aspect of subjectivity, crucial not just to the cinema. Emotions, one could argue, ought to belong to any engagement with matters of life and death, on the part of those whom history has given the role of spectators, but also of those who are charged with passing on compassion and preserving memory. SCHINDLER'S LIST has had some of its most fervent advocates among non-film specialists, who argue that there is a need to invest history with such feelings, and that the cinematic resources of drama, melodrama, suspense and violence are legitimate means when deployed towards these ends:

As a contribution to popular culture, it can only do good. Holocaust denial may or may not be a major problem in the future, but Holocaust ignorance, Holocaust forgetfulness and Holocaust indifference are bound to be, and SCHINDLER'S LIST is likely to do as much as any single work can to dispel them.¹⁸

This has a slightly patronizing air, suggesting that emotion is something only the ignorant and the lazy need, in order not to forget. But discussions of melodrama, for instance, have offered a more sophisticated analysis of the relation between representation and affect, and affect as representation, in the force-field of the said and the unsaid, the excessive and the repressed. It is important, then, to understand the rhetorical tropes by which presence and absence, inclusion and exclusion signify each other.¹⁹ Another non-film specialist, Bryan Cheyette, has argued that SHOAH and SCHINDLER'S LIST are

diametrically opposed representations [which are nonetheless] intimately related. What Lanzmann rightly insists is impossible to represent on screen, Spielberg does his best to put on screen. Much to Lanzmann's irritation, testimony contained in SHOAH is turned into images in SCHINDLER'S LIST. For this reason, the popular realism and sentimentalism of SCHINDLER'S LIST cocks a snook at Lanzmann's intellectually unanswerable, but unrelenting, modernist scepticism.²⁰

While the balancing act of the passage shows how difficult a terrain the juxtaposition of realism, melodrama and modernism confronts, it is made more difficult still by polarizing the representation of fascism in the cinema between modernism and postmodernism. In this respect, I think Friedlander is right, for instance, to reject arguments that might seem to defend works by German filmmakers, say Syberberg's *OUR HITLER*, or Fassbinder's *LILI MARLEEN* (1980) (two films Friedlander finds particularly problematic) on the grounds that they are deconstructive, pastiche or postmodern works; he is right to insist instead that their dominant modes of emotional engagement are indeed those of fascination, kitsch, nostalgia, melodrama. However, Friedlander's argument is based on a modernist position which is as distrustful of any kind of 'mimetic' affective engagement as it is aware of the inadequacies of conventional realist narrative. But in as far as the aesthetics of impersonality and understatement constitute his implicit representational norm, it is not unproblematic that so many of Friedlander's examples are drawn from the cinema. The film experience is, par excellence, a site of mimetic emotions. Its ambiguous, libidinally charged play of identifications is therefore responding to a 'melodramatic' interpretation more obviously than a 'modernist' hermeneutics. Cinema, in this respect, is on the side of excessive, perverse, or compulsive, rather than ruled by an aesthetics of detachment and distance.²¹ Even *SHOAH*, a limit case, is committed to a rhetoric of pathos, irony and affect.²² In this respect, the films perhaps are postmodern, but this question needs itself first to be confronted with a history, and in particular, the history of the representations of fascism.

Show Time for Hitler

With Nazism, all cinema, but the German cinema in particular, has had an especially ambivalent relation. Not only because, as I shall argue, the German 'speaking position' is at stake, even without a debate about modes of representation getting in the way. Since 'never before and in no other country have images and language been abused so unscrupulously,'²³ the fact that German fascism has left a more complete account than any previous regime of itself and its version of history in images and sound, means that its specular self-presentation becomes part of what one could call the representational reality of Nazism. Moreover, German fascism was the first political ideology which borrowed the materials, the techniques and the mise-en-scene of its self-image from the cinema and show-business. Fabric and drapery, floodlights and recorded sound, scaffolding and plaster became the preferred props and elements. What has been called 'Stimmungsbau' (mood-architecture) found its way from stage and screen into public life. As a result, cinematic representations of Nazism *after* Nazism are of necessity involved in a dimension of self-reference or mise-en-abyme. They are confronted with a choice of evils: either adhere to a stringent form of

understatement and visual asceticism, in order to counter the visual pleasure and seduction emanating from the regime's spectacular stagings of itself,²⁴ or expose the viewer once more to the fascination, making the emotional charge residing in these images part of the subject matter itself. While the rhetoric of sobriety and understatement became itself a clichéd way of dealing with fascism in post-war documentaries, the presentation of the fascination 'from within' was precisely the mark of the 'new discourse' detected by Friedlander in Italian, French and German films of the 1970s. In either case, the regime's self-representation, its eroticization of power and charisma is not only a 'reality' with which films have had to engage, it is also a 'signifier' of Nazism from which they could not escape. In this sense, visual fascination is as present in the German films made about Nazism in the late 1940s and 1950s, where a *film noir* atmosphere wanted to signify the 'demonic' quality of Hitler and his henchmen, as it is when a more contemporary filmmaker practices an 'aesthetics of resistance' against specular seduction, as did Jean Marie Straub in *NOT RECONCILED*.

The watershed which signalled renewed interest in fascism as a film subject came around 1970, when Luchino Visconti's *THE DAMNED* (1969) and Bernardo Bertolucci's *(THE CONFORMIST)* (1970) chose to do battle on the enemy's terrain, so to speak--the territory of fascination, sex, death, violence, not least because the enemy was also the enemy within: the cinematic self in another guise. Its representational reality rather than its historical meaning was what made fascism material for a certain (idea of) cinema in the first place, which in turn signalled the crisis of another and previous (idea of) cinema: that of neorealism. This choice of topic, we have to assume, was therefore neither naive nor speculative, but one that recognized the legacy of Nazi aesthetics (even where its politics had lost its appeal) in present-day commodity culture, also given to conspicuous waste and spectacular destruction. In the age of the blockbuster, who does not recognize the seductive appeal of creating a substitute world, of treating power as a work-of-art, in short, the eros and thanatos of objectification? Visconti and Bertolucci spoke to these thoughts, unequivocally.

But what about popular or commercial films, like Bob Fosse's *CABARET* (1972) or Mel Brooks' *THE PRODUCERS* (1968), which also made much of the affinity between fascism and show business, underlining this 'aesthetization' of politics, already critical to Walter Benjamin, and later also analyzed by Susan Sontag?²⁵ Do they not confirm Friedlander's worry that the lure of kitsch and death carries over into films using fascism as their pretext for a love intrigue? Does the spectacle of putting-on-a-show, the song and dance routines and parodies of goose-stepping Nazis in a production number called 'Springtime for Hitler' not make light of the obscenity of a regime that put on the mask of entertainment and glamour, so as to hide the energy it put into destruction, terror and contempt for human life?

Perhaps Liza Minnelli's Sally Bowles in *CABARET* can serve both as an example, and a

counter-example. In the story of the night-club performer's friendship and entanglement with a homosexual Englishman and his lovers, several themes emerge which do and do not have to do with the nascent fascism that forms the backdrop, one of which is precisely that of the fascination with the 'other', the oscillation between alien and familiar. That the film portrayed Germans of all classes and convictions in a sympathetic, or at any rate, non-judgemental light was motivated by a foreigner's perspective, and it marked a significant enough shift in Hollywood representations of Germans. But it was the fact that it dared to use its Nazi setting for a musical which considerably raised the stakes. The association of such a sinister chapter of history with jazzy music seemed designed to court the charge of trivialization, yet the radical shift in genre from sombre Wagnerian music drama (for instance, in *THE DAMNED*) to light entertainment was defiant in several respects: it made a claim for popular music and the musical as genre to be taken 'seriously' (a complex cultural process that had taken place during the 1960s on a very wide front) and it also argued that sexuality be granted a 'political' dimension. *CABARET*'s discourse on perverse sexuality and dandyism as a form of political resistance cut across stereotypical identification of fascism with sexual perversion. It opened the way for representing homosexuals as themselves a persecuted group, and for understanding sexuality (in this case, the bisexuality and androgyny of the Sally Bowles figure) as a subject position that responds to this specific historical reality and embodies a form of heroism.

CABARET's generic identity as a backstage musical about show people in Berlin on the eve of Nazism makes it a polysemic text. This polysemy, though, is not quite the same as postmodern openness. Rather, being a big budget, star-cast international commercial film, *CABARET* tries, like all Hollywood vehicles, to address a wide audience, with very diverse entry-points into its diegetic world (which includes an entry-point for Germans, one of Hollywood's largest European markets, no longer willing to pay money to see their countrymen cast as cardboard villains). Instead of seeing the film suspended between critical intentions and misinterpreted reception, *CABARET* (and its huge international success) must in the first instance be regarded a historical fact about 1972. As such, it records a number of (transgressive) cultural shifts (about popular music, gender and sexuality) which have now become commonplaces, but which at the time perhaps needed to articulate themselves in the context of a referential world -- Germany in the 1930s --, which itself connoted transgression, danger, ambiguity. It could do so successfully, because it rewrote a popular intertext, *THE BLUE ANGEL* (1930), famous for (hetero-sexual) decadence. *CABARET* represented its diegetic universe as a blend of youth, the politics of the street, impending apocalypse and sexual adventure, suggesting a number of 'Zeitgeist' parallels between the 1930s and the 1970s, which however shallow they may seem to a social historian, allowed the film to have a multi-

vocal speaking position, made coherent by its star, Liza Minnelli, who successfully 'addressed' an audience.

It is easy to see how such an argument can also be made for *SCHINDLER'S LIST*. Spielberg's hero, as becomes clear well before the end-credits which dedicate the film to Steve Ross, the late Chief Executive Officer of Time-Warner, is a gambler, a risk-taker, a showman whose hour of fame and moral courage is intimately connected to a situation of war, but seen as any period in which the 'real economy' is overlaid or suspended by a kind of 'symbolic economy' of brinkmanship, bluff and bravado: familiar to us from a more recent decade of mega-deals, merger-mania and junk-bonds. It is across Schindler's self-definition (in his first major scene with Itzhak Stern) as the man who brings the knack of 'presentation' to an otherwise banal transaction which allows the audience to 'recognize' him, and from then on, make his motivation as psychologically coherent as any Hollywood narrative requires.

Taking Back Neo-Realism

This move could be identified as typical of the new 'discourse of fascism': an amalgam of kitsch and sentimentality, violence and nostalgia, adventure and show. One might counter that such is the emotional stuff the cinema has been accused of from its beginning, which no doubt is what led to the notion -half argued, as we saw, in reviews of *SCHINDLER'S LIST*, but already voiced two decades ago by Hans Jürgen Syberberg- that the cinema is inherently fascist. But such a perspective, while worth arguing, is somewhat foreshortened.

A missing link in the debate, to my mind is the fact that, through the topic of fascism, the European art cinema of the 1970s and 1980s (particularly the Italian cinema) decisively broke with realism, the dominant post-war representational mode, whether one thinks of the neo-realism of Rossellini and De Sica, or the realist ideology of virtually all the 'new' cinemas of the 1950s and 1960s in France, Britain, Poland or West Germany. Visconti's *THE DAMNED*, Bertolucci's *NOVECENTO* (1976), or Fellini's *ROMA* (1972) had, in a sense, 'taken back' neo-realism (which of course, in such textbook examples as Rossellini's *ROME OPEN CITY* (1945) or Visconti's *OSSESSIONE* (1943) was itself essentially melodramatic)²⁶. Moreover, these directors had made a subjectively slanted, melodramatically or operatically spectacular representation of history the dominant model of filmic representation.²⁷ With it, the Bazinian notion of the morality of cinema ('truth 24 times a second' as Godard put it), entered into a profound mutation, one that increasingly (in film theory) focused on the constructed, or semiotic nature of realism, and (in filmmaking) explored the media reality which the ubiquity of television, video and their enormously enhanced power of imaging had created. This probing of the new image worlds of electronic reproduction, and the breakdown of the divide between 'inner' and 'outer' reality which they entail is still the major preoccupation

of the cinema, and it has brought an as yet unabated turn to melodramatic, erotico-pornographic, horror and fantasy subjects, as typical of the post-1970s Hollywood as it is of contemporary European cinema.

Thus, one can, with some justification, identify within these major shifts and reorientations of both popular cinema and art/ auteur cinema (shifts which postmodernism has tried, not altogether successfully, to theorize) a tendency in the 1970s that, especially for European filmmakers, made fascism a preferred reference point: Visconti and Bertolucci were followed, in quick succession, by Louis Malle's *LACOMBE LUCIEN* (1973), Liliana Cavani's *THE NIGHT PORTER* (1974), Lina Wertmüller's *SEVEN BEAUTIES* (1976), Joseph Losey's *M. KLEIN* (1976), Ingmar Bergman's *THE SERPENT'S EGG* (1978) and François Truffaut's *THE LAST METRO* (1980). Although these films hardly form a genre or even a coherent group, there are enough areas of contact to invite a more systematic analysis of their preoccupation with Nazi emblems, Nazi iconography and the building up of a kind of stock repertoire of architectural props, clothes, haircuts and accessories that began to function as instant signifiers of fascism.²⁸

Such an analysis can proceed from different perspectives and consequently, construct different 'objects of study'. Looking at the afterlife which Nazism appeared to lead in the popular media generally, Friedlander saw the films, with their ambiguous celebration of style detached from a clear moral and historical stance, confirm a dangerous confusion between critical distance in historical understanding, and a form of exorcism that seemed to end up playing the devil's advocate.²⁹ Other analyses sprang from nationally specific points, for instance, the realization that quite a radical change in attitude had occurred in France with respect to the Occupation period and the Resistance. Michel Foucault attributed it to the demise of Gaullism in 1968-69 which dissolved the strategic post-war alliance de Gaulle had forged between the nationalist right (government-in-exile) and the collaborationist right (Pétain and Vichy). What Foucault feared from the sympathetic portrayal of collaboration (in *LACOMBE LUCIEN*) and the revelations of just how widespread and highly placed collaboration had been in occupied France (in Marcel Ophüls' *LE CHAGRIN ET LA PITIÉ*[1970]) was not the glamorization of Nazism, but a negation of the Resistance, together with the denial of popular (socialist) struggles, and thus an erosion of what he called 'popular memory'.³⁰

Jean Baudrillard, taking a characteristically wide sweep, analyzed the phenomenon in the context of a general nostalgia, and detected in the cinema's 'retro-fashion' a distinct 'retro-scenario': Western Europe, locked into the political stasis of the Cold War, with the intelligentsia demoralized by the post-1968 defeat of its revolutionary dreams, nostalgically imagines through the cinema a time where a country's history still meant individual victims, still signified causes that mattered, and decisions of life and death. The attraction of a return

to history as story and image was the illusion it could give of a personal or national destiny: a need fascism had tried to gratify on a collective scale. For Baudrillard, too, retro-cinema was therefore less a move towards coming to terms with the past than the fetishization if not of fascinating fascism, then of another trauma located in the present: the absence of history altogether.³¹

Historicizing vs Relativizing: Different Theories of Fascism

What the debate about retro-fashion, nostalgia and historicism highlights with respect to Nazism is a certain deficit in the traditional, or even scholarly accounts of Fascism, a historical experience which, precisely, has lost none of its topicality at the end of the twentieth century. To the extent, however, that it is a historical experience, which in Europe alone has profoundly affected millions of people, it matters whether it is analyzed by historians, by ethnographers and psychoanalysts, or indeed by filmmakers and film scholars.

Historians in the 1970s became embroiled in what later was called the 'fascism-debate', opposing 'intentionalists' (German fascism as the systematic implementation of Hitler's racist and imperialist goals) and 'functionalists' (Nazism as the ad-hoc alliance of divergent socio-economic interests, held together only after Hitler had declared war, and bonded to the Führer by criminal complicity in the 'Final Solution'). It gave way to the historians' debate of the 1980s, when Jürgen Habermas detected in the writings of certain German scholars (notably Ernst Nolte and Andreas Hillgruber) a revisionist project, designed to relativize the Nazi period in order to 'normalize' it, by comparing the extermination of the Jews to other genocides before (Stalin's GULags, the Ottoman massacre of the Armenian nation) and after (Idi Amin, Pol Pot).³²

The latter argument became crucial to the issue of historical representation around the limit case Nazism, because it was the reverse side of the attempt, so prevalent among German historians, to keep distinct the representation of the 'Third Reich' from the representation of the Holocaust. Precisely because these two realities are mutually interdependent and inextricably bound together *in history*, it is important to understand how and why they have been played off against each other, or are regarded separately in historical, narrative or fictional representations. One of the tell-tale signs, for instance, of an apologetic discourse has always been to separate the 'internal' history of the 'Third Reich' from its 'external' policies (the war, the extermination of the Jews), by pointing out that Hitler achieved the unification and modernization of Germany (where Bismarck and the Weimar Republic had failed), before the war undid it all, or to argue that since out of a population of 700,000 German Jews 'only' about 250,000 perished in the camps (and most of them in the years 1942-45), the majority of Holocaust victims died as a direct or indirect consequence of the

war, and therefore must be seen in the context of the exceptional situation created by war.³³

On the other hand, an argument that sees the 'Final Solution' not only as the implicit 'telos' of Nazism, but as the single reality that informed every aspect of Nazi Germany from 1933 onwards, risks separating Hitler's racial policy from the regime's other principal aims: the 'overcoming' of democracy, the subversion and destruction of communism and organized labour, the domination of Europe by the German Reich and the attainment of world-power status. That it 'succeeded' in only one of its aims, the destruction of European Jewry, does not make the 'failed' objectives any less part of the representational reality of the 'Third Reich'. But then, so are other representational realities, which may have to be looked at separately from any of the overt political and ideological aims of Nazism, in order to grasp their meaning, and connection with Nazism. Hans Dieter Schäfer, for instance, has analyzed some of the contradictory 'life worlds' existing side by side in Germany during the 1930s and 1940s, which include such popular culture phenomena as a lively trade in jazz and swing records, even though they were officially banned, or the thriving tourism by sea and road to countries (including the USA) on which Germany was to declare war. What Schäfer calls 'everyday schizophrenia' becomes a little less inexplicable when seen against Nazism's (successful) promotion of a consumer culture which reconciled many Germans to the regime's curtailment of civil liberties.³⁴

Such historical 'revisionism' has itself to be seen in the broader context of 'historicizing fascism'. Initially, this had been the goal of Marxist analysis. One remembers Max Horkheimer's dictum from the 1930s: 'he who does not wish to speak of capitalism should also be silent about fascism',³⁵ taken up after the war in order to counter the 'demonization' and personalization of fascism in the figure of Hitler. What the notion of Hitler as a uniquely aberrant individual and the Nazi elite as a gang of common criminals sanctioned, was the screening out of the political and economic factors that had made fascism part of the modernizing forces of industrialization and the crisis cycles of finance capitalism. Furthermore, it exculpated those sections of German society that had helped Nazism to power and had maintained it there, notably the banking establishment and heavy industry, the judiciary, the army and the civil service. Declaring *tabula rasa* in 1945 allowed the Adenauer government to make its peace with most of them, a fact to which several of Jean Marie Straub's protagonists are, precisely, NOT RECONCILED.

However, by the early 1970s, the 'historicizing' argument had moved on, to focus on the inadequacies of the structural or conjunctural models that Marxists had been putting forward. Instead of calling fascism the 'crisis management' of capitalism, the 'new' debates either stressed the European or international dimension of the phenomenon (for instance, by taking up the earlier theses of Ernst Nolte³⁶) or they gave the psychic-libidinal dimension a

greater weight (Alexander Mitscherlich's attempt to explain, for instance, the allegiance of the masses to the Führer³⁷). While the first has surfaced again in the historians' debate, the second, psychoanalytic approach did not find favour with historians, but was hugely influential among writers and filmmakers, especially in West Germany. Hence the paradox that a 'theory of fascism' regarded as almost irrelevant by professional historians, came to assume a major cultural and explanatory power for filmmakers and film historians, leading to the posited affinity of modern cinema and fascism.

In the European art cinema, the analogy was elaborated, but also limited along at least three quite distinct lines: as the theme of specular seduction, show-business and the technology of sight and sound (*THE LAST METRO*, *LILI MARLEEN*); as sexuality, in its vitalist, gendered and perverse dimensions (*THE CONFORMIST*, *SEVEN BEAUTIES*, *THE NIGHT PORTER*); and finally, as the loss of self, melancholy and 'mourning work' (*THE SERPENT'S EGG*, *DESPAIR*, *M. KLEIN*).³⁸ At the same time, one needs to be cautious about the label 'European'. France, Italy, Germany: each country's cinema recorded these affinities and mirror-images in distinctive ways. While in Italian films, class decadence and deviant sexuality became major issues (*THE DAMNED*, *SALO*), in German films, it was often the family and patriarchy that found themselves scrutinized via the Nazi setting (*GERMANY PALE MOTHER*, *LILI MARLEEN*). As the divergent explanations offered by Baudrillard or Foucault show, even within one country, the specificity of historical reference must be addressed, or conversely, the films' polysemy needs to be seen within generic or institutional frameworks. If there is indeed a new discourse (as opposed to several discourses), and one symptomatic for the whole of Europe, it has to test itself through determined historical, generic or geographical representations, not against them.

Among German historians, the ambiguity was a different one. A problematic symmetry opened up between those whose moral conscience insisted on the uniqueness and singularity of the Holocaust, and those who in an ideological move wanted to claim the same uniqueness for Hitler and his regime, absolving the generations before and after from responsibility. Yet since any argument that would isolate the period of Nazism from the rest of German history was unsustainable on both historical and moral grounds, the conservative right put forward its own demand for historicizing fascism. This time, however, not in order to point to the continuities of fascism with Germany's social structure throughout most of its modern history, but in an attempt to relativize Hitler's policies, to compare the regime's crimes to those of other totalitarianisms, and as already indicated, thereby to 'contextualize' the Final Solution.

This skewed symmetry was to haunt West German public attitudes to recent German history throughout the 1970s and 1980s.³⁹ It is the soil on which the new (apologetic) right

has grown, but it is in some sense also the background to West German filmmakers' critical turn to fascism as a film subject. Compared to what may or may not have been the motives in France and Italy, theirs was more complex story of reaction, regrouping and response. The New German cinema came to films about history late, almost a decade after Visconti's *THE DAMNED*, at least as far as its fictionalization was concerned. For most of the 1960s and 1970s documentary approaches predominated.⁴⁰ Only when a series of political events, replete with uncanny historical parallels led Alexander Kluge early in 1978 to gather together a number of his colleagues to make the film *GERMANY IN AUTUMN* (1978) can one detect a different kind of self-reflexiveness in the cinema's relation to the fascist legacy, and also to its possible and impossible historicizations: two funerals -- a state funeral for Hans Martin Schleyer, West-Germany's boss of bosses, assassinated by the Red Army Fraction, and a reluctantly granted family funeral for Gudrun Ensslin, convicted member of the RAF, who presumably committed suicide in a Stuttgart high-security prison -- provide the framework for an oblique meditation on some of the asymmetrical repetitions in recent German history.⁴¹

As an 'omnibus film', *GERMANY IN AUTUMN* attempted to combine discursive and argumentative sections with dramatizations, which may explain why it had relatively little response among the general public. Barely a year later, another fictional treatment of fascism was to have a public impact of unexpected proportions, the screening on German television of the US-produced four-part series *HOLOCAUST*.⁴² Thus, the trigger for German directors to rethink the representation of history on film came, like the defeat of fascism itself, from outside. They stood under the shock of the enormous public response, and in particular, the overwhelmingly emotional response the story of the Weiss and Dorf families elicited from German television viewers.

An American television series [...] accomplished what hundreds of books, plays, films, and television programmes, thousands of documents, and all the concentration camp trials have failed to do in the more than three decades since the end of the war: to inform Germans about crimes against Jews committed in their name, so that millions were emotionally touched and moved.⁴³

The emotions touched were themselves of a complex kind; while the metaphor of 'floodgates opening up' recurred almost stereotypically, and expressions of guilt, shame and remorse were made public with sometimes hysterical and sometimes exhibitionist fervor, there was also much outrage and condemnation about the screening.⁴⁴ Among those who charged the series with trivialization and embarrassing sentimentality, because it represented the unrepresentable and imaged the unimaginable -- the concentration camps and gas chambers -- were also filmmakers. While some felt perturbed that a Hollywood soap opera on *the* German subject should have moved millions to tears when their own films had been ignored, others

felt roused to respond to the challenge. Not only was it the case that, in the words of Günter Rohrbach, head of drama at WDR, 'after HOLOCAUST television can no longer be what it used to be',⁴⁵ the New German cinema could also no longer be what it used to be. In quick succession appeared Hans Jürgen Syberberg's OUR HITLER (1977), Rainer Werner Fassbinder's THE MARRIAGE OF MARIA BRAUN (1978) and DESPAIR (1978), Helma Sanders Brahm's GERMANY PALE MOTHER (1979), Alexander Kluge's DIE PATRIOTIN (THE PATRIOT, 1979), Volker Schlöndorff's THE TIN DRUM (1979), Fassbinder's LILI MARLEEN (1980), and finally, in 1984, Edgar Reitz' 11-part HEIMAT, begun in 1979. These are still among the titles most immediately associated with the New German cinema, its identity from then on fixated --and its fate sealed, it seems -- by brooding ruminations about national history and identity.

Ordinary Fascism

Few directors of the 1980s represented Auschwitz or the Holocaust (although a screening of Alain Resnais' NIGHT AND FOG plays an important role in Margarethe von Trotta's THE GERMAN SISTERS[1981]).⁴⁶ Instead of 'historicizing' fascism along the left-right divide, many of the films, especially those made for television, found a primary orientation in what among historians came to be known as 'Alltagsgeschichte' ('the history of everyday life'). As a form of micro-analysis of history, from the perspective of 'ordinary people' it offered itself as a perspective on ways of recording life in Germany through the years between 1933 and 1945: Nazism as a daily reality, as a 'normality' putting to the test individual attitudes and human behavior. Its historiographic pedigree is the French school of the 'Annalists', in such celebrated studies of the middle ages as Ferdinand Braudel's, or LeRoy Ladurie's *Montaillou*.⁴⁷

Studying Nazism in terms of everyday history had been a point of contention among historians since the late-1970s. Martin Broszat, for instance, had argued that, in order to be able to talk about the 'Third Reich' as 'the German people's own history' and thus for individuals to take responsibility for what had occurred, Germans had to cease viewing it as external and separate, and to mobilize private or family memories.⁴⁸ Rather than regard Hitler as the nation's pied-piper, and themselves as having acted in a trance ('the Nazi-spell' was a common term of post-war disavowal), personal stories and reminiscences had to be evoked and told, in order to get out of what one historian called 'the quasi-hypnotic paralysis of most of the German people with regard to the Nazi past'⁴⁹. To opponents it heralded at the very least a dangerous simplification, the return of the 'barefooted historians'.⁵⁰

Several successful television series (for instance, Eberhardt Fechner's TADELLÖSER & WOLF [1974/75]) and countless documentaries were to be based on this concept, yet the international apotheosis of filmed everyday life was Edgar Reitz' HEIMAT, which followed the destiny of the Simon family from 1918 to 1982. If HEIMAT suggested that the German cinema,

too, had recourse to melodrama for its view of history, then this was both its strength and weakness: strength, in that it reached a large audience in Germany and elsewhere, giving unusually detailed and engrossing insights into rural life before 1945; weakness, in that 'Alltagsgeschichte' can indeed be apologetic in tendency if not intent. Reitz soon found himself accused of having used the revisionists' ploy for 'normalization' and 'routinization', especially when his decision to leave out the death camps, was justified on the debatable grounds that few 'ordinary' Germans would have experienced the deportations and exterminations first-hand. Jim Hoberman, for instance, spoke of 'blatant tokenism' and 'born again Germany'⁵¹. HEIMAT also confirmed Baudrillard's thesis, when one considers that the insistence on the family had something of a fetish-function, because it clung to a notion of the authentic in 'everyday experience' as if it was a quality that could somehow be recovered, and represented on film.⁵²

Yet HEIMAT could also be seen as 'deconstructing' some of the conservative values it appeared to extol, notably the 'blood and soil' rootedness of its main characters, and the authenticity that their close-knit family life represents. For what appears to be the motor and motive of historical change is ultimately technology and consumer culture. Reitz shows no rural, pre-industrial idyll, and instead, his characters' lives and histories are transformed by modern communication technologies: the women go to the movies (to see a film called HEIMAT), and the men either spend their time with ham radio sets, or are busy with precision optics or have a passion for still photography, when not on active duty as newsreel cinematographers on the Eastern front.

The Postmodernist argument: rewriting history as film history

An equally deconstructive turn is present in another, even more controversial response to HOLOCAUST, Hans Jürgen Syberberg's OUR HITLER. One of its central arguments is that the Nazi deployment of radio broadcasts, live transmissions, mass rallies and civilian mobilization campaigns turned the State into a twelve year state-of-emergency, experienced by many Germans as communality, participation and direct address. Syberberg's polemical point is that Hollywood cinema and now television, in the name of democracy and the right to consume, have made the Riefenstahl aesthetic of TRIUMPH OF THE WILL (1935) the international television norm: politics has become a photo-opportunity, public life a perpetual festival of presence, action, live-ness, where spectacles of destruction, or feats of prowess and the body beautiful are feeding national or individual fantasies of omnipotence. Together with Fassbinder's LILI MARLEEN --the most obvious example of a postwar German film to take Nazi history and turn it into a representational mode of excess, melodrama and contradiction -- the mega-films/mini-tv series of Syberberg and Reitz might therefore qualify for the epithet

'postmodern', in the sense of their three specific areas of intervention: pastiche and rewriting, show business and power, and the media reality of radio and cinema.⁵³ If Reitz's contribution to breaking down the divide between high culture and popular culture is a tour de force of 'Alltagsgeschichte', Fassbinder's attitude to popular culture implicitly replies to Syberberg's *OUR HITLER*, where an uncompromisingly high-culture proposition (that modern show business is in some sense more fascist than Nazism) underpins the rather shrill and cranky bracketing together of Hollywood cinema and Hitler.

By representing fascism and the cinema at the level of the referent by way of citation and cliché (sidestepping issues of how 'accurately' a film can 'deal with' fascism, or 'convey' its horror or seduction), these filmmakers concentrate on the (technological, emotional, rhetorical and psychic) machinery which fascism has in common with cinema. They draw attention to one particular history of the cinema's (and television's) power-potential: that of creating a public sphere ('mobilisation') and affective/ emotional engagement. But where Syberberg, and indeed Reitz, differ from Fassbinder is in their barely disguised anti-Americanism, which gives them critical leverage against fascism while not obliging them to engage with the Holocaust. *OUR HITLER* in particular, is recognizable as the high-water mark of a certain post-1968 anti-Americanism, whose critique of Hollywood can also be found in Godard's demand for 'two or three Vietnams, in the heart of the Hollywood-Mosfilm-Cinecitta-Pinewood Empire', or in the British avant garde's calls for a 'cinema of un-pleasure'.⁵⁴

Once again, the parallels with the *SCHINDLER'S LIST*/*SHOAH* debate are inescapable. First of all, most of the critical reactions to *SCHINDLER'S LIST* went over the same ground the *HOLOCAUST* debate in Germany had raked up more than a decade earlier. As we saw, *HOLOCAUST* and its reception posed a double problem for German filmmakers. The series had 'successfully' combined the representation of the 'Third Reich' with the representation of the Holocaust: it had made of it one story. Secondly, it had been able to arouse strong feelings by personalizing history, concentrating on two individual cases, juxtaposed and counterpointed, and -utilizing the strategies of Hollywood dramaturgy most discredited by film theory- it had manipulated spectator empathy and identification. Then again, it had neither 'historicized' fascism in the left-wing sense, nor 'relativized' it in the right-wing sense. It had not treated the Holocaust as unique either, because by choosing the genre of the family melodrama, it was offering identification to each and every viewer. Put differently, *HOLOCAUST* had provided a coherent subject position, but at the price of de-historicizing fascism altogether, universalizing it as a soap opera, against the background of natural catastrophe.

Although SCHINDLER'S LIST is, in every respect a more serious and sophisticated film than HOLOCAUST, superficially at least, there are parallels, if only to the extent that both deploy melodrama, spectacle and viewer identification. Spielberg, too, presents life in the camps, and in one controversial scene, shows women undressing and entering the shower rooms. But he is careful in this scene also to direct the eye towards the background, to a long column of figures disappearing into an underground bunker which the viewer need not be told stand for the gas chambers. Suspense and melodrama are here in the service of a moment of tragic irony in which the viewer is obliged to infer what cannot be shown, while the manipulation of expectation, suspense and relief of the women rescued from Auschwitz creates an appropriately extreme counterpoint.

Spielberg, too, personalizes. But, unlike HOLOCAUST he confronts the problem of how to identify individuals and yet represent the collective. The very notion of 'the list' is a powerful device to retain in view a collectivity, a group, while the repeated act of naming gives each the dignity of an individual fate. At the same time, as some critics have pointed out, Spielberg has the rare gift of imparting dramatic sweep and emotional resonance to the depiction of a crowd, notably in the scene 'in which the children are trucked away to something worse, and the mothers surge forward as involuntarily as a groan'.⁵⁵

Nonetheless, the most persistent criticism of SCHINDLER'S LIST is Spielberg's focus on one individual, tilting the narrative away from the destiny and destruction of a people, towards the story of Schindler, a man whom Lanzmann has called 'merely a small-time German gangster'.⁵⁶ Yet it is also arguable that a mode that encompasses the oblique and the unstated, along with the explicitly horrific, requires a story told 'against the grain' of all the narratives we have in our heads about the Holocaust. Spielberg, while remaining within the terms of Hollywood dramaturgy, relies on some of the 'classical' devices of the historical novel, filtering events through a middle-of-the-road hero, the nature of whose involvement positions him at the margins of the stage of history, neither prime mover nor victim.⁵⁷ Similarly arguable is whether the optimistic ending is a necessary device for getting the story to a mass public in the first place and thus a 'concession to Hollywood', or an unforgivable insult to the six million who died during the transports and in the camps. Those who might want to reply that it makes little sense to accuse Spielberg of concession to popular taste (what is Spielberg if not the incarnation of popular mass-entertainment?), end up appearing cynical, shallow or worse. Cheyette, for instance, concludes his piece with an exasperated *cri de coeur*: 'Surely it is possible to try and comprehend both Lanzmann and Spielberg without being accused [...] of being a Holocaust "denier"'.⁵⁸

Given the intensity of feeling, such apparently reasonable liberalism may miss the mark: even a reviewer has to choose, it seems. But, I would argue, the filmmaker has chosen.

Above all, he has chosen for the cinema and its history: whether this makes him a post-modernist, and whether a postmodern stance makes him necessarily either morally or historically irresponsible towards the Holocaust is a point worth pondering. In contrast to HOLOCAUST, SCHINDLER'S LIST is both highly 'intertextual' and 'deconstructive'. Spielberg is not only aware of his film's Hollywood and US television predecessors, but knows the European cinema from the 1970s that have had fascism for their subject. Circumstantial evidence even suggests that he has also looked at some of the German films under discussion: the brief turns to color were first used to similar effect by Reitz in HEIMAT, and other parallels, in particular with Fassbinder's films, impose themselves. By bringing together an entrepreneur (Schindler), whose only gift is showmanship, and a sadistically torturing and self-tormented psychopath (Goeth), Spielberg outlines what one could indeed call a 'postmodern' analysis of fascism: around the topos of absolute power, and the cancelling out of values in a situation of crisis. The quasi-Dostoevskian discussion the two men have, where, according to Schindler, true power lies in pardoning a presumed transgression, rather than punishing it, poses a metaphysical crux which in Goeth merely confirms the random arbitrariness of all life and human actions, while it underscores that Schindler's own power at this point arises from the fact that an economic and a moral system having been put 'under erasure'. The barter between supply and demand, human life and human labour, cupidity and vanity which makes the Schindler 'scam' successful, follows the logic of a black market, in which both currency and value have been brusquely suspended.

Like Spielberg's vision of the links between Schindler's factories and the camps, Fassbinder's emplotment of the 'Third Reich' in LILI MARLEEN stresses the frighteningly surreal logic of symbolic and material exchange.⁵⁹ It designates the point where a postmodern reading of the film misses a historical dimension, precisely because Fassbinder refers himself also to a specifically German film history. He makes melodrama and excess his subject not only because he wanted to address a mass audience; Nazism was that period in German history when, paradoxically, the division between high culture and mass culture began to seem less definite. Already in the 1930s, Ernst Bloch had warned the German left about abandoning to the right the energies inherent in popular culture.⁶⁰ In light of the 'schizophrenic consciousness' alluded to above, one can see popular culture as the site of an ambiguous struggle, manifesting itself in Ufa films, in popular music and the radio-broadcasts to the masses of classical music concerts. Mass culture in 1930s and 1940s assumed a new historical significance, precisely because of the enormous investments that were made in the technology of sound and vision. This general process, however, took on an added *political* and national significance, because of the regional and folk cultures that were selectively taken in charge by the centralized state. The modern technologies of representation at the fascists'

disposal became the material basis for calling the Nazi entertainment cinema 'propaganda', not so much because of what it showed, but what the perpetual show hid from view: the fanatic ruthlessness with which the regime repressed, destroyed and eradicated other cultures and crafts on an incalculable scale.⁶¹ Fassbinder's black market melodramas, from *DESPAIR* and *LILI MARLEEN* to *MARIA BRAUN* and *BERLIN ALEXANDERPLATZ* (1980) record some the fallout of this wider process, even where they focus on the nuclear family and the couple: the very excess of the emotional turmoil wracking the characters points to the dislocations caused, in Fassbinder's case, by capitalism's modernisation processes as well as the first society of the spectacle it gave rise to.

Conveying a specifically Jewish point of view, *SCHINDLER'S LIST* has the stamping out of skills, the destruction of cult objects and cultural artefacts as one of its many themes. The tracking shots which follow the ghetto inhabitants' luggage into the recesses of the railway station (where the contents are, with assembly line efficiency, sorted, sifted, weighed and dismantled) are a heart-rendingly eloquent image of a culture's wholesale desecration and obliteration. Spielberg here sees the fate of the Cracow ghetto also in the context of a general devaluation of material culture which goes hand in hand with the industrialized production and warfare, the relocation, exploitation and dehumanisation of labor, for which black market conditions are both necessary prerequisites and symptomatic manifestations.

These themes, however, are also very close to *SHOAH*, substantiating the gesture of acknowledgement Spielberg seems to have extended towards Lanzmann. Spielberg cites a number of specific scenes from *SHOAH*,⁶² but in a mode so different that the 'modernism' of Lanzmann is put in brackets by the homage Spielberg pays him, a homage which as we saw, one critic went so far as to call 'cocking a snook'. But this is to interpret rather narrowly a relation of some complexity, where acknowledgement of a debt goes hand in hand with what, in a somewhat different context, Harold Bloom has called 'an act of creative correction that is actually and necessarily a misinterpretation'.⁶³

For Spielberg's film, in ways that this essay can only hint at, is quite intimately bound up with European film history as well as European filmmaking. The fact that he decided to shoot in post-Cold War Poland, that the style he chose reminds not only Wim Wenders of Andrzej Wajda, that at one stage he asked Roman Polanski to direct it, suggest a dimension to *SCHINDLER'S LIST* which makes it part of the ongoing dialogue of so-called post-classical American cinema with the art and auteur cinema of Europe,⁶⁴ extending a special tribute to Poland and Polish cinema. At the same time, Spielberg, no less than other directors of his generation, such as Coppola and Scorsese (but also Spike Lee), is a self-consciously American director, and furthermore, an ethnic director. In this respect, *SCHINDLER'S LIST* is a sort of *GODFATHER* on *MEAN STREETS*. Furthermore, the dedication to Steven Ross makes the

connection to the movie moguls (and to the Jews that 'invented Hollywood'), and there can be little doubt that Spielberg himself identifies with the Jews as well as with Schindler, whose alter ego is, of course, Goeth. Which is to say, at one level his protagonists Schindler, Stern, Goeth figure in a drama that allegorizes, not all that obliquely, the physics and metaphysics of power. As a filmmaker, too, one is master over life and death, in a world both volatile and virtual. More concretely, Spielberg also situates himself within the tradition of classical American cinema. According to Armond White, the reference is explicitly to Griffith:

As with the ORPHANS OF THE STORM separation of the sisters in THE COLOR PURPLE [the scene of the women separated from their children] recalls Griffith's command of primal emotion and narrative vigor. The Spielberg twist (and plus) comes with the very Hollywood principle of 'proportion'. A single mother separated from a child is usual [...]. But 200 women running after their abducted children belongs to a most powerful artistic vision. It's a moment in which Spielberg has successfully reimagined the terror of the Holocaust in an original way.⁶⁵

White goes on to remark that, compared to Spielberg's other films, SCHINDLER'S LIST is both less bold and less imaginative in the very territory it purports to make its own: that of genocide and of representing history in a popular medium. As a film about race and oppression, THE COLOR PURPLE seems to White to 'attempt a first -applying Hollywood's entire fictional apparatus to create a romance about African Americans, [...] the most successful example of the Eighties' interest in cultural signs and signifiers of African-American and Hollywood history', while 1941 and INDIANA JONES AND THE LAST CRUSADE 'give serious attention to the WWII era and the fascist thrall of Nazism', with Spielberg accomplishing 'a postwar, postmodern miracle in those films - criticising the political gestalt of the virtuous, victorious, prosperous West with the pop ethos of Hollywood fantasy, the tradition of which he is the truest heir'. SCHINDLER'S LIST by contrast, is 'circumscribed [...] by the culture industry that has accumulated around the subject of this century's European Holocaust'.⁶⁶

Such vigorous claims for a postmodern Spielberg seem at first glance contradicted by the director's equally vigorous affirmation of one of Western culture's *grands récits*, that of human progress. But once one concedes that one cannot get very close to SCHINDLER'S LIST by arguing whether Spielberg was right in showing 1000 Jews rescued where six million perished, it is possible to recognize in his films a typically postmodern hubris, namely the faith that the cinema can redeem the past, rescue the real, and even rescue that which was never real. As Leon Wieseltier put it:

SCHINDLER'S LIST proves again that, for Spielberg, there is a power in the world that is greater than good and greater than evil, and it is the movies. He is hardly alone in this cinéaste's theodicy.⁶⁷

Whose History: Public Parapraxes and Personal Speaking Positions

But if the cinema should have attained the status of a reality in its own right, it is a reality still bounded by history, more precisely, bounded by the fact that cinema exists in the public sphere. Films such as *SCHINDLER'S LIST*, just like *HOLOCAUST*, *OUR HITLER*, *HEIMAT* and *LILI MARLEEN* were, beyond their existence as films, also media events, discursive realities cascading through the representational reality of television, phone-ins, newspapers, leader columns, learned journals. The question of the subject positions they created and the speaking positions they assumed were vital aspects of their reality in culture. While in *HOLOCAUST*, the subject positions offered led to a facile identification with the victims of the Holocaust, *OUR HITLER* and *HEIMAT* were anti-*HOLOCAUST* in that they tried to open a more tortuous and underground path to subject positions of the divided German self (the monologue of the schizophrenic child-murderer from Fritz Lang's *M* (1931), or passages from Himmler's Posen speech at crucial points in *OUR HITLER*) and a retreat to the domestic self (Reitz in *HEIMAT* creating a Mother Courage who doesn't lose her children to the war). If *HOLOCAUST*'s naivety in assuming that showing people go to the gas chambers in a film could give an idea of 'what it was like' was a deeply offensive presumption, how is one to take the analogy between the child-murderer in *M* and Adolf Hitler (in *OUR HITLER*), and how does one 'become naive' in Reitz' *HEIMAT* about the persecution and deportations of Jews, barely mentioned throughout 16 hours' of film?⁶⁸ For Reitz, it was Hollywood's speaking position that offended about *HOLOCAUST*, while for some viewers of *HEIMAT*, it was the speaking position of a barely disguised anti-Americanism that offended.⁶⁹ By dividing Germans into those who stayed and those who went away (to the United States, as emigrants or exiles), and by speaking from a German New left position (for which the United States was the enemy), while trying to identify with the old German left (wiped out by Hitler and Stalin), Reitz' film appeared to be speaking from the 'green-red' position of the German ecology movement.

Both Syberberg and Reitz may argue that their films are in a 'double frame', so to speak. *HEIMAT*, for instance, is for Reitz a story within a story ('thousands of stories based on irritatingly detailed experiences which do not contribute to judging or explaining history, but whose sum total would actually fill this gap'⁷⁰), and thus a (single) story of the Simons family 'framed' by the many stories (too well known, according to Reitz, to need retelling) of the Holocaust. Similarly, the multiple ironies and incongruities constructed in *OUR HITLER* could be seen as the *mise-en-abyme* of all possible speaking positions, and thus proof of the impossibility of speaking 'as a German' about the Holocaust and the 'Third Reich', while needing to testify that the unspeakable happened. However, in light of the directors' public interventions (Syberberg's having become increasingly political⁷¹), it is important both to

protect the films' mise-en-abyme or framing ironies from their makers' personal statements, and to acknowledge the difficulties the cinema has as a mass medium to institutionalize preferred readings other than by creating ambiguous subject positions.⁷² There had been, after all, those 'hundreds of documentaries' about fascism and the Holocaust, none of whose unambiguous subject positions provoked either the emotional outbursts following the screening of HOLOCAUST or the debates occasioned by HEIMAT, OUR HITLER and SCHINDLER'S LIST. The question is thus one of the 'political unconscious' of a popular text, which by definition exceeds the control of the maker, and which becomes a cultural or historical fact precisely because of this excess.

It is this configuration which allows one to speak of the 'identity politics' involved in the representation of fascism and the Holocaust. In some instances, it can involve a whole nation's speaking position. The identity politics of Germany, for instance, surface not only when the speaking positions of, say, the films of the New German Cinema are at issue, but when official (West) Germany manifests itself with a speaking position on public occasions, especially when dates are commemorated or historical events are celebrated. There is, for instance, May 8th, the date in 1945 of the German Reich's unconditional surrender. The many mishaps and misunderstandings which this day has given rise to in the last forty year could fill an entire book⁷³, documenting how the Federal Republic has never been able to decide whether the nation is celebrating its liberation or mourning its greatest defeat, or both, or neither. Perhaps the best-known blunder around this date was the visit of Ronald Reagan, then President of the United States, to commemorate with Chancellor Helmut Kohl the 40th anniversary of the end of WW2 in 1985 by a visit to the town of Bitburg, famous for its beer and now for a previously unremarked military cemetery including graves of Waffen-SS officers. After world-wide protests from the Jewish community, another visit was hastily arranged, of the memorial at the former concentration camp of Bergen-Belsen.⁷⁴

May 8th, however, is not the only instance in (West) German public life where history as the return of the repressed suddenly intervened to draw unwanted attention to the speaking positions of prominent Germans. On November 9th, 1988 a ceremony took place in Bonn to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the 'Kristallnacht', the beginning of the open persecution and deportation of German Jews. Philipp Jenninger, the President of the Upper House of the Federal Parliament, gave a keynote speech, which caused so much consternation that he was obliged to resign. Reading the speech in print, one is struck by the writer's intense and emotional identification with the victims, especially in the passages where he quotes at length and in horrifying detail an eye-witness report of mass-executions. But, speaking as a German rather than a Jew, he also tried to think himself into the minds of the ordinary German of 1938. Jenninger's speech might be called a post-HOLOCAUST and post-HEIMAT

attempt to address two constituencies simultaneously: Germans and Jews, the memory of those who lived in places like Schabbach (Reitz' fictional village in HEIMAT), and the memory of those who were transported to camps like Auschwitz. The attempt singularly failed, not only because there is no historical discourse in which these two realities can coexist as compatible subject positions, but also because Jenninger had entirely misunderstood his own speaking position. What might conceivably have passed if spoken as an individual deeply troubled by a sense of responsibility and the need for atonement apparently could not be said by the representative of the highest elected body of the nation. Representation here taking on its full meaning of representing an event while also speaking on behalf of someone, those on whose behalf Jenninger spoke clearly did not feel the event was represented as they wished to hear it.⁷⁵ By trying to remove the frame that separated these two incompatible discursive registers, Jenninger was left without a place from which to say anything at all. Since then, the 'Kristallnacht' has become, in another historical turn, once more an overdetermined date, allowing two quite dissimilar events and their reverberations to superimpose themselves on each other, one 'silencing' the other.⁷⁶

On such occasions history has a way of overtaking the most carefully scripted speaking positions, so that mastering the past also implies an 'un-mastering' of history, accepting the 'parapraxes' which can insert themselves into one's speaking positions. The historical semiotics at work here can be studied all over Eastern Europe, and they extend beyond individuals and texts: they comprise, for instance, the way a nation speaks to itself about its history in the form of public holidays and public memorials, or when naming streets and designating sites as part of national history. It was surely no accident that Jürgen Habermas, for instance, when starting the polemic which subsequently became the historians' debate, made a connection between the writings of scholars like Nolte and the German Federal Government's plans to fund two new historical museums, one in Bonn for the history of the Federal Republic, one in Berlin for the history of the German nation, even though Nolte had taken no part in these decisions. The government's attempt to distribute history strategically, so to speak, and create an asymmetrical duality, was itself however, proven premature thanks to the irruption of an another historical event: the fall of the wall and German unification.

By what is therefore also no coincidence, the publication which Habermas singled out for comment shows the same dual structure of dissimilar events obliged to share one and the same representational or discursive space that so often typifies divided and now united Germany's dealing with representation of its recent history. Andreas Hillgruber's *Zweierlei Untergang* ('Two Kinds of Ruin'), combines in one volume an essay on the 'Shattering of the German Reich', with one on the 'End of European Jewry'.⁷⁷ This brought into a deceptive, and

as it would turn out, provocative symmetry the story of the collapse of Hitler's Eastern front in the last year of the war, and an assessment of the 'Final Solution', its planning and ruthlessly methodical implementation. The provocation resided not in the texts themselves, nor the case they put forward.⁷⁸ More problematic was the parallel that the juxtaposition seemed to draw between the evacuation and expulsion of the German population from the provinces east of the Oder, and the extermination of Jews, herded from all over Europe into the death camps of the East. Yet what caused major offense was Hillgruber's candid admission that, as a German historian, he could not but empathize with the injustice, suffering and death inflicted on the German population during the cold winter months of 1944/45. Had Hillgruber, who was himself part of the exodus, made these statements in the context of a biographical account, 'few would have quarrelled', as Perry Anderson put it. But by claiming empathy and identification while speaking as a German historian, Hillgruber had 'slipped with one step from the understandable to the indefensible.'⁷⁹

Identification, Identity Politics, Empathy

In one sense, the reason for the indefensible is obvious: the position of empathy assumed by Hillgruber creates in the same space of narration two kinds of victim, each competing with the other: those of the Holocaust, whose singular and exemplary fate is as though invalidated by dramatizing, back to back, the possible or actual Soviet retribution meted out to the civilian population of Germany's former Eastern provinces.

But surely, one could object, even the Germans must be allowed to mourn their dead? Might Hillgruber not be understood as following the advice of Alexander Mitscherlich who had suggested that West Germans suffered from a particular kind of self-alienation, the 'inability to mourn', which meant that they were also unable to love, either themselves or others.⁸⁰ Significantly, it was German filmmakers who took up the call for mourning work, and it forms the central idea in *GERMANY IN AUTUMN* as well as *OUR HITLER*. For Syberberg, for instance, an aesthetics of mourning as he conceived it, is radically opposed to dramatic enactments and restagings, and thus counters the mechanisms by which the classical fiction film creates coherent viewing subjects. Instead, his is a counter-cinema, based on a bricolage of kitsch objects and sentimental mementos, clichéd images and romantic music. Such a poetics of 'mourning work' is also a politics, and as the example of Syberberg or Hillgruber shows, it carries a high risk. Too often, it has seemed that 'mourning work' stops short at the stage of self-pity and sentimentality ('what is terrible about Germans is not their brutality, but their sentimentality' the Jewish writer Amos Oz once remarked), acknowledging compassion only at the price of playing victims off each other, in the vain hope of squaring accounts. It has even been argued that much of the New German Cinema presented a view of history, in

which Germany appears as a nation of victims, either by choosing women as protagonists, or by allegorizing the country as a female body, vulnerable and maltreated: in both cases without leaving room for other victims.⁸¹

Here, too, the discursive reality of the New German Cinema implied a collective speaking position which history itself called into question. Internationally recognized, albeit briefly, it became fruitfully caught up in the ambiguities that had attached themselves to the signifier 'German' after 1945. The film directors, showing the same love-hate relationship which other prominent post-war Germans --above all artists and writers-- displayed towards the Federal Republic, protested alienation from their country, while being nevertheless eager to represent it, especially abroad. In the movement's heyday during the 1970s and 1980s, Werner Herzog, Syberberg and Wim Wenders ritually saw themselves as international spokesmen, even as ambassadors of a 'good' Germany, often taking the moral high ground. Wenders, for instance, wrote:

I speak for everyone who in recent years, after a long drought, has started once again to produce images and sounds in a country which has an unceasing distrust of images and sounds that tell its story, which for this reason has for forty years greedily soaked up all foreign images, just as long as they have taken its mind off itself.⁸²

Other directors, in the spirit of Willy Brandt's genuflection at the memorial to the Warsaw ghetto, did public penance, such as Herzog's pilgrimage to Lotte Eisner, or his assertion that his films represented 'legitimate German culture'. Others still, rather more sceptical or cynical, played the court jester, and on occasion were not afraid to openly bite the hand that fed them (the Bonn Government, its film funding system, or the Goethe Institute that sent them abroad): Herbert Achternbusch, for instance, whose 'politics of identification' in a film like *DAS LETZTE LOCH* (1981) represented one of the more radical ways of confronting Nazism and the 'Final Solution'.⁸³

Similarly, Fassbinder refused to act the honorary diplomat, and instead, threatened to become a street-sweeper in Mexico, while misbehaving at home: his play, *The City, Garbage and Death* caused a scandal even after his death, for it touched a taboo area of West Germany, by representing official philosemitism as an attempt to blot out an anti-semitism whose persistence after 1945 had never been publicly acknowledged or debated. Using the crudely Manichean dramaturgy of a Jacobean revenge tragedy, Fassbinder featured his villain as a character simply called The Jew, an Auschwitz survivor and property speculator, who derived power from the guilt feelings he could call upon thanks to his official victim status, while being himself used by the political establishment to do their dirty work. If, understandably, it caused grievous offence to the Jewish community especially in Frankfurt where the play is set, it also became the scapegoat of a debate which never took place, though by virtue of

becoming a scandal, it forced into the open those external limits which the representational arts may have to test.⁸⁴

One of the casualties of unification has been the right and the obligation felt by the German literary establishment and film authors to speak on behalf of Germany, to 'represent' it. In the complex process of yet another impossible squaring of accounts between East and West Germany, a period of reassessment is under way, perhaps not yet of German history, then of some of those who until now have been its artistic custodians. With it, the idea of 'mourning work' for one's own experience of loss as a prelude to acknowledging the loss of others has begun to sound hollow: not least because it over-values the political importance of the aesthetics of moral rectitude, but also because official Germany seems once again to be lording it over others, while still standing in line for sympathy. 'Die Schuld lassen wir uns nicht nehmen' (we won't let them take away our guilt) once read the caption to a West German cartoon of Chancellor Kohl laying a wreath at a concentration camp memorial. But if 'mourning work' cannot open up that space of otherness, what can? What kinds of affect might possibly 'unlock' numbness, apathy, indifference and reconcile memory and hope, commemoration and forgetting, or mediate between pity, sentiment and shame? This question unites those who applaud a popular filmmaker like Spielberg with those who condemn him, and it is at such a juncture that the mimetic emotions of cinema, including nostalgia, sentimentality and melodrama have a direct bearing and purchase on the idea of representation, perhaps because they are emotions of the (narcissistic) self, over which the cinema, and the audio-visual media in general have a not inconsiderable power, even if that power does not amount to that of a 'theodicy'.

Here, a term comes to mind which in its use and over-use is symptomatic of a certain dialectic of power and powerlessness: the word is the German *Betroffenheit*, which roughly translates as 'the affect of concern', but in its root-meaning includes 'recognizing oneself to be emotionally called upon to respond, act, react'. It thus covers empathy and identification, but in an active, radical sense of being 'stung into action'. This concept, so widely used when matters of 'politics after politics', such as the question of human rights, of ecological action, or racist violence are debated that it has become a cliché, nonetheless tries to convey subject positions that lie beyond sentimentality and yet touch a point where the self itself knows and can experience otherness. In the face of narcissistic forms of identification in conventional narrative and fictional dramatization, such an 'affect of concern' is meant to break through any coherent and thus comforting subject position and shock spectators into recognition. Yet such strategies of shock, increasingly used to convey the suffering caused by human or natural disasters also imply the deeply ambiguous modes of address typical of news broadcasts and current affairs programmes: soliciting (emotional) response, while disempowering (civic,

political) action.

The dilemma re-focuses the divide between fiction film and documentary with which this essay began. It is now possible to compare these two genres not in terms of what they show or do not show, whether one is more 'authentic' than the other, but in terms of the ambiguous or extreme subject positions they are able to sustain. To take the example of a documentary filmmaker also concentrating on European history, Marcel Ophuls. In films like *LE CHAGRIN ET LA PITIÉ*, *MEMORY OF JUSTICE* (1976), *HOTEL TERMINUS* (1988) and *NOVEMBER DAYS* (1990), Ophuls has turned his camera and microphone on people whose self-deception is only rivalled by their sense of self-importance, thus creating a credibility gap crucial to Ophuls' method. Yet what seems equally typical is Ophuls' ability to transform himself as interviewer into a character, often playing the clown, not afraid of having a door slammed in his face like a travelling salesman, and thus eliciting a whole range of apparently inappropriate feelings, from comedy to sadistic pleasure, from farce to prurience. Dissimulating his own emotions and convictions, in order to make (some minor protagonist of) history 'speak', Ophuls not only remains a spiky presence on screen or through his off-screen voice, he also once compared himself to Columbo, Peter Falk's awkward, stooping, serio-comic detective, always asking one more question. Crucial is the fact that Ophuls understands the need to create for the viewer a complex subject position, even if this connects them to a speaking position which is that of a quasi-fictional character.

In *SHOAH*, Lanzmann also creates a persona for himself. With his relentless questions he turns into something like his subjects' super-ego, at once insistent and firm. The dialectic of who speaks and who is silenced in an image becomes here the very core of the enterprise. Lanzmann's care over bureaucratic detail, the exact description of place and circumstance, the way he goads the memory of surviving prisoners, guards of concentration camps and farmers who merely looked on, suspend all preconceived narratives and explanations. *SHOAH* does not invalidate, nor does it complement them. Instead, Lanzmann works with each individual's memory as a unique 'archaeological' site, requiring different tools and different techniques. Whether he flatters someone's complacency or patiently stalks another's evasiveness, whether he takes the man who shaved the women at Treblinka back to his barber shop or listens to the prisoner from Chelmno tell how his singing voice saved his life, Lanzmann creates a multitude of speaking positions by separating them as sharply from each other as possible, while embedding them in sympathy, even when they must have appalled him, or when pity all but threatened to overwhelm him.

The 'affect of concern' emanating from the films of Ophuls and Lanzmann is to make one see things which are not on screen, and listen to voices speaking from within oneself. In contrast to *HOLOCAUST*, where omniscient narration generates a unified subject position, the

restricted narration of SHOAH and LE CHAGRIN ET LA PITIÉ holds the viewer in place by the presence of the filmmaker as interviewer/detective/father confessor, without disambiguating these roles nor making them transparent. The films can begin to do 'mourning work', not because they give us fictional victims or actual villains, but because they fill the mind's eye and ear with voices and presences, like Dante's encounters in hell: they will forever speak of a history for which there is neither redemption nor exorcism.⁸⁵ Yet, paradoxically, however painful and arduous the films are to watch, neither Ophuls' nor Lanzmann's speaking position threatens the coherence of the viewer's identity: to this extent, they are classical, or classically modernist works. If on the other hand, fracturing the viewers' identity is the very condition that makes the radical otherness of an extreme historical experience representable, then there may be a limit to the documentary methods employed by Lanzmann and Ophuls. The limits of the fiction film, by contrast, would have to be defined differently.

For instance, Joseph Losey's *M. KLEIN* is a film built around the construction of one such moment of fractured identity, aiming to recover the point at which the spectating subject catches him/herself out, all the while carried along by the processes of fictional identification typical of the popular feature film. The story of a Parisian art dealer during the Occupation who, not a Jew, can make his fortune buying up collections from Jews anxious to escape France, *M. KLEIN* hinges on the fact that despite his morally suspect behaviour we totally identify with the hero, when one day he is arrested by the Gestapo and taken to the Vel'd'Hiver. For the fact that M Klein does not protest, and instead, gets on the train with all the Jews that have been rounded up, makes the spectator want to say, on behalf the hero: 'but you've got the wrong man: he isn't a Jew' -until with a sudden shock one realizes that, of course, all the people on the train are 'the wrong men'. Identification, historical foreknowledge and the logic of classical narrative have here conspired to lull the senses into 'accepting' the transports as normal, until the moment we want to rescue our hero, and realizing that we need to rescue them all, we are shattered by the knowledge of our total impotence, but which is also the knowledge of our own collusion and complicity.

It might almost be an axiom of the difference between documentary and fiction films about fascism that the latter, in order to have any kind of credibility, must not create sympathy for the victims of the Holocaust, since that very sympathy trivializes and betrays them. Which is to say that the particular strength of the fiction film is, precisely, to 'shatter' subject positions, including those of empathy. Such moments of recognition as I have tried to describe in *M. KLEIN* and *SCHINDLER'S LIST* are unique to the cinema, and they demand aesthetic strategies -resources of narration and identification for instance, but also of contrast, excess and violence (as in the children's transport, or the shower scene)- that are not only more complex than the literary representational self-restraint of naming and documenting, but

perhaps also more perverse, even more threatening than the realist/modernist ones often held up as the critical norm.

Framing the subject positions of the films' mode of address, I argued above, are culturally agreed or and discursively negotiated readings, which in the examples I gave, can amount to manifestations of a historical unconscious, itself part of 'representing history'. However, it is part of the 'postmodern' condition of contemporary cinema that the 'text' no longer speaks for the author. No modernist credo of 'exile, silence and cunning'⁸⁶ for the filmmaker as author, but the public arena of magazine and television interviews, published diaries and essays, the promotional machinery that makes the director 'speak'. These speaking positions, I think, need not refer to biographical individuals, nor even to 'auteurs', but are instances of historical and personal accountability. It is in this context that one can view the one-sided exchange between Lanzmann and Spielberg. In order to put this dimension into a political context and a moral perspective, it may be helpful to recall two responses to HOLOCAUST from the 1970s. When the series first aired in the US, Elie Wiesel, in an article in the *New York Times*, wrote

The film is an insult to those who perished and to those who survived. In spite of its name, this 'docu-drama' is not about what some of us remember as the Holocaust. [...] I am appalled by the thought that one day the Holocaust will be measured and judged in part by the NBC television production bearing its name. [...] The Holocaust must be remembered. But not as a show.⁸⁷

Wiesel clearly could invoke both personal testimony and a notion of the authentic against a product of the entertainment industry. A year later, in May 1979, after HOLOCAUST had been screened in Germany, Edgar Reitz published a kind of manifesto, entitled 'Let's work on our memories':

Authors all over the world are trying to take possession of their history [...] but they often find that it is torn out of their hands. The most serious act of expropriation occurs when people are deprived of their history. With HOLOCAUST, the Americans have taken away our history.⁸⁸

Reitz', too, appealed to memory, and thus to a category of the authentic. Indeed, at first glance, these two statements are identical in judgement and sentiment. They condemn the series' fictionalization and trivialization, and fear for the survival of history as validated experience. But their speaking positions could not be further apart. In the case of Reitz, one is bound to ask: who is speaking? How can a German who grew up under Hitler lay claim to this history, appropriate it, and not speak in sorrow or shame, but complain that the Americans have 'expropriated' it? If 'our history' means causing the death of 20m people, one wishes the Americans could take it away! What the Americans did take away was the scourge

of fascism from the face of Europe, a detail that seems to have escaped Reitz' moral and aesthetic sensitivity. To the postmodernist argument that in the battle over representations, Reitz has the right to 'rewrite historical texts' since there can be no history outside texts, one can answer that it is Reitz' speaking position that is outside the text, where it has to confront its formal similarity and historical incompatibility with Wiesel's speaking position.

However, what gives Reitz' position its air of rectitude is that the 'post-colonial' discourse Hollywood/European cinema (shades of Godard's 'two or three Vietnams'), has superimposed itself on another historical discourse, that of Auschwitz and 1945. In the process, aggressors and vanquished have changed places. Reitz, by claiming 'our history' is claiming victim status. Hollywood ('the victor'), makes a film called HOLOCAUST, which 'conquers' the world markets, while the Germans (the vanquished) make films called OUR HITLER and HEIMAT: the intended irony of these titles pales to an un-postmodernist white irony, as one blushes to realize the larger irony that cancels it, where 'Hitler' and 'Heimat' connote once more the very causes of the Holocaust.

Nothing quite so crass frames and unframes the speaking positions of Lanzmann and Spielberg, but their disagreement prompts similar thoughts about the historical, geographical and indeed, spiritual horizon that their films touch and their identity politics cannot transcend. Whatever one may finally think of either SCHINDLER'S LIST or SHOAH, the subject positions they offer the spectator are on the one hand determined by their respective genres, and on the other, united by the fact that both films work, with admittedly different means, on the borders of what I have called the 'unified' and the 'shattered' self. These subject positions, however, stand in stark contrast to their respective economic status, and thus to their place in the public sphere. Where SHOAH, although screened in many countries, had to contend with minority television channels or at art cinema venues, SCHINDLER'S LIST was one of the major international Hollywood releases of the 1993/1994 season. This difference of access to a public means that, in the absence of a 'level playing field', they cannot be simply compared 'as texts', and instead, they compete with each other in one of the discursive realities that Spielberg's film has opened up. Both Lanzmann and Spielberg make use of the media interest fanned by SCHINDLER'S LIST to construct for themselves speaking positions. While Lanzmann volunteered comment on Spielberg's film in articles and talk-shows, Spielberg gave interviews and issued statements, before, during as well as after the shooting of SCHINDLER'S LIST. With such a media intervention to establish his (biographical, ethnic) right to speak on the issue of the Holocaust, the normally rather media-shy Spielberg seemed anxious to define the terms of a 'preferred' reading of his film.⁸⁹ By and large, he was successful: the film, even before it was awarded the endorsement of seven Oscars, received wide coverage and a mostly favourable press. Although it is thus possible to impute to Lanzmann professional pique (but

to what purpose?), or let the matter rest on the difference between a modernist and a realist aesthetics, the ensuing one-sided exchange may well point to other, equally relevant differences.

Interviewed by the BBC, for instance, Lanzmann was to argue that Spielberg had made a film 'typical of American Jews, wanting to appropriate the Holocaust'⁹⁰. Startling as this assertion may be, its shock comes from the way it echoes Reitz' remarks some fifteen years earlier, that 'with HOLOCAUST, the Americans have taken away our history'. Both statements are united by an anti-Americanism in which the Hollywood/Europe divide allows other agendas of identity to intrude upon the moral issues at stake. For Lanzmann might, in giving vent to a resentment, have hinted at deeper incompatibilities, throwing into relief the fact that Spielberg had indeed 'interpreted' the Holocaust. Had he not told the story of Schindler and his Jews as a double, if not triple allegory, which in each case, promises salvation? Ending as it does at his graveside, with the survivors paying tribute, Schindler can be seen as a Moses figure, leading his people out of an Egyptian captivity, while he, like all true prophets, is barred from reaching the promised land. But where the Israelites danced around the Golden Calf, the Schindler Jews smelt gold to make of it the ring they present to Schindler as token of their gratitude. This gives, in turn, an almost mythic authority, as the elect, to their reappearance on the horizon, carrying with them the sacrifices of a past into a nation-building future. Spielberg has, and this Lanzmann recognized perhaps rightly, appropriated a particular version not so much of the Holocaust as of Jewish redemption, overlaying it with a recognizably American, immigrant, settler and founding-fathers rhetoric.

As such, it is a play with 'master-narratives', transgressing the taboo against any kind of narrative emplotment, which as we saw is part of the 'European' identity of the Holocaust. Like CABARET, discussed above, SCHINDLER'S LIST provides several entry-points for its audiences, it is a polysemic text, which is to say a popular text. Yet it is a popular text also because it contains a meditation on two kinds of survival, against the two kinds of ruin Auschwitz connotes not only to survivors like Wiesel and Lanzmann: that of a people and that of the idea of humanity. Spielberg first of all gives a surprisingly literal reading to 'whoever saves one life saves mankind' for he has dared to 'count' and 'reckon' the Schindler Jews not against those that perished, but by the number of their descendants. He has enveloped in a generational pragmatism (or 'family history') *the* historical event which, by general consent, nullifies all reckoning, all rendering or squaring of accounts. Two kinds of eschatology, then, seem to confront each other: the tragic vision of life of the European Jew Lanzmann, and life-affirming vision the American Jew Spielberg. But beneath the eschatology, there is the 'theodicy', to take up once more the phrase of Wieselthier, or perhaps, more precisely, the rule of synecdoche. By affirming that whoever saves one life, saves

mankind, Spielberg accepts the principle that the one can represent the many, that the part can stand for the whole.⁹¹ SHOAH is based, explicitly and emphatically on the exactly opposite premise: that no-one can stand in for anyone else, no-one can speak for anyone else. After six hours of testimony -a testimony that, in different ways records only absence-, one is left with the overwhelming thought that no history can contain, let alone signify or represent, the palpable reality of so many individual, physical deaths.

By contrast, now that Spielberg has made the film, a palpable reality exists, a space filled with faces, voices, bodies, objects. It has even called into being realities that did not exist. The streets and places in Cracow, for instance, where he shot on location exist as a new kind of historical reality. Tours can be booked that take you to the site of the ghetto, made meaningful because a famous movie was shot there.⁹² By association with a trivial event this or that street has become historical, and even though, of course, it is a 'false' (postmodern) history, it can now remind visitors of, and thus credibly stand for a 'real' history. A cinéaste's theodicy, after all. More generally, and more paradoxically, Spielberg, by putting into circulation a discourse which suggests that this was a 'personal' film, has given himself the license to do exactly the opposite, namely to speak on behalf of others, to make the step from direct testimony and personal memory, to narrative and history.

Thus, neither the normative argument of generic emplotment, nor the institutional constraints imposed on professional historians to validate their evidence can altogether satisfactory be invoked when the representation of history in the cinema is at issue. Yet while there may be no internal limits, as it were, which constrain a filmmaker to 'stick to the facts' or observe the dictates of good taste, there are a number of external constraints, as we saw, which operate even more stringently in the case of popular cinema. For to the extent that a film creates a public sphere, a space for discourse, confrontation and debate, it is this space that produces the speaking positions which in turn are the external limits of representation. The reason for dwelling on these examples at such length is to underscore the difficulties, when taking fascism as a 'limit case' of historical representation, of determining any text's or author's speaking position, yet also to reassert the necessity of doing so in each case. Detailing the inversions, reversals and at times perversions of such speaking positions, hopefully, extends beyond a mere academic exercise. At a time when history has returned to Central and Eastern Europe, to Africa and elsewhere, while the legacy of Fascism as well as Stalinism has to be confronted by the whole of Europe, the crimes named by Nazism and the Holocaust cannot possibly be 'our' history, just as it need not only be 'our' testimony or mourning work. Therein lies a hope, but also an obligation.

Notes:

1. John Rowse, speaking about 'Human Memory and the Computer' on John Tidmarsh's Outlook, BBC World Service, August 1994.
2. The notion of narratives without closure, demanding a degree of attentiveness and participation one associates with information that might vitally affect one's life, recalls what Hayden White has defined as 'modernist events'.
3. See Ian Buruma, The Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan (London: Jonathan Cape, 1994), about these two countries' very different ways of 'mastering the past'.
4. See Saul Friedlander, ed., Probing the Limits of Representation (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1992)
5. One would like to think that Adorno's often-quoted remark about the impossibility of poetry after Auschwitz refers to this paradox rather than positing a proscription.
6. See Hayden White, 'Historical Emplotment and the Problem of Truth', in Probing the Limits, pp 37-53.
7. This has been the position, notably, of George Steiner, in The Portage to San Cristobal of A.H. (New York, Simon & Schuster, 1982)
8. Berel Lang, 'The Representation of Limits' in Probing the Limits, p 317.
9. Jean François Lyotard, The Differend: Phrases in Dispute (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p 57.
10. Jean François Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p 78.
11. See, however, Ilan Avisar, Screening the Holocaust: Cinema's Images of the Unimaginable (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988)
12. Berel Lang, 'The Representation of Limits', in Probing the Limits, p 317.
13. 'What's wrong with the film is essentially what's wrong with nearly all popular culture, namely that its means of expression are debased and debasing' (Letter to the Editor, Times Literary Supplement, April 1, 1994, p 15).
14. David Thomson, 'Presenting Enamelware', Film Comment, March/April 1994, p 50.
15. Saul Friedlander, Reflections of Fascism (New York: Harper & Row, 1983)
16. For a comprehensive list of titles, see Robert C. Reimer and Carol J. Reimer, Nazi-Retro Film: How German Narrative Film Remembers the Past (Boston: Twayne, 1992).
17. Most recently, Wim Wenders, in a public discussion with the author, at the Desmet Cinema, Amsterdam, July 8th, 1994.
18. John Gross, 'Hollywood and the Holocaust', The New York Review of Books, February 3rd, 1994, p 16.
19. Cf Peter Brooks, The Melodramatic Imagination (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).
20. Bryan Cheyette, 'Schindler's List', The Times Literary Supplement, April 1, 1994, p 15.

21. For an argument about the 'melodramatic' as an autonomous representational mode, see Christine Gledhill, 'The Melodramatic Field: An Investigation', in Gledhill (ed.), Home is where the Heart is (London: BFI Publishing, 1987), pp 5-41.
22. See my discussion of Shoah in New German Cinema: A History (London: Macmillan, 1989), p 258.
23. Wim Wenders, 'That's Entertainment: Hitler'. Originally in Die Zeit, August 5th, 1977, translated in Eric Rentschler (ed.), West German Filmmakers on Film: Visions and Voices (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1988) p 128.
24. The reference point being, inevitably, Leni Riefenstahl's Triumph of the Will (1935).
25. Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' in Illuminations (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), and Susan Sontag, 'Fascinating Fascism' reprinted in Bill Nichols, Movies and Methods I (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1980).
26. See Robert Burgoyne, 'The Imaginary and the Neo-Real', Enclitic (Spring 1979), pp 16-34.
27. There were, of course, in Italian cinema, illustrious precedents, both in the popular cinema (the long tradition of the 'peplum') and in auteur cinema, notably Visconti's Senso (1954) and The Leopard (1963).
28. Anton Kaes notes, 'The Third Reich itself was often reduced [...] to a semiotic phenomenon: SS uniforms, swastikas, shaved napes, black leather belts and boots, intimidating corridors and marble stairs have become mere signs unmistakably signalling "fascism"'. From Hitler to Heimat (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1989) p 22.
29. The so-called 'Hitler-wave' broke with Albert Speer's memoirs in 1968, Joachim Fest's Hitler biography (1973) and subsequent film Hitler- A Career in 1977. It reached its high-culture water mark with novels by Michel Tournier and George Steiner, and ebbed away with the farcical fraud around Hitler's diaries in 1986. Its symptomatic importance lies also in the fact that it encompassed the whole spectrum of culture, from garish comics and pornographic magazines, accessories in sex shops and s/m boutiques, glossy reproductions of period photographs in coffee-table books, to the growing shelves of novels, biographies, autobiographies and scholarly publications devoted to the 'Third Reich', to Hitler, and every conceivable aspect of Nazism.
30. Michel Foucault, 'Film and Popular Memory', originally in Cahiers du cinéma, no 251/2, July/August 1974, in English in Sylvère Lotringer ed., Foucault Live (New York: Semiotexte, 1989), pp 89-106.
31. Jean Baudrillard, 'Holocaust', Cahiers du cinéma no 302, July-August 1979.
32. Among an extensive literature, one can usefully consult Charles S Maier, The Unmasterable Past (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1988) and Jürgen Habermas, The New Conservatism (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1989).
33. This is the line taken, for instance, in parts of Joachim C. Fest, Hitler (Frankfurt, 1973)
34. Hans Dieter Schäfer, Das gespaltene Bewußtsein: Deutsche Kultur und Lebenswirklichkeit 1933-1945 (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1981).
35. Max Horkheimer, 'Die Juden und Europa', Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung VIII 1/2 (1939), p 115.
36. Ernst Nolte, Three Faces of Fascism transl. Leila Vennewitz (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969).
37. Alexander and Margarethe Mitscherlich, The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behavior, trans.

Beverly A. Plaszek (New York: Grove Press, 1975).

38. For a discussion of 'mourning work' and cinema, see my New German Cinema: A History (London: Macmillan, 1989), pp 239-248 and Eric L. Santner, Stranded Objects (Cornell University Press, 1990).

39. Cf Dan Diner, ed., Ist der Nationalsozialismus Geschichte? Zu Historisierung und Historikerstreit (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 1987) and Reinhard Kühnl, ed., Streit ums Geschichtsbild (Cologne: Pahl-Rugenstein, 1987).

40. Cf Eric Rentschler, 'Remembering not to Forget: Alexander Kluge's Brutality in Stone' in New German Critique 44, 1989, pp

41. The autumn in question was the highpoint of the RAF, the politically motivated assassinations, the cutbacks in civil liberties, the crisis of the social democratic government under Chancellor Helmut Schmidt. On the question of historicizing fascism the film took an unambiguous leftist position. What it suggested were the continuities between Hitler and the Federal Republic, between deep-seated authoritarian attitudes and hysterical over-reaction among the population, between lack of courage in public life and official censorship. For a more detailed discussion of Germany in Autumn, see Anton Kaes, From Hitler to Heimat, pp 26-27 and my New German Cinema: A History, pp 260-264.

42. (NBC 1976, dir: Marvin J. Chomsky, scr: Gerald Green). The impact of Holocaust in West Germany has given rise to a sizeable literature. For a comprehensive assessment, see Michael E Geisler, 'The disposal of Memory: Fascism and the Holocaust' in B Murray, C Wickham, eds., Framing the Past (Carbondale, Ill: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992), pp 220-260.

43. Heinz Höhne, in Der Spiegel, quoted (and translated) by Anton Kaes, From Hitler to Heimat (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp 30-31.

44. The exhibitionist side was in some sense highlighted by the fact that, as every German commentator pointed out, the world's eyes were on Germany, to see how it reacted to the series. Anton Kaes, From Hitler to Heimat, pp 31-35 has an account of the international dimension of the Holocaust reception.

45. quoted in Anton Kaes, From Hitler to Heimat, p 31.

46. There were, however, a vast number of documentaries dealing with both the 'Third Reich' and the 'Final Solution'. See, for instance, Volker Lilienthal, 'Das gepriesene Schreckbild', in Joachim Schmitt-Sasse (ed.), Widergänger: Faschismus und Anti-Faschismus im Film (Münster: MAks, 1992), pp 173-201.

47. Ferdinand Braudel, The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II, transl. S.Reynolds (2 vols, London 1972-3) and Emanuel LeRoy Ladurie, Montaillou: Cathars and Catholics in a French Village 1294-1324 (London, 1978).

48. Martin Broszat, et al., Alltagsgeschichte der NS-Zeit. Neue Perspektive oder Trivialisierung? (Munich/Vienna: Oldenbourg, 1984). For a concise statement of Broszat's position in English, see Martin Broszat, 'A Controversy about the Historicization of National Socialism' in New German Critique, 44 (1988), pp 85-126.

49. Christian Meier, quoted in Kühnl, Streit ums Geschichtsbild, p 258.

50. For a review of the debate, see Martin Jay, 'Songs of Experience: Reflections on Alltagsgeschichte', Salmagundi, Winter 1989, pp 29-41.

51. Jim Hoberman, 'Once Upon a Reich Time', The Village Voice, April 16, 1985, p 52.

52. For a critique of the the notion of 'authenticity' as used by German filmmakers, see my 'The New German Cinema's Historical Imaginary', in Murray/Wickham, eds, Framing the Past, pp 282-285.
53. For a fuller version of this argument, see my review of Heimat (Monthly Film Bulletin, February 1985), pp 48-52, and Myth as the Phantasmagoria of History (New German Critique 24-25, Winter/Spring 1982), pp 108-154.
54. As in Laura Mulvey's 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', Screen 16/3 (Autumn 1975), p 17.
55. David Thomson, Film Comment, p 44.
56. Claude Lanzmann, in a discussion programme aired by TV 5, January 12th, 1994.
57. See Georg Lukacs, The Historical Novel (London: Merlin Press, 1962) for an analysis of characterization and plot structure in Walter Scott, Stendhal and Leo Tolstoi among others.
58. Times Literary Supplement, April 1, 1994, p 15.
59. See my Fassbinder, Fascism and the Film Industry, October no 21 (1982), pp 115-140.
60. Ernst Bloch, 'Non-Contemporaneity and Obligation to its Dialectic', in Heritage of Our Times trans. Neville and Stephen Plaice (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1991) pp 97-144.
61. Fassbinder's reworkings of the Ufa melodramas of the 1940s concentrate on give an intimation of what feelings of fear, loss and guilt Germans living during the Nazi period might have been repressing, in order for films like Veit Harlan's Die goldene Stadt (1942) or Opfergang (1944) to 'harvest' them so efficiently and perversely in the form of female masochism, self-sacrifice and the yearning for death.
62. Such as the picture of the empty chairs, or the throat-slitting gesture Polish peasants are reported to have made to passing cattle-trucks headed for Auschwitz.
63. Harold Bloom, The Anxiety of Influence (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973) p 30.
64. Many of the 'epic' scenes, as indeed in earlier Spielberg films, show the (acknowledged) influence of David Lean.
65. Armond White, 'Toward a Theory of Spielberg History', Film Comment, March/April 1994, p 55.
66. *ibid.*, p 54, 55.
67. The New Republic, January 24, 1994, quoted by David Thompson, Film Comment, March/April 1994, p 44.
68. Cf Gertrud Koch, 'How Much Naivety Can We Afford?' New German Critique 36 (Fall 1985) pp 4-6.
69. See Eric L. Santner, 'On the Difficulty of Saying "We"': The Historians' Debate and Edgar Reitz' Heimat', in B. Murray/ C. Wickham, (eds) Framing the Past, pp 273-4.
70. Edgar Reitz, 'Statt Holocaust Erinnerungen aufarbeiten', medium 5/79, p 21.
71. Cf, for instance, Hans Jürgen Syberberg 'Wie man den neuen Haß züchtet', in Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, September, 12, 1990.
72. Enno Patalas, director of the Munich Filmmuseum, once contrasted the public's reaction on showing Veit Harlan's Kolberg (1945), where no-one protested, with that of showing Harlan's Opfergang (1944), after which he

received threats. (Quoted in Bernadette Klase, 'Eine Frau wird erst schön durch die Liebe', in Joachim Schmidt-Sasse (ed), Widergänger, p 38). It seems that audiences have a secure subject position in a film they 'know' to be propaganda (Kolberg), but feel threatened when a strong emotional reaction to a melodrama (Opfergang) conflicts with their awareness that this is a 'fascist' film.

73. See Norbert Seitz, ed., Die Unfähigkeit zu feiern (Frankfurt: Verlag Neue Kritik, 1985), quoted in my 'Bitburg and Bergen-Belsen: The Inability to Celebrate', in On Film 14, 1985, pp .

74. See Eric Rentschler, 'The Use and Abuse of Memory': New German Film and the Discourse of Bitburg' New German Critique 36 (Fall 1985), pp .

75. Philipp Jenninger, 'Von der Verantwortung für das Vergangene' [On the Responsibility for the Past], Die Zeit, 25 November 1988.

76. On November 9th, 1989, a year after Jenninger's speech, East Germans first crossed the Berlin wall. Eric Santner has spoken of a 'mnemonic readjustment' taking place, making November 9th 'newly available for libidinal investment'. Eric L. Santner, 'History beyond the Pleasure Principle', in Probing the Limits, p 144.

77. Andreas Hillgruber, Zweierlei Untergang: Die Zerschlagung des Deutschen Reiches und das Ende des europäischen Judentums (Berlin, 1986).

78. Perry Anderson has a high regard for the historical merits of Hillgruber's analysis. See 'On Emplotment: Two Kind of Ruin', Probing the Limits, pp 62-63.

79. Perry Anderson, 'On Emplotment; Two Kinds of Ruin', Probing the Limits, p 58.

80. I have discussed Mitscherlich's theses 'Primary Identification and the Historical Subject: Fassbinder's Germany', reprinted in Phil Rosen, ed., Narrative, Ideology, Apparatus (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp 544-548.

81. Eric Rentschler makes this point in 'Remembering not to Forget: Alexander Kluge's Brutality in Stone' in New German Critique 44 (1989), p .

82. Wim Wenders, 'That's Entertainment', in Rentschler, New German Filmmakers, Visions and Voices, p 127.

83. Cf my 'Achternbusch and the German Avantgarde', Discourse no 6, Fall 1983, pp 92-112.

84. For a detailed documentation, see Heiner Lichtenstein, (ed.), Die Fassbinder-Kontroverse (Königstein: Athenäum, 1986).

85. The Dante analogy I owe to an excellent review of Shoah by Michael Hollington, 'Naming, Not Representing', The Age Monthly Review, March 1988, pp 9-11.

86. James Joyce, Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1966), p 128.

87. Elie Wiesel, 'Trivializing the Holocaust: Semi-Fact and Semi-fiction', The New York Times, April 16, 1978.

88. Edgar Reitz, 'Statt Holocaust Erinnerungen aufarbeiten', pp 21-22.

89. See among others, Jeremy Isaacs, Face to Face: Steven Spielberg, BBC 2 Television (24 March 1994) which featured details about his Jewish upbringing and family, as well as touching on the story of himself as a boy, taunted and bullied at school.

90. Claude Lanzmann, interviewed on 'Moving Pictures', BBC2 Television, Dec 4, 1993.

91. 'Except to the people whose lives he saved, Schindler made no difference to the outcome of the Holocaust. But the film's aim is to show that he made a huge difference, for he is meant to prove that remarkable individuals can outsmart evil.' Jason Epstein, 'A Dissent of Schindler's List', New York Review of Books (April 21, 1994), p 65.

92. Julian Borger, "'Visit Places from Schindler's List': Site of Schindler story repackaged as city of the film', The Guardian, May 16, 1994, p 20.