STAGING HITLER MYTHS

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by

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The undersigned, appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled

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Presented by Judith Lechner

A candidate for the degree of Master of Arts in German.

And hereby certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

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Introduction

After the 2004 release of *Der Untergang* (engl.: Downfall) in Germany, a national debate in the feuilleton arose regarding the possibility of accurately depicting Adolf Hitler. This debate divided film critics and it appeared as if this discussion were more than just an argument over film aesthetics. Behind the valuing of the presented image of Hitler the political leanings of the reviewer seem to shine through. While the more conservative newspapers published glowing reviews of the movie and praised the "realistic" portrayal of Hitler, the liberal newspapers consistently criticized the humanized depiction of Hitler. Frank Schirrmacher – editor in chief of the conservative newspaper, "Die Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung" (FAZ) – calls *Der Untergang* a "masterpiece" (Schirrmacher), while director Wim Wenders criticizes the film for the represented point of view (Wenders).

In 2007, as a direct response to "Der Untergang", the Swiss director Dani Levy released "Mein Führer – die wirklich wahrste Wahrheit über Adolf Hitler" [Mein Führer – The Truly Truest Truth About Adolf Hitler[1]]. In an interview with FAZ Levy explains his motivation that led him to shoot the movie in the first place.

> When I heard of this project, even before the film (Der Untergang)
> was made; my fingers were itching to make an anti-movie, a kind of

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[1] Will be released in the USA in August 2009.

subversive answer to this movie. Already the constellation of Eichinger, Fest, Hirschbiegel, that they with a lot of money wanted to construct a German monument, teased me to counter with something small, fast, sassy, and politically incorrect (Adorjan).[2]

Out of this motivation Levy's film must surely be seen, understood, and interpreted as an answer to *Der Untergang*. Levy classified his movie as a tragic-comedy. Even though these movies at first glance seem to have completely different approaches – melodrama versus tragic comedy – the critics evaluated both based on a common denominator: the depiction of Hitler and the role – or importance of – the Holocaust. Both movies have been harshly criticized for offering a personalized depiction of the historical character of Adolf Hitler – a humanistic characterization full of emotion and feeling. In many instances, critics have questioned the films' approach – particularly in their attempt to portray the historical past of the Third Reich and mainly the mass destruction.

I found it especially interesting that most critics – proponents and opponents –were concerned about the "realness" of Hitler's character, especially when discussing *Der Untergang*. Furthermore, when they talked about Levy's film, they failed to make a connection between the two films, most likely due to the difference in genre. Interestingly enough, once more the criticism was based on Hitler's depiction. While in *Der Untergang,* Bernd Eichinger, producer and scriptwriter, relied on testimonies of people from Hitler's inner circle, Levy relied

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[2] Als ich von dem Projekt erfahren habe, also noch bevor es den Film gab, hat es mich schon in den Fingern gejuckt, einen Gegenfilm dazu zu machen, eine Art subversive Antwort darauf. Alleine die Konstellation Eichinger, Fest, Hirschbiegel—daß die mit ganz viel Geld ein deutsches Monument erstellen wollten, daß hat mich gereizt, dem etwas Kleines, Schnelles, Freches, politisch Inkorrektes entgegenzusetzen (Levy interviewed by Adorjan). Translation are my own.

on a psychoanalytical approach formed by Alice Miller. In both ways writers and filmmakers created their own image of the German dictator – as I will argue both created their own personal Hitler myth.

Interestingly, the idea to create a 'Hitler myth' goes back to the Nazi party itself. The National Socialist party worked hard to elaborate a Hitler Myth, even before they were in charge. It was an important element of their propaganda strategy. As the British historian Ian Kershaw points out "the idea and image of a 'Führer' of the Germans" existed before Hitler became the leader of the state in 1933 and was used by the Nazis. The Nazi propaganda machinery picked this notion up and fit it onto Hitler (Kershaw, 14). The 'Hitler myth' provided the "central motor for integration, mobilization, and legitimation within the Nazi system of rule" (257). When Hitler became chancellor the party used propaganda films such as *Triumph of the Will* to establish this notion of Hitler as an almost divine leader. With the downfall of the Nazi party, Kershaw argues, the 'Hitler myth' lost "its power to capture the imagination of millions" (268). In his work *Unser Hitler* [Our Hitler] the German scholar Marcel Atze describes the surviving of the Hitler myth in German literature. He points out that in most literary texts not the person Hitler, but different Hitler myths dominate the portrayal (17). I argue that we could transfer this statement onto Hitler depictions in contemporary German film. Hitler seems to be a permanent guest star in contemporary pop culture. With his appearance in different media, such as the Internet, TV Shows and feature film, the function of his figure changes. The concepts connected to Hitler, such as history itself and the actions of the Nazi party, are represented in different ways. In my first chapter, "Pop Cultural Icon –

Hitler and the Media", I will explore some examples of these different approaches and functions of the Hitler figure. To me, all these depictions circle around the mythology that has developed around Hitler. In the following chapter "Staging Hitler Myths," I want to explain how a myth works. Referring to the concept of the French linguist Roland Barthes, I would like to expose the correlation of the image, the history and the representation of both for the myth. As I will argue, a depiction of Hitler is never simply a depiction of a historical figure. It is an interaction between the meaning of a sign or a form (in this case the person Hitler) and the concept and notions that are projected onto this form. The questions that arise from this construction are: Which factors come into play when we see a depiction of Hitler? How is this picture composed? And what can a Hitler portrayal really tell us about the historical dictator? Where do we find different Hitler images and what do they tell us about strategies of representation?

These will be the leading questions for my analysis of the movies *Der Untergang* and *Mein Führer*. Since *Der Untergang* can be seen as the point of departure for *Mein Führer*, I will first focus on an analysis of the Hitler depiction, the representation of the historical facts and the role of the eyewitness in Eichinger's movie. A similar structure is used for the analysis of the Dani Levy movie. As my analysis will prove, both films provide the audience with their own interpretation of the Hitler figure – they both create a Hitler myth.

A Pop Cultural Icon

> Hitler has not gone without a good deal of posthumous attention, in other words. Go to the movie and you will see him. Look at popular bookracks and you can't miss him. [...] There is a growth industry in Hitler picture books, biographies, films, fictions, other assorted memorabilia, tokens, and trinkets that symbolize the Nazi period and hold it steadily before us (Rosenfeld, 2).

This statement, which Alvin Rosenfeld makes in his book *Imagining Hitler* (1985), is still relevant more than 20 years after it was written. While Rosenfeld is focusing on popular literature, his statement is transferable to mass media in general. We meet Hitler's ghost everywhere in the realm of modern media. The fascination with and the curiosity about Hitler still occupy the minds of moviemakers, writers, and especially a broader audience, which is consuming all the new information released about the German dictator.

Why the German dictator is still so popular cannot be answered satisfactorily. But the fact is, Hitler sells. It does not seem to matter whether we talk about newspapers, magazines, television documentaries, or feature films. When Hitler is depicted in a cultural work its sales numbers or TV ratings increase. This may be one reason industry is unwilling to let the German dictator go, why they pull him into the spotlight over and over again. It seems to be the reason articles such as "How Hitler lost his testicle" (Bild.de) are written and read.

Today, almost 60 years after the Third Reich, Hitler is still a media icon. And his depiction varies. Contemporary pop culture discovered the historical

figure Adolf Hitler for its own purposes. It uses Hitler as a symbol of something between humor and evil. Hitler's visual image is inseparably connected to the historical events of the Third Reich, but the historical events usually are not the main focus in this context. It appears to be Hitler's appearance and the visual representation of the Nazi party that makes it tempting to use him. The symbols of the Nazis such as the swastika and the uniforms are easy to identify. The distinctive external features — the small mustache and the parting of the hair — have become a pattern that can be easily adapted to any figure. This strategy is frequently used on contemporary animated television shows, such as *Family Guy*, *South Park*, and *The Simpsons*. The Hitler figure in this context usually makes a short appearance and functions as a funny sideshow; the figure is only shortly embedded in the plot, which usually deals with something completely unrelated to the Nazi era. Most of the time, Hitler is absolutely detached from his historical background. There is no appropriate representation intended. In this scenario, the Hitler figure is transformed into a comic element. And usually the other myths about Hitler are implied. For example, in a *Simpsons* episode, Hitler lives a happy life in Argentina. Or we can watch Hitler and Eva Braun on *Family Guy* committing suicide, and neither character wants to swallow the poisoned pill first.

In addition to comedy television shows, Hitler iconography is pervasive on the Internet as well. Users post short clips on forums such as YouTube. If you

enter the keyword "Hitler" on youtube.com, you will find 60,000 results.[3] These

are short clips about the dictator posted by people worldwide. This enormous

pool of videos shows how Hitler still occupies people's minds all over the world in

very different ways. The posted videos follow different motivations: You will find

revisionist posts, original footage with original comments, original footage with

new comments, and plenty of what Harald Martenstein, a columnist for *Die Zeit*,

calls "small Hitler art"[4] — short clips in which people make fun of Hitler in

various ways. This includes excerpts from comedy shows, such as Monty Python:

Hitler in England, and new material that represents Hitler in a comedic context,

such as *Der Bonker* by Walter Moers. Martenstein points out that "in the Internet

the Hitler-Art has become an independent genre. You could yearly vote the best

Hitler clip." For Martenstein, "Hitler developed internationally to a figure of pop

culture." He is still the center of interest for many people. Importantly, in this

context Hitler and the Nazis are usually free of any political context, especially in

cartoons (Martenstein). The purpose of such depictions is not to show us the real

Hitler, but to deconstruct the figure. He becomes detached from his actual

context. Similarity to the historical figure is created through the visual

components, such as the Hitler mustache, the uniforms, or the swastika, but not

by historical accuracy. There is no attempt to create this accuracy. The form of

the representation is already preventing credibility. Short depictions make

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[3] Update 3/23/09.

[4] "kleine Hitler Kunst" (Martenstein). Translations are my own.

identification impossible. This is a major difference between such depictions of Hitler and those in film.

We must face the fact that what seems to be acceptable for Internet pop art is not necessarily acceptable in cinematic depictions of Hitler. From the time Hitler appeared on the political stage he became an object in films. His image was distributed by the media apparatus of his party and by contemporary opposition (of course, foreign) media. Staging Hitler in film was a major task of the propaganda machinery in Germany. Films such as *Triumph of the Will* or even *Olympia* by Leni Riefenstahl supported and produced the idealized image of Hitler. *Triumph of the Will,* especially, supports a glorified and almost divine iconography of the dictator. While the propaganda of the Nazi party tried to conceptualize a positive and powerful image of Hitler, the propaganda of the other countries, such as the United States, tried to dismantle and to turn in the Hitler image into ridicule.

After World War II we have seen different ways of approaching the depiction of Adolf Hitler, from serious dramas such as *The Bunker* (1981) or *Der letzte Akt* (1955), documentaries such as *Mein Kampf* (1960) and *Hitler – eine Karriere* (1977) to comedies such as *The Producers*. These depictions focus on different time periods of the Nazi era; they attempt to depict different parts of Hitler's career, his rise and his downfall. Ever since Hitler appeared on the political stage, we have had the Hitler comedy approach. The Nazis silenced the German opposition, so the only comedies about Hitler were Ernst Lubitsch's *To Be Or Not To Be* (1942) and Charlie Chaplin's *The Great Dictator* (1940), which were made in the United States. Both of these films deconstruct in a funny way

the excessive ritualization of the Nazi party. The self-display of the NSDAP becomes a vantage point for the directors. Since then, Hitler's depiction has developed into playful varieties. While the comedies serve a deconstructive function, it seems as if feature film and documentary approaches were trying to be historically accurate and offer insight into the Nazi system, and especially into Hitler's motivation. The goal of a lot of such depictions, it seems, is to convey "the real Hitler" to the audience. This leads to a crucial point in my analysis.

In my opinion, it is impossible to depict "the real Hitler." The representation of the myths in feature film always tries to explain why the Third Reich was possible. An interesting argument in this context is the American magazine writer Ron Rosenbaum's perspective on the numerous attempts to explain Hitler. In his book *Explaining Hitler*, which was originally published in a serialized form in *The New Yorker,* Rosenbaum describes different attempts to explain Hitler's personality, and comes to the conclusion that all attempts to explain Hitler are doomed to fail. There can never be an appropriate and overall explanation given for the character of Hitler, Rosenbaum writes. The only thing that is revealed when we try to deconstruct or explain Hitler, he believes, is our own reflection on the Nazi era. In other words, the picture we draw of Hitler tells us more about our society than it says about Hitler (Rosenbaum, xviii). By applying this argument to feature film and cartoons in pop culture, it becomes obvious that every Hitler depiction bears a message. Hitler is therefore no longer a historical figure. The Hitler figure appears to be an empty vessel that directors fill with meaning. Hitler is inseparably connected with the past of the Third

Reich, but it is the relation between his representation and the staging of history that varies.

While in the short representation of Hitler in cartoons the representation of history is a subsidiary matter, in feature film the position one takes toward history can influence the Hitler depiction crucially. I argue that the connection between the visual appearance and the interpretation of the historical events creates a "Hitler myth." This myth is nurtured by different elements, such as the staging of Hitler as a character and the depiction of the historical events. A side effect is that these elements transmit a position on the events of the Third Reich. Whether or not the "original" Adolf Hitler actually appears, these Hitler depictions – no matter if the dictator is embodied in a human or just a cartoon figure – intersect in the function of creating an idea about Hitler. In their construction they all formulate a statement as to what they depict. When we take a closer look it becomes obvious that all of these different approaches try to create and transmit their own idea of Hitler. They create their own myth. While pop cultural depictions are able to more or less avoid viewer identification with the characters and depiction of the historical background of the Third Reich, feature films cannot neglect these elements, because they are crucial to representation and narration. I argue that it is this difference that opens up the space for creating a Hitler myth. By including an identification strategy and elaborating the historical background – by introducing contrastive characters – the Hitler image and its meaning become charged with additional or new interpretations.

Staging Hitler Myths

The introduction and staging of the Hitler myth has the potential to disrupt common and false views towards the history of Nazi Germany. Important for my understanding of the expression "Hitler myth" is that there are different factors that come into play. The representation of Hitler in feature film is no longer simply historical. Hitler has been transformed from a historical personality into a myth. And every cinematic depiction is desperately concerned to give this myth its meaning. By using the term "myth" I want to emphasis the legendary and fabulous component of these depictions. An important notion of the myth concept is that myth is neither a counterfeit nor a lie; it is a societal tool. In contrast to scientific theories, for example, a myth does not intend to provide an explanation or depiction of reality, but combines different elements into a narration. This narration, nevertheless, creates meaning. The meaning is transported by diverse iconographical symbols (Bizeul, 20). This narration is disseminated throughout a group that has a common cultural knowledge of the subject of the story. A myth works through a visual component such as the representation of symbols or signs, a semantic tradition, and it bears a cultural notion – it refers back to a common knowledge a particular group shares (Atze, 20). Myth often carries an idealized notion of its subject and seeks to represent this as a common idea. Since myth is created within a group, it therefore can be dismantled.

The structural concept developed by the French scholar Roland Barthes is useful understanding how a myth can be deconstructed. He broadens the concept of the myth from a purely oral one to a visual and symbolic one. With Barthes' concept we are able to transfer myth from its oral tradition in language to a visual representation, such as film. By referring to Barthes' concept of myth I want to point out that myths are constructed socially, and that there is flexibility in this concept. Barthes points out that anything that can be the basis for a discourse can become a myth. For him a myth is a "system of communication" and therefore a "mode of signification." In other words, a myth carries meaning. "Myth is not defined by the object of its message, but by the way in which it utters this message [...]" (Barthes, 109). This concept is not only valid for language; it also can be adapted to images. For Barthes myth consists of "modes of writing or of representation." There are various forms that he understands as "a support to mythical speech." And this can be any kind of filmic or visual representation, because images carry meaning and can therefore be interpreted. Important for mythical speech is that it refers to "material which has already been worked on" and therefore is usable for communication. Barthes points out that, "[...] the materials of the myth (pictorial or written) presuppose a signifying consciousness [...]"(Barthes, 110). We have a certain picture and we ourselves are tempted to assign a meaning based on our pre-established concept of the sign. It is therefore not an arbitrary reading. To Barthes "myth has in fact a double function: it points out and it notifies, it makes us understand something and it imposes it on us" (Barthes, 116-117).

The myth expressed by the sign has three dimensions. It consists of a signifier (form), a signified (concept), and the resulting sign (signification).[5] Because of this interrelation the meaning of a sign can shift. So if I name the representation of a Hitler depiction or image as a myth, I apply Barthes' concept as follows: The signifier is the image of Hitler himself. The signified is everything we connect to this picture: Hitler's function, the history of World War II, and every attribute we connect with an image of Hitler. The signification is the meaning that emerges out of this connection. It becomes obvious that in the creation of a Hitler myth all these components are interwoven. The signification of the Hitler figure can change depending on the context in which it is represented. The signification of Hitler has changed over the decades and media reinvents it frequently. The creation of the Hitler myth starts with Hitler himself and his presentation, supported by the propaganda machinery of the Nazi party. The image of Hitler has been used since his appearance in German politics. The valuation and therefore the meaning of this image has changed. While his peers saw Hitler's image as a sign for success and change, the opposition saw it as scary and dangerous. This ambivalent interpretation has now also been applied to the filmic representation of Hitler. While we have the depiction of a cruel, demon-like creature on the one hand, we have attempts to depict Hitler as human and lovable on the other hand. Hitler's indentifying features, nevertheless, are the

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[5] In his construction Barthes overlaps the terms sign and signifier. He points out that the signifier in the system of myth can be seen from two perspectives, first from the "final term of the linguistic system" and also as the "first term of the mythical system." The signifier in the mythical system is therefore called "form" and the signified is called "concept." The correlation of these two is the sign, but to avoid confusion Barthes calls it "signification." (Barthes, 116-117).

ones established by the Nazi party and Hitler himself, such as the uniforms, the swastika, and Hitler's mustache. The iconography of Nazis in German film therefore is completely designed in the spirit of the former German Nazi party. The creation of the myth comes into play when the concept of the form changes. In other words, when the Hitler image is set in relation to its representation – the history of the Third Reich, the interaction with other Nazis or civilians and his popularity, among other things – an interpretation of history becomes visible.

As Barthes points out, in a visual representation of a myth (form), the extension or loaded meaning of the myth (concept) is multidimensional. The signification that represents the myth and its elements relate to each other (Barthes, 102). By changing these relations, we are able to change the signification of the myth. If we, for example, take the seriousness of Hitler's politics and his destructive actions and confront it with an inner emotional development, for example we show a crying Hitler, the myth of Hitler as a demon can easily be dismantled and replaced by a more sensitive and emotional depiction of Hitler. Such a mystification and reinvention easily becomes problematic if we label it as reality, as a truth that we are representing. By doing that we ignore or suppress the fact that our subjectivity reinvents Hitler.

The Hitler myth in German feature film is created out of variable factors: including the historical background knowledge and expectations of the audience, the visual staging of the Hitler figure and the staging of Hitler's voice, the perception of the Hitler figure by other characters and the establishment of the historical events in the plot. The interaction between these factors creates an

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overall impression and transmits more than just an attempt for historical accuracy - every myth bears an ideology.

Since an analysis of the expectations and background knowledge of the audience would go beyond the scope of this work, I want to focus on the elements we can read into the cinematic staging. How is the Hitler image set up and how are the elements of perception and history connected to this representation? How do they form an independent Hitler myth and what ideology does this depiction transmit?

Besides the staging of the Hitler figure itself and the perception of Hitler through other characters, the staging of history in a movie is part of the analysis of the construction of the Hitler myth. The question that frequently comes along when determining if Hitler was represented in an appropriate way is how the events of the Third Reich were depicted. A representation of Hitler can never be an isolated representation of the dictator. It always includes a depiction of the historical events, too.

The depiction of history in film, especially feature film, is already problematic and controversial. German public discourse about this issue becomes even more complicated when we talk about the depiction of the Nazi era. We are now – in 2009 – at a crucial moment when the eyewitnesses – perpetrators and victims – are dying, and soon the only testimony we will have about this time will be the archives of film and written and recorded documents.

> The certainty of the fact that the contemporary witnesses will disappear, creates two forms of memory: the *communicative memory* – three generations of lifetime perspective; and the *cultural memory* where the possibility of this exchange process is

ending and the image of the past will be canonized in a permanent codex of memory. (Fröhlich, Schneider, Visarius, 7)[6]

In the introduction to their book *Das Böse im Blick* [Keeping an Eye on Evil] Christian Schneider, Margrit Fröhlich and Karsten Visarius refer to a statement the German historian Reinhard Koselleck made in 1981. His statement concerning the generation change becomes more and more relevant as time goes by. Film – documentaries, historical films and documentary drama – has proven to be the strongest medium for historiography. (Fröhlich, Schneider, Visarius, 8) It might not only be the strongest medium when it comes to the transmission of context – it is probably also the medium with the biggest public audience. Therefore, in the context of the representation of the Third Reich, the depictions and interpretations of history and Hitler should not be underestimated. Because of the massive effect of history's retelling in films, it is important to analyze these images of the past that have been designed by contemporary directors. The question of representation strategies of memory and history is a fundamental problem of the consciousness of society and cultural identity. An important question in this context concerns how depictions relate to, complete, or ignore discourse in society (Fröhlich, Schneider, Visarius, 11). In the context of the Hitler depiction, the questions are, therefore: How does the depiction of Hitler go along with the public opinion about the Third Reich? From which perspective

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[6] Die Gewissheit des unmittelbar bevorstehenden Aussterben der Zeitzeugen bezeichnet die magische Grenze zwischen zwei Formen des Gedächtnisses: des *kommunikativen* Gedächtnisses, das heißt die unmittelbar einholbare Vergangenheitsschau in der lebenszeitlichen Perspektive von drei Generationen; und des *kulturellen* Gedächtnisses, in dem die Möglichkeit dieses lebendigen Austauschprozesses endet und das Bild der Vergangenheit in festen Codices der Erinnerung kannonisiert wird. Translations are my own.

does the movie represent history? How does it affect the common interpretation of the past?

I would argue that feature films are generally unable to represent history in a purely factual manner. A feature film can be based on facts, but the representation of these facts is arranged. There seems to be no objectivity in a historical representation in a feature film. A selective process always takes place. That is where the problems with accuracy and authenticity come into play. There are always the questions of why the director or screenplay writer chose this particular part of history, why he/she chose a particular point of view, and how the facts were interpreted. It is, for example, impossible to create an overall image of the Third Reich. Feature film simply cannot represent all perspectives on a historical event. There has to be selection. And where selection takes place, there is always exclusion. If a movie with the focus on the Nazi elite of the Third Reich is made, an appropriate depiction of the victims most likely, but not necessarily, is excluded or underrepresented. While the absence of a particular part of history already reveals a bias against the unrepresented, constructing a clear portrayal of the represented is evidence of the same bias. Since the signification arises out of an interaction between the form (the visual representation of Hitler) and the concept (historical background, interactions with other characters and so on) the choice of what part of history is focused on in the filmic representation influences the signification of the Hitler myth crucially.

While analyzing the staging of the Hitler myth on the screen, we can divide the process into small aspects that together form and influence the whole

representation. The first aspect: How is Hitler represented in terms of acting and visual staging? The second aspect involves the interaction between Hitler and the other characters in the film. How do we perceive Hitler through the eyes of the other characters? What perspectives are introduced, and what effect do they have upon the overall representation of Hitler? How do these representations influence the Hitler myth?

Hitler Myths in Contemporary German Film

Der Untergang – *The Myth of a Seductive Leader*

Since *Der Untergang* can be seen as the basis for the Hitler depiction in *Mein Führer,* I would like to start with an analysis of the Hitler figure played by the Swiss actor Bruno Ganz. As the historian Joachim Fest points out, the performance of Ganz' representation of Hitler imposed "new standards." For Fest, Ganz embodies the "real Hitler" as he was never before seen in a feature film (Fest). The majority of film critics share this point of view. They all bring up the authenticity and closeness of Ganz's performance. Compared to impersonations of Hitler in previous feature films, such as Anthony Hopkins' in *The Bunker* (1981) or Alec Guinness' in *Hitler: The Last Ten Days* (1973), Bruno Ganz has, besides his quality as a good actor, two major advantages over all the other actors: his similar look and the ability to speak in German, both of which, I think, should not be underestimated. A Hitler who yells in German is much more

credible than a Hitler yelling in English. Since Hitler was known for his rousing speeches, voice and verbal expression are crucial when depicting Hitler.

Ganz was shocked and surprised by how close his metamorphosis into Hitler came after he had endured the preparation process for the film shooting (Ganz). He trained extensively to imitate Hitler's gestures and facial and verbal expressions. He developed an accent and pronunciation very close to Hitler's. Ganz even studied body movement of people with Parkinson's disease to make his performance as close as possible to the German dictator's in his last days. As preparation material, Ganz used the enormous supply of footage that is widely available, and he even studied other actors who had played Hitler before. The result of Ganz's training is remarkable. We are hardly able to distinguish where the person Bruno Ganz ends and where the historical figure Hitler begins. Or, perhaps more importantly, we cannot see a difference between the historically verified person Hitler and Ganz's interpretations. This is potentially dangerous. His embodiment of Hitler appears to be so convincing that he fills the gap between historically verified episodes and episodes in which the actor gave his own interpretation of how Hitler might have reacted. We can see this in a scene in which Hitler and Eva Braun are alone. She is crying and begging Hitler not to kill her sister's husband. Hitler listens to her sensitively as he gently strokes her face, before he gets angry and yells at her. This scene is fictionalized, since only Hitler and Braun are present. As we know, neither one of them survived the war; they committed suicide. Therefore any depiction of intimacy between Braun and Hitler – which had no outside witness – is interpretation and invented.

While we are all familiar with the angry, shouting Hitler, we are less

familiar with the soft-spoken friend Hitler. We hardly have footage of Hitler as

the "nice guy," and all we can rely on are testimonies of the witnesses who were

with Hitler in the bunker, his inner circle—the people who loved and trusted him.

Ganz's credibility as Hitler is based on his closeness to a real historical figure, but

the actions and their representation in the movie are purely fictional. It is not the

real Hitler who is crying and yelling, desperate to lose his leadership; that is the

fictional Hitler, developed by Fest and Eichinger and impersonated by Ganz.

Ganz's closeness to the original and Fest's and Eichinger's strategies of

authentication tempt us to take these actions as truth, as history.

Besides Ganz's realistic portrayal of Hitler and his convincing

representation, the staging of historical accuracy is also important for the Hitler

myth. For me, the representation of history relates to the concept associated with

the form in Barthes's theory. The representation of history therefore influences

the signification of the myth. The concept referring to the form includes the

simple representation of historical facts and their selection. It also includes the

representation of eyewitnesses and other members of the Nazi elite. By basing the

screenplay on historical sources such as the testimony of Traudl Junge, the

private secretary of Hitler, the filmmakers try to create the sense of historical

credibility. "Authenticity" is a major point for Eichinger. He emphasizes that he

tried to weave the historical facts as authentically as possible into the narrative.[7]

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[7] "Ich habe versucht, die Ereignisse so authentisch wie möglich in eine Geschichte zu packen, die die üblichen Formalismen des Kinos über den Haufen wirft. Es gibt keinen Kampf zwischen Gut und Böse. Wir haben uns an die Erlebnisse von Zeitzeugen gehalten, außerdem an

An important feature that plays into the depiction of Hitler in *Der Untergang* is Bernd Eichinger's statement that the movie would represent the "real Hitler." Eichinger and Fest are convinced that they depicted the events in the bunker as truthfully as possible, that they created a piece of historical evidence. This "historical evidence" gains its credibility out of the historical testimony that was used to write the screenplay. Eichinger, who wrote the script, relied on three sources to tell the story of the Nazi elite in the last days in the Führer bunker: a book about Hitler's last days written by the historian Joachim Fest, testimony by Traudl Junge, and memories of Albert Speer, the former armaments minister, a private architect, and a friend of Hitler. The filmmaker's choice of the sources already reveals the position they take. This is not a movie told from a victim's perspective; they only chose members of Hitler's inner circle, people who had a more or less uncritical relationship to Hitler while he was in charge. By the choice of these sources, the filmmakers introduce an uncritical point of view. This influences the ideology the myth carries – it represents the ideology of the perpetrators and bystanders.

Joachim Fest's book *Inside Hitler's Bunker: The Last Days Of The Third Reich*[8] inspired Eichinger to develop the movie in collaboration with Fest. The book is the basis for the movie, and therefore Eichinger relies on the way Fest depicts the historical events. Fest himself has a certain reputation as a historian

Geschichtsbücher, Traudl Junges "Bis zur letzten Stunde" und an die Buchvorlage von Joachim Fest. Vor allem seine Schilderungen lieferten den dramaturgischen Schlüssel." Eichinger, Interview mit Spielfilm.de

[8] In German the original title is: Der Untergang. Hitler und das Ende des Dritten Reiches. Berlin 2002.

in Germany: He was the first one to write a detailed biography of Hitler, and he supported and published the dubious historian Ernst Nolte, who is closely linked to revisionist approaches.[9] As a second source Eichinger used the memories of Traudl Junge, Hitler's private secretary, based on her autobiography[10] and the André Heller documentary *Blind Spot: Hitler's Secretary*[11]. The character and testimony of Traudl Junge plays a major role in the development of the movie, and more than once the audience sees Hitler through her eyes. Her testimony— the documentary footage from Heller's film — functions as the frame for the movie and as an important strategy of authentication. By using the footage from the documentary as proof of credibility, Hirschbiegel creates the notion that we are seeing the events in the bunker through the perspective of a first-hand eyewitness and suggests that her perspective will bring us closer to "the real Hitler." She worked with him, so therefore her depiction must be adequate. Her perspective appears to be a truthful one. The movie opens with the real Traudl Junge's voice. She talks about herself in the third person. She says:

> I have the feeling that I should be angry with this child, with this childish thing, or that I cannot forgive her for not realizing the horrors, the monster, before it was too late, for not realizing what she was getting into. [...] I was not an enthusiastic Nazi. When I

[9] Joachim Fest as the editor in chief of the conservative newspaper Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, published articles of the historian Ernst Nolte. These controversial articles caused strong reactions. The philosopher Jürgen Habermas became critically involved and the debate between these very oppositional interpretations of history became known as the "Historikerstreit", that has its climax in 1987. Joachim Fest supported in this context the right-conservative positions of Ernst Nolte.

[10] Traudl Junge, Melissa Müller: Bis zur letzten Stunde. Hitlers Sekretärin erzählt ihr Leben, 2004.

[11] André Heller, Othmar Schmiderer, *Im toten Winkel. Hitlers Sekretärin*, 2004.

came to Berlin, I could have said no, [...] But I did not say no. Curiosity got the better of me.[12]

This statement not only introduces the film; it also introduces the audience to one of the major perspectives through which they will experience the film. It is the perspective of a "child" who followed the Nazis not because she was convinced, but, rather, out of curiosity. The movie therefore starts with an excuse and sets up the initial position we will see developed in the film. It is an excuse of one of the main protagonists, that she was just a bystander and did not see the crimes coming. This statement is already manipulative. It gives the audience the idea that even the people who were close to Hitler did not see the crimes and that some of them were just naïve and young. This impression of an innocent, childish, and fearful young woman that the character Traudl Junge offers is supported by the scene that follows this introduction. We see a group of people walking through a dark forest. As a flashlight lights up the scene we see a close-up shot of a young girl (Alexandra Maria Lara) who looks terrified; her eyes are wide open. This will turn out to be one facial expression we will often see her character wearing. She is frequently shocked as she "finds out" more and more about the Nazi crimes. Only at the very end of the movie, when the narration comes back to the real Traudl Junge, does she admit that it is no excuse that she was young. She points out that "[...] it would have been possible to find out things."[13] Here she

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[12] Traudl Jung in *Der Untergang*. Out of the documentary by André Heller, Othmar Schmiderer, *Im toten Winkel. Hitlers Sekretärin*, 2004.

[13] [...] "Und in dem Moment habe ich eigentlich gespürt, dass das keine Entschuldigung ist, das man jung ist, sondern das man auch hätte vielleicht Dinge erfahren können." Traudl Jung in *Der*

uses the subjunctive. Her usage reveals just how much she wants to distance herself from this past. She still sees her choice as one of many; her perspective represents that of a curious child who made the wrong decision.

The perspective of a child experiencing the nice Uncle Hitler is also communicated every time we see Hitler interact with Goebbels' children, and with the child soldiers of the "Volkssturm." It is a perspective that is supported throughout the movie. The perspective of Hitler as the nice and friendly paternal friend, or even idol, is therefore supplemented and causes us to consider the possibility of Hitler as a seductive leader — which, again, is a myth. The children — immature, candid characters — are so fascinated by Hitler that not one is able to see him with a critical eye. They unconditionally believe and follow the "Führer." And even though Traudl Junge brings up the notion that youth might not be an acceptable excuse, the movie suggests exactly the opposite sentiment. The depiction of Hitler as charming, warm, and friendly excuses the children — and Junge in particular. She could not see the crimes that the Nazis committed, because she was impressed with Hitler's personality and the power that came along with it. The impact Hitler made on her seems to have clouded her judgment.

The notion of an alleged delusion becomes more than obvious when Junge writes the political last will of Hitler. They are together in one of the office rooms in the bunker. Hitler is dictating his last words when he summarizes the situation

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Untergang. Out of the documentary by André Heller, Othmar Schmiderer, *Im toten Winkel − Hitlers Sekretärin*, 2004.

and recapitulates his political achievements. While she is focusing on writing down his words, he looks down at the table. Softly, he says: "Centuries will pass, but from the ruins of our cities and cultural monuments, our hatred will be renewed for those who are responsible, the people to whom we owe all this: the international Jewry and its supporters."[14] As he speaks these words, Junge looks at Hitler in disbelief; her eyes and mouth are open wide. When Hitler looks at her with eyebrows raised, Junge quickly buries her head. This disbelief in Junge's facial expression can be seen as the commonly held understanding among Germans that the bystanders knew nothing about either anti-Semitism, which was the hatred of Jews in the Nazi Party, or the sanctions that had been imposed to work through what the Nazis called the "final solution," or the mass murder of the European Jews. This interaction between Junge and Hitler supports another notion that plays into the seductive leader myth: It expresses more than just the feigned innocence of those who were fascinated by Hitler. Furthermore, it develops the notion that, besides Hitler's attraction, this group of immature bystanders supposedly had no idea about the whole evilness of the Nazi ideology. The bystanders are represented in the movie through Junge's character. With the introduction of her perspective, the movie gains the viewpoint of a young, naïve female who only years later will admit that it was a mistake to join the Nazi Party and that possibilities existed other than becoming Hitler's private secretary. The historical Junge can be seen as a representative of the trustful people who closed

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[14] Der Untergang, 1:30:48 to 1:32

their eyes to the Nazi crimes in order to take advantage of the system and to function in it. In the movie, however, only her naïveté and her paternal relationship to Hitler are emphasized.

The story is partly told from her perspective. The camera more than allows us to see through her eyes, literally. The gaze of an innocent child is introducing us to Hitler in the first place. Her perspective thus is formative for the rest of the movie. We see her several times in close-up shots that emphasize her innocent and usually surprised facial expression. We are led to identify with her, and, by extension, to perceive Hitler the way she perceived him.

It is mainly through her perspective that we are encouraged to see Hitler as positive and paternal figure. This is the way Hitler is introduced to the audience. The first shot we see of Hitler is from Junge's perspective. As a result, her point of view influences the audience's perceptions from the very beginning. And because Junge does not represent the typical Nazi perpetrator, it seems to be safe to identify with her. But this setup tempts us to fully rely on her memory, and especially the arrangement of her memory. Her experience as represented in the film shows us an innocent young girl who fell for a paternal seducer who promised her a good job. In essence this setup provides an excuse for all the bystanders who fell for these promises without considering the consequences.

The construction of the myth that Hitler was human is therefore not the shocking news, but rather to use this myth to elaborate on the seductive leader myth – to use this myth as an excuse — is problematic. Ignorance — the character's naïveté, mixed with a lack of critical thinking — is no excuse for

joining the Nazi party. And the movie should not create empathy for those who took advantage of all the false promises the Nazi party made.

Junge's memory and experience aside, other parts of the movie were based on Albert Speer's testimony. And in addition to the eyewitnesses, we have interactions between Hitler and members of the Nazi elite, who lived or had access to the inside of the "Führerbunker," and we experience the events that took place outside of the bunker as well. Here the depictions of the events become especially problematic, since the line between eyewitnesses and non-eyewitnesses blurs. The filmmaker's visual representation of Junge and Speer does not differentiate from the representation of the other characters in the film. All persons are represented in a similar way, even fictional characters such as Peter – a young boy participating in the Volkssturm.

The distinction between the inner and the outer world of the bunker establishes a partition between the Nazis in the bunker and the ones who are outside of this parallel society, defending Berlin against the Red Army. This distinction automatically turns the whole outside world into victims; even Berlin becomes a victim as it is destroyed by the Allies. We see people fighting for their lives and suffering. We see leading Nazi perpetrators taking over the role of war heroes. This becomes especially obvious when we take a closer look at the representation of Professor Dr. Ernst-Günter Schenk. While Albert Speer and Heinrich Himmler are more or less well-known historical figures, Schenk is not. In the movie his name is barely mentioned, but his actions are depicted as especially human in their concern for the civilians. He refuses to follow orders and stays in Berlin to help out in the city. Throughout the depiction of his actions,

Schenk comes across as a hero, a positive figure. The criminal past of this historical person — that he worked in a concentration camp and was involved in tests on humans — is completely left out of the film. Therefore, since it does not include such critical facts, the picture of Schenk is incomplete. This representation indeed distorts events of the past. It creates the image of the "good Nazi." The audience can identify with this false character; he comes across as an honorable savior for the weak and wounded civilians. The range of his history in the movie is reduced to these single acts of humanity he performs at the end of the war, while all the war crimes he committed are simply ignored.

The same problem taints the depiction of the events that take place in the bunker. Even in the inner circle of the Nazi elite, among the most powerful Nazi characters the movie attempts to establish a distinction between "good" and "bad" Nazis. While Goebbels and Hitler still give orders to fight for, defend, and, finally, destroy Germany and German land, the Nazi elite, represented by Albert Speer and Heinrich Himmler among others, turn their backs on Hitler and betray him. In contrast to Hitler, these people appear to be partisans who manipulate the war strategies; they suddenly ignore Hitler's orders. The fact that Albert Speer, as armament minister, was responsible for the exploitation of forced labor is not mentioned, nor is the fact that, as Hitler's architect, he had almost unrestricted access to Hitler. Speer's testimony is used in several scenes, when he is interacting with Hitler, or other people in the bunker — most of whom committed suicide. There is no way to prove the substance of these conversations as factual. Take for example the conversation between Hitler and Speer in which Speer confesses to Hitler that he violated Hitler's orders of "scorched earth." This

scene has no further function than to emphasize Speer's heroic move to tell Hitler the truth, which could cost him his life, and to show that he had a strong emotional attachment to Hitler. The tension in this scene once more enhances the bond between Hitler and his supporters as an emotional rather than an ideological bond. This seems to be the primary reason part of the Nazi elite followed him. Strangely, the one moment Albert Speer — as he is depicted — speaks up against Hitler eclipses all the times he supported the Nazi party's ideology. In the last breath of the Third Reich, when it finally becomes clear that the Nazis have lost the war, the perpetrators of the 12-year dictatorship, who took advantage of the system by becoming rich and powerful, are suddenly represented as victims of the system and survivors of the war.

Even the information boards at the very end of the movie strengthens the notion that even the perpetrators were simply survivors of the war. To simulate authenticity and credibility at the end of the movie, we are given a short summary of the outcome of WWII and the fate of the people to whom we are introduced in the movie. Mixed in with this information is a just a snapshot's worth of information on the Holocaust: basically only how many people died. Interestingly—and this is what supports the notion of the equality of the suffering of the different parties—all the boards look the same and are accentuated with the same music. As Wim Wenders points out,

> What is happening with the final boards baffles all descriptions.
> They start with the capitulation date, educate us about the 6 million
> dead Jews the film was not dealing with, did not want to or could
> not deal with, and lead us finally—accompanied by the same

music—to the fate of humans or fiends we were allowed to follow in
a realm of 12 days.[15]

Besides all the authentication strategies mixed in between all the elements

that suggest that the film is based on a true story, we find certain fictional scenes.

While the leading story line might have been created around facts, we also must

be aware that Eichinger mixed fictional elements into the story, which makes his

approach—supposedly based on a mission to tell the truth—very doubtful. A

significant fictional figure is Peter, a little boy who fights with the "Volkssturm" to

defend Berlin and who does not want to give up until the very end, even when his

father tries to convince him to stop fighting. Parts of the story are told through

his eyes. He is the savior of Traudl Junge in the end, and he gets a medal from

Hitler for his engagement in defending Berlin. These scenes make it obvious that

what Eichinger and Hirschbiegel are representing is not exclusively based on

facts; it also embeds fictional material without marking it as such. The framing of

the movie with Junge's testimony and the aesthetic strategy of providing

information at the conclusion of the movie are efforts to legitimize and

authenticate the interactions throughout the movie.

The danger of Eichinger's and Hirschbiegel's movie is that they depict the

entire movie in this fashion. I would not necessarily say that they are purposely

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[15] Und was in den Schlusstiteln geschieht, spottet dann jeder Beschreibung. Sie beginnen mit dem
Datum der Kapitulation, klären uns dann auf über die sechs Millionen Juden, von denen der Film
nicht gehandelt hat, nicht handeln wollte oder konnte, und führt dann, unterlegt mit derselben
Musik, die alles einebnet, auch über zu den Privatschicksalen aller Menschen und Unmenschen,
denen wir in einem Zeitraum von zwölf Tagen haben zuschauen dürfen (Wenders).

trying to establish revisionism in their movie, but the movie offers this reading. The seductive leader myth Eichinger and Hirschbiegel create gives us less information about the "real Hitler" than it provides us with an excuse for those who followed Hitler unconditionally. The line between a bystander and a perpetrator shifts, and they are all depicted as victims of the terror of the Third Reich, regardless of whether they had supported the system for years.

The filmmaker's overall arrangement tries to convince us that the depiction of Hitler and the last days of the Third Reich are as real as possible. But can we really trust the witnesses' renditions of Hitler? Is Ganz's interpretation an expression of the "real Hitler"? Or is it maybe the more idealized notion of Hitler based on the testimonies of the people who were close to him? For me, the shocking experience in *Der Untergang* is not seeing that Hitler was a human. I was well aware that he ate no meat, loved his dogs, and used the restroom frequently. But the choice of the eyewitnesses and their perspective on Hitler exposes the intention of the filmmakers to represent a sympathizing perspective on Hitler. In the film only people who were close to Hitler are telling their perspectives. The eyewitnesses conventionalize Hitler, as the human seducer, who could be so friendly and emotionally wrapping. This emphasis on Hitler's seductive skills is surprising and alarming. The memory of these people considering Hitler do not simply illustrate their experience or facts about the last days in the bunker; it seems more to be trying to create an excuse for those who followed Hitler until the bitter end and were only willing to see the cruelty of the Third Reich when it became obvious they had already lost the war. It is interesting how many of the characters introduced in *Der Untergang* suddenly

become partisan heroes as soon as they figure out that there is no chance they will emerge victorious. By choosing the perspective of bystanders and perpetrators, the filmmakers of *Der Untergang* influence the concept of the Hitler representation, and therefore its signification. By ignoring the cruelty of Hitler against everyone he had labeled as "The Other", such as the Jewish community in Europe, gay people, and communists, and by focusing on the suffering of the civilians and the former supporters of the Nazi system, a shift of valuation takes place. The myth of an irresistible, seductive Hitler that is created in this context should convince the audience that it was difficult to figure out how destructive and evil the ideology of the National Socialist party really was. It creates the impression, that all this supporters did indeed follow Hitler, but because they were fascinated by him, not because they fully agreed with his ideology. Interestingly, this excuse for being a member of the Nazi party also had been used by leading politicians such as Baldur von Schirach during the Nuremberg trials (Kershaw, 263). To me, it is less important if they really believed in Hitler. These excuses are a strategy to refuse the responsibility of choices they have made. Through introducing the seductive leader myth to the audience Eichinger and Hirschbiegel support this strategy. They release perpetrators and bystanders from guilt.

Mein Führer – Myth of the traumatized child

For the following analysis of the Hitler myth as staged in Dani Levy's film, it is important to see *Mein Führer* as a direct reaction to *Der Untergang*. While Eichinger's and Hirschbiegel's film can be called a melodrama, Levy's approach is what he calls a tragic comedy. In an article he wrote for "Die Welt," Levy explains his approach:

> You have read that *Mein Führer* would try to master the balancing act between reality and grotesque, between comedy and tragedy and would therefore fail. A balancing act, my dear critics, is a question of flexibility. I am tired of having the same discussion about genres again and again. That is a German disease. The audience is much more flexible. Comedy and tragedy, serious thesis and subversive laughter—why shouldn't we be able to cope with both in the same movie? It is not a question of an inability to decide. It is my belief as an artist that the combination of laughter, thought, insecurity, and sympathy offers a complex treatment of the German wound. (Levy)[16]

Levy's film is the first German comedy about Hitler and the Holocaust. Besides the common denominator — Hitler — Levy alludes to the structure of Eichinger's movie, its authentication strategies, and the interactions between the characters. Many of Levy's setups directly parody *Der Untergang,* in order to deconstruct the

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[16] Sie haben gelesen, „Mein Führer" würde den „Spagat" zwischen Realität und Groteske, zwischen Komödie und Tragödie versuchen und dadurch scheitern. Spagat, meine Herren Kritiker, ist eine Frage der Beweglichkeit. Ich bin es müde, immer wieder die gleiche Genrediskussion zu führen. Es ist eine deutsche Krankheit. Die Zuschauer sind da wesentlich beweglicher. Komödie und Tragödie, ernsthafte Thesen und subversives Lachen—warum soll das nicht in einem Film Platz haben? Das hat nichts mit Entscheidungslosigkeit zu tun. Es ist meine künstlerische Überzeugung, dass das Nebeneinander von Denken, Lachen, Verunsicherung und Mitfühlen der nötige komplexe Umgang mit dieser deutschen Wunde ist. (Levy) Translation are my own.

illusion that was built up in Eichinger's and Hirschbiegel's movie. Similar to Der Untergang Levy constructs his impression of Hitler through the interrelation between the Hitler figure, his personal relations and history.

As mentioned before, Eichinger and Fest claimed that they depict the truth about Hitler and his last days in the bunker. This claim of reality is parodied in the title of the Levy movie: "The Truest Truth." Using alliteration and the superlative for describing the "truth" Levy shows that the claim for reality Eichinger and Fest tried to present, is grotesque. In his movie Levy establishes an alternative truth about Hitler: he ironically claims that his "truth" is the real one; it is probably truer than the truth. It also reflects the wish to discover the real truth about Hitler, and to show the audience the private person Hitler as he really was. Since Nazi propaganda tried to hide as much of Hitler's private life as possible, the representations we have of him are all more or less doubtful. We have film material made by the Nazis and testimonies of eyewitnesses — people who were indeed close to Hitler but are not necessarily the most objective and reliable sources. Speer's memories set a good example for a whitewashed version of his personal past. Eyewitnesses sometimes manipulate their testimonies — consciously or unconsciously — to make themselves look better in retrospect.

As in *Der Untergang* the interaction between the staged Hitler figure, his private relations and the staging of the historical events is crucial for the representation of the Hitler myth in *Mein Führer*. Representing the past becomes a crucial narrative structure in *Mein Führer*. Like in *Der Untergang* we have an alleged eyewitness's testimony framing the film. The fictional character Adolf Grünbaum introduces the audience to the film. Through a close-up shot showing

him hidden under a platform on which Hitler is standing, we see his face between

curtains. Blood is slowly running down his face. His voiceover describes the

scenery. He says he will tell us a story so true that no history book will ever report

it. This statement expresses that Grünbaum's and Hitler's story is taking place

outside the common knowledge about the Nazi party, outside of the usual stories

about Nazi Germany. The image of Grünbaum hidden beneath the platform

frames the movie, and so does his testimony. It contrasts with eyewitness Traudl

Junge's experiences in *Der Untergang*. Grünbaum claims to know the truth,

because he had the chance to come close to Hitler. Grünbaum's perspective of the

story can be read as representative of all the stories about Hitler that have never

been told because the people who came too close to Hitler have been silenced.

The close-up of Grünbaum's face includes his bloody spectacles, which are

mentioned in a passage in Rosenbaum's book as a symbol for those who knew too

much and were silenced. We have seen the image of the bloody spectacles too

many times, he writes. They came too close to see the abyss of Hitler's psyche.[17]

They symbolize the idea that many stories about Hitler "got lost," due to efforts

by the Gestapo and other Nazi institutions, so as to keep any outside perspectives

on Hitler bottled up, to silence everyone who could destroy the glorious Hitler

myth. No story could be published that could harm Hitler's image or dismantle

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[17] In his book, Rosenbaum follows the story of journalist Fritz Gerlich, who was close to publishing a story about Hitler and the mysterious dead of Hitler's niece and evadable lover Geli Raubal, who committed suicide in 1931. In his article that was destroyed by the SA storm troopers Gerlich must have been dangerously close to damaging the Hitler myth created by the NSDAP. Gerlich got deported to Dachau and was killed in 1934. After the Gestapo shot Gerlich in his head, they sent the "spectacles, all spattered with blood" to his widow. For Rosenbaum the bloody spectacles therefore became a symbol for a person who has seen too much and hence must be killed. (Rosenbaum, xix/ xx)

the Hitler myth set up by the National Socialist propaganda. As we know, that was one reason why opposition journalists and writers had to leave Germany. If they did not, the Nazi party deported and murdered them. Levy sets up this notion and also reinforces the idea that no testimony that comes out of Hitler's inner circle can depict a complete picture of Hitler. Critical voices had not been allowed. And the inner circle mostly admired Hitler. The justification of having followed Hitler is easier to present when we depict Hitler as a charming, lovely man, rather than a sick and perverted monster. Who would want to admit to following a demon?

Levy makes a clear statement about the problem of staging history in film. The figure of propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels introduces the concept of "staged reality." For Goebbels, it is not about the way the situation really is; it is more about how we can depict it. Berlin was already more or less destroyed by the Allies when Goebbels planned to reconstruct parts of the city with movable walls to cover the damage. With these statements Levy picks up on an important feature of National Socialism – the all-encompassing propaganda machinery – represented here by Goebbels. While this topic is brought up in dialogues and is the carrying motive of the narration, the aesthetic nature of the film also supports the notion of staged reality. Historical footage and footage shot by Levy complement each other. Levy's film illustrates that the Nazis' footage was produced for a purpose and that the material was as staged as their propaganda itself. A cameraman films as the Grünbaums move into the Reichskanzlei. We, the audience, see Grünbaum's family enter into the house. The camera perspective is a long shot. Levy creates a film-in-film situation, since we have a

cameraman in the film filming the arrival of the family. Next to the cameraman

stands Goebbels, as we can see in a parallel montage (*Gegenschnitt*). In contrast

to the normal color film, the cameraman's shots are in black and white and are

supposed to suggest actual footage of the Nazis. The perspectives switch between

the picture the cameraman takes in the film and the normal film perspective. The

shots take the observer's perspective: that of the propaganda minister who

arranged the whole scenery. Levy's set up again is a direct citation of *Der*

Untergang. The cameraman and the camera in Levy's film look exactly the same

as in Eichinger's und Hirschbiegel's movie. It is the same camera model and the

cameraman is wearing almost the same clothes. In the corresponding scene of

Der Untergang Hitler hands out medals to the young child soldiers.[18] The whole

scene gets captured on film, too. This scene elucidates that it is the perpetrator's

perspective through which we are seeing. The camera takes Goebbels'

perspective. These pictures have been taken to serve a certain purpose, one

directed by members of the Nazi party. Instead of using this staging as proof for

historical accuracy, it is used to reveal the perspective that is hidden behind the

footage material. It supports the idea that all film is representation; all footage is

staged. Images can only provide a certain perspective. In this case, the

perspective of the perpetrator.

Furthermore, it reveals the fact that just because a scene is depicted as

historically accurate does not mean the content itself is accurate. The film

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[18]The scene of *Der Untergang* refers to a photograph taken in the last days. That captures the scene elaborated in the movie. So Levy's citation is in fact a citation of a citation.

frequently demonstrates the strategies used to make film material look original. Levy operates with different film material. He uses original footage from the Nazi party, color film material that is obviously his own and material he shot in the style of original footage. In assembling all this material he provides the impression that all these film documents are equally meaningful and informative about the past. Faking this material and putting it into such a context illustrates the problem of showing history in film. The claim of representing the real past is reduced here to absurdity. By demonstrating how film footage can be bent to carry the meaning people want it to, Levy exposes the impossibility of relying on film footage. This is particularly true when we keep in mind that we are talking about the Nazi party, which believed greatly in the power of film and propaganda. In Levy's movie Goebbels names the most important makers of such content: Veit Harland and Leni Riefenstahl. As is so often the case in the history of National Socialism, the Nazis in Levy's film try to manipulate reality and build up lies in order to get their message across—a paradox Levy puts on display in a comedic fashion.

Another important historical aspect Levy includes in his film is the representation of the Holocaust as a part of the concept connected with the Hitler figure. In contrast to Hitler's Nazi world and his shiny superficial appearance, we have the figure of Adolf Grünbaum, who, along with his family, is a fictional character introduced into the story. They represent the victims of the Nazi state. As a result, his character has a conflicting, ambiguous nature. On the one hand, he is a fictional character, and his meetings with Hitler have never taken place. But on the other hand, he represents the very real fate of the deported,

persecuted and killed Jews in Nazi Germany — a historical fact that is more or less ignored in *Der Untergang*. More specifically, it is reduced to a footnote to text shown at the end of the movie.

The different status of these characters is expressed by Grünbaum's external appearance. He is very skinny. He was just released out of the concentration camp — his head is shaved, and his clothes gray and shabby. He lives with his family next to the Reichskanzlei in a barracks-like annex similar to the concentration camp. It is dark and dirty in the annex; there is only a little window in the kitchen. Everything is simple and contrasts greatly with the Reichskanzlei.[19] Grünbaum in this context represents the outside of the Nazi world. It is not the destroyed Berlin, which becomes victimized. The only perspective we get outside of Hitler's office – beside the event of the speech in the very end of the movie – is the concentration camp Sachsenhausen in which Grünbaum is imprisoned. As opposed to *Der Untergang* where the outside world only shows the civilian population of Berlin, Levy shifts this focus to include the victims of the Nazi system. With Grünbaum's arrival at the Nazi headquarter, the displaced and suppressed part of the Nazi world – the suffering of the deported Jews – moves in. The Grünbaum figure provides space for the Nazi elite such as Goebbels and Himmler to unfold their anti-Semitism and their violence. Grünbaum gets abused verbally and physically. Especially Goebbels mingling

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[19]Hitler's world is depicted really colorful. His office is equiped with gigantic furniture. Ironically it is not exaggerated. As Levy points out in an interview as a bonus on the DVD, because of the low budget they were operating with, they used the old requisites of a documentary made about Hitler's regime. The stage designers of this documentary were careful to stick as close to reality as possible. The exaggeration of the setting is therefore not staged by Levy, but by the Nazis.

with him shows the brutal arbitrariness the Nazi system was based on. Hitler's reactions to Grünbaum's experiences in the camp elucidate the idea that Hitler himself did not know what exactly was going on in the camps, or better, he did not want to know. It demonstrates Hitler's ignorance.

The inclusion of the Holocaust seems to be, on the one hand, progress compared to *Der Untergang* but on the other hand it creates the problem of an appropriate depiction of it. The representation of the Holocaust is clearly not the main focus of the movie; it is a subtext presented through the character Grünbaum. Besides introducing an alternative storyline and representing the victims of the Holocaust, the figure Grünbaum has two additional functions. First, he presents, besides all the Nazi characters, an alternative role the viewer can identify with and second, through Grünbaum's perspective on Hitler the audience sees an alternative depiction of Hitler — as a private person. As in Eichinger's movie, the private person Hitler is a matter of interpretation since we have almost no proof of how Hitler was as a private person. The mystification of the Nazi propaganda tried to hide the private person (Atze, 221/222). Similar to Eichinger, Levy fills this gap with his own staging of Hitler in intimate interactions with Braun, Speer, and Grünbaum.

In Levy's movie, the personal interaction between Grünbaum and Hitler becomes the main plot. Like the representation of Hitler, the presence of the Holocaust becomes omnipresent. It is embedded in the comedic interaction between Grünbaum and Hitler. The interaction is reminiscent of a bizarre relationship between a therapist and his patient. As Hitler's trainer, Grünbaum accidentally discovers Hitler's childhood trauma. By opening this repressed

wound, the meetings between Hitler and Grünbaum shift toward therapeutic.

The journey into Hitler's psyche, as funny as it is supposed to be, seems to be

another attempt to excuse or explain Hitler. Levy sees in Alice Miller's analysis of

Hitler's violent childhood a key to understand National Socialism[20]. One reason

the Nazis were able to take over power in Germany, for Levy, is that they shared

the common experience of a violent childhood with Hitler. Levy emphasizes, "the

German folk was looking for its dictator"(Levy, tip Berlin, 32)[21]. While on many

levels Levy tries to deconstruct all the flimsy interpretations of Hitler's persona

Der Untergang provides, he walks right into the trap Alice Miller's interpretation

of the Hitler figure sets up. Instead of presenting the private person Hitler as an

empty character who seems to be inaccessible, he opens up the possibility of

psychoanalyzing him. Instead of deriding the notion of explaining Hitler, Levy

provides us with his own explanation; he offers his own interpretation of the

Hitler myth; the myth of the abused child.

By connecting Hitler's childhood trauma to the mass murder of the

European Jews, Levy provides a more than questionable answer to the question:

Why did the Holocaust happen? This notion is elaborated in an interaction

between Grünbaum and Hitler. Hitler has a nervous breakdown. He is upset and

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[20] Alice Miller traces back in a very controversial book, that Hitler was abused as a child by his father and therefore could not feel empathy.

[21] Miller beschreibt in diesem Kapitel über Hitlers Kindheit den in der Psychoanalyse unzweifelhaften Zusammenhang zwischen dem frühkindlichen Erlebnis von Wilkür, Gewalt und Mitleidlosigkeit under unbewussten, zwanghaften Umkehrung des Erlebten als Erwachsener. [...] Hitler hat mit seiner Biographie und seiner Veranlagung etwas repräsentiert, was im deutschen Volk wiedererkannt wurde. Oder böse gesagt: Das deutsche Volk hat sich seinen Diktator gesucht (Weixbaumer, Zwirner, 32). Translation are my own.

complains about the lack of character his father had because he abused him when he was a defenseless child. Grünbaum compares Hitler's situation to the situation of the persecuted Jews in Germany. He alleges that Hitler is simply reenacting the role of his father.[22] In this construction a visible shift in responsibility takes place. While in *Der Untergang* Hitler seems to be responsible for everything that happened and the bystanders and perpetrators are more or less excused, Levy almost completely pulls responsibility away from Hitler. Instead of a seductive leader, Levy depicts Hitler as a traumatized child.

If Grünbaum would laugh about Hitler's lame excuses, instead of trying to explain them, an unraveling would take place and the absurdity of Hitler's statement would become obvious. But instead, Levy lets Grünbaum function as a moral authority. He allows Grünbaum to analyze the situation and search for an explanation. This is not a comedic moment; it is tragic. By taking Hitler's trauma and its effect on his personality seriously, the audience is provided with a most ridiculous explanation of Hitler's behavior. If we did not know that Levy indeed believes in Alice Miller's explanation it would be hysterical, and it would show how absurd every attempt at explaining Hitler truly is.[23] Harald Martenstein points out that the Alice Miller reference is the movie's only weakness. Next to all the other characters, Hitler becomes the only one into whom we are granted

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[23] Unfortunately Dani Levy points out in an interview with Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, that he believes in the psychoanalytic approach that draws a line between abuse in childhood and inability to emphatize. Adolf Hitler, so Levy, is a phenomenon of his time. He understands "black pedagogy" (schwarze Pädagogik) as an important factor of enabling the politics of destruction (Adorjan).

psychological insight. His character is depicted with a depth no other character is given (Martenstein). Grünbaum's function as Hitler's therapist has an even worse effect. The line between perpetrator and victim seems to blur. Hitler's excuse to Grünbaum that he should not take the "final solution" too personally seems to have rather a bizarre, disturbing effect instead of a comedic one. The potential to reveal the brutality of Hitler's propaganda and its execution does not take place during the interaction between Grünbaum and Hitler. The focus is too strongly on Hitler. While he is pulling off a great show, Grünbaum's character seems to disappear. The potential of this interaction has not been fully utilized, especially because no one before had ever brought a direct victim of the Holocaust and Hitler together. But Levy's set up creates a similarity between these two characters. While Grünbaum is imprisoned, so is Hitler. Hitler seems to have no agency.

While the Hitler figure is depicted in *Der Untergang* as still in charge, Levy's Hitler figure gives only strange orders and no one respects him anymore. He is absolutely powerless. Hitler seems to be trapped in the main setting of the film, the "Reichskanzlei." Goebbels and other officials observe him in his office through a two-way mirror hidden behind a painting. They stage an experiment involving him and Grünbaum and observe the two as if they were guinea pigs. Even when Hitler decides in the middle of the night to go for a ride, his employees hold him back. Goebbels controls Hitler's moves, and the staffers are always consulting Goebbels first before they take Hitler's orders. This imprisonment is a contrast to the myth of the power and control that are deeply connected to the figure Adolf Hitler and was introduced in Eichinger's movie. It

supports the notion of Hitler as a child. He is not able to have control over his personal situation. He can trust nobody. He is alone.

Hitler's loneliness and isolation are supported by the interaction between him and his peers, which is based on lies and mistrust. Hitler keeps secrets from them and they hide their motives and the truth from him. Goebbels' falseness in particular is communicated in all of his actions. Falseness characterizes the way he speaks and the way he interacts with all the other characters. The camera is always focused on his face and gives us a very close depiction of his expression. The way he grins and squints shows that he always has ulterior motives. While in front of Hitler, he appears to be concerned about Hitler's health and state of mind, but behind his back Goebbels plans Hitler's assassination. Again, Levy is picking up on the presentation of a relation between two characters in *Der Untergang*. While Eichinger represents Goebbels as Hitler's absolute supporter, as a person who wishes to die with his boss, Levy depicts Goebbels as a ruthless traitor. Levy's construction once more breaks with the myth that in the Third Reich it was all about Hitler. It shows that the other Nazi members were powerful too. They had their own agenda, while Hitler was more or less a puppet on a string.

Distance from the Hitler figure is not only created by the interaction with the other Nazi characters; the casting of the Hitler impersonator and the deconstruction of traditional Hitler myths also create it. While Bruno Ganz seems to completely merge with the historical figure Adolf Hitler, Helge Schneider's impersonation of the German dictator is very different. Schneider's impersonation of Hitler brings into play what film scholar Robert Stam calls

"thickness of the character"[24] (22); some actors have a reputation and bring this reputation into the performance. By choosing Schneider to play Hitler, Levy builds up the audience's expectations. Schneider is the best-known and most successful German comedian and comedic musician in Germany. His performances on stage, in concert, as an author and as an actor are well known among Germans. When Levy announced that Schneider would play Hitler, the comedy project took on an amusing flavor and heightened the popularity of the film. The audience expects to see something extraordinary when Helge Schneider takes on the leading role.

While Ganz merged with his role and was hardly recognizable as the person he is, Schneider, even under layers of makeup, was always identifiable as the comedian figure he is. His language and his moves identified him. In the scene in which Hitler and Eva Braun have a rendezvous, the musical approach of Helge Schneider films and his stage performance is represented: They sit together to watch some films Braun recorded on her camera. While the original footage plays in the background on a screen, Hitler musically accompanies the films by playing an electronic organ. The song he plays consists of corny phrases ("Without love, life is a vacuum") combined with the melody of a popular hit song. This style is representative of Schneider's songs. And by singing out of tune he distorts the songs' supposedly romantic character; the atmosphere becomes

[24] Stam points out, that "no medium [...] really gives us direct access to a character, they do give us some the forms of signification to that medium [...]. Each medium deploys significant traces to trigger a sense of the character in the mind of the reader or spectator." For Stam a character on screen gains "an automatic 'thickness' though bodily presence, posture, dress and facial expression" (22).

grotesque. In this way, Schneider himself is omnipresent in the movie. There is

no way to entertain the idea that Hitler might have been the way Schneider

represents him. The staging is always obvious. As in the depiction of Hitler in

pop cultural cartoons, the attempt to create and alienate the "original" is always

present.

The character's outfit carries on the deconstruction of the usual Nazi

depiction. While Ganz is always dressed in a uniform or a plain suit, Levy is more

creative in dressing Hitler. Aside from a uniform or a suit, we see Hitler wearing a

yellow jumpsuit and urine-soaked pajamas. These are representation strategies

that break out of the usual iconography of the Nazis and detach the Hitler figure

from conventional depictions. Levy distances himself from usual Nazi symbols to

present us with his own interpretation of Hitler, always making clear that this is a

new creation. He even goes so far as to deconstruct the classic visual depiction of

Hitler: The hairdresser unintentionally cuts off half of the "Führer's" mustache.

Hitler insists that he cannot speak in front of the German nation without his

mustache. The mustache is Hitler's facial trademark. It is obvious that without

the mustache, Hitler looks like any random guy. Therefore, any other random guy

can look like Hitler with the right mustache. The arbitrariness of who can

represent Hitler becomes obvious at that moment. Playing with these usually

strongly limited conventional strategies creates most of the movie's comic

situations.

Levy constructs parallels between interpersonal relationships and the

perception of Hitler through the eyes of a woman in *Der Untergang* and *Mein

Führer*. Levy repeats and reinvents confrontations and relations between Hitler

and his surrounding society in his movie and picks up scenes and meetings from *Der Untergang* to parody them. In both movies we see Hitler interacting with his party members and his German shepherd Blondie. And we see Hitler's relations with women, such as his fiancée Eva Braun. Levy uses these clashes to contrast Eichinger's image of Hitler with his own, and to expose the notion hidden behind this situation. In other words, *Der Untergang* shows interaction between Hitler and Eva that no one can verify, since both of them died before World War II was over. Therefore, this scene was imagined. There is no testimony on Braun and Hitler's intimate meetings. There is no proof of Hitler being sensitive to her. By introducing his own imagination of what intimacy between Braun and Hitler might have looked like, Levy caricatures the relationship between the two that has been presented by Hirschbiegel and Eichinger.

Braun, who was Hitler's fiancée, provides the female perspective on him. Her role in the overall depiction is minor, but the scene in which she and Hitler are trying to have sexual intercourse is crucial. Not only is Hitler shown as impotent, —Eva is pointing out that she cannot feel him ("Ich spür' Sie nicht, mein Führer!") — but the strangeness of their relationship is revealed too. For the entirety of this scene, both characters use the formal you ("Sie", "Machen Sie schon") to address each other. The use of the formal you creates a distance between them. This insurmountable distance is enhanced by the fact that both are dressed during their attempt to have sexual intercourse. Hitler is still wearing his pajamas. While Hitler is trying to penetrate Eva, the camera moves to her ankle, and we can see his distorted face in a medium shot. We see, alternately, a close-up shot of Eva's disgusted facial expression and a long shot of Hitler

moving desperately up and down on top of Eva. In this scene, we see a Hitler who

is not at all able to seduce. He fails to have intercourse, and he fails to win her

over, too. The whole atmosphere is laughable. We see no familiarity between

Hitler and Braun. What we do see is awkwardness. Their relationship is

illustrated as a weird farce. In Levy's depiction, Hitler has no charming effect on

Eva. Levy's depiction of Hitler's inability to be a sensitive lover completely breaks

away from the "seductive leader myth" created by Eichinger, Fest, and

Hirschbiegel. Instead of being represented as the lovely partner, Hitler is

depicted as an uptight, insecure, and impotent person.

Another factor that makes Hitler appear human and friendly is his

relationship to his German Shephard Blondie. While we see Hitler in *Der*

Untergang having a caring relationship to Blondie, Levy continues the depiction

of this uncommon friendship. But in his depiction Blondie becomes a disturbing

factor. No one likes the dog, and the dog does not like Hitler. Hitler's clumsiness

and inability to interact with anyone is emphasized even more. The notion of

Hitler being a weird loner is exposed even more. Hitler's emotional outbursts do

not seem to be angry and aggressive; rather they appear as childish, and they

articulate helplessness in this figure. He has no friends. No one respects him or

cares about him—not even the dog. Instead of barking, when Grünbaum knocks

out Hitler, the dog pees on Hitler.

Through his attempt to capture the phenomenon of Hitler and National

Socialism in a humorous and grotesque way, Levy puts himself alongside

successful directors such as Ernst Lubitsch, Charlie Chaplin, and Mel Brooks.

Michael D. Richardson suggests in his article "'Heil myself!': Impersonation and

Identity in Comedic Representations of Hitler" that the imitation of Hitler can create an attack of Hitler. This attack on the mythos of Hitler can help us control this figure (279-80). Indeed, the comedic approach to staging the Hitler figure opens up a broad range of possibilities for Levy. The self-representation of the Nazi party, with all their symbols and rituals, invites a parody, just as much as Hitler's way of giving speeches. Levy successfully breaks from traditional depictions of the Nazis and reveals their ridiculousness. By introducing a comedic approach, Levy brought in a refreshing perspective on the Hitler ghost that haunts us in contemporary film. It is not Hitler who is funny or scary anymore, but his constant reinvention. Joachim Paech points out that jokes about Hitler make visible his contradictory nature (Paech, 78). But by putting Hitler into the spotlight of his tragicomedy Levy not only brings out Hitler's own contradictions and the ambiguity of the Nazis, but also the dubiousness of depictions of Hitler in contemporary film. By introducing the Holocaust into the interaction he shows the ambivalent way people have dealt with this topic. In more than one scene, especially during the interaction between Grünbaum and Hitler, the line between tact and dark humor fades. The Holocaust becomes a conversation topic between the Nazis and Grünbaum. Levy's Hitler apologizes to his Jewish victim for the unpleasantness of the deportation and tries to talk himself out of responsibility for these decisions. Or consider when Goebbels asks Grünbaum in which concentration camp he was imprisoned. Grünbaum answers, "Sachsenhausen." Goebbels seems to be surprised and tells Grünbaum that he thought that they had put him in the "good camp," the Theresienstadt ghetto. Humor in this context embeds information about the camp system of the National Socialist

world. To understand this "joke" Goebbels makes, knowledge of the Nazis' concentration camp and ghetto strategy is required.[25] This scene depicts the absurdity of the Nazi ideology at its best and brings out an understanding of the deceitfulness of the Nazi leaders.

But to me the introduction of Hitler's psychological insight creates a problematic treatment. On one hand we should be able to laugh about Hitler, but on the other hand Hitler is depicted as a victim of his father. The Alice Miller interpretation and the staging of Hitler as an abused child unfortunately encourage audiences to empathize with Hitler. Through Grünbaum's eyes Levy tries to show us "the private Hitler." And this is where he falls prey to a fallacy: It is impossible to depict the private person Hitler. This whole notion of the defenseless child only supports Levy's idea that Hitler was not as powerful and strong as he appeared, that he was just a pitiful creature. The myth of the abused child Levy is staging has the side effect that Hitler's responsibility for all his cruelties seems to fade. As in Eichinger's movie, Levy presents his own interpretation of how Hitler really was. To me this attempt is as suspect as the attempts established by *Der Untergang* since it almost comes across as an excuse. Hitler might have been abused, but there is no proof that this made him the terrible dictator he was. And since there is no explanation for the personality of Hitler and his Nazi followers, there is no explanation for the Holocaust. As the

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[25] Theresienstadt was seen as the "model-ghetto," the ghetto that was even inspected by the Red Cross during World War II. In order to deceive the inspector of the Red Cross the Nazis renovated parts of this ghetto temporarily; they re-constructed reality for a day.

French director Claude Lanzmann points out, in referring to the Shoah, "There is no why" (Lanzmann, 52). And the same should be said of Hitler: There is no why.

Conclusion

The press reactions to the two very different movies, *Der Untergang* and *Mein Führer,* show that it is still problematic and controversial to depict Hitler in a feature film. The critics formulate their concerns across the different genres. While in *Der Untergang* they focus on the problem of identification, in *Mein Führer* they find the belittlement of Hitler problematic. In both cases the representation of history is a major point of criticism.

As I pointed out in referring to Barthes' understanding of myth, the signification originates from an interplay between the representation of the form and the concept that is set in relation to it. Once more it becomes obvious that a depiction of Hitler is never simply about Hitler. He might be the focus, but the specific arrangement of historical facts and figures around him reveal a statement. In both films, Hitler is the center of attention. All occurrences are connected with him. The audience's attention is focused on his persona. It is his personality that has most space to develop. It appears in both movies that everything else is just happening to support the filmmaker's intended image of Hitler. The circumstances seem to explain why Hitler was the way he was. In his review of *Der Untergang* Jens Jessen raises the question of what we can tell about the real thoughts and feelings of Hitler? Are these movies helping us to

understand Hitler better? Or are they only providing us with the filmmaker's interpretation of Hitler's personality?

A film about Hitler – regardless of the genre – always creates a myth, even if the intention – much like that of Levy's film – is to dismantle a myth. Every depiction of Hitler that involves an intense portrayal sets up a counter myth. As long as these films continue to follow narrative strategies that focus on the human emotions of Hitler and provide a space for the audience to identify with Hitler, there exists a danger of eliciting an empathetic response. This empathetic response seeks to create understanding, as if we could now see why Hitler was the way he was or why he did the things he did. But Ron Rosenbaum points out the attempt to explain Hitler must fail because there cannot be any satisfying explanation. We do not have any access to Hitler as a private person. The interlude between the staging of Hitler himself and the representation of history opens up space for interpretation. This interpretation is unable to display any historical accuracy based on fact. Since filmmaking is a selective process it can only provide us with an interpretation of these facts. It tells us more about the purpose of the filmmaker than it does about Hitler.

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