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Aesthetics and politics of fascism: West German women filmmakers in the nineteen seventies

Weinberger, Gabriele W., Ph.D.
The Ohio State University, 1988
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AESTHETICS AND POLITICS OF FASCISM:
WEST GERMAN WOMEN FILMMAKERS IN THE NINETEEN SEVENTIES.

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of the Ohio State University

By

Gabriele W. Weinberger, M.A.

*****

The Ohio State University

1988

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VITA

April 21, 1954 . . . . . . . . . . . . Born - Passau, West Germany

1980 . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Staatsexamen, English & French
University Regensburg, West
Germany

1982 . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . M.A., German, The Ohio State
University

Field of Study: German
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INTRODUCTION

A film about the past is a film for the future.

Erwin Leiser

That fascism lives on; that the much quoted coming-to-terms with the past was unsuccessful until today and degenerated to its caricature, the empty and cold forgetfulness, is due to the fact, that the objective social conditions which brought about fascism, have not ceased to exist.

Theodor W. Adorno "What does "coming-to-terms with the past" mean."

What can be written about, is overcome.

Anna Seghers

Since Germany's defeat in 1945 the myth of a 'point zero' (Nullpunkt), a new beginning, in cultural life and especially literature is commonplace. Contrary to its reappearance in many literary histories, the fallacy of this perceived break-off point and fresh start after the total defeat soon becomes obvious to any reader of post-1945 German literature, since virtually all narrative literature as well as films share the reference to the Third Reich in one way or another.

The postulation of a "zero situation" -- the belief that National Socialism had come to an end utterly and finally with the fall of Hitler's regime as suddenly as it appeared to have arisen -- this mandate of the "new beginning" has been made innumerable times
over the last 40 years down to President Reagan's memorable visit in Bitburg on the anniversary of the capitulation of the fascist terror regime on May 8, 1985 when president Richard von Weizsäcker addressed the combined assembly of the Bundestag and Bundesrat by saying "There was no point zero; rather we had the opportunity to start anew." The fact that not the end of the war but indeed the "Währungsreform" in 1948 stayed in the Germans' consciousness as Stunde Null points to the problems of the new German society and its ways of coming to terms with the unassimilated Nazi past.

After the defeat of the National-Socialist power, the Allies implemented programs of denazification and re-education. Impressed by the Nazi regime's conspicuously successful exploitation of motion pictures, the press, and radio for war propaganda, the Allied forces began to produce their own films as part of these programs. The directive No. 1067 of the Joint Chiefs of Staff contained the five basic goals: the suppression of all forms of militarism, the denazification of the population, the dismantling of German industry, inculcation in the German people the idea of collective guilt for war crimes, and finally the strict prohibition of fraternization between occupation troops and local inhabitants. After the first phase (German movie theaters showed the first of these newsreels on May 18, 1945, only ten days after the capitulation), the Long Range Policy Statement of June 1946 initiated a second phase of the re-education policy in which the emphasis shifted from incriminations of collective guilt to the need to rebuild the country. Thus the goals of re-education and
denazification — the impossible task of eradicating an ideological
perversion by a population which themselves had not yet begun to
fully understand — were rather quickly put aside as the fronts of
the Cold War began to form and the population of the Western zones
had to prepare for the "reacceptance into the family of peaceful
nations." As Bob Dylan sarcastically commented in one of his songs
on this Western alliance, which put Germany under the wings of
protection, "They slaughtered 6 million, in their ovens they fried,
but the Germans now, too, have God on their side." The peaceful
Western Allies saw fit to give Germany an important role in their
new cold war against the communist system through its assigned role
in the defense of Europe. The extreme limitations of the
denazification efforts become clear in Friedrich Kahlenberg's
account:

Meanwhile a rising number of older German films were passing
the sometimes all too formal criteria of the military
government censorship boards and were being re-released for
distribution. The German film industry had produced over
1,300 feature films and full length documentaries in the years
of the Third Reich, and by August 1948 the Allies had approved
all but 454 titles for public showing. After the founding of
the Federal Republic, the film officers of the Allied High
Commission reduced the list of forbidden films to 270.
Interestingly enough, a series of feature films made in the
UFI (sic!) studios in winter 1944/45 were shown from 1947 to
1949, with minor changes and no further objections from the
The fact that these films, Nazi tools to distract and divert the people during the final phase of the war, were considered by the occupying powers to be harmless, indicates a growing dissociation from the original re-education concept. The Americans led this movement among the Western Allies in another aspect:

The Americans turned out to be the most broad-minded of the occupying powers; from 1946 on they had a far more liberal policy of allowing actors and film-makers to return to their profession than the other three powers. This established a noticeable continuity of personnel in the Federal Republic during the first ten years of its existence.5

After an initial effort to confront the German population with the atrocities of their war crimes in films like Death Mills (1945) about the concentration camps and Nuremberg and Its Lesson (1946) -- from which the majority of Germans who considered themselves "unpolitical" could easily dissociate themselves as the actions of a handful of murderers, the films stressed reconstruction and normalization.

The early years of the Federal Republic through the Adenauer era and the mid-sixties were characterized by the effort to pick up the pieces and rebuild West Germany with the help of the Marshall plan, the Berlin airlift and Germany's place in the European Defense Community. In the West, the new democratic ideology functioned as a barrier that encouraged a psychological dissociation from the war and the holocaust (as socialism did in the Eastern German occupation
zone, which posited itself as the anti-fascist German Nation as if all the fascists had miraculously been in what became after the end of the Third Reich the Western occupied zones). Clinical psychological studies of the sixties, however, showed evidence of the deep irrational anxieties and guilt feelings arising from the subconsciousness of patients over thirty; the repressed memories of the fascist past were seeking forms of expression hidden under the surface of seemingly stable, productive lives.

The dominant trait underlying the discourse on German history of this first paradigm up to about 1969 is repression, evidenced in a number of different ways in both film and literature: a) reduction of Fascism to the figureheads and institutions like the military, youth organizations, etc.; b) division into Nazis and innocent Germans, good, unpolitical victims of their own state; c) overabundance of adaptations of earlier literature in postwar films, as well as sentimental Heimat and pseudo-historical films, cf. the Sissi series.

In this first paradigm, blame for what had been allowed to happen often was placed on figureheads like Hitler and a handful of high ranking Nazi officials as well as institutions like the military, the church and school, whereas the "little man" of the lower middle classes, actually the foremost class in support of the Nazis, appears as victim. Böll in his 1953 Und sagte kein einziges Wort attacked the Catholic Church. Rolf Hochhuth accused the Roman Catholic Church and especially Pope Pius XII in Der Stellvertreter (1963).
Whereas the films *The Life of Adolf Hitler* (1961) by Paul Rotha and Erwin Leiser's *Mein Kampf* (1960) were produced outside of Germany, West German film production featured on the one side a majority of films carefully chosen both for their escapist value and on the other side a form of Vergangenheitsbewältigung, which is described by Furhammer and Isaksson in their book about *Politics and Film*. The following paragraph succinctly characterizes its nature and I will therefore quote it in its full length:

After the mid-fifties, the West German film industry began to tackle subjects from the Nazi era with a growing sense of commitment. These films were not critical and soulsearching but more like comforting new versions of history in which all Germans turned out to have been good anti-Nazis, so that the burden of guilt for Nazi crimes was placed entirely on a few influential psychopaths who had been put away for good; professional military honour and the decency of ordinary citizens were shown to have had nothing whatever to do with politics. The rehabilitation of the espionage chief Canaris in *Canaris* (1954), Helmut Käutner's film on air-force general Udet (*Der Teufels General* - The Devil's General, 1954), Paul May's burlesque series about *08/15* (1954-55) and G.W.Papst's *Es geschah am 20.Juli* (The Jackboot Mutiny, 1955) are among the films which offered German audiences moral as well as military rationalisations. These films are nearly always set in a military environment during the final phase of the war, and convey the impression that German soldiers - and officiers
in particular - were all men of honour who were to blame
neither for the crimes nor for the catastrophic outcome of the
war. It was Hitler and the other lunatics who lost the war for
Germany.6

In the second category named above, typically the works draw a clear
line between the guilty ones, the fascists, and the innocent, often
victimized characters. The protagonist in Wolfgang Borchert’s
Draußen vor der Tür is a simple German soldier, the victim of the
war. Unable to reintegrate into society, he puts the blame on the
officer. At the same time, the play even contains anti-Semitic
slurs. In some of Böll’s short stories from the collection
Wanderer, kommst du nach Spa.. (written between 1947 and 1950) a
returning soldier, barely older than a schoolboy, is physically and
psychically shattered. The guilt lies in an anonymous power or in
institutions. The individual person carries no responsibility for
what happened.

A special form of the filmic discourse on German history is
the abundance of literary adaptations in post war West Germany.
Helmut Käutner’s 1956 version of Carl Zuckmayer’s Der Hauptmann von
Köpenick speaks for the repressive, ahistoric character of German
society in 1956 through its representation of the author’s social
satire as an unpolitical comedy.

A later example of the same paradigm is Volker Schlöndorff’s
Young Törless (Der junge Törless, 1966), the work that initiated the
rise of Young German Film.7 The dialectics of victim and
victimizer are central to this film. Based on Robert Musil’s novel
of 1906, Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törless, this study of young cadets in an Austrian military academy portrays the predispositions that became dominant structures during the Third Reich. Young Törless can thus be seen as a very oblique contribution to the German "coming to terms with the past." The camera forces the viewer to witness the sadistic brutalizing of the Jewish cadet Basini and he watches Törless observing the violence. Whereas Törless is not only tolerating the victimization, but actively taking advantage of the victim, the viewer is put in the position of the powerless onlooker who accepts the violence as part of the social environment, the military academy. The indifferent, distant, and troubled Törless is a victim of the institution which made him a victimizer. This is emphasized by the composition of the first and the last scene: in the beginning, the still innocent young boy is separated for the first time from his mother, who in the end takes him back to escape from the institution to the intact values of her world - not in the train of the corrupt modern times which we saw in scene one out in the middle of barren fields, but in the enclosed protective space of her horse-drawn carriage, riding through the old town.

After initial raves, these kinds of historically-minded works by liberal humanists have become the object of scepticism and attack, especially during the years 1969-1974, which mark a second paradigm. In the period from 1966 to 1976 the fewest films on the Third Reich were made. The years of the student opposition with its affectation of the "cultural revolution" at long last saw a change
in government from the Conservative Christian Democrats/Christian Social Union to the Social Democrat/Liberal Coalition under Willy Brandt. Under the Social-Democratic government of Willy Brandt, the discourse focused on the key role of large industry and a number of important families (e.g. Krupp, Henkel). Documentary literature like Günther Wallraff’s *Industriereportagen* exposed the power and involvement of the present industrial leaders in Nazi Germany and destroyed the myth of a newborn innocent West German society. In the new democracy, men like Filbinger of Baden-Württemberg were welcome in leading positions despite their having been prominent figures as judges, etc., during the Nazi regime. Once confronted with accusations about his past by the media, Filbinger showed no consciousness of any wrong doing. Baudrillard suggested that in times when people are living "in step with history" (when they are evidently taking part in a revolutionary process) they do not need "retro-scenarios", and that conversely, in times when society has frozen into rigidity, the cinema will turn to history for its subject matter. During the late sixties and early seventies, in step with leftist discourse, the analysis in the historical mainstream focused on Nazi figures still in power positions of German industry and social and political institutions.

A decisive turn away from this discourse, which singled out a few culprits, can be found finally in the third paradigm since about 1974: that of the "new subjectivity" of private family histories, which is tied to the issue of national identity and the discourse of a new patriotism. Whereas earlier literature had gotten essential
political impulses from the installation of the Bundeswehr, the spectacular trials of Nazi criminals (e.g. Eichmann) and successes of neo-Nazi parties like von Thadden's NPD, in the mid to late seventies Germany was swept by questions of national identity. During these years, school authorities in Hessen decided to do away with history as a school subject and instead only offer a combination of geography and social studies. The events of fall 1977 - the abduction and killing of Hans Martin Schleyer, the hijacking of the Lufthansa flight in Mogadishu and the deaths of the terrorist leaders in the maximum security Stammheim prison - called for a "historical" explanation. The film theoretician/director Alexander Kluge wrote about that fall of 1977:

The deadly catastrophe has caused many people suddenly to remember again. The events didn't have much to do with "war", but people associated with them "1945" and "war". It is no coincidence, that the emotions have been stirred which seek to know about Germany's history that appears in this fashion.¹⁰

A team of ten West German filmmakers tried to produce a counter public-sphere in their film Germany in Autumn. In his part of the montage film, Rainer Werner Fassbinder exposes his own helplessness and his egocentricity, on the one hand accusing Germany of not having learned anything from its past by pointing a finger at criminalization of all leftist people, denunciation etc., while on the other hand perpetuating fascist modes of behavior in his own private (and to a point, professional) sphere. He became the
epitome of the German postwar generation that has come of age as the victimized turned victimizer. His mother's voice in the argument, "What we need is a morally good dictator," represents the older generation's unassimilated memories of the past, the typical popular memory of Hitler as the benefactor who at one point went crazy. Through the discussion between mother and son as well as Fassbinder's relationship with his lover Arnim, the spectator is faced with the repressed contradictions of postwar German history. "Any present time is characterized by the images synchronistic with it: every "now" is the "now" of a specific recognizability. In it, truth is filled with time to the limit of capacity." According to Anton Kaes, that is what this film tries to do, thus "salvage the dialectical image of the past in the present, the truth of this unique constellation of past and present." During the mid to late seventies there was a correspondingly deeper sense of disappointment when hopes for a transformation of social consciousness were frustrated, especially since anarchic terrorism and bureaucratic overreaction came to dominate the scene by the mid-seventies. The state's extremely defensive and repressive reaction had caused a profound sense of alienation, futility and cultural malaise, especially in the young generation, the sons and daughters of those who had experienced the fascist regime. In his seminal study on this "lost generation", Michael Schneider traces the phenomena of crippled energy, courage and capacity to hope. Schneider analyzes this generation's utopian phantasies and its ability to transform creatively social
relationships back to their fathers' fascist experience and its
displaced effect on the sons: the defeated, latently depressive
sense of life.\textsuperscript{13} It resulted in a number of autobiographical
works, all written within a very short period.

However, the new German feminism, which had formed in the late
sixties and early seventies when many male leftist intellectuals
showed signs of a burnout, flourished in numerous activities, in
journalistic as well as literary publications and in a great number
of films. Many of these films were major productions which
successfully competed in Europe and in the East with those of their
male counterparts. After the NBC mini-series \textit{Holocaust} had aired on
West German television, some of the Young German filmmakers saw an
opportunity to gain worldwide attention (i.e., in the U.S.) and to
finally open a truly international, American market for their
works. As Edgar Reitz, one of the initiators of the Young German
Film movement, put it:

\begin{quote}
If German films are to make use of what is their last chance
internationally, they must come to terms with their Nazi
past. Our generation is the only one that can deal with the
period at all, for we can drop the whole moral burden, we were
never Nazis. We can tell the story of 1940 with open
eyes.\textsuperscript{14}"
\end{quote}

Reitz set out to work for five years on his film history, the 15 1/2
hour mammoth work \textit{Heimat}, which was released as an eleven part TV
series in 1984. Riding on the wave of its international success,
Bernhard Sinkel, two years later, finished his 7 1/2 hour film
Fathers and Sons. The flashy 18 million Mark color TV production was financed with American, French, Italian, and German money and starred Burt Lancaster and Julie Christie. The film describes the rise and fall of a German industrialist's family. Out of this clan one family member is singled out as the corrupt man whose exaggerated strive for power and business success are to blame for the development of Cyclone B gas which was then used in Auschwitz to gas the Jews. Sinkel worked four years to create this film with which he intended to counter Hans-Jürgen Syberberg's gothic Nazi-romantic film Hitler, but which the media announced as a German Dallas or Dynasty.

Quite in contrast to the ambitious and often pretentious works by these male directors, the women directors focused their inquiry on what went on in everyday life under the Nazis, in their personal and emotional sphere. Some of the women directors attempted to inquire into the various psychological effects which the fascist political environment had on personality development. Whereas the post-1945 realism debates concerning the representation of Fascism reflect the barriers vis-à-vis this topic, the new subjectivity seemed to open up new possibilities to deal with the issues.

To understand the far-reaching implications of this development, a clarification of the term "new subjectivity" is due. Breaking away from the marxist discourse of their male Mitstreiter in the student movement, the feminists claimed the political relevance of subjective reality, questioning the voice of authority:
The seeming legitimacy of an "I" which speaks for the entire society, as it has again and again been postulated by the traditional as well as the avant-garde literature, perpetuates male privileges and control, by defining and controlling that which is not identical, by excluding women as an opposition or regarding them as an appendage to man, by constructing and controlling discourses about women and by speaking from a depersonalized position of authority which claims to be gender-neutral.16

This "de-personalized, seemingly gender-neutral position of authority" is a phenomenon that characterizes in particular postwar Germany, as newspaper and magazine articles (e.g. Der Spiegel) in many cases do not disclose the name of the author. As the identity of the author is withheld, the impression of spreading absolute truth or a common knowledge is created. The individual hides behind the authority of a publication. The nameless author assumes the authority of a national voice which stands for us all. The feminists undertook it to dismantle the voices of male authority by offering their own individual subjective views. In the seventies, disillusionment had left some male authors paralyzed into speechlessness or motivated works which express their existential emptiness, their hopelessness in the face of this life in Germany, or more globally the absurdity of life in the postmodern 20th-century. At that time a number of women authors, filmmakers, critics etc. refused the male authors' authority and claimed their own experiences and needs:
... Together, writing, reading and making women's experiences and needs a critical political issue not only questions the socio-economic and psycho-sexual conditions of our oppression, but rather they also question the ability of existing literature, political theories and organizational forms to deal with concerns regarding the connections between sexuality, identity and oppression.17

In their search for new self-images, a critical look at the old ones proved to be inevitable. In this context all expressions of self and the world, language and images alike, at first became worthless as:

> insight .... that our personal language cannot simply free us from the ideological restraints of our society; as we begin by speaking in the forms through which these restraints are also expressed.18

As part of this effort to find their own identity, the women set out to learn about their own history. The avant-garde feminist new subjectivity on the one hand held the promise to fulfill the great need of the Germans to find their individual identity, and consequently it was appropriated by mainstream artists to serve as an instrument in their search for national identity.19 Films - more than any other media - held the highest promise as far as their potential as a contribution to the process of coming to terms with the past. As Bruno Fischli explains:

> ... if we are to understand the rise to power of the National Socialists, their establishment and increasing stabilization
of their power we must look more than anything at the everyday lives of ordinary people; these were emotionally strongly organized in and under the National Socialists. Precisely the depiction of emotion is the main field in which the cinema operates — the cinema is there to tell a story, arouse feelings and reactions and depict them. Its strength lies where other means of presentation fail. Insofar it can make a very special and fundamental contribution to the process of coming to terms with the past.\textsuperscript{20}

From the mid seventies to the early eighties, the legacy of this Fascist past in present day Germany, how it affected the young generation and what traces it left in this new democratic society which is deemed the "most liberal nation on the face of this earth"\textsuperscript{21} by many of its citizens, has become the subject of many debates led by intellectuals, theoreticians and social critics. Reinhard Koselleck's thoughts on the presence of the past and its reflections in today's society and individuals are exemplary for this new discourse on Fascism:

A history dissolves in its effects. At the same time it transcends its effects in certain situations. Because the effects themselves change, without history ceasing to instigate these effects.\textsuperscript{22}

These words point both at the complexity of the problem of history as part of the future, and the importance of this task in this specific instance of German history. In other words:

Coming to terms with Fascism, or attempting to understand or
analyze it ...means coming to terms with, or attempting a critical analysis, of present-day Germany."²³

While Alexander Kluge still philosophizes about history in his 1985 film The Blind Director and his writings published in Aesthetik und Kommunikation 53/54,²⁴ the revisionist historians led by Ernst Nolte and Andreas Hillgruber have raised their questions more loudly than ever following the fortieth anniversary of the capitulation. The political events of the last few years, such as Reagan's visit in Bitburg in 1985, the Waldheim election in Austria and the extreme reactions of the conservative West German regime to the killings of two police officers in the course of demonstrations²⁵ have made the renewed relevance and urgency of the above demand or even its failure so far very clear.
Notes

1 Translation of these quotes by G.W.


4 Kahlenberg 5.

5 Kahlenberg 4.


8 In Musil's book the boy is not Jewish, but illegitimate.

9 Bruno Fischli, "Coming to Terms with the Past in Film," The Third Reich in the Films of the Federal Republic of Germany.


11 Walter Benjamin in his *"Passagen-werk"*, 570.


16 Evelyn Torton Beck/Biddy Martin, "Westdeutsche Frauen-
literatur der siebziger Jahre." in Deutsche Literatur in der Bundes-
republik seit 1965. eds. Paul Michael Lützeler and Egon Schwarz,

17 Eva Hiller, "müter und töchter. Zu "deutschland,
bleiche mutter" (hsb), hungerjahre (jb), daughter rite (mc)." Frauen

18 Evelyn Torton Beck/Biddy Martin (see note 16 above) 147.

19 See e.g. Edgar Reitz, Heimat.

20 Fischli n. pag.

21 quoted from Benedikt Martin Gregg, president of the
West German Police Union; n.a. "Diese Morde verändern alles." Der
Spiegel, Jhg. 41, 46, nov. 9, 1987, 28.

22 Reinhart Koselleck. "Terror und Traum. Methodologische
Anmerkungen zu Zeiterfahrungen im Dritten Reich." in Vergangene
Zukunft. Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten. FFM: Suhrkamp Verlag,
1979, 282.

23 Klaus Volkenborn; quoted from Fischli n. pag.

24 In the books co-authored with Oskar Negt Öffentlichkeit
und Erfahrung and Geschichte und Eigensinn he offers a theory of
counter history.

25 Spiegel-Titel (no author) "Wir machen Rambo auf
German democratic state becomes obvious through the reactions of the
administration to the murder of two police officiers by masked,
armed men who mixed in with a crowd of demonstrators, the most
recent incident in a history of demonstrations in which both sides
use violence. Whereas the press speaks of a "a decisive historical turn" and evaluates "the coldblooded murder as the ultimate consequence of the politicizing militant attitude, as perversion of our right to assemble freely," the West German Chancellor Kohl used the Nazi terms "absonderlich und abartig" (degenerate and perverse), and the Bavarian secretary of the Interior Peter Gauweiler announces the formation of a special policetroop which he terms "Greiftrupps."
Beyond the Private Sphere:

Political implications of Motherhood in *Germany, Pale Mother*

I. The Visual Code of Representation in *Germany, Pale Mother*.

The first twelve shots of *Germany, Pale Mother* display on black background in small white print Berthold Brecht's poem "Germany" written in 1933 in exile. Concurrently we hear a dramatic reading by Brecht's daughter Hanne Hiob. This prologue draws the programatic connection between the fascist past and today's generation of the daughters. Apart from being a comment on the political situation till 1933, the poem reads like a prophecy of the worst bloodshed of the Holocaust yet to come.

In the late sixties and throughout the seventies, the outrage of the generation of sons and daughters like Sanders-Brahms about Germany's persistence in favoring some of its "sons" (e. g. old Nazi judges still serving in Germany's courts until today) and scorning those who Brecht had honored as its best (those who went into exile to flee the fascist regime were called traitors when they returned -- e.g. Willy Brandt) reached its climax. Brecht's poem is more than a historic poem -- it is emblematic of German history since the
start of fascism. The outcry contained in these lines is renewed by
the leftist discourse of the seventies, which the filmmaker
integrates. The poem divides Germany into those who suffer and
those who inflict suffering. It serves to provide not so much a
historical but a cultural context: the male dominated discourse in
which woman only serves as allegory. Sanders-Brahms

"... begins by acknowledging her inheritance of a cultural
tradition in which woman has been made the carrier of
ideological meaning even when politically her importance has
been denied; Victory, Justice, Patria appear in the figure of
woman even when actual women have been disenfranchised as
citizens. With the title of her film and the prefatory Brecht
poem, Sanders-Brahms clearly places herself within this
cultural tradition."1

In the film she sets out to dismantle the patriarchal allegorical
structures. "By revealing the specifics which the symbols at once
refer to and, in so doing, hide from view, she exposes the symbols
as ultimately hollow, meaningless in themselves."2

The establishing shot of the narrative part of the film (the
fascist flag) ostensibly roots the story within the political frame
of its time. The flag's reflection in the water marks the movie as
the retrieval of a sunken past. As writing history will always be a
subjective enterprise despite all claims of objectivity, this
personal look back at the filmmaker's private history is not a
direct one, not a clear mirror image, but one that contains the
multiple distortions of the water's rippled surface. The director's
voice-over commentary points out her story's limitations as memory and her own personal re-construction. Whereas Alexander Kluge, building on the therapeutic effect of construction, despite his belief that memory cannot be recovered, sees his films as construction sites, Sanders-Brahms constructs memory through the attempt to retrieve her beginnings. Her digging for history aims at the emotional and psychological experiences of women, what the war meant for them in those terms. The filmmaker allows her memory to be emotionally guided rather than using objectively and impersonally general criteria like "what did you achieve?" or "how far did you go?", etc. In voice-over the director states her own innocence in what had happened in the war. Guilt is not an issue in this work, neither that of the parents nor a possible guilt of the young generation. The film is about who and what the people became as a result of their being part of fascist history. Germany, Pale Mother is located in the nowhere land of the personal, historical space between the crimes and the innocent pictures of the family photo album. Whereas the liberating effect that war had on women is well known and has been documented, the women's "postwar readjustment, unlike that of the returning soldiers, was not talked about in public." The director emotionally brings her mother's experiences closer, takes the subject out of the taboo zone and allows these experiences to become palatable.

The subjective and thus limited view is visually presented in the following scene, when the onlooker's perspective, her/his movements (directed by the camera's focus and angle) co-determine
the viewer's image, seeing through the perspective of the two men in the rowboat, Ulrich and Hans, to which is added the extradiegetic, disembodied voice of the narrator (filmmaker). Lene's story is visually introduced in a number of elements which seem to stem from different puzzles. When Lene is attacked by the dog, the viewers get to see her through Ulrich's and Hans' impression as the strong German woman who doesn't scream (i.e. the male perspective on the German woman). As viewers our relation to the screen spectacle is doubled by Hans' and Ulrich's relation to the drama unfolding in front of them. The two men's commentary is, however, contradicted by the image that follows: a close-up of lonely suffering personified. Silent tears run down Lene's face. The filmmaker assumes a subjective female authority, revising the myth of the "real German woman" from her own perspective. During the whole scene we hear the SA officers, the dog, Ulrich and Hans -- however, often dissociated from their image -- only Lene, the German woman and mother figure is silent. Apart from the allusion to Brecht's "Germany, pale mother" this silence serves to "make different" (in the Brechtian sense, i.e. it makes Lene stick out of the group and draws attention to her character, makes us think about her rather than accepting her at face value on a general superficial level). Sanders-Brahms in turn, Lene's daughter and one of this generation's new German mothers, breaks the silence through appropriating her mother's story by naming: "My Mother. You said: I learned to be silent. From you I have learned to speak. Mother tongue." The distinction between Lene's language and her moments of silent
suffering is an important one throughout the film without which one can come to the oversimplified conclusion that the portrayal of her suffering is that of the typical silent, suffering woman of the melodramatic discourse.\textsuperscript{5}

_Germany, Pale Mother_ has been called a melodrama,\textsuperscript{6} but the melodramatic elements of this film have not been analysed, nor have their implications and limitations. According to Gledhill melodrama is "not about revolutionary change but about struggles within the status quo."\textsuperscript{7} The status quo of women's experience of war is Sanders-Brahms' topic; Lene is in no way a revolutionary character, but rather undertakes her individual struggle for happiness within the parameters of the historical situation, i.e. fascist Germany, a war-torn country from which the men are temporarily absent. Within the status quo the use of melodramatic features has subversive potential due to the "radical ambiguity attached to the melodrama" which can go either way and "function either subversively or as escapism -- categories which are always relative to the given historical and social context.\textsuperscript{8} Potentially melodramatic elements present in _Germany, Pale Mother_ therefore need to be scrutinized further as to their function and meaning. Scenes in _Germany, Pale Mother_ like the birthday scene in which Lene hears of Hans' draft notice have a typically melodramatic appearance: "The sudden reversals of fortune, the intrusion of chance and coincidence characterized cinematic melodrama in the tradition of 19th century melodrama."\textsuperscript{9} On the other hand the melodramatic shock serves to convey the hermetic closure of Lene's idyllic life as a homemaker.
She has no work life. Her relationships remain limited to her immediate family. What appears rather melodramatic is in fact the realistic representation of the typical hermetic German middle class family and specifically the women, escaping collaboration in the men's plans of destruction (the war industry) by taking shelter in their homes. It is essential that the viewer experience Lene's confinement to the traditionally feminine sphere and her subsequent experience of politics as restricted to emotional conflicts within her private life. Christine Gledhill posits "three major modes of modern cultural perception/expression: realism, melodrama, and modernism." Germany, Pale Mother does not stay within a single mode, but often seems to walk a narrow line between the three modes of expression, mostly within realism and melodrama. Although in some aspects it has a melodramatic appearance, the film is not homogenous and, with its use of symbolic and documentary elements, often transgresses into other modes. Alain Bergala has described Sanders-Brahms' aesthetics in this film:

"... la nature particulière de ton "réalisme" qui est un mélange curieux de réalisme "mythique", toujours au sens de Pavese (la rivière, la ruine dans cet absolu et cette indétermination venue de l'enfance) et d'un besoin fondamental d'inscrire la vérité la plus singulière dans et par le corps de l'acteur..." The nature of this "vérité la plus singulière" of Sanders-Brahms' film aesthetics in all its aspects of style, structure and function on different referential levels will have to be clarified through
this entire chapter.

The introductory scenes of the film contain a number of different images of water. First the dark, ominous rippled surface that displays the image of the fascist flag, then as a murky, dark, impenetrable, almost still moving body of water. On its surface float the rowboat with the Nazi Ulrich and the dead cat. Whereas the dog is associated with aggression and other male characteristics of power, the associations with a cat's character are predominantly female. Hitler's love of German shepherds and fear of cats is legendary. The cat as symbol for the witch, death, decay, abounds in myths and literature. As Bernward Vesper in his autobiography has his father, the Nazi poet Will Vesper say: "Cats are unpredictable and untrainable creatures of inferior origin in the orient -- they are a semitic race."13 The image of the dead feline is followed by the victimized woman Lene, crouched into the same size and similar shape as the floating dead creature. The camera then moves up to the bank, where Lene is sitting. Whereas the men have no problem watching the Nazis commanding their dog to attack the woman without any impulse to come to her help, Ulrich can't bear looking at the dead cat and takes it as a bad omen. This remark is significant as a hint of the sentimentality (only the flip-side of brutality) of Ulrich and Germans like him, who feel strongly about Tierschutzvereine, but have no problem killing people.14 These water-images associated with disease and death are re-inforced by the image of the extreme close-up of the flies covering the fascist flag. The slowly flowing river has a special
function as symbol of the fascist mass. As Canetti pointed out, the river is "the symbol of a movement which is still under control, before the eruption and the discharge; it contains the threat of these rather than their actuality. It is the symbol of the slow crowd. (...) Rivers are especially a symbol for the time when the crowd is forming, the time before it has attained what it will attain." During those early years of formation the National Socialist party is not overtly repulsive enough to make it impossible for Hans to sit in the same boat with his Nazi friend Ulrich.

Sanders-Brahms' use of the water as a symbol can be traced back to its use as a symbol in a number of scenes in the fascist propaganda film, Triumph of the Will, in shots of the river Pegnitz in Nürnberg first displaying the reflexion on the dark, shadowy surface, and then typically the camera movement upward. In the image that Sanders-Brahms created all the qualities of those shots are contained: dark, impenetrable and very slowly moving water with patchy dark shadows that is contained by a frame of brick structures (in Triumph of the Will bridges and walls). However, whereas the images of water in Riefenstahl's work draw a general picture of the German town and the Germans up and coming nation, Sanders-Brahms' use of the water is more specific in that it points at the fascist, "brown" era and even more intimate as the space of this experience of victimization.

This first scene at the river introduces Hans and Lene through their interactions, more by what they don't do than by their
actions. Their avoidance of action is even more evident in the following three scenes which function as introduction of their political position: in the first one we see Hans interact at work, whereas Lene is politically situated through her interaction with her sister Hanne in the Kristallnacht incident.\textsuperscript{16} Their bodies are static, their movements reduced to a careful minimum. These two scenes are separated by the encounter of the couple in the dance scene.

From the multiple perspective of the introductory scene at the river, the film’s perspective narrows extremely in these next scenes, especially in the dance scene which presents German society in a symbolically colored tableau -- again personalized by the filmmakers comments on the relationships. The dance scene’s first frame shows the upper body of two SA guards in medium close-up, from a low camera angle. Despite this portrayal (looking upward at them) which tends to give a threatening, larger than life impression, these fascist soldiers, in stark contrast to the usual representation of fascist military in film, do not look threatening but rather dull and unimpressively common, as we hear one of them biting into a long, thin sausage. In general, soldiers of the German fascist army portrayed in this film are no different from other soldiers, no more vicious or heroic than in other wars. They are not marked as either Nazis or non-Nazis. The filmmaker’s perspective is that of the insider, the Aryan German woman. As such Lene had nothing to fear from the military and paramilitary troops, but rather from within the fascist structure of the state bureaucracy. Even Rachel’s
attackers are common fascists in plain clothes. The message is that the enemy is us, he is not clearly marked as "other" but the threat of fascism was much more real, from within the people and not the picture book "bad German" in uniform. The fascists in this film are friends and relatives (Lene's uncle, Ulrich and Lydia) who are situated in the state's bureaucracy and use the system to their advantage.

From the first scene on, the opposing good and evil dramatis personae of the melodrama are marked through their political/unpolitical nature either in the image (uniform) or through the director's voice over comments (Ulrich in the row boat, Lene's sister Hanne at the dance and Ulrich's fiancée at the birthday party.) This good/evil dichotomy is upheld all through the film and coincides with powerless, poor and politically non-aligned (Lene and Hans) versus the powerful and rich Nazis (Ulrich with his wife Lydia and Lene's uncle).

Apart from those three persons, fascism in the film is represented through the spoken word rather than through people: as an off-screen voice or a voice from the radio receiver. When the speaker is present in the scene, we do not see him (it is always a male) but his off-screen commentary accompanies a different image. This is the case in all scenes up to where Lene stands on the ruins of her house: the marching Nazis at the beginning of the film as they address Lene; at work Ulrich's comment about his boss; in the birthday scene we hear the speech over the radio and while we watch Lene and Hans, Ulrich comments "Pull yourself together Lene." In
the army quarters scene we see Hans looking at the script "LOVE" and at the other soldiers while we hear the radio blaring the national anthem. From the same radio receiver (Volksempfänger) the scene changes into Lene's living room. In the execution scene an off-screen voice asks whether to include the resistance fighter that resembles Lene; concurrently we hear the army speaker from the radio. This mimicks the way most people experienced Nazis: through the power of the word, hearing speeches etc., mostly on the new instrument of propagandistic power: the Volksempfänger.

In the dance scene, the Nazi flag (again from a low camera angle, with patchy shadows and framed by darkness, as in Riefenstahl's film) forms the larger than life backdrop to the dancing couples, moving rhythmically like puppets. Instead of the music they dance to, we hear the piano hammering a much slower dramatic beat. These people are going through the motions, a German population that pretends that nothing is different and ignores the 'Other' among them (represented through SA guards passing on either side of Lene and Hans through the dancing crowd and uniformed dancers). There is no resistance to these personified changes, going through the crowd like a wave. Like the subjects in the fairy-tale of The Emperor's Clothes they do not have the courage to admit and face what is plain visible. As the filmmaker's commentary on Hanne's love affair with the Nazi and Hans' question to Lene about becoming a party member imply, politics have long been accepted as a necessary concession to one's private needs. Hans' question shows his eagerness to integrate into the fascist party
politics for the sake of his private happiness. Hans is very insecure about how to achieve his goals, and willing to try anything. The Nazi party is only another club to belong to which opens up social opportunities.

The scene at the telegraph service, where Hans works as a civil servant has a very naturalistic look. Ulrich is centered in the background, towering over both his boss, the "old socialist", and Hans. Whereas the superior counters Ulrich's dream of Germany's political grandeur, Hans reacts to Ulrich's aggressive behaviour evasively and ducks away from the political controversy with his comment about seeking happiness in his life with Lene. In the close-up that ends the scene, Hans' facial traits are very soft and almost have something feminine about them. The camera zooming in on the tiny area of Germany on the globe, breaks the stylistic unity of the otherwise very naturalistic images. In the Night of Broken Glass scene in Lene's bedroom, the extreme close-up of Hanne's crying face is the only frame that stands out from images that otherwise have the same natural look. Both these scenes frame the dance scene that follows, whose theatrical composition is most obvious and stands in stark contrast to the two surrounding naturalistic scenes.

Thus, even within the fictional narrative the scenes are stylistically different, or if they are similar, always contain an element that has a disturbing function (such as a sudden, long, extreme close-up or a commentary that draws the viewer's attention and adds a secondary meaning to the images). Some scenes which
stand in stark contrast structurally or stylistically are connected with one another in a way that makes them at first hardly discernable from each other (radio as transition between different spheres, also the mixing of documentary footage and the narrative as in the birth scene and the scene with the little boy wandering through the ruins of a city. It is intercut in such a way that Lene actually interacts with the boy).

The elements of Sanders-Brahms' montage are vastly different in nature. Both types described in the following quote are present in the film:

Where language remains in the foreground, the single shots function as units of meaning and, although organized in a series, retain their independence due to the abrupt shifts associated with montage. On the other hand, in a second type of cinematic text, the linguistic character is hidden and the shots - no longer acting as discrete signs - merge into one another unnoticeably, i.e. cuts are obscured with the help of modal alternations or long and stationary shots.17

Most of the time, Sanders-Brahms' film language is of the second type. A comment on Werner Herzog's images applies to images created for Germany, Pale Mother:

Herzog will hold an image until it seeps into the stem of the senses and acquires an undefiled beauty. His most potent images lie on the screen for a long, long time; they bed themselves down with you until you get to know them (...) As you are forced (or rather invited) to look at these images, you begin
to look at them for a longer time than you are ordinarily accustomed to look at images. You begin to see them for the first time (...).  

Although clearly diverse elements are mixed, they serve to give a rounded complete picture. The length or duration of a single shot and within a shot-sequence which gives the film its distinctive rhythm, is regarded as the single most important criterion for Sanders-Brahms. The memory creation is not homogeneous and different events have a different character, some more emotional and immediate (victimization), others more abstract, distanced, and constructed. An important component in this film is the extradiegetic narrator: on the one hand the voice-over identifies the images as a construction, on the other hand the commentaries are often integrating and connecting rather than disrupting and breaking the narrative flow. They mainly serve the purpose to keep the viewer from sinking into the historical period and insist on the perspective of the late seventies. Whereas especially the extremely long takes without cut (e.g. Lene's face in the end) are emphatic and suck the viewer in, the voice-over tends to cut the spectator's identification.

One example of the abrupt changes within one scene and between scenes is Lene's abrupt turn away from the horror of seeing their friend and neighbor Rachel in danger, to talk about her love life (Lene's remark about her plans to marry Hans.) The film cuts abruptly from the Kristallnacht-scene to scenes of seemingly totally unpolitical fulfilment of these dreams: the motorcycle ride between
rows of blooming cherry trees and the couple's arrival at their new home after the wedding. Yet at the same time, the new technology, especially cars and for the "small man" motorcycles were accessories they gained access to through Nazi rule. Police, SS, SA greatly encouraged motorcycle and car races. So Hans and Lene in their private bliss are seen on the same vehicle as the SS, SA. In every image, even the most romantic, the political element is present in one way or another as a disturbing factor. The scene in their home, following the set-up of their relationship as a dream that lifts them out of the everyday reality around them ("Like a film," the neighbor said), has again a very staged, theatrical appearance, emphasizing the material attributes of this middle-class retreat by focusing selectively on details such as the golden door knob, the silver cutlery, and the telephone. Lene hurting herself on one of the pins still sticking in the brand new curtains adds even the theatrical pathos of the fairy-tale (Sleeping beauty who misses a full hundred years; wishful thinking to wake up from a dream after the fascist years are over.) In the voice-over comment the filmmaker clearly identifies the scene as her composition, its artificiality owing to her own distance especially to her father. Even in her memory she can only imagine him as old as he was when she met up with him after the war. The romantic love of her parents as newlyweds she can hardly imagine, and, lacking a whole family as a role model, she never married (she says "From you I did not learn to marry," clearly meaning that she became deterred from marriage because she experienced theirs as a hideous one later on.) Any hint
of things political (the missing Hitler portrait over the bed) is marginalized to keep the "real" world out of their home entirely.

The ultimate composed image is the shot of Lene and Hans seen in the threeway folding mirror: the centered image of the couple in loving pose separates two mirror sections which reflect Lene and Hans separately, one on each side, foreshadowing their separation, the very temporary and fragile nature of their union. (In their postwar home this image is echoed by a parallel image of Anna in the same type of mirror; the old structures are superficially restored, emphasizing the exaggerated importance of appearance -- looking neat and practicing neat handwriting.) The newlywed scene ends with Hans and Lene helping each other out of the formal wedding outfits, laughing.

How much of an illusion their attempt to retreat to a private sanctuary really is, demonstrates the visual contrast with the first frame of the birthday scene that follows: in the foreground Ulrich and Lydia yelling "Heil Hitler" as their arms shoot up for the German salute, covering a dwarfed Lene in the background, as she stands in front of the radio, leaning over it, listening intently to Hitler's speech. The scene centers around the antagonisms between the two groups: Ulrich and Lydia, guests at Lene's birthday party, in their language and movements dominate the space (Ulrich ordering the wine and commenting on Hans' draft notice for Poland), whereas Hans, Lene and Hanne are left without options to react to the situation into which they have been thrown. Whereas the men's conversation (off-screen) sets off the incident, their bodies only
appear in the image in passing. The camera focuses on the impact on the women, especially Lene. The interior, emotional break of the news is translated into the breaking dishes. The impact of the fascist regime on the family is immediate on Lene’s body (the cut on her hand, in close-up, that her sister takes care of.)

The fact that Hans is drafted first is taken as an indication of his lack of worth for the society and deeply affects his self-worth. As a non-party member he is not needed in the fascist social structure of the German state and therefore one of the first to be stripped of his authority as head of his family. Even in the military he never rises above private and after the war his inferior status is reaffirmed through the fact that he is not promoted at the same or a higher rate as former Nazis.

His inferior position and his own perception of himself as a low status male are expressed in terms of gender typecast behaviour and his sexuality. Whereas the feminine traits that he has are portrayed as positive ones (tenderness etc.) before becoming a soldier, in the fascist environment they are turned against him. In the military he is always the outsider showing emotions: crying after the execution of civilians and admitting his love for his wife. Both are womanish reactions that emasculate him in the eyes of his peers. Hans goes through a cycle of transformations: his frustrations at not being accepted by his peers make him turn against his wife using force (tearing up Lene’s clothes and beating her when she reacts alienated and overwhelmed by his sexual demands after the long separation). Later, at the time of their encounter
in Berlin Hans has absorbed the ideas of his military environment just as he had under the influence of his Nazi friend Ulrich. Although never a true "member" he becomes a part of the system to a point where he sees the women's capacity of tenderness, their innocence, and their moral superiority of not killing as a threat to his identity.

By the time of this visit, Hans has therefore totally lost his sexual connection with Lene and sees the unity of the mother-daughter relationship as a realm into which he cannot penetrate (especially since a child was to be the solution to that estrangement). He is only the shadow of a person, unable to live his sexuality with Lene and insecure in her environment: when they hear fighter planes Hans asks for the protection of a shelter although the alarms don't even go off. The inner distance between Lene and Hans that is present from his first home leave on is visually represented in the composition of the images. In contrast to the first scene in their home, in which they are centered in a symmetrical image (such as the one with the mirror), in these later scenes they are always separated by a vertical split in the backdrop (e.g. Lene in front of the light background of the window and Hans in front of the darker folds of the curtains). These images also lack the tight frame of the previous ones. The cut-up effect of the screen into two different sections is present in many scenes throughout the film. When Lene and Hans are lying in bed talking about his leaving again, Lene is under a dark shadow and divided from Hans' lighter half of the image by the barrier of an even
darker shadow. In the Berlin mansion the wood paneling provides the vertical lines. Hans is now fortified by the "armor" of his uniform. Before he puts it on we see a weak man, in some images seemingly supported by those vertical lines like the door posts when he comes back in the room after a bath, with the towel around his neck. With every piece of equipment that he puts on, the 'German man' is assembled, built up, clearly a construct that lends the appearance of character where there is no inner center left.

In his soldier's uniform, Hans talks like a true Aryan fascist. Standing at the fireplace in the Nazi's mansion with the portrait of three fascist leaders overhead and the classical stone bust in front of him he recites the propaganda that he has been fed continuously: "To win -- or to perish. That is the German man's dignified fate." He can only seek acknowledgement and the sense of belonging in the troops and in clichés. Hans has been stripped of his identity as a private person and has become a part of the mass of soldiers at war, whereas Lene sets herself apart from the mass assuming her position as an individual.

The portrayal of Hans is reminiscent of how Klaus Theweleit characterizes Captain Berthold, a German national hero of the volunteer corps: "His feeling of self-worth as a man depends on the condition in which Germany is."20 Lene, like all women, is relatively unaffected, since she has no "Vaterland" equivalent. In this precarious situation of German warfare when battles in Russia are being lost badly, Hans has absorbed the "anxiety of the mass to fall apart into its components."21
Hans integrates into the mass of soldiers, but as non-Nazi never becomes entirely one with it. Although not actively committed, Hans never was overtly against Nazis in his company and always associated with them. Now he completed his transformation into an authoritarian character, of the type which Wilhelm Reich described as men "who cannot draw any satisfaction from private relationships with people, but only from the acknowledgment by the state as a carrier of a function." After the war he is shocked to find himself struggling for promotions in the same hierarchy in which the formerly enthusiastic Nazis like Ulrich and Lene's uncle advance without problem and with the support of their superiors, their former friends in the party.

The war is represented in this film through personalized scenes that regard Hans and demonstrate his initial limitations and scruples which are limited to women who resemble Lene. Whereas the first instance of that kind makes him cry, in the second one he takes part in the execution of the woman without any trace of hesitation. When he first mentions that he is going to France, he sounds like he is going for a vacation at the historic place and we see him enjoy his oysters in the oppressor's assured pose, insensitive to the woman's position.

Apart from Hans' side of the war, WW II is represented through documentary footage, mostly views of German cities shot from planes. Whereas the bird's eye view of the city shot from an airplane in Lene Riefenstahl's Triumph of the Will conveys the sense of the godlike, almighty fascist power, Sanders-Brahms uses the same
images to represent different powers: on the one hand the male, patriarchal sphere and its work of death and destruction of the German cities through bombings, bombs and bombed out buildings. The structures of the society are torn down (as real buildings and in their abstract function as ideological constructions). On the other hand these images of the demolished structures are juxtaposed to Lene's expanding sphere of life: creation, positive energies and life force. In later scenes, the filmmaker connects them with witch metaphors and thus the elation of the women's liberating, anarchic powers. While at first Lene's hopes were pinned on her ties with Hans, with the birth of her daughter and loss of the home that she had shared with him, Lene is filled with disgust for the patriarchal war and re-routes her emotional attachments to the women's realm of her own creation entirely. War has set her free from the men's false authority and made her strong enough for survival. For Hans, having been turned into an agent of destruction, the war becomes destructive, negating the value of life, that of others but more important: his own.

There are two aspects to the destruction caused by the war: its effect on the civilian community and that on the individuals who are fighting the war. In Sanders-Brahms' film war is the men's business, set apart from Lene's world and even Hans' former world. Lene attempts to retreat from it, but can't escape (airraids make Anna overly nervous, the rape). The film shows the separateness of the war sphere from this world at first. It then proceeds to demonstrate the way in which the war effects changes in those
spheres, and consequently changes in the people.

When Hans returns from the war, he is defeated in many ways, aware that his function had been that of an instrument of killing and cannon fodder. Lene doesn't think that she is inherently better than Hans, but blames him for letting Nazis influence him - for not being able and not even wanting to retreat like her uncle did. Whereas Ulrich easily goes from one political status to the other through brief de-nazification formalities and superficially adapts to the new social climate (while being his old self as his interaction with Anna clearly demonstrates), Hans admits that his not having been a party member was not so much out of conviction. He is and was aware of having been used. He has the hypersensitivity of the officially innocent, who knows deep down that he is guilty. While he struggles to regain a respected position (the typical German man of the Adenauer era), the former Nazis advance socially and professionally at more or less the same rate.

Lene's uncle's position as a leader is reaffirmed and the same upper class social values and attributes are celebrated during the meal in their new home. Contrasted with the lightness and luxury of this place is Hans and Lene's low middle class home, in the following easter scene, another symbolic social tableau. A cut separates the ceremonially set table with maid and oriental rugs from the table at Hans' home: from a high camera angle we see a number of bottles on a brightly lit bare table, surrounded by the darkness of the room overcrowded with petty bourgeois furniture. The round of totally drunken friends is singing a children's song.
The housewife Lene is in bed, totally excluded from the round until she asks for some alcohol. Holding on to the table Hans recites part of the Easter walk from Goethe's Faust, sarcastically stressing the epitome of traditional German values: education and striving. Everybody in the round has one goal represented in Konrad Adenauer: to make the German people a respected people again. Lene, lying on her bed, excluded from that goal still passively has to listen to it. When she finally breaks down in the middle of the night she is confronted with the reminders that her daughter and husband need their sleep to do well the next day. Unable to force her into calming down or to deal with her in any other way, Hans finally runs away.

In contrast to the first visit home from the war in Poland, when Hans let out his inferiority complexes and frustrations through open violence against Lene, she now is a threat to him (even just her gaze). His years among the fascists and his active part in their game has put a big trench between him and his wife and he can only reach her with verbal assaults (his repeated accusations about Lene's infidelity). Hans now overcompensates his insecurity by asserting his authority over his daughter (for whom he remains distant, a strange intruder) with the commanding tone of the military and by beating her.

The victimization of Lene (and Anna) has triggered a very strong reaction by many viewers as shocking and problematic. As Alain Bergala has pointed out, Lene's life and experiences are expressed in a very physical way through her body, its appearance
and what is done to it. The actors are not made to appear aged. Rather at each stage of their lives throughout the film their bodies assume a different characteristic as they are exposed to their respective experiences of the times. Lene is first heavy and slow moving, during the war lighter and swifter and after the war petrified.

The rape scene with the drunk American soldiers is of great significance (another rape by Russian soldiers was among the scenes cut for the final release version). It is essential that we do not see the violence on screen, we only see mother and daughter keeping eye contact. Anna calmly stares at Lene, both alone in the consecutive images. The rape visually and physically separates mother from daughter only for the duration of the incident. The cross-cut close-ups are framed the same way, in matching shots, each one shot from the point-of-view of the other. Although she is an observer, Anna cannot help her mother. The newly gained knowledge does not change Anna’s life positively or negatively. The daughter is as vulnerable as the mother was.

On the other hand, the incident is a strong negation of male prowess and power, signaling the difference between male and female reality. The filmmaker presents rape which patriarchy has turned into the horror of horrors, since it attacks man’s prized possession, as quite harmless when unaccompanied by other abuse. This presentation serves to stress, by contrast, the domestic violence and what greater longterm damage this battlefield within the women’s private sphere can do. Nevertheless this scene was
received as highly questionable. Many feminists felt that Lene's shaking it off and going on, the fact that she does not break as a result of it, can falsely be interpreted as playing into the hands of the dominant chauvinistic myth about women's masochism: that taking women by force is pleasurable for them.

The truly scary incidents of violence which permanently leave their mark on mother and daughter are those in their home: not the assault by the drunken enemy but the inflictions suffered by the friendly men, her own husband and her doctor.

Their violations of Lene's body destroy her both emotionally (Hans) and physically (the dentist) and are much harder for the viewer to bear because of the graphic details of the images. In the domestic struggles Hans knocks Lene off her feet, and half drags her behind him to the doctor. In the dentist's office we see Lene at the bottom half of the image, underneath the dentist to whose power is added the authority of the husband standing behind him. Anna suffers through Lene's afflictions and tries to defend her mother from her father's assaults.

Both women react to attacks with crying and subsequent silence. The filmmaker has been accused of "leav(ing) the conventional representation of motherhood as silent, selfless, sacrificing, largely intact because it (the film) fails to imagine the mother's speech."²⁵ Lene's language is very natural and in tune with her personality. The above statement disregards this personality (and the filmmaker's). It seems to be misguided by the wish for a different kind of mother. It disregards the power that
the women's silence potentially had. Very often the silence of
girls vis-à-vis their husbands was far from selfless and sacrificing,
but rather critical and accusatory. Lene's silent gaze proves most
powerful both to Hans and the viewer, especially after her facial
paralysis: "Gros plan monstrueux avec ce deuxième visage surajouté
au premier, le défaisant sans vraiment le reconstruire, et qui nous
regarde avec défi." This face dissected in two halves
symbolizes Lene's inner condition, her broken self, destroyed on the
battlefield of the home.

In her postwar home, Lene loses the wholeness and autonomy of a
historical subject that she had preserved through the war in her
unity with her daughter's body during their retreat from
civilization into the woods. Visually they are united in one
cluster as Lene carries her on her back together with all their
belongings. Physically she is part of her, still breastfed for lack
of other nutritious food with Lene losing weight, while she is
growing. Thus the child only survives because she is feeding off
the mother's body, the most immediate tie between two people, short
of cannibalism. As Canetti explains at length, the feeding of the
daughter through the mother is also the most intensive form of power
that a human being can have over another living person.

Thus Lene's and Anna's means of surviving the war and Hans'
survival carry an inherently different meaning: ultimate closeness
for them and ultimate separation for Hans. Lene's survival of the
war is tied to her relationship with her daughter. It is
represented in the visual closeness in the image (Anna during their
march through the woods even tied to Lene's body with a scarf or hanging from her neck) and the emotional intimacy of their movements. Within the film as an entity as within Lene's life the psychological bond between mother and daughter and what becomes of it, play a central role.

Due to the outstanding circumstances of Anna's childhood where she has only the one identification model of the all-powerful mother the identification with her is unbroken. Sanders-Brahms "demonstrates how the traditional psychoanalytic focus on interpersonal relationships can - indeed must - be radically historicized. How, this film asks, have relationships -- between women and men, wives and husbands, children and parents, daughters and mothers - been shaped by the particulars of their moment in history?"28

Contrary to turn-of-the-century Freudian observations on women, Anna experiences a very strong mother, as a positive role model and identification in her early life. Due to the demands of their war existence Anna's life depends almost entirely on her closeness to Lene. Within this extremely close relationship Anna experiences both the "being with" of oneness with the mother that feminist psychoanalytic theory posits,29 as well as the "being distinct" of separateness from that mother (standing vis à vis her violated mother, playing amidst the ruins she is encouraged by her not to let a boy get the better of her). In contradiction to Freudian thought, in Jessica Benjamin's feminist psychoanalytic theory a preoedipal impulse toward separation is present from the start. The child
develops between the poles of closeness and separateness, both balancing each other out depending on the impact of the role models.

In Anna’s case the onesided extreme connectedness to women results in extreme closeness, and the almost total lack of de facto and psychological separation of mother and daughter. Until the end of the war, Lene’s life is built around providing for Anna. They are inseparable in the images (invariably sharing each frame, with the exception of the rape scene), and we observe Lene giving her daughter food. The joyful message of the end of the war is followed by documentary footage of the work of Trümmerfrauen, sorting out what is left in the ruins and starting to rebuild. At that time the women, even those who like Lene had refused to leave their private sphere, lend their energy to the reconstruction efforts. The filmmaker offsets these images of a very hopeful, inspiring cooperation among women with a comment that superimposes and incorporates later insights (e.g. by Alexander Mitscherlich on the nature of postwar architecture and its significance in postwar social structures, as well as the lack of coming-to-terms with the past) into the nature of this new beginning. The new buildings grew out of the limitations of the reaffirmed old patriarchal political structures. This commentary runs into images of Lene, Hanne and Anna doing that work. In this environment the women are in the majority, and they know that they are strong. Since there are hardly any men around (only those who are either too old or too young to assume a place of authority, or soldiers who turned from enemy into occupation) Anna’s positive models for identification can
only be women.

After the war is over, the daughter still shares a bed with her mother. When her father finally returns, Anna has a late oedipal awakening as her place in bed next to her mother is literally taken away and she is replaced by a father she hardly ever met before. Anna learns at that point her inferiority to men. As Herman and Lewis (in agreement with Chodorow) have pointed out in their analysis, "The daughter's pride is deeply wounded by the discovery that even her mother prefers males to females, placing her love for her husband above her love for her daughter." Anna experiences sexuality in her immediate surroundings, as the postwar situation with most of the houses bombed out make it necessary for Anna, her sister and her child to share a place with other people. Lying in bed at night, Anna overhears their intercourse. Until her father's arrival, Anna shares physical intimacy with her mother (cf. also the earlier scenes with erotic overtones of the bath and Lene's play and dance with Anna.) Her father's arrival thus means a concrete physical separation of mother and daughter and replacement of the daughter as love object. Subsequently Lene and Anna are separated in the frames and social spheres. Through experiences such as the "Waldheini" episode between Ulrich and Hans, Anna learns what it means to be female in a world where power and privilege are the province of males. As a consequence "Not only does her esteem for her mother suffer, but her own self-esteem is endangered by the thought that she might share in her mother's inferior status." Lene and Anna enter into the stereotypical
patriarchal family pattern. In the ambitious order and meticulous cleanliness of their postwar home Anna gets to know a different mother, one who is subservient, suppressing her own feelings and whose function is reduced to menial tasks and repetitive non-productive chores:

At the same time that she recognizes her own inferior status, she is forced to reevaluate her estimation of her mother. The woman who once appeared all-powerful to her is now revealed as subservient and weak. Outraged and disappointed, the daughter reproaches the mother for their common fate.32

Lene's reduction of her personality subsequently reduces Anna. "The mother, herself dependent and inferior, has the job of preparing her daughter for a life of dependence and inferiority."33 Anna's new female identity is expressed through her body: she has lost the free ungroomed look of her early years and become a motionless stiff icon of the pure femininity of the little housewife. Her sexual and emotional repression is symbolized in the mindless deadening routine of the repetitive calligraphy exercises. Anna becomes the epitome of postwar German culture: the perfectly neat look in her notebook and in her reflection in the threeway folding mirror. Even more than before the war, the home is shutting them in, giving a claustrophobic impression of rooms cluttered with the obligatory pieces of furniture. The rooms are dark with the white lacey curtains keeping the light inside subdued and full of grey shadows.

In the prison of her postwar life as a homemaker Lene has no strategies for dealing with the new ground rules set by the
returning men. She has no particular function in this world, except for giving an impression of integrity and wholeness. The repression of this "patching over" takes its toll, now that her body has to function for Hans (in her behavior and her appearance.) The repression of her own hopes and realization of the necessity of her oppression through Hans to give him a sense of authority suffocate her livelihood. Lene has betrayed the nurturing symbiosis with her daughter through her hopes for a relationship with her husband. Lene carries the guilt for subjecting Anna to female inferiority in the male dominated system. The "alienation between mothers and daughters is based on mutual inferiority."\textsuperscript{34} Lene realizes that the nurturing closeness with her daughter makes her vulnerable within the patriarchal system. When Anna tries to reciprocate by feeding Lene (making soup), Lene's brutal gesture of throwing it in her face in a manner of speaking spreads Lene's own affliction as a warning to her daughter: the nurturing woman will bear the mark in her face.

Lene only becomes aggressive against the daughter after the outbreak of the disease. Almost as if she asked for resistance, she pushes Anna back, who brings her hot soup to remind her of surviving. With the disease the relationship turns around. The daughter becomes the protector and the mother the protected. The camera follows Anna from the kitchen to the sickbed and when she is pushed to the edge of the frame by the abrupt movements of the mother, she insists on coming back into the frame to find the mother again and to calm her.
The symbiotic relationship as such remains unchanged. Lene was entrapped by following in the footsteps of the traditional female role-model: motherhood. As woman Lene is destroyed by the suffocating effect of her nurturing, self-negating closeness. Only when the symptoms show on her body (the paralysis) she tries to free herself from her position. Lene distances herself from her family by telling them to leave (we see a lonely Anna with her milkcan -- taking over her mother's nurturing role -- among two girls her age playing with dolls). Another step toward separation is her turn to alcohol. Lene's final action of turning on the gas, the ultimate desperate attempt to break out of the relationship under which she is breaking down, fails. As in Years of Hunger, the suicide attempt is not completed. The mother Lene lives. The agonizingly long shots of Lene's marked face and of the door behind which she has disappeared express the desperate isolation, the inner break of Lene and Anna. The yellowish-grey light makes Lene look more dead than alive, because inside she is dead. Like Hans and Lene Bach, many postwar German families stayed together and merely functioned when there was nothing left inside them.

II. Nazi Ideology in Germany, Pale Mother.

From the mid-seventies to the early eighties, the search for women's history has produced numerous new studies on matriarchy and related social phenomena such as mid-wifery, wise women and
witches. In this context, old and new myths of motherhood have surfaced in West Germany. Some idealize motherhood as the non-plus ultra of a woman's life. For many older German women (in their sixties and older) the new motherhood cult evokes memories of the motherhood cult in the Nazi era which they experienced in their youth. Motherhood played a major role in the political scheme of the Nazis. Based on the traditional German patriarchal family as well as on popularized Germanic myth, motherhood was ascribed a new social and political meaning and used as a powerful political instrument by the Nazi party.

Motherhood during the fascist years is the theme of Helma Sanders-Brahms' 1979 film Germany, Pale Mother. The director's point of view is that of the daughter, herself mother of a daughter, who plays Sanders-Brahms' role in the film.

All the critical articles on Germany, Pale Mother touch in one way or other on the role of the mother, be it in psychological terms of the mother-daughter relationship, reflecting on the ambiguities of the film, or exploring the dimensions of popular myth and literary texts (by Brecht and Grimm) which Sanders-Brahms incorporated in the film. My investigation focuses on Lene as a German mother in the context of the Nazi ideology of motherhood, and the meaning of this legacy for German women/mothers today as the film seeks to convey it. Apart from the film itself, my analysis includes the film book and an interview with the filmmaker. It is based on historical documentation of fascist gender politics.
In the two prefaces to her book, the filmmaker states the goal of her work: to remember in this film those who are purposely overlooked by other films and books:

And once again those are forgotten, who made the protagonists possible.

Who voted for Hitler. Or maybe didn't even vote for him, but didn't protest either, didn't go underground, join the resistance, emigrate or end up in a KZ, but who wanted to live the easy life, love, marriage, a child amidst the Götterdämmerung....

And my Mother: ..

...She experienced how strong she was, that she needed nothing but herself and a hope, this child or this husband, and now that this hope fulfilled itself, but her strength was not needed any more, she lost her face.

Hitler in many films. A man.

A film for my Mother, thousands of women.

English, Italians, French asked me further and further in this (hi)story, when I started to relate it.

Because this is, what other nations don't understand, that every single German could participate so much in this staging of their own downfall and yet survive so well, that everything functions now, better than elsewhere, functions, merely functions, naked hopelessness
in all the big high-rises of insurance companies. 
And I believe our parents are also looking for someone, who 
tells 
their story for them. Not in a moralizing way, not 
implying: that had to come, but in a way that they 
recognize it and can think about it one more time, 
not suppress it further, 
whereas the stories of the protagonists are told 
in different ways again and again. 
.......... 
What makes us better, except for the advantage of being 
the descendants? 
Our self-righteousness is like the one who is in the 
tiger's mouth, laughing: the lion won't get me. 
I tell the (hi)story of my parents, 
because I know it, because I am affected by it, 
but also because it shows, that pressure from outside and the 
cold 
outside 
create more warmth inside, but when they cease, the 
destruction inside becomes visible, 
and because this (hi)story is at once an individual and a 
collective one. 
This (hi)story, very individually, was experienced by 
millions... 
To become guilty, although one doesn't do anything but obey the
laws, follow orders of the authority, seek happiness, where the Bible promises it to the people: in marriage, with a child.

Loyalty has been a virtue for thousands of years, but what has this loyalty caused?

Here Sanders-Brahms expresses the need to understand the history of people like her parents. There were millions of middle class Germans, who were never Nazis, who lived according to German 19th-century tradition by staying out of politics, retreating to a private life. They believed that an unpolitical stance would absolve them of any guilt for the events around them. However, their selfish noncommitment produced guilt by association. Helma Sanders-Brahms attempts to come to terms with the guilt of those uninvolved Germans who, like her parents, deemed themselves good non-Nazi Germans and yet caught enough of the "virus" of fascism to carry it on beyond the fascist years.

In view of this stated intention, accusing the film of "fail[ing] to enact the impact of World War II on women who were not middle class, German, unengaged in political resistance, or, I need hardly add, gentile." is asking of the film to be something that it was never intended to be.

The dedication to both her mother and her daughter points to the political intention of the film: to take a look back at history in view of the present and future, i.e. the director's own responsibility as daughter who carries on this German history as a mother. Critical studies have pointed out the problematic
nature of this film's representation of her mother's story as women's history. In my view the director's problematic personal position and bias at least in part account for the problematic representation: she spent her first ten formative years with a mother who developed her own strength in the absence of her husband, who shielded her daughter from the world and never broke the close bond between them.45 Thus her mother created for the two of them what became for her "the positive history of Germany during Fascism, during World War II and afterwards, the story of the women who kept life going while the men were used for killing,"46 as she calls it in the second preface of the film book. Sanders-Brahms' perspective is a look back from the reaffirmed patriarchal system in postwar Germany, with broken men like her father resuming the positions of authority. From this point of view the years with her mother take on for Sanders-Brahms the character of a psychological 'paradise lost'. The following statement makes evident in which way the filmmaker links her generation's positions as women/feminists to their mothers' 'emancipation' during the war:

But we, the children, the generation who was born during the war, share this strength. It is not surprising that women like Gesine Strempel, Helke Sander, Margarethe von Trotta, Alice Schwarzer, Grischa Huber are all Trümmerkinder, children of these mothers. Women who live without husbands, like they saw it in their mothers during the first few years of their lives. Emancipation was the first experience of their childhood, an emancipation that reached much further than ours. 47
Finally the film is also an attempt to offer the 'flip side of the coin' and rectify the one-sided negative picture of women as the strongest supporters of fascism, the way they have often been depicted in mainstream literature and films about that period, as in what Sanders-Brahms says about Joachim Fest's film Hitler - eine Karriere.

Fest's film pretends that the women had given themselves to the Überphallus Hitler, the guilty ones for what happened in Germany at that time - sure, the women applauded the strong man who then seemed to solve the German problems so easily. But in all my interviews, I kept running into men who still remember this time of everybody's heroicism fondly as a time of adventure.  

While the historians Annemarie Tröger, Maruta Schmidt and Gabi Dietz have documented the truth about the women's vote and the role of the leftist parties, Sanders-Brahms' film comments on the National Socialist ideology and its effects on middle class private life from a woman's point of view.

The preface ends with this statement about her mother: "Never again have I heard my mother sing. At that time she sang a lot." At the center of this venture clearly stands the mother's role during those years and its multi-dimensional significance: politically, in terms of her personal development, in terms of her daughter's life and in terms of the dangerous role of mythologized motherhood in the history of women's emancipation (which was a very important political issue for women in the
protagonist's, Lene's youth, was still in 1979 and is even more so today under the rule of the conservative parties).

The film *Germany, Pale Mother* is political not only because it attempts to rethink the relationship between the private and the public, but because it transgresses the German cultural taboo of disclosing the recent political past of one's own family members to the public. "Using one's parents' history was utterly inappropriate as the basis for a film about Germany during the war" was quoted a main factor in the film's unfavorable reception in West Germany, which proves that German audiences perceived the film as highly political and offensive. I claim that the American reception of the film primarily as a melodrama - with political background - is based on a culturally different notion of the political in public and private life. Whereas politics as a conversation topic are taboo in America, Germans in general engage more in political discussions on an everyday basis. On the other hand, however, Germans are a lot less open about their personal sphere and while Americans discuss freely their sessions with a therapist, Germans traditionally don't like to disclose personal feelings in company. Nowadays this is in part grounded in the recent historical legacy: Especially the generation of Germans that experienced the fascist years lived in very reclusive families. Having been a necessity for many years (fear of denunciation or compromising oneself politically) it carried over into postwar social structures up to the present. With good reason many parents kept silent about their past, and not having been actively involved in crimes was the most positive claim
that fathers and mothers could make. While any critical look at the past was quickly labelled as Nestbeschmutzung and hushed, parents tried to uphold their position of authority in the family and especially feared their children's criticism. The break between the parent generation and the sons and daughters as they became of age politically had never been as radical as in the late sixties in Germany. This specific conflict between the generations and politics, of which the Nazi ideology is only a part, are the historical background that inform this film.

Although my investigation of the work is based on the shortened version generally available for distribution and also takes into consideration the published film script as well as interviews etc., I would like to point out that the original script as well as the two-hour-long original film version which the filmmaker regards as the 'authorized version' contain important scenes with direct political references. The impression of the film as a political work has changed dramatically through the cuts that were necessary to shorten it to a more marketable length.

In the following I analyze a number of thematic issues that the film presents, e.g. motherhood and the fairy-tale, under the aspect of their political value. This analysis is based on the historical background of the Nazi ideology and considers the filmmaker's intentions as to present political implications of her visual representation.
Motherhood

To fully understand the issue of the nazi ideology of motherhood, it is necessary to go back to sexual politics in Germany after World War I. As the editors of Frauen unterm Hakenkreuz pointed out in their introduction, the poor social conditions during the Weimar Republic served as an ideal precondition for the nationalist ideology of authority and submission to gain a foothold in the German family:

After the end of World War I, millions of women were laid off by the factories, in order to make room for the returning men. 'Equal pay for equal work' remained a demand which was even sabotaged by the male union members. For many women it was impossible to make a living through their own paid labor. New ways did not open up, or only for very few women; thus remained the desperate falling back on the family, the clinging to the board of a sinking ship, as a desperate attempt to survive.53

Thus emancipation was perceived by many women as a threat rather than a blessing. The social demotion of and discrimination against women made many women retreat to their role in the old patriarchal family and, as Leila Rupp writes, to traditional mythologies in the realm of women's lives, such as female goddesses, motherhood cults and theories about matriarchy as the original social organization of mankind:

"Refusing to accept current notions of women's inherent physical and intellectual inferiority, Nazi feminists took
comfort in the popularized anthropological theory that postulated matriarchy as the earliest form of social organization."\textsuperscript{54}

Gregor Strasser wrote as early as 1926 that National Socialism intended to restore the natural order, to accord women the respect they deserved as mothers and housewives. In Hitler’s own words: "There is nothing nobler for a woman than to be mother of the sons and daughters of the people."\textsuperscript{55} This statement does not only lift the woman up on a higher social rank, if she fulfills her destiny as mother, but it also accords her an important function in the new Nazi state. Through childrearing, the housewife and mother, whom it was difficult to integrate into the political process, could be forced into getting actively involved with the national socialist ideology:

Being a mother means giving birth to healthy children, developing in them all physical, mental and spiritual gifts, making them a home, which nurtures the \textit{völkisch-rassische} Kultur, realizing a piece of the community of the \textit{Volk} within the community of the family, and giving the \textit{Volk} grown up children who are fully physically and spiritually developed, who have what it takes to face life courageously, who are conscious of their responsibilities toward their \textit{Volk} and their race, who will further the glory of their \textit{Volk}.\textsuperscript{56}

The political key role of motherhood becomes most obvious through Hitler’s suggestion in \textit{Mein Kampf} that women be granted full citizenship only with marriage.\textsuperscript{57}
From the declared goals of the völkische marriage, it is evident that it was not really the marriage but family which was protected. Consequently the propaganda did not glorify the wife but the married mother.58

Nazi ideology proclaimed the reconstruction of the family and the significance of women's role as mothers, housewives, guardians of racial purity, transmitters of German culture, and supporters of national economic policy. As Claudia Koontz' documentation of the pre-war German middle class women's movement and Nazi women's groups proves, the National socialist movement added their racial doctrines onto the conservative women's position. Ruth Woodsmall reported in 1933 about upper and middle class housewives:

For the great majority [of German women] the present doctrine and practice of narrowing woman's sphere of action means little change and certainly no sacrifice, but rather the glorification of the role to which they have always been committed.60

Having sketched the basic ideology of marriage and family in National Socialism, I go on to the interpretation of the film and draw attention to the Nazi postulates only where they are relevant to my argument. Both Lene and Hans are introduced in scenes which define them politically through confrontations with Nazis. Lene suffers the dog's attack passively, for which she is praised as a 'real German woman'. Hans witnesses the Nazi's provocation of their boss without as much as a blink of the eye. Asked about his opinion about politics, he retreats into private life: "I really don't care. I want to be left alone and get that girl with the black
hair. Only have a good life, you know. The Führer can't have anything against that."

Lene's character is further established in the talk with her lovesick sister Hanne. Lene doesn't show any emotions but has very clear notions about what she wants for her future, and the words 'work' and 'job' are not a part of it. This has to be considered against the background of the following comment:

The vast majority of the mainstream Nazi authors believed that the best situation for women was as full-time housewife and mother, but they recognized the economic necessity and the surplus of women over men made this an impossible dream for many women.61

Being entirely lower middle class, Lene tries to catch a piece of that dream for herself. However, she believes that she is following nothing but the Bible and nature in her pursuit of happiness through marriage. With typical middle class snobbishness toward the Nazi party ('Parteiheini'), she consciously chooses a partner, who, like herself, is seemingly unpolitical.

As the two girls witness the Nazis' attack on their friend Rachel, Lene reminds her sister Hanne of her commitment to the party, and that it would not make any sense for her to interfere. Whereas Hanne is emotionally and morally involved in politics, Lene's energy is spent on trying not to commit herself. Her credo, which she shares with Hans, is essentially one of isolation from evil, staying away from politics to establish and preserve one's own ideal sphere. Their retreat from society and their hopes for the
start of an innocent life together are represented in the immediately following romantic nature scene of the couple riding along a country road lined with blooming trees. However, the motorcycle and leather gear as important attributes of the SS and police already connect Hans with the Nazis, as does his friendship with Ulrich.

Significant is the door to their apartment as a barrier that wards off the political world around them, and as a passageway to the sheltered life in their home. Lene shows her awareness of this function by mentioning that there is no portrait of Hitler hanging on the wall above their bed, which according to the neighbor's talk makes for better children. The presence of the motherhood cult of the Nazis is thus established, if only in a roundabout way. Rationally it is negated, but it is in the back of Lene's mind nevertheless. Their bedroom is thus marked as a place which they try to keep free from ideology. Although they are aware of it, they still fall victim to it.

Both of them lack strong beliefs. They are merely rejecting ideas, but show no sign of personal identity. There is nothing personal in their apartment, but only the commodities of a traditional bourgeois home (e.g. silver cutlery). The political is characterized as being kept 'out of the picture', eliminated: Lene literally shuts political events out when she closes the blinds on the horror of the Night of Broken Glass. As viewers we either hear the action off screen, or only a brief mention of events is made (about the deportation of Jewish acquaintances).
Their lack of any political persuasion as well as their fear of sexuality make them typical of the type of people who, according to Wilhelm Reich, were most susceptible to the new ideology. Just how easily becomes clear in the birthday scene, where Lene's opportunism is affirmed again: she would not have minded if Hans had become a party-member if that had preserved their private retreat.

The relationship between Hans and Lene carries a political message, not by way of the assumption that private life is the political (i.e. sexual politics), but as a consequence of Nazi family law: "Marriage and family were largely stripped of their private character. In important areas, the law replaced the autonomous decision of the married couple." On the other hand, National Socialism reinstated the power of the husband as patriarch, which he had all but lost in the desolate economical and political conditions of the Weimar Republic:

The husband could again take over the role of provider and protection, which was especially important in a totalitarian system, because for his loss of importance in the economy and in politics, he was compensated through more authority within the family."... The husband makes all the decisions concerning all matters of married life; it is he who determines in which city and in which house they will live...according to 1354 from this does not ensue a 'law of the master' which the husband could use egotistically, but he was to act responsibly as Führer of the family and accept his wife as consultant. Ideology and reality differed considerably: the Nazis destroyed the
family which they glorified. Through military duty Hans is deprived of the power over his wife (the state takes his sexuality) Visually he loses his backbone: He looks weak, is barely held upright by the support of the window post in the train compartment and leans at door frames in Lene's uncle's house in Berlin (which she chose as a shelter that he couldn't provide for her). The bomb that destroys their first home sets Lene free. When Hans returns after the war and they move into a new home together, she feels once again like a prisoner in his little apartment.

Hans' identity is expressed in terms of sexuality and sentimental attachment ("I love my wife"). In the army he undergoes a process of assimilation (different behavior he displays in the first war scene, where he cries as they kill civilians in Poland, and his second campaign to France where he has assumed the air of the proud, good German soldier, who has the enemy woman serve up the best food and has no difficulties executing civilians).

Back from Poland, Hans feels like and talks like the dutiful soldier, who accuses Lene of having betrayed him while he was gone. Her alleged adultery takes on political meaning as he suspects that she gave in to a Nazi. Hans' thinking/perception is determined by a factor which is known to play a major role in the psychology of fascism: fear of the inferior as sexual rival (especially the racially inferior). Hans thinks in the same terms of hierarchy, only upside down: with the Nazi political man as Untermensch who is opposed by the non-Nazi. He has appropriated the Nazi ideology's view of adultery ('Rassenschande'): "Since through a woman's
infidelity the entire inheritance of racial characteristics could be changed, the adultery of a woman was judged as much more severe than a man's.\textsuperscript{64}

The following quote illustrates the men's role in taking over the punishment, since the women were not legally to be held accountable for their actions:

The wife's going astray could not be punished with legal measures, but could be avenged through morally corrective measures. Numerous pictures of the time prove this. Guarded by SA-troops, a sign around the neck, on which the crime was drastically described, the women who had violated their race had to stand in public squares and streets as horrid warning to others. This pillory in the literal sense was also the punishment for other crimes that could not be prosecuted. The reappearance of this form of punishment clearly symbolizes the partial reversion of the system to the Middle Ages.\textsuperscript{65}

In beating Lene, Hans punishes her for an offense against his honor and her duty as pure mother of his legitimate sons and daughters. He tries to assert his power through marital rape. Although his enemy is still the Nazi, his defense patterns are unconsciously the Nazis'.

After Hans has physically expressed his mistrust of Lene, and raped her, they slowly turn to each other again. The separation between them is visualized first by his hand between their faces (as he tells her that he will be going to France the next day) and then by shadows between them. At that point Lene says that she wants to
have his child. This is not only an attempt to create a connecting element that unites the two disjunct unities Lene and Hans; it is above all a desperate way for her to reassert herself as a woman by using her strongest asset: the ability to bear him a son, after he had doubted her loyalty as his property. Through motherhood she asserts her position on the homefront, for it gives her the highest social prestige a woman can get in Germany at that time. As in Nazi propaganda the woman's childbearing was promoted as duty to the state that she served. So while her husband serves his duty as a soldier in the field, Lene unconsciously conforms to the social pressure and tries to meet its highest standard. The fact that Sanders-Brahms intercuts the scenes of childbirth with those of a fighterpilot dropping his bombs is nothing arbitrary or original, but is indeed the visual representation of Nazi propaganda:

The theme of childbirth as an analogue of battle was a popular one in Nazi ideology: Hitler wrote in "Die völkische-Sendung": "Every child that a woman brings into the world is a battle, a battle waged for the existence of her people."66

The birth scene (creation) follows the execution scene in France (destruction), and is in turn followed by documentary shots of the bombed out city (destruction). The dissociation of sound and body, that Kaja Silverman discusses in her article "Dis-Embodying the Female Voice"67 is used by Sanders-Brahms as the basic structure of the birth scene: We see Lene in labor and hear the noise of bombers and bombs exploding. When Lene presses we see the pilot followed by bombs emerging from the plane's opening underneath.
Lene's function as a pawn in the political scheme is obvious. The midwife's more commanding than supportive voice and the camera angle that shoots Lene from on top and the mid-wife from a low angle represent Lene's giving birth as the politicized action that it is. The mid-wife's congratulation: "Heil Hitler. Ein Mädchen." makes Anna a female soldier for Nazi Germany, a future mother. The director Sanders-Brahms was born as part of the upcoming völkisch-rassisch generation.

The New 'Lebensraum'

Lene decides to have a child, knowing that she will have the baby to herself since Hans will be gone for a while or maybe even forever. This assures her an authority and freedom that she would not have had in times of peace: "Only when the father was unable to exercise his legal authority, the mother was granted the authority of a parent." Taking advantage of the war, she creates her own private sanctuary for herself and her daughter, and naively chooses her Nazi uncle's Berlin villa as Lebensraum in which Hans' visit leaves only the traces of a minor disturbance. He has become one of the destroyers of this world from which Lene and Anna hide in the country.

"Besides serving as a code for bellicose expansion in Hitler's vocabulary, Lebensraum also meant to contemporaries (...) a social space where domestic tranquillity and traditional values reigned. In this sense, women commonly used the term to describe a space beyond the materialist and abrasive
'masculine' world of business, class struggle, and high politics. The leading spokeswoman for the middle-class women's rights movement, Dr. Gertrud Bäumer, captured this meaning in her book *The Woman in the New 'Lebensraum'* in which she outlined women's responsibilities for bringing order and humanity to public life in times of hardship and chaos. The attractiveness of Hitler's vision of a gender-differentiated society—bifurcated into the male realm of production and the female sphere of reproduction—has remained virtually unnoticed.... Whatever their views about men and politics, middle-class women generally believed they could establish their own harmonious 'living space', cleansed of diversity and dissent within national life.\(^7^0\)

At first Lene finds this ideal *Lebensraum* in the seclusion of her living room, playing the role of the perfect German mother and homemaker who listens to the voice from the *Volksempfänger*. In the bomb shelter, while the old men left behind can't provide any help, the women are drawn closer by the changed living conditions. The destruction of the patriarchal society is perceived by Lene as liberation. She establishes a symbiosis with her little girl and excludes society around them from their *Frauenreich*. She projects all her dreams and emotional needs onto her daughter, in conscious opposition to the male principle. As Bammer states in her article there is an "almost constant visual connection between them. Lene and Anna are almost always seen together."\(^7^1\) In the reunion scene in Berlin, Lene's sexual bond with her daughter becomes
obvious in the play, dance and lovesong. Their separation into two separate beings is being reversed by Lene on their journey through Germany: the physical oneness is visually reestablished as the child is tied to her back with a scarf (the umbilical cord) to form one moving body. Psychologically the bond with Anna remains intact until Lene’s rape and the final return of the father.

As Jan Mouton has pointed out, the film is re-enacting the director’s entire childhood oedipal drama in its most extreme lack of separation (see Nancy Chodorow), with the father coming between them and the mother’s traumatic cutting off her daughter (pouring soup in her face and shutting the door in her face).

How superficial Lene’s freedom is and how little she really managed to even remove herself from the patriarchal world of the Mörderhaus Germany, and create an alternative, better Lebensraum is established through the habitats during and after the war: The crematorium is the second Mörderhaus, after her Nazi relative’s villa in Berlin, into which she takes her daughter in her opportunism and political naiveté. Although not without difficulty, but certainly without any resistance she integrates into the old patriarchal social structures at the end of the war, first sharing an appartment with her Nazi sister Hanne and another couple, and later even helping in building the 'bürgerlichen Wohnstuben' of the fifties. The daughter’s voice-over comment points out the bitter irony of this action, while we see Lene helping re-build from the rubble the same middle-class houses from which the war had freed her
and in which she will be reduced to the life of a housewife who is supposed to watch over her daughter's calligraphy exercises.

**The Fairy-Tale**

Lene's telling the fairy-tale *The Robber Bridegroom* exemplifies the uncritical, naive perpetuation of patriarchal, bourgeois myth by women. The two wander through the Mörderhaus Germany and witness the victims (dead soldier) and the killing machine (crematorium) without being affected by them. In this visual allegory Lene is the robber's bride who takes back what she saw by adding to her statement "it was only a dream", thus placing herself outside reality and trying to avoid the consequences of actions. Even in the absence of men, Lene is bound to the male discourse of the classical fairy-tales, without ever questioning them.

In my view the film does not fall back behind the myth or remystify, as has been claimed. It exemplifies that fairy-tales don't have a didactic effect. They carry the soothing promise of a higher justice that takes all responsibility out of the hands of the individual, especially women. Instead of becoming aware and active, Lene gets lost in her fairy-tale world and does not perceive the real world around her. By association, Lene's world, that she created for herself and her daughter is identified as a fairy-tale world. Her joyous reaction to the real world, to Hitler's capitulation and suicide, is the childlike recitation of the children's song *Maikäfer flieg*. She is incapable of finding her own language and thus can only reiterate for her daughter the male
As Jack Zipes documents in his study, the fairy-tales by Grimm, Andersen and Bechstein were of crucial interest and widespread use in the socialization process in the Nazi period. Those classical tales were unchanged, but were "now disseminated through radio and film, and this distribution made their input even greater on children of all classes. The innocent folktale was transformed into an ideological weapon meant to serve the building of the Thousand Year Reich. Thus Party official Alfred Eyd announced in 1935, 'the German folktale shall become a most valuable means for us in the racial and political education of the young.' The folk tales were considered to be holy or sacred Aryan relics. Therefore, the classical fairy-tales of the Grimms, Andersen and Bechstein were promoted as ideal as recommended reading lists for children. On the other hand the tales were a welcome tool for children and young people to escape and to "compensate for the political bombardment in their daily life. (...)the fairy-tales became more and more popular toward the end of World War II because they were a kind of refuge from the bitter reality of the war and ideological warfare." So Sanders-Brahms choice of allegory was in no way haphazard or naive, but on the contrary contains a number of political statements about Lene. Even more so since the filmmaker chose a fairy-tale that serves as a direct allegorical account of the political
environment of the two women in Nazi Germany and also an allegory of male-dominated patriarchal society with all its trappings (the decision-maker is either ignorant: the father who selects the groom - or a criminal: the robber bridegroom. Whereas the women can only have recourse in flight, the men who first ignored the robbers' activities later judge them) Although this fairy-tale offers none of the socially comforting joys of Cinderella, the warning is not being heard either. Since the Nazi period fairy-tales have met with much suspicion in Germany, but also experienced a renaissance in the seventies. This in turn fueled the debate over their ideological value.

Elisabet Lenk points out the bourgeois order of the fairy-tale and the authoritarian structures renewing themselves continuously in them (at a time when kings could be beheaded the monarchic structure was replaced by the democratic order with the people bringing justice as in The Robber's Bridegroom). However, the place of these authoritarian hierarchies is in the subconscious, in the artificial harmony of the fairy-tale where punishment is guaranteed. The insistence of the story The Robber's Bridegroom, that the murderers will meet their just punishment is doubly anachronistical: Anna herself experiences that in real life there is no justice (the rape and her postwar life with old Nazis) and on an historical level the German judicial system still struggled with the punishment of the murderers in the highly publicized Maidanek-trials which had been dragging out for years when Sanders-Brahms made the film, finally ending in ridiculously mild sentences.
Conclusion

Helma Sanders-Brahms demonstrates through Lene, that from seeing the shortcomings and retreating from a patriarchal society and a political system does not follow an active improvement and also that developing one’s potential does not mean one will live it. This is what Sanders-Brahms often has been accused of in this film and in her work in general: that she does not believe in feminist insights improving life automatically. Feminist consciousness (like class consciousness) can open up new possibilities, but does not in and of itself present us with a better world. Through Lene female viewers re-live the frustrating experience of their own limitations which ultimately set them up as victims and victimizers. The film makes a statement about women’s responsibility by demonstrating that Lene’s refusal, her seeking a private happiness outside of the patriarchal order is destroying her in the end. The women’s sphere that Lene sets up for herself through motherhood and the love relationship with her daughter’ like a witches’ sphere, only offers a very temporary, unstable shelter and the strength that women develop out of it does not withstand the test of life in the context of society. The idealized identities are crushed by the demands of the real world.

Sanders-Brahms’ film shows how Lene is responsible for what is going on in her private life and in society around her. Women carry responsibility for the society they live in, and creating a women’s utopia while ignoring the patriarchal world will not only set themselves up as victims, but also as accomplices. The director
acknowledges not a vague sense of guilt for the past on her part, but what this past has put into her, what she carries over through her personal development, i.e. her own responsibility to revise, to grow beyond women's myth and to actively take part in history. Sanders-Brahms film demonstrates that the "hope to come away unharmed" that Bammer claims for Lene and Anna\(^8\) is a false one, that war affects everybody's personality deeply and in a lasting manner.

III. Germany, Pale Mother in the Context of the German Feminist Movement.

The director Helma Sanders Brahms is not one of the figureheads of the new West German women's movement. Her political consciousness developed through the 1960s student movement and the formative years of the new German women's movement. Although feminism had a strong influence on her, this influence was characterized by the splits between factions fighting over opposing dogmas and strategies.\(^8\) (These splits marked the West German movement much more than its American counterpart).\(^8\) When her film was advertised in New York by its American distributor, New Yorker Films, as "the strongest voice in feminist cinema", Helma Sanders-Brahms regarded this as a false label.\(^8\) The film director and her work Germany, Pale Mother cannot be seen simply as a voice of the West German women's movement.\(^8\) The film reflects, however, strongly upon the West German women's movement and its struggles during the 1970s.
In the mid-seventies, at a time when the director was writing the script for Germany, Pale Mother, the search for women's history brought about numerous new studies on matriarchy and related social phenomena such as midwifery, wise women and witches as an integral part of a cultural, not necessarily politically activist, feminism. (In this context, old and new myths of motherhood abounded also in West Germany; cf. the chapter on "Nazi Ideology and Germany, Pale Mother")

The resurgence of the witch figure became an important European feminist phenomenon, evidenced by a great number of political actions and events in her name as well as innumerable publications on the history of medieval women doctors, midwives and witches. The titles of six political films by German women contained the term 'witch'. Feminist publications on herbal medicine etc. were entitled "Hexengeflüster" (Witches' Whispering), songbooks were entitled "Witches' Songs" and the cities of Vienna, Austria, Hamburg, West Germany and Basel, Switzerland each had a major exhibition about witches and witchhunts. In Hamburg the exhibition organizers presented events from the 1970s as a continuation of the historical witchhunts: the exhibition documented the accusations (in many cases false) made against scores of politically active women as sympathizing with terrorism, their stigmatization as the worst possible terrorists, devils incarnate. The organizers thus marked this new myth concerning terrorism, that it is a feminine phenomenon in which men play a subordinate role.

One distinctive trait of the appropriation of the witch into
feminist discourse is its historical inaccuracy and partial blindness. The new interest in the witch was politically biased (neglecting facts, for instance that many women who were accused of witchcraft were conservative and themselves perpetuated the male myths) and avoided a critical look at recent history. In the German feminist publications on this topic which I scrutinized, the craft and the witches since the turn of the century are lifted out of their political context, whereas studies about magic and the political realm (such as The Occult and the Third Reich by Jean-Michel Angebert and Morning of the Magicians by Louis Pauwels and Jacques Bergier) are being ignored as purely patriarchal enterprises. Despite their particular vantage point and own limited knowledge of the backdrop of the National Socialist movement these studies document the reason why the Nazi movement extended well beyond the limits of a political party into the scope of a religion. These studies show that Hitler was — to a great extent — a product of secret societies, and that the National Socialists substituted for the universe of logic and reason a cosmogony which revived the Pagan myths of the ancestors. Angebert traces the swastika back to Hitler's early experiences with black magic, and to the neo-gnostic Thule Society. The National Socialist Party's official paper, the Völkischer Beobachter, had been the paper of this racist, antisemitic occult sect. Ten initiates of the Thule Society took on key roles in the Nazi movement. One of them, Dietrich Eckart, the Editor-in-chief of the Völkischer Beobachter and counselor to Hitler, told his intimates on his deathbed:
"Follow Hitler. He will dance, but it is I who have written the music. We have given him the means for communicating with them.

... Don't weep for me: I shall have had more influence on the course of history than any other German." Contrary to common explanations of the Third Reich as a continuation of the Reichs of Bismarck and William II, the Germany of Hitler was to be the third epoch of the human species. The aim of the prophet (Hitler) and his community of the adepts (the party) was the production of beings, in the long run "the coming of the sons of God. All of the force of creation will be concentrated in a new species....This new species will infinitely surpass modern man." The extensive testimony by many witnesses offered in this study documents that "Nazism's ultimate goal was the mutation of man and his chimeric transformation into a god," a goal which developed under the influence of Nietzsche's thought. Before pursuing its own goal of creating the superman of the new age, Hitler's black magic of the neo-Pagan Nazi philosophy struggled with various movements of white magic, such as the anthroposophy of Rudolf Steiner. The opposition between black and white magic is still present today, although not manifested in the same way. Whereas the Nazis' burned down Steiner's Goetheaneum in Dornach, Switzerland on New Year's Eve 1922 and attacked masonic brotherhoods, in the 1970s in West Germany, the struggle between sects of black magic and white magic is removed from the political realm. This fact, however, does not preclude political influence of some lodges. The women's movement touched upon a taboo by using the witch as a political token figure, but it did not carefully examine
the role of occult and witchcraft during the fascist years. Instead, an effort was made to create a kind of 'counter history' which was again based on the ancient myths, but had to exclude modern history. Only by way of exclusion, shutting out the 'unwanted elements' of patriarchy and creating an alternative world to the men's sphere, was it possible for the feminist movement to pursue the dream of a better world.

One would expect that the same kind of renewed interest in the witch among feminists was present in America as well as in Europe during the nineteen seventies. This is, however, not the case. In the U.S. the generally more positive attitude towards religious traditions allowed the renewal to take place in the form of a spiritual revival of witchcraft and the founding of numerous new covens. In West Germany, however, the interest in witches is a decidedly socio-political and academic one (mostly by liberal, leftist intellectuals). The different nature of the revival of witch culture in the two countries is documented by the trends in recent literature about witches published in the U.S. and in Germany since the late seventies. With the exception of very few personal biographies of witches and ritualistic poetry, the German women's publications are historical and sociological studies that hardly ever mention spirituality or the present existence of the cult other than in Anglo-Saxon countries. In American publications the historical fact of the medieval persecutions of thousands of women as witches is mentioned only in passing. Europe is regarded as the medieval spiritual center of a pre-patriarchal
religion. In these books the reader is informed about witchcraft as a cult, about its spiritual content and practice.\textsuperscript{94}

These culturally differing notions of witches account in part for the American reception of Helma Sanders-Brahms' repeated use of the term 'witch' and the witch images in Germany, Pale Mother, and may contribute to the film's being regarded as apolitical.\textsuperscript{95} In my opinion it is imperative, for a better understanding of the references made by the director, to be aware of the context into which the German feminist movement has put the term "witch."

In her excellent analysis of the witch phenomenon in the German feminist movement, its development and mythological and political connotations, Silvia Bovenschen critically remarks that the use of the term 'witch' by feminist women has become a fad:

The topic of "witches" has become fashionable, has indeed already acquired a fatal glamour. Is the image of the witch a wish projection resulting from unrealized female potential? Are witches for feminism what Spartacus, the rebellious peasants, the French revolutionaries and the Bolsheviks are for the socialists?\textsuperscript{96} These questions clearly mark the political character of the phenomenon. How did the witch turn into a political symbol? It developed in a way that is characteristic of the German women's movement during the mid to late seventies:

The rumor spreads and an image crystallizes. But apparently without the explicit intention of constructing, \textit{a posteriori}, the continuous revolutionary, historical
continuity of feminism. The assimilation of the witch into feminist visual and linguistic parlance happened spontaneously, not as the result of a plan. There must be a more direct preconceptual relationship — possibly in connection with a diffuse historical idea — between the word on the one hand and the personal experiences of today’s women on the other. [In] this experiential appropriation of the past[...] elements of social and historical fantasy are incorporated, which are sensitive to the underground existence of forbidden images: it is anarchical and rebellious in its rejection of chronology and historical accuracy.97

Bovenschen points out the diffuse, unplanned character of the use of the term "witch" by feminists. The witches' diversity resists the simple dichotomies of the mainstream patriarchal culture which makes her an ideal symbol of the feminist quest for an opening in those closed structures of binary oppositions. Margot Adler's definition of witches reflects the new image of the witch, the reasons for the feminists' attraction to the witch as a political model and exemplifies some of the strong new associations that the word can evoke:

The Witch, after all, is an extraordinary symbol — independent, anti-establishment, strong, and proud. She is political, yet spiritual and magical. The witch is woman as martyr, she is persecuted by the ignorant; she is the woman who lives outside society and outside society's definition of woman. In a society that has traditionally oppressed women there are
few positive images of female power. Some of the most potent of these are the Witches...

It's an awareness that witches and gypsies were the original guerrillas and resistance fighters against oppression - particularly the oppression of women - down through the ages. Witches have always been women who dared to be: groovy, courageous, aggressive, intelligent, nonconformist, explorative, curious, independent, sexually liberated, revolutionary.98

The last paragraph, if isolated and taken out of context would fall into the 'romanticizing' category that Bovenschen criticizes: "To elevate the historical witch post festum to an archetypcal [sic] image of original women's freedom and vigor would be unimaginably cynical, considering the magnitude of her suffering".99 This warning in Bovenschen's study is followed by the assertion of potential for resistance in the present:

On the other hand, the revival of the witch's image today makes possible a resistance which was denied to historical witches.

This moment of resistance is, however, contemporary and political. It is not based in mythology even though it occasionally makes use of mythological imagery.100

Witch myths and mythology are in fact crucial in an analysis of the content and forms of this present resistance. Since Helma Sanders-Brahms in her film Germany, Pale Mother employs the witch discourse in a number of different ways in various instances, the question arises as to the nature and function of these verbal and
visual references. Is the director's use of the witch part of the present resistance of the 1970s? Does it perhaps criticize the ongoing discourse? Or does the film make a statement about the witch discourse in the Nazi era and/or in the feminist movement of the 1970s? The witchcraft symbolism in the opening scene leaves no doubt about the importance of the theme in *Germany, Pale Mother*. The director breaks the convention of the establishing long shot with a close-up of the reflection of the Nazi flag on dark, impenetrable water. Like the remains of a sunken ancient culture, memories of the Nazi past reappear before the viewers' eyes as a distorted, fragmenting reflection. After setting the stage in this first scene, the director forces the viewer into a sharper focus with the extreme close-up of the Nazi flag: the frame is divided horizontally into a white top half and a red bottom half, both covered with black flies. This enigmatic image, which, as the camera moves upward, reveals itself as the Nazi flag, symbolically captures Hitler as devil: the Lord of Flies. This representation of the Nazi movement's flag shot from an extreme low angle, unfurled in the wind, with dark shadows and framed by darkness, takes the viewer back to original images from the Third Reich: the final frame of this scene is a quote from a scene preceding the party congress speeches in Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*.101

The persistence of the century old trivial myths about witches in the present is documented in a number of recent sources. To mention only two examples I would like to quote from Bovenschen's analysis and from the Hamburg exhibition (a text about present day
The reactionary-antifeminist basic premise that operates with the supposedly dangerous hypertrophical female sexuality had already been used in the writings of the witch hunters. Here [in Will Peuckerts writings, 1967] it is only slightly weakened. In trying to assess what damage they [the witches] are to be held responsible for, the significant characteristic seems to be their power to counter the laws of nature (flying, changing things across vast distances, influencing the weather and other natural phenomena).

The director Sanders-Brahms employs those trivial myths in the first scene in Lene’s uncle’s mansion in Berlin. We see Lene and Anna playing in the bathtub and hear the director’s voice-over commentary on their life together as "loving each other, being free, and flying over the rooftops like the witches." This statement contains the three classic components of trivial myth: 1. "loving each other": the strongest recurrent theme in witch mythology, namely that all women pose a threat to male power through their sexuality; i.e. female sexuality is labeled inherently destructive. This claim to power has been projected onto women by men ever since the Hexenhammer, and can be found in many writings, from Rousseau to Schopenhauer and Krafft-Ebing. In this view not just a certain type of woman with special attributes is stigmatized as the threatening witch, but all women through their sexuality. 2. "being free": the stigmatization of the woman who is not in a male’s possession, an outsider, not under the authority of a man.
Paracelsus had already stated this criterion as one of the distinctive features of witches by which one could identify them. 3. "flying over the roofs": their defiance of the laws of nature.

During the voice-over commentary, a sudden cut separates the bathing scene from the image of a flight over a German city in ruins (documentary footage shot from a plane). The joyous comment about the two women's flying, usually associated with anarchic activity at witches' gatherings, forms a striking opposition to what would be expected as a commentary on the pictures of the bombed out German cities. Or, rather, the image clashes with the words. Alain Bergala even sees joy in the fantastic use of documentary footage in this and later scenes:

Bien loin de renvoyer à une quelconque horreur de la guerre, les plans d'actualités qui traversent le film - je pense à ces somptueux plans de ville en ruines filmés d'avion à basse altitude - y fonctionnent de façon ludiquement jubilatoire, quelque chose comme une vision subjective de sorcière survolant des toits éventrés.

He points out that these scenes are typical for Sanders-Brahms in that she has the women experience the most freedom when the patriarchal society is gone to pieces. The shattering of the old forms of the male society allows for hopes of a different new world. The war ruins are bourgeois structures that are broken open, cracked. This is associated with great hope. However, I fail to see anything joyous in the pictures of the ruins. This
entire witch scene is characterized by strong contrasts. Image and comment together form an oxymoron-like structure: it starts with a seemingly innocent, naive image of mother and child playing, combined with a political comment about their identity, and then a political image of male destruction and the women’s ‘romantic’ comment which is obviously utopian, out of touch with reality. In a provocative and shocking way the director contrasts men’s politics with this radically different women’s concept of politics. I see a distinct danger that Sanders-Brahms mother-daughter witches come across simply as deluded by feminist idealism, not unlike the witches in the medieval Hexenhammer who treated as deluded creatures in the hands of the devil.

In addition to the above-mentioned allusions to the old trivial myths, the statement "we loved each other in the bathtub" gives this mother-daughter relationship lesbian undertones which are backed up by the images of the dance scene in the mansion. In Germany, Pale Mother, the filmmaker does not simply reverse the oedipus complex into an Electra complex (daughter in love with her father), but instead implies homoerotic bonds. The strong ties between Lene and Anna make both of them want to exclude the father who becomes the "Other." While the mother-daughter relationship touches upon the prevailing homoerotic taboo, what Lene and Anna establish is not a lesbian incest love relationship, the filmmaker only hints at the psychological/emotional bond. This exclusively feminine sphere is a feminist utopian projection. When the male principle breaks into this closed system (e.g. the soldier Hans returning from war) this
women's realm cannot endure. On a symbolic level this relationship between the two women can be understood as questioning a new myth that surfaced often in the pioneer days of the new feminist movement in Germany: namely that of the supportive and protective feminine sphere, that women love one another. The fact that the bath scene breaks off open-ended with the overwhelming destruction by men indicates that the women's alternative is a personal, euphorically utopic vision, contradicted by real life experiences during the war and postwar period, an implicit criticism of the retreat into the private sphere. Those moments of euphoria are isolated and encapsulated. They are set off by the visual breaks separating them from the preceding and following images, and thus Sanders-Brahms avoids new mystification. Ultimately Lene and Anna live in a world of male domination (war, destruction and their being pushed back into the private sphere of the home as soon as the soldiers return) and they are destroyed along with that world. Their freedom and strength turn out to be a temporary illusion and the fact that they still are male possessions is proven through the depersonalized rape scene. The witch can be taken, "it is the victor's right" (Lene's comment to Anna). The victory over the old system only appeared to be so.107

The term witch is also used by the director in voice-over during the father's visit, commenting on the real and psychological condition of the relationship between mother, daughter and father. In the statement "What was my father to do with me? I much rather wanted to be a witch with Lene amidst the ruins," the temptation to
romanticize female bonding is made most obvious. This sequence of
the encounter with her father follows Lene's dance with Anna which
in turn plays with the notion of the witches' gatherings where naked
witches were said to be dancing heathen fertility rituals.\textsuperscript{108}

As mentioned earlier, apart from the verbal allusions to the
witch figure the film also employs the symbol in its visual code.
In the scenes in which Lene walks through the woods, she herself, as
she is telling the fairy-tale of the old woman freeing the robber's
bride, visually resembles that figure of the witchlike woman. Lene
is removed from the social context and situated in the surroundings
in which witches were typically pictured: "often gloomy, hidden,
dark places like cemeteries, ruins and remote clearings."\textsuperscript{109}
Like the old woman who helps the bride escape, but ultimately has no
power to bring justice, Lene can guide her daughter only so far, but
ultimately Anna will have to live in the men's world.

Thus the image emphasizes the direct parallel between the
fairy-tale where the old woman takes the young one away from the
murderer's house and Lene who leads her daughter away from the
murderers, trying to escape. The ability of the old woman to pass
on her knowledge to the young one is a very dubious one: in the end
she does not possess strength. It is society that reckons with the
robber, just as Lene does not have the strength needed to survive
the coexistence with the murderers.

The threat that Lene poses to male power, to Hans' authority as
head of the family and father is expressed through the symbol of the
teeth. Teeth are closely associated with a creature's power, in man
often with sexual power. Elias Canetti has pointed out this important symbol:

"The effect of teeth on man is so strong and manifold: those of strange and stronger animals as well as his own. Their character is between that of an integral part of his body and that of a weapon; that they fall out or could be punched out only makes them resemble a tool even more. The teeth are the armed guards of the mouth. (...) The narrow gorge is...the ultimate threat."

As a creature of nature, the witch is often represented as devouring her victims, using her teeth as weapons and thus in the same category as the emasculating vampire. As Bovenschen writes: "Woman as sphinx, as demon, as unbridled sensual creature, at the extreme even in possession of the infamous vagina dentata, wafts through the annals of cultural history." Teeth and mouth are symbols of captivity and in sexual terms are connected to the ultimate threat to male sexuality: the vagina dentata (Canetti). The physical threat to Lene through its blanket character (dentist: "I don't know what exactly it is, but I can't guarantee that it won't affect the whole body. I will have to pull all her teeth.") very much reminds one of the arbitrariness and totality of the witch trials.

In the historical parallel with the witch the feminists fulfilled their need for history in the most radical way. In Bovenschen's account this use of the witch symbol can become a weapon against mystification of femininity:
...the demystification (...) allows the association between witches and the ancient feminine myths of the past to become something relevant not only to the past, but primarily to the present and future: liberation from enforced role behavior and diffuse anxiety, which in part also consists of dismantling the evaluation and mythification of femininity built up during the centuries of patriarchal domination. Women establish their own autonomy by invoking the feminine "witch" myth, and it only looks like a new myth has been created. (...) The mimetic moment in the demonstrations exemplifies on the one hand a critique of and ironic approach to the male mystification of the female, and on the other, a relationship to history and nature which actually is unique. In the image of the witch, elements of the past and of myth oscillate, but along with them, elements of a real and present dilemma as well. In the surviving myth, nature and fleeting history are preserved. Sanders-Brahms' use of the witch image plays off these political actions and foregrounds not only the ancient feminine myths, but also the limitations of the dismantling, acknowledging its limited power. The representation through the clash of image and language implies the problematic of the split between very idealistic women (whether they draw their energy from a reactionary motherhood ideology in the thirties and forties or the matriarchal utopias of the new women's movement) and the political/historical reality of the world they live in. It seems to me, that the 'oscillating' nature of the witch attracted the director, since it opens up
several different levels of allegorical and symbolic use, which is in some instances twice removed. Angelika Bammer has pointed out that the film, at times, seems to be lifted out of history. I would claim that references to the 'witch' discourse can be read as critical by way of their structural function in the film (e.g., break, even shock). However, the references always contain many implications and are therefore ambiguous.

Lene's utopian new life with her daughter, outside the bourgeois order, separating herself from the world around her and trying to create an entirely different sphere of her own, fits into the socio-historical picture of the period. However, Lene is as unaware of how much she shares the dreams of the dominant ideology, as the feminist movement was unaware of the historical precedent of the role of the occult in the Third Reich.
Notes

2Bammer 96.
5Elsaesser 4.
8Elsaesser 4, one prominent example of politicized melodrama is Fassbinder’s Angst essen Seele auf (Ali) as Judith
Mayne's article "Fassbinder and Spectatorship" *New German Critique*, 12 (1977): 61-74 demonstrates.

9Elsaesser 3.

10In this there is a parallel to the mother's life in Peter Handke's *Wunschloses Unglück*.

11Gledhill 45.


14Bernward Vesper's book *Die Reise* was first published in 1977.

15This phenomenon is also documented by Ruth Beckermann in her film *Wien Retour* (1984).


17See also chapter on Nazi ideology for details on Lene's non-commitment.


19Interview with Helma Sanders-Brahms that I conducted in Berlin in November 1985.

21 Canetti 73.


23 In that respect, Hans is reminiscent of Wolfgang Borchert's *Man Outside*.


25 Seiter 569.


27 Canetti 221-222.

28 Bammer 100.


31 Herman & Lewis 150.

32 Herman & Lewis 150.

33 Herman & Lewis 140.

34 Herman & Lewis 144.

35 Eva Hiller, "mütter und töchter. zu "deutschland, bleiche mutter" (helma sanders-brahms), hungerjahre (jutta brückner), daughter rite (michele citron)." *fuf*, 24 (1980): 30 (my
Ellen Seiter, "Women's History, Women's Melodrama: Deutschland, bleiche Mutter." German Quarterly, 59, 4 (1986): 569-581. I am quoting from another version of this article: Ellen Seiter, "What have your sons done to you": Germany, Pale Mother." paper read at the 1985 SCS Annual Conference in New York.


Helma Sanders-Brahms, Deutschland, bleiche Mutter: Film-Erzählung. Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch, 1980. Translation of quotes from this book and all other German sources by GW.

Interview with Helma Sanders-Brahms that I conducted in Berlin in November 1985.

See The Second Sex by Simone de Beauvoir, in which she writes about the women being outsiders to the male order, and thus living in a separate sphere.

A point that Helma Sanders-Brahms specifically stressed in the interview: that she basically only met her father at the age of eight, if one disregards the one brief visit during the war. He only came to live with her and her mother when she was ten years old.

Sanders-Brahms 25; See also the mother's life during the war in Peter Handke’s Wunschloses Unglück, (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1972) 20-34: "Diese Zeit half meiner Mutter, aus sich herauszugehen und selbständig zu werden. Sie bekam ein Auftreten, verlor die letzte Berührungsangst."(20) "Der Krieg [...] war für meine Mutter kein die zukünftige Empfindungswelt mitbestimmendes Angstgespenst [...], sondern zunächst nur das Erlebnis einer sagenhaften Welt, von der man bis dahin höchstens die Prospekte betrachtet hatte."(25) "Meine Mutter wurde nicht schreckhaft, lachte höchstens..."(30) "Schon erzählte sie von 'meiner Zeit damals' obwohl sie noch nicht einmal dreißig Jahre alt war."(34)

Handke shows exactly this point also in postwar Austria: His father a broken tyrant and his potentially stronger mother.

Annemarie Tröger, "Die Dolchstoßlegende der Linken: 'Frauen haben Hitler an die Macht gebracht', in: Frauen und
Wissenschaft, Beiträge zur Berliner Sommeruniversität für Frauen, Berlin, 1976, 345. zitiert nach: Maruta Schmidt und Gabi Dietz, "Haben die Frauen Hitler an die Macht gebracht?" Frauen unterm Hakenkreuz. Berlin: Elefanten Press, 1983, 11. This introduction proves through documentation the falseness of the myth that women were responsible for the fact that Hitlers NSDAP won the elections.

50 Sanders-Brahms 25.
51 Sanders-Brahms 26.
52 Sanders-Brahms.
53 Maruta Schmidt, Gabi Dietz, 11.

54 Leila Rupp, Mobilizing Women for War. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1978, 18f. The thinking was quite anachronistic and in contrast to the actual technological advances of the time.

55 Rupp 17.
58 Klinksiek 70.
60 Rupp 44.
61 Rupp 41.
101

62Klinksiek 72. This goes hand in hand with the ban on birth control. There was a legislated prudishness for the little people.

63Klinksiek on marriage and family: 68-86. Quote from the 1939 edition of the Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch (BGB).

64Klinksiek 71. See Engels on the nature of patriarchy in Der Ursprung der Familie and Theweleit who says that the Nazi may be the purest form of the patriarchal man.

65Klinksiek 74f.

66Rupp 17.


68This, along with HSB's major premise that there is no such possibility for anybody not to be affected by the war refutes A.Bammer's argument that the film presents the daughter as "in-nocent (one who is 'not harmed, not touched by things" (106)

69Klinksiek 78.

70Koontz 200.

71Bammer 101.

72Jan Mouton, "Women as Mothers / Women as Others" paper presented at the Annual Conference of Women in German, 1985.


74Bammer: "For instead of sustaining a critique of the politics of mythical discourse, Sanders-Brahms ends up
reconstituting woman as a once again mythical, and thus mystified figure."(107) and Miriam Hansen in her response to Ellen Seiter's paper.


76 Zipes 139.

77 Zipes 141.


79 In the interview Sanders-Brahms mentions as her background a strong involvement in the 1968 student movement, rather than in feminist groups. Her first two film projects dealt with labor problems. From this experience, the director learned that a political message cannot be taught in that way in films effectively and successfully. Although she acknowledges the achievements of feminism such as shelters for beaten wives etc. she insists on the radical claim of a necessary change in patriarchal social structures as prerequisite for real improvement. All the little steps that feminists have taken in the right direction have not made them better mothers whose sons don't become little chauvinists similar to
their fathers. In the interview she says: "Film for me is: seeking truth. Truth in the sense of realism which allows the viewer to acknowledge problems, instead of offering utopian solutions."

80Bammer 107.

81The first paragraph of this chapter is based on information obtained in the interview with the director, conducted in November 1985 in Berlin. For more information of the relationship between the filmmaker and the feminist film journal frauen und film see the interview printed in fuf, 13 (1977): 21-31. This issue also contains articles on some of Sanders-Brahms' films. See also Helke Sander's very positive remarks about Germany, Pale Mother: "Krankheit als Sprache. Eindrücke von den Berliner Filmfestspielen 1980", fuf, 23 (1980): 25.

82This claim can be supported by any number of statements made by various German women about their role and the role of other women in the women's movement. Most recently it is documented by Andre Müller's interview with the film director Margarethe von Trotta in DIE ZEIT NO. 29, 18. Juli 1986, 15-16. For an assessment of the different political, historical, and sociological factors that characterize the West German Women's Movement in opposition to the American Women's Movement see Hilke Schlaeger, "The West German Women's Movement" New German Critique, 13 (1978): 59-68.

83Sanders-Brahms.

84Ginette Vincendeau points out the conflict between feminist cinema and auteur cinema in France which is also a very real conflict for the West German women filmmakers: "To the
unresolved debate between women film-makers identifying themselves as such on the one hand, and those claiming their identity as auteur-e-s irrespective of gender (and hence often shunning the FFF'), is added the tension inherent in trying to hive (sic!) the festival off its 'ghetto'."(156) in: Ginette Vincendeau, "Women as Auteur-e-s: Notes from Créteil." Screen, 27, No 3-4 (1986): 156-62. Sanders-Brahms as one of the two most prominent, most successful German women directors is clearly an example of the filmmakers who claim auteur status.

85 In September 1979 Sanders-Brahms wrote the text that she speaks as voice-over comments in the film; see HSB, Deutschland, bleiche Mutter - Film-Erzählung (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1980), 112.

86 See also Heide Gottner-Abendroth about utopias in the New Left and the Women's Movement, where she refers to Irigaray's utopia being based on matriarchal structures. "Von hier aus gelangt Irigaray zu ihren gesellschaftstheoretischen Andeutungen, die utopischen Charakter haben: Die weibliche Sprache könne aber erst gefunden werden, wenn die in der hysterischen Stummheit potentielle, doch gelähmte Kraft zur Entfaltung käme. Diese Kraft, der Boden der weiblichen Sprache als Kontinuum zwischen Körper, Sinnlichkeit und kosmisch erfahrener Welt (die symbolische Sprache von Mythos und Dichtung), hatte ihre Wurzeln in der archaischen Beziehung der Tochter zur Mutter. Diese Beziehung ist zerstört, verdrängt und verblichen. Um ihre vollen Gehalte wiederzufinden, ist es wohl nötig, bis vor die griechisch-patriarchale Kultur zurückzugehen, in eine archaisch matriarchale Zeit.(12) in: Heide Göttner-Abendroth.

E.g. Luisa Francia, Hexen (1979).


Luisa Francia, Mond, Tanz, Magie (Verlag Frauenoffensive, 1986). Judith Jannberg, Ich bin eine Hexe (Bonn: Verlag Gisela Meussling, 1983). The following quote from Hilke Schlaeger's article (see note 82 above) illustrates the attitudes toward spirituality in the German movement: "The intellectual standards of the women's movement in the Federal Republic are not especially high. Otherwise it would be difficult to explain the unquestioning acceptance of such anti-intellectual discoveries as the romanticization of self-therapy, spiritualism, love of the moon and the primeval mother, and the limitation of emancipatory activity to the ability to handle a speculum."(67)

the joint signature of two French scholars whose fields of specialization include regional history and the history of religions. Their approach in this book seems to be from inside the cult, rather than a clearly political vantage point. The two scholars leave out extensive parts of the German political-ideological scene such as Arthur Dinter's writings and the Ludendorff circle.

89 Angebert 163, 165, 169, 173.
90 Rauscnng commenting on the focus of Hitler's magic vision. Angebert 178.
91 Angebert 189.
92 See note 82 above.
93 See note 88 above.
95 See e.g. Ellen Seiter's paper, acknowledging the influence of her students' reception of the film; and Jan Mouton on melodrama in "Women as Mothers/Women as Others." Both papers were presented at the Women in German Annual Conference in Portland, Oregon, 1985.
Typically, in a number of scenes in this film the flag is represented this way: from a low angle, blowing in the wind, with shadows.

The authors of the Hexenhammer (Malleus Maleficorum) cannot really imagine loving women, however, they see them loving a devil or demon. Bovenschen 91.

Bovenschen 105-7 and Thomas Hauschild 24-25.

Bovenschen 97.


Bergala traced this characteristic in four of Sanders-Brahms' films: Germany, Pale Mother, Heinrich, Shirin's Wedding and The Earthquake in Chili.

This is also the case in Kleist's Earthquake in Chile. While both works first create the hope for and illusion of victory, they take it back in the end. Sanders-Brahms' strong fascination with this author (cf. her film Heinrich) is part of a new Kleist reception and adaptation during those years, especially from the side of the women, e.g. Christa Wolf (cf. Kein Ort Nirgends.)

Thomas Hauschild 12.
109 Thomas Hauschild 12.

110 See Sigmund Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*.


112 Bovenschen 90.

113 Canetti 208.

114 Bovenschen 90.
CHAPTER II

Through a Girl's Eyes: Body Politics and Fear of War

I. Marianne Rosenbaum and the Aesthetics of Angst.

Whereas Helma Sanders-Brahms' film Germany, Pale Mother (1979) took a look at the impact of fascism and war on two young adults and their family life (focusing mostly on the mother, questions of motherhood and the notion of individual suffering), Jutta Brückner's film Years of Hunger (1979) dealt with the war's heritage and the failed denazification as they leave their traces in a post-war family to the extent where the adolescent daughter is driven into a most severe existential crisis. Marianne Rosenbaum's Peppermint Frieden (1982) however, goes back to the basis of fascism and the foundation of post-war Germany as the formative experiences of a young child. The film exposes the mechanisms of proto-fascist upbringing still prevalent in post-war Germany when people often made little more than half-hearted attempts toward a transition into the new democratic society as imposed by the allies.

The filmmaker started work on the film in 1978. The premiere took place in Germany in 1982. Although the work is autobiographical and the director started to work on the project after she
had her daughter, the film does not concern itself predominantly with the mother-daughter, or father-daughter relationship, but rather with the child's own way of coping with the threat of war. This threat of a new war has been on the increase in Germany since the end of World War II. For an understanding of the cultural atmosphere out of which the film developed it is necessary to refer to the political events of these years, involving the American presence in Germany and elsewhere in Europe. During the Carter administration America's peace-keeping intentions and its overt and covert imperialist ambitions in Europe and the Middle East triggered mass demonstrations, terrorism, and revolutions in different countries. In Germany the anticipation of the final vote on the deployment of 108 Pershing II Cruise Missiles in the fall of 1983 had a dramatic influence on the political climate in that country. The deployment of these nuclear warheads on German territory with their unparalleled destructive potential gave the peacekeeping efforts an increased urgency. America's role in the peacekeeping efforts was viewed as negative and a possible nuclear war on central European territory was fresh on everybody's mind and was therefore reflected not only in the news media but also in art, especially the visual arts.¹

Marianne Rosenbaum does not rewrite history from a woman's point of view, but rather creates a powerful case study of terror—the creation of fear for political exploitation. Combining an idiosyncratic symbolism with insights gained from individual and mass psychology, *Peppermint Frieden* renders the child's understanding
of the world based on her personal experience and her internalized fear of war in West German society during the cold war. Whereas grown-ups have learned to compensate for their deep-seated fears and rationalize them away ("Seoul is much further away than Minsk and Smolensk"), the little girl’s (the protagonist’s name is also Marianne) imagination is an ideal vehicle for the director to show fear. She uses the child’s sometimes more distinct, direct understanding of her world as well as her sometimes grotesque, but very revealing misunderstandings. The film demonstrates how the natural potential for love, sexuality and pleasure are replaced by fear and hatred of enemy images during the formative years. The film’s achievement lies in the wit with which it plays off the adult world against the child’s experience of it in order to produce an anti-war message.

Peppermint Frieden is carried by the child’s way of seeing, in a very literal sense, visually, and in a more abstract sense, her view of the world which is incongruous with that of the adults. Children have a natural resistance against superimposed political perversions such as man-made suffering and war. The film dispels the popular myth that children under the age of six are not affected by politics in their surroundings, that they are only influenced by their parents and do not have conscious memories of their earliest years.

As a child Rosenbaum was confronted with a dual anxiety: her personal fear which resulted from the losses of loved ones, and with the fear of society. Through the media and the purposely instilled
political fear of the revengeful attack by the Russians, during the cold war, an enemy was projected. Both fears had become a part of Rosenbaum's life as she grew up in Bavaria.4

At a very young age the filmmaker experienced the existential threat of nonbeing5 when people whom she loved simply disappeared. First her tender loving, nurturing father (who had taken the place of the sick mother), then others like the family doctor — in the film represented as the Jewish physician Dr. Klug. As the director grew up, she had to deal with her partly irrational, partly empirically-based fear that every time she loved someone this person would disappear or die. This fear is translated in the film into the little girl's associative connection between caressing herself or someone she loves and their disappearing or dying. One day Mr. Frieden is gone, just as her father and Dr. Klug were taken away from her. In the beginning Marianne had not understood why they disappeared, but religious instruction teaches her that Mr. Frieden's love for Nilla was a mortal sin. The girl learned that being gentle to oneself and to others, enjoying tenderness brings about punishment.

Peppermint Frieden shows the deep emotional imprint which the losses incurred during the war leave on the little girl. The film insists on Marianne's acute perception of the changes around her and exposes where the limited knowledge of the child simply prevents her initially, but only temporarily, from drawing the correct conclusions. Marianne knows that Dr. Klug did not go on vacation, that he has been taken away, but she does not know why or where.
She can draw conclusions from her observations and the active and passive roles of the people around her. It is obvious to her that her mother and grandmother know more about the disappearance of fellow citizens, but do not react out of fear. The girl takes note of the many gaps: the absence of people, of talk about certain topics, the silence of grown-ups at certain moments, the whispering, and her eyes being covered by her parents. That kind of "editing" of her perception of the world leaves marks, very obvious blank spots. In that context the child is a reflection on the apolitical, immature mass of Germans: although confined to the narrow world of her home environment she witnesses the impact of fascist politics in her surroundings and if she were allowed to, she might want to act, whereas they don't. The decisive factor is how her perceptions are transformed into consciousness. The film bears witness that politics are part of the family life and in which ways that is the case. It manages not only to expose the myth of the innocent apolitical Germans as fiction, but also in its psychological images depicts the origins of such characters and their submission to authoritarian power because of fear of freedom. As Wilhelm Reich stated about the apolitical individual:

> It is erroneous to believe that this being-unpolitical is a passive psychic condition. On the contrary, it is a highly active attitude, a defense against the awareness of social responsibility. ...The socially irresponsible individual is the individual absorbed in sexual conflicts.6

In his social and clinical sex-economy Reich demonstrated, that "the
mechanism which makes the masses of people incapable of freedom is
the social suppression of genital love life in children, adolescents
and adults." As the filmmaker stated, she has adopted
her basic premise Reich's insight into the sexual economy of the
masses being at the root of authoritarian (and especially fascist)
mass psychology. Neither in the film nor in her book or magazine
interviews does the filmmaker point out the importance of Reich as a
source for her thinking or argue his theories. Important for her
socio-political argumentation against the production of fear is only
her belief that the basis of the development of the individual's
sexual conflicts lies within the authoritarian family, whose effect
is reinforced later by social institutions:

the interlacing of the socio-economic with the sexual
structure, as well as the structural reproduction of society,
takes place in the first four or five years of life, and in
the authoritarian family. The church only continues this
function later on. In this way the authoritarian state
develops its enormous interest in the authoritarian family:
the family is the factory of its structure and ideology."

The first part of Peppermint Frieden (until the end of the war)
exposes the structural reproduction of the German fascist society,
by the family as well as by the public sphere. After the war is
over, the basis laid by the mother's repressive manipulations is
reinforced by the organized repression of sexuality now fully
implemented through the Catholic church, in the priest's preaching
and religious instruction in school.
the sexual inhibitions which constitute the prerequisite of the continued existence of the authoritarian family and the essential basis of the structure of the lower middle class individual are brought about with the aid of religious fears which thus become sexual guilt feelings and deeply anchored.¹⁰

The film documents the little girl's behavioral changes effected by the repression of natural sexuality:

It produces, by inhibiting sexual curiosity and sexual thinking in the child, a general inhibition of thinking and of critical faculties. In brief, the goal of sexual suppression is that of producing an individual who is adjusted to the authoritarian order and who will submit to it in spite of all misery and degradation.¹¹

Whereas Marianne is both strongly affected by the repressive teachings and reacts strongly against them, Marianne's friends represent the typical authoritarian characters who are aligned by the fear-instilling dogma.

Wilhelm Reich's writings were based on insights of the 1930's and 40s about the role of mysticism and specifically the Catholic Church in laying the basis for the fearful authoritarian personality. Reich points out the critical edge which reactionary forces had over progressive movements:

Up to now, the revolutionary movement has made the serious mistake of considering sexuality a "private matter." But it is not a private matter to political reaction which always
proceeds on two fronts simultaneously: that of economic politics, and that of "moral revival." The movement for freedom, thus far, has proceeded on a single front. It is a matter of mastering the sexual problem on a social scale, of changing the backstage of personal living into mass mental hygiene, of including the sexual problem in the total fight, instead of restricting oneself to population politics.¹²

During the Weimar Republic, the political left limited itself to economic issues and questions of political participation, while the reactionary forces were the only ones to fully recognize the political importance of sexuality as a part of the authoritarian system. However, the reactionary forces camouflaged this knowledge and their strategic use of it. Although Nazism had tried to replace Catholicism with its very own myths and repressions,¹³ this role of mysticism and specifically the Catholic Church, the conditions and strategies described, remained the same after the war, in the late fifties and sixties, and will be found essentially unchanged in Bavaria until today.

Wilhelm Reich, in his American exile, manoeuvred himself and his research into a dead end and subsequently was ostracized from the profession as a communist extremist. His writings received much attention, once again, in the early seventies in Europe. Yet only the feminist movement declared the body and its suppression a political issue of the same magnitude as Wilhelm Reich had. Going beyond the limits of both feminist theory and Wilhelm Reich's insights, Rosenbaum transcends specific political movements and
partisan interest in protest against various kinds of suppression of gender (male-female), class (from the Marxist discourse) and of one person versus the other (outside enemy).

Rosenbaum is mostly concerned with the analysis of power structures in patriarchal society (the notion of "power over", i.e. the patriarchal impulse of domination, as opposed by the positive constructive energies of an individual, her subjective power to make things happen in a cooperative or solitary effort, but without gaining power over another being, dominating him/her) and the role that fear plays in the male-dominated system. The film developed out of Rosenbaum's conviction that patriarchal structures are inherently fascist structures according to Reich's definition and the new French Fascism theories of Glucksmann and Foucault which claim:

Fascism is not brought about by a coup — because it doesn't spring into existence, it is already there; it is not launched into the present imperialist society; even if it does not govern it totally, it is prevalent in certain areas, which prove that the ruling Bourgeoisie in our time has a constant fascist tendency;...Fascism is already in the state.14

In his article Glucksmann defines Fascism as "power over all domains of the lives of the oppressed masses."15 The filmmaker's own political utopia — the ideal of a non-hierarchical, non-fascist system — is implicit in her demand that we "make the world round":

These centralisms are bad in East and West. They are very patriarchal and essentially out of date because the world is
round and not a pyramid. Everywhere they build little pyramids and try to see whether they work. How can somebody far away know what I need here in Munich, what do they know in Bonn? What do they know in Moscow about what they need in Czechoslovakia? In order to preserve this world and in order to be able to respond immediately to certain conditions, one has to work decentralized. Decentralization is something more feminine....We could handle energy differently and we would not have to be so destructive and have those huge projections of friend/foe. My neighbor would be a small scale enemy, but I can handle him....We meet at festivals all over the world and share a glass of champagne and at the same time we know: because you exist, we have bombs, and because I exist you have the bombs there. Such madness! These are the final stages of this strange patriarchal system.16

This quote demonstrates Rosenbaum's awareness and criticism of what she views as the absurdity of hierarchical political power structures, as well as her conviction that fundamental social and political changes will have to occur to break the vicious circle. While opposing the oppressive patriarchal system Rosenbaum searched for the roots of this power structure in German society and found some answers in Wilhelm Reich's psychological theory of sexual repression as the basis of this issue. Reich does not limit his analysis and criticism of the authoritarian social order to the Western capitalist patriarchal society, but to all patriarchal societies:
The question is not one of culture but of the social order.
If one studies the history of sexual suppression one finds
that .... it appears at a relatively late stage of culture, at
the time of the development of authoritarian patriarchy and of
class distinctions. At that stage, the sexual interests of
all begin to serve the profit interests of a minority. This
process has assumed a solid organizational form in the
institutions of patriarchal marriage and patriarchal
family.¹⁷

Based on his historical, anthropological studies, Reich comes to the
conclusion that

Matriarchy - a historically proven fact - is not only the
organization of natural work democracy but also that of the
sex-economically natural society. Patriarchy, on the other
hand, has not only an authoritarian economic organization, but
also a catastrophically chaotic sex-economic organization. ...

The amazing thing about the sexual organization of matriarchy
was not its completely different blood relationships but its
natural self-regulation of sexual life.¹⁸

The film director Rosenbaum is far from drawing the simplistic
conclusion that reverting to a matriarch society is the answer to
the problem. Rosenbaum claims that in all existing societies (both
capitalist and communist) women are reduced to a subordinate,
negligible factor and the male dominance has created extreme forms
of power structures. Her answer seems to lie in seeking a
counter-balance, a moderation of male power-seeking. She tries to
create a consciousness of the patriarchal social order we live in, which she hopes will enable us to modify it. The misogynist fears of the conservatives as well as the threat which the women’s emancipation poses to the patriarchal order (especially to the reactionary forces within this order) is represented in the film through the veteran’s reading of the soothsayer’s prophecies. Women are recognized as a potential force which has to be kept in the subordinate, marginalized position, or else they could effect changes. As Reich has pointed out, sexually repressed women can only succumb to reactionary authoritarian systems. The little girl, however, has the potential to break out of the dominant power structure and counter the male authority.

Following Reich’s claim that

a sex-negating religion begins to develop which gradually builds up its own sex-political organization, the church in all its forms, which has no other goal than that of eradicating sexual pleasure.19

Rosenbaum assesses the key role of the church as a socio-political force. The film thus centers on how Marianne is affected by the Catholic upbringing.

In the early post-war scenes, Marianne and her friends visually exhibit their unrestricted freedom to play, their initial innocent state of mind through nakedness and tender touching, which is associated with peace. However, soon the taboo of one’s own body as the first primordial enemy is established in their lives by the priest’s religious instruction in elementary school. The film
perceptively integrates the church's openly dogmatic and restrictive strategies to keep the children in check and fearful of pleasure. *Peppermint Frieden* exposes dramatically the priest's openly manipulative intentions and double standards during his fear-instilling lessons, his teaching the sixth commandment as a mortal sin, — a lesson which makes Marianne fear that Mr. Frieden will be dead instantly, imagining him as she had seen the victims of air-raids. The little girl's deductions become visible for seconds in the images of the victims, followed by those of the GI and his lover in the same state and pose. In order to establish the notion of outside enemies, the basic psychological structure has to be prepared by the notion of the enemy within oneself: sexuality. The priest's powerful demonstration of God's omnipresence, his creation of terror, are supported by the parents' strategy of steering the children away from not only their sexuality, but anything vaguely physical (e.g. the toilet taboo.) The effect is most dramatic, when the parents with their extreme fear of the body are confronted by Marianne's question about syphilis. Hitler's racist fear of syphilis as an epidemic which the Jews brought over the Germanic race thus continues to be tied into teaching fear of sexuality. Reich already pointed out:

It is remarkable how closely linked is this theory of pollution with the political thesis of the pollution of Germanism by the "world Jew Karl Marx." The irrational fear of syphilis is the most potent source of National Socialist political Weltanschauung and antisemitism.
Marianne’s parents fear of the enemy, the Americans, is thus expressed in sexual terms. After the German society had ridded itself of all foreign elements (Jews, gypsies and others) through the final solution, Germans after the defeat were faced with the Jewish people again coming from America. The not always conscious conglomerate of sexual and political fears surfaced in the relationship of the German population with the American military.

The children’s anxiety caused by repression is reflected in their altered behavior: they don’t dare to play naked anymore, their bodies don’t move freely. Anything pleasurable, such as chewing gum, hopping on the sofa, riding in Mr. Frieden’s car, watching him kiss Nilla, is associated with guilt and causes the need for the redeeming religious rituals: the worshipping of relics, staging of biblical scenes, and confession. Rather than being simply performed, these rites are, however, at the same time criticized in various ways. The children’s worshipping the artificial limb of a veteran on one level indicates their lack of understanding, and on another criticizes the worshipping of relics as a hoax. The scene also contains a critical comment on the special status which is ascribed to disabled veterans by the authorities. In the staging of the biblical play, physical involvement and identification disturbs their concentration while performing. There is an interference of personal emotional factors in seemingly unrelated activities. The children’s physical experiences overpower the spiritual experience which the priest hopes to convey, a fact which points at the incomplete repression of the children’s physical sensations.
Finally, in one of Marianne's dream sequences, confession appears as a sham as the priest is aware of politically opportunistic manipulations. In all these cases the film director demonstrates that everyday reality and needs interfere with and defeat the purpose and impact of the religious ritual.

Whereas the fear of abandonment is one of the child's existential fears which has become connected to her fear of the body, of touching and sexuality impressed on her by the religious instruction, a second source of fear is the threat to her own life through war. This very real threat in her early childhood was perpetuated after the war in the hostile atmosphere of the cold war and the effects which fear of military retaliation by the Russians produced in the German population. As the church sermon scene in Peppermint Frieden demonstrates, the Catholic church, in its explicitly political preaching activates the people's fears and uses them for their purposes. Herr Expositus's sermon so aptly exposes his language for what it is: a conglomerate of propagandistic phrases which do not differ much from what was preached a few years earlier during the Third Reich, both by the Nazis and by the Catholic Church. Very often these phrases hide their lack of meaning behind mystical allusions of moral grandeur. (I discussed the importance of the tradition of mysticism in the Third Reich in the last chapter on Germany, Pale Mother.) This tradition is continued by the Catholic Church and other mystics like the soothsayers in post-war Bavaria. The film exemplifies their role in maintaining the authoritarian power structures.
In Bavaria aside from the Catholic church, irrational fears were supported by the predictions of Mühlihasl, an early nineteenth century Lower Bavarian soothsayer, whose prophecies have had a significant influence on the rural population into the 1980s.22

The film director relates from her own experience as a little girl: when ice had destroyed the bridge over the Danube, people remembered one of Mühlihasl’s prophecies "When the bridge over the Danube is completed, the war begins."23 When the new bridge was finished, people were intensely scared that the war would begin because the bridge was ready. When Rosenbaum returned recently to her home town, people referred to another one of the soothsayer’s warnings: "When the roads have been built, the Russians will come and then World War III will start." Since the Autobahn is being built in this area, those fears are very topical. At the time Rosenbaum worked on her film, a new edition of Mühlihasl’s prophecies was published. The filmmaker comments:

This "happened" to take place at a time when a new atmosphere of fear was being built up, when the communists and the east were again being affirmed as the enemy in the FRG. That had first been the case from 1946 to 1948 during the cold war and now again, during the last few years, just before the deployment of the Pershing II missiles. The good American weapons arrived, which "protect" us. Otherwise they would not have been necessary. During the administration of the Social Democratic Party the communist scare was put into perspective. There were talks, negotiations, even commercial
dealing. The new Christian Democratic administration and the necessity that the USA finance its weapons industry with our money made it necessary here to create the fear that we need missiles. Following that, irrational thinking was widely encouraged. Madame Teissier suddenly got TV coverage, Nostradamus was discussed, the apocalypse was anticipated for 1982, and everybody was shaking with fear. In the fall of 1983 the missile deployment was ratified. If one hears all this as separate facts, it would not look suspect....but it happened in 1948 and now again. There is a method behind this.24

An integral part of the prophecies of Mühlhiasl are male-chauvinistic scare tactics, implying that women who try to be like men would be to blame for the biggest war ever. From Mühlhiasl’s days on in the spiritist circles in Bavaria (a majority of the population in this predominantly rural, for German standards underdeveloped area close to the Czechoslovakian border) this prediction has served as a perfect instrument to keep women in their traditional role. In Peppermint Frieden the blind veteran uses it knowing that it is a tool to regain control over women who during the war had experienced that they could hold their own, and who had in fact often been doing better without their men around. Fear and regression on the part of women are results of such scares. One such regression manifests itself in the film by Marianne’s turning to the Virgin Mary as a role model.25 The prophecies related by the veteran are followed by Marianne’s fear-inspired fantasies of
the pure woman, first as the bridesmaid in white and then in the role of the Virgin Mary. The emancipation from patriarchal oppression is successfully blocked by patriarchal manipulation supported by mysticism of all origins.

As Reich pointed out, the Virgin Mary cult is a crucial element in the church's attempt to repress sexuality by the fetish of purity and sanctity. The filmmaker presents the impact of the patriarchal ideals and negative feminine role models on Marianne (especially Marianne's initial, suffering version of the Virgin Mary with stigmata of Christ's crucifixion on her hands.) Rosenbaum has the little girl act out her criticism of the patriarchal order as well: despite the danger of becoming like a man and being the cause of war, Marianne's version of the Virgin Mary later defies the image of the passive, suffering Mary invented by the Catholic church. Mary's seven sorrows (or dolores) of the Catholic dogma, represented in religious images as knives thrust into Mary's heart, become in Marianne's imagination "seven swords" with which she counters wrongdoing. Desperate in her fearful nightmares, she musters the courage to put up a fight against the aggressions of the men's world, e.g. the atomic bomb dropped by the Americans, the patriarchal voice from the radio (VolksEmpfänger.) Instead of accepting Jesus' suffering, Marianne's Virgin Mary takes care of his wounds.

In the filmic representation, Marianne's fantasy world and her actions are not two disparate entities but blend into each other, as is typical of children. Rosenbaum has her protagonist reject the
most crucial element in the Catholic dogma: the concept of suffering. To the great dismay of the priest, Marianne believes in the ideal of a strong, loving and caring mother who takes Christ from the cross and soothes his pain. In her dreams, Marianne plays the role of a strong heroine. Encouraged by this model she carries out her conviction that the suffering must end and dismantles the crucifixes in the cemetery.

Marianne's "activist" version of the Virgin negates the traditional feminine role models dictated by patriarchal culture as "natural" or holy, often under the illusion of retrieving their original character. Her belief in an idealized Virgin Mary causes Marianne to fall prey to the deception of the pure woman as a better being. She has completely internalized the church's view of sexuality as the downfall of humanity.

The film focuses on the future and ends with the beginning of a new war, the Korean War, rather than dwelling on things gone wrong in the past, and the suffering and guilt connected with it. The ending stresses the fact that nothing has been learned from history and that the next war in Europe could start at any time, because all political change will remain superficial as long as they are not based on fundamental changes in the deep structures.

This brings me to the role of the soldiers, the "enemies" which the Germans fear so much. They are on the one hand the Russians who exist mostly as a scary figment of imagination and take on a realist shape only in Marianne's memories and fantasies. Then there is the American Occupation army which plays the most crucial
role for Marianne, as the bringer of peace and love, but also as the Americans who threw the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and fight the Korean War. All power is perceived as ambivalent and untrustworthy.

The film introduces a second protagonist next to the little girl, the figure of an American GI - Mr. Frieden (German for "peace"), at the same time a symbol of peace and hope for a democratic renewal of the German society. Mr. Frieden is the focus of Marianne's attention, her role model for a new life of freedom, love and peace.

With the child's acute perception and insistent close-up point-of-view, the film observes the differences between the Germans who lived through the fascist regime and the American soldiers. Regardless of their past political involvement or lack thereof, the experience of Fascism is inscribed in the bodies of the Germans, expressed in their movements, their language, it is present in the space they occupy and the way they interact with other people.

The inhabitants of a small German town move rigidly, forcefully upright, their faces closed in a serious look which signals non-involvement, negating their presence. One of the most typical gestures is pulling the curtains shut, hiding from the view of others which is complemented by the curious look, the typical pose of peeking out of a window, from behind drawn curtains, from under the piano etc. Their mode of speaking tends to be a repressed whisper, an enigmatic, evasive answer or, when feelings finally surface, a loud scream. Contrasted with this behavior are the Americans and their modes of expression. The child's perception and experience of this new element in her life is a very sensual one,
i.e. the girl takes note of the different look, sound, smell and the
tastes they bring with them.

The first American whom Marianne meets, the officer of the
American military government, is a nice man in dress uniform, with
glasses, obviously not a soldier of the battle field but a middle-
class family man with a desk job who delegates authority. He helps
them reunite with her father as she, her mother and grandmother
arrive in Lower Bavaria as refugees. He represents the positive new
order. The American presence is felt and represented in the movie
as a positive authority that followed the chaos of war. None of the
military installations appear in the film, since the German small
town population does not come in contact with that aspect of the
American presence in Germany. All we see is an office with an
American flag and the picture of the American president on the wall
behind the officer, i.e. a demonstration of a positive patriotic,
nationalistic identification — feelings which have become
impossible in Germany after the defeat. From the ashtray on the
officer's desk Marianne picks up the cigarette butts and carefully
saves them to present them later to her father as a precious
present. America means affluence and material comfort.

Following this short initial encounter with the occupation
army, the key figure, Mr. Frieden, is introduced by his big black
American car, chewing gum he distributes among the children, the
record of American music which he leaves with his lover, and later
the coffee (real coffee which in Germany is extremely rare, hard to
get and precious at that time.) Mr. Frieden does not wear a
uniform, but the leather jacket and shirt of a pilot. His appearance is that of a typical good clean American boy with a Pepsodent smile.27

Through Marianne's eyes we see Mr. Frieden as the lover of a young woman in the village, Nilla. He has come into this Bavarian village where people know only fear, mistrust (of denunciation) and aggression/destruction. Especially the children - Marianne and her friends, have experienced these to the exclusion of all other feelings, since for them war was the only mode of life. For the children of the war, Mr. Frieden is the bringer of a new way of life. They slowly lose the reflexes that the war has taught them (e.g. taking cover at the sound of an airplane.) Peace allows them to experience their own bodies as they play along with the two lovers on the other side of the door.

The first love scene in which the children play out their own feelings and establish a bond with the new friend, establishes the children's relationship with the American soldier and the pleasures and good feelings connected with it as well as the innocent misconceptions, especially of what adults would criticize as fraternization. Myths are generated by the children as their imagination is set free.

The scene at the river in which they all take part in the play initiated by the child symbolizes the influence of the American culture on the German post war population. The American joy of life was infectious and became a model for German popular culture (rock and roll, etc.) during the post war years. The limitations of this
influence, the fact that it was seen rather critically and condemned by some is conveyed at the end of the sequence: Whereas they joined in and tried hard to forget their initial resentments and fears of what used to be the "enemy", the change is only a forced, superficial one.

The third kind of American soldier represented in the film are the military police officers who hunt down Mr. Frieden for fraternization. They belong into yet another category: the lowly troops who only execute orders, much like military and paramilitary police troops of other nations. Their faces are not shown, they are not individuals but only a function. We see the MP only briefly in the scenes that show the real events, on the lookout for Mr. Frieden's car in various places around the village, and as they enter Nilla's house to search it. However, in the scenes which represent Marianne's mental images of the events, the American MP chases Mr. Frieden like bloodhounds until he gets caught and destroyed by the village priest. In her imagination they are, significantly, part of the same force. Rather than representing a better order, these Americans assist (directly or indirectly) the Fascist German elements in this work of destruction. Mr. Frieden's love for the German woman is condemned both by his authorities and the German priest. By identifying the representative of the German Catholic church and those of the American army as representing the same power structure, jointly responsible for the destruction, Rosenbaum introduces new supernational values. In her fears that the talk of the grown-up Germans about another war (the much feared
revenge attack by the Russians) Marianne dreams of Mr. Frieden looking like he might drop a bomb from a fighter plane. Her dream defuses the threat and turns the bomber covered in white drapes into the big American car, and Mr. Frieden assures his little German friend that he has no intention of killing. Back in real life, however, the next thing we hear from him is greetings to Nilla from Seoul. Although he wanted to open a business back home and pursue a private life, his country has a new war for him to fight in Korea. The film ends with Marianne's terrible disillusionment. Although the war did not happen in her part of the world, it happened, and worst of all: the one man symbolic to her for love and peace is the one whose job it is to kill people in a different part of the world. As young as she is she learned that democracy is no more a guarantee for peace than any other political system, and the American government made her friend Mr. Frieden go to Korea, just as the German authorities had made her father go to Russia. On yet another level, beyond the little girl's disillusionment, this ending signifies the disillusionment of a large part of the German population with the American politics of showing military muscle during an age in which the nuclear holocaust has become a real possibility, all consequences of which no human being can fathom.

The representation of the American occupation troops in West Germany in *Peppermint Frieden* is divided into three different military ranks along with three different social classes. The film also differentiates between the American presence in Europe as a foreign cultural influence and as a political system of democracy.
and peace keeping very much in conflict with its policies carried out in the Korean war and other implicitly imperialist American claims. These images of a little girl's very limited, personal view of the American military presence paradoxically have the power to serve as metaphor not only of historical but current problematic overtones of the German-American alliance.

The presence of the Russians in the film falls into two categories: in the conversation of the adult villagers the Russians (or red hoods as they are referred to) are the unknown enemy, termed the Anti-Christ by the priest. The "Ivan" (a reflection of Nazi jargon "der Jude," "der Ami") watches their every move from behind the hills of the Bavarian Forest. The first threat which precedes the actual attack lies in the act of looking, of spying.

In the children's conversation, however, Marianne plays a crucial role in correcting the scary image of an enemy by relating the memories of her encounter with Russian soldiers in Dresden. In her account given in a matter-of-fact voice, she reduces the absolutely evil enemy to a friendly, polite visitor who was "totally naked" — symbolizing his love of peace, the fact that he was not threatening. Yet the fear of the Russian attack which had been spread daily in her Bavarian environment left its traces in Marianne's nightmares and mental images. There the Russians are masked soldiers coming out of haystacks and ditches. In these shots the soldiers blend into the yellow tinted image, are part of the environment from which they finally emerge. As they become discernible as figures the image changes from the uniform yellow
grey tint of black and white footage to clear bright colors: on the army truck that drives into the farm yard is a large group of friendly soldiers who wear bright red berets and crack sunflower seeds with their teeth. Only slowly Marianne’s voice recalls this memory of the Russians as the first ones who brought her food at the end of the war. And it was not "Ivan" the terrible, his name was Vladimir whose name Rosenbaum interprets as meaning "ruler of peace" however, "mir" has a double meaning of "world" and "peace" and in this combination is generally interpreted as "ruler of the world."

Rosenbaum’s images of post-fascist Germany present a highly subjective point-of view. They reveal the role of the church as an authoritarian institution and the mechanisms with which guilt is induced in the masses, as well as the political function of guilt as the basis of fear. In post-war propaganda films, the Western Allied forces promoted the concept of a collective guilt in the German population which became an important factor for the German population’s fear of the Russians, which could be used for the larger political scheme as fear of the communist enemy during the cold war. The social and personal guilt of sexual repression, however, has a far deeper psychological impact and supports the fear of the authoritarian character for a lifetime, to be potentially activated for various political aims at any time.
II. The Visual Code of Representation in Peppermint Frieden

Peppermint Frieden is shot in black and white, with only a few scenes colored in various techniques of tinting and had painting. Rather than the standard establishing shot, the film opens with an image which forces the viewer in medias res, confronting her/him with a mostly dark, crowded, not neatly defined frame. The first shot shows three children playing with gas masks on, sitting on the floor crouched into a low space later identified as under a piano, which is covered with a tablecloth for protection. They are whispering sensuous lines to one another, interrupted by one of them saying that it is a gas alarm. As the film title in pink print comes on music starts and the black and white image freezes. This first part of the scene is separated with a cut from a second part, in which the camera pans across the room, moving from two girls behind the piano rhythmically swaying to their version of Zarah Leander’s sensuous, sentimental, schmalzy song "Der Wind hat mir ein Lied erzählt." The frame widens to a long shot of the entire group of children and finally back to two of the children under the piano putting the gas masks back on. A cut separates this second part from a third sequence with the two singing girls (one in the uniform of Hitler’s youth organization for girls) as they now reenact or copy gestures from love scenes with a lot of pathos and feeling, touching each other. These images are reminiscent of scenes from silent movies and sentimental photo postcards from the 1910s and
20s. The camera angles are low, copying in turn the original representation of actresses in the movies. This stage effect is contrasted to the backdrop of a shelf of stored homemade preserves for one girl, and a piece of furniture covered with a sheet for the other one. This first scene ends as it had started, with the three children wearing only underpants and gas masks.

In the first scene the order which one would expect, the establishing shot followed by its breakdown into component parts, is thus reversed. Rather than offering an overview which is subsequently broken up into a more narrowly focused, detailed situation, the filmmaker directs the viewer straight to her protagonist, Marianne, whom she then places into the temporal and spatial context of her environment. The way this scene presents the mind set of the children introduces Rosenbaum's psychological approach, her focus on the perceptions of fear and intimacy. Neither the war per se nor the children, but rather the effect the war has on the children is represented. In this particular combination of elements lies an element of grotesque humor: the children's emotions contrast with the political reality of the day and with kitschy media representation.

From the privacy of the first scene, the film switches into the public realm in the second scene, situating one of the children from the first scene, Marianne, within her family in the public sphere of the train. A long shot serves to set the stage: through the frame of a number of train doors we see an officer walking along the corridor toward the camera. Marianne is defined by her
interaction with the grown-ups. In an over-the-shoulder-shot from behind the mother we see Marianne talking to her father (still in civilian clothes) about the little Russian boy. The mother does not participate in the conversation, she looks over her shoulder frightened and says "somebody is coming." As she turns around, her face is extremely close to the camera, which puts the viewer in the position of an eavesdropper at a keyhole (or worse: in the position of the Gestapo or police whom they all fear) inadvertently getting caught. Rather than observing one of the film personae intrude into the family conversation, the viewer inadvertently becomes the intruder. The father gets up hastily. The scene with the officer entering the train compartment is shot in a 180 degree pan. Marianne shouts "Heil Hitler" whereas her mother turns away from the scene, looking out the window, and the father (now in uniform) salutes the officer at the other end of the compartment. The following interchange between him and Marianne marks the break-up between father and child, the sudden distance that the situation has put between them through the extreme point-of-view low angle and high angle shots.

As the father leaves, the mother holds on to Marianne from behind. The relationship between mother and daughter is marked as less close than that between father and daughter by this reoccuring alignment of mother and daughter, without eye contact, with the mother making an attempt to control the daughter's feelings and their outburst (here it is a nervous scratching of the back of her hands.)
The next eleven scenes are all rather short and separated by cuts, some of which are bridged by the overlapping of the soundtrack, a feature used throughout the film. These scenes show Marianne's experience of the war as a variety of stimuli on her senses. They explore how they are short circuited or interrupted by her family so that Marianne cannot form complete mental pictures.

The first scene of this sequence elaborates on the relationship between the girl and her mother: Marianne is standing in the right foreground, throwing something on the bed spread, which the mother is straightening out with a wooden yard stick to give it an immaculate look. This image combines a number of elements: a) the denial of any activity in bed, the necessity of restoring the virginal at least in appearance; b) the yard stick as the instrument of authority, restoration of order through corporal punishment and c) the symbol of exactness, measuring and an absolute, almost military order that does not allow for exceptions. Making the bed in the home and in the military quarters are closely connected actions through Hitler's claim that the women are soldiers on the home front. Giving birth is their battle field. Although there is a war going on, the order of the home is upheld. Marianne cannot bear the chasm between this impeccable system and the breakdown of order in the public world into which her father got drawn. The camera angle is again an over the shoulder shot, this time a low angle shot from Marianne's perspective to the mother who yells at her: "Intentionally. You did that intentionally." A reverse high angle shot seems to follow from the perspective of the grown-up
(apparently the mother, which a second later turns out to be false since Marianne is in a different room, facing the door) at Marianne who sits on the floor. The continuation of the soundtrack from the last image (one still hears the mother making the upset remark: "The beautiful bed!") connects the two scenes closely despite the visual cut. Again there is a short sequence of shot reverse shots from the extreme angles of the point-of-view of the child sitting on the floor and the grown-up standing up. Marianne's look was fixed upon the door, through which a man enters wearing a paper-maché rabbit head. Marianne is in awe but recognizes it as "monkey trick." As we hear her fearfully asking whether Dr. Klug, the family doctor under the mask, will also leave because of the war, the camera rests on his face (low camera angle from Marianne's position) as he is making funny rabbit faces.

As her father had diverted her attention by complimenting her on how nicely she could say the Russian names, again she does not get an answer to her serious question but is treated as a little child who does not understand. Foreshadowing the necessity for him as a Jew to escape the Nazis, he talks to her using as his symbol the rabbit, which tends to change directions all the time, making unpredictable moves. Despite this analogy, the "rabbit" Dr. Klug gets caught. While in the next shot we see Marianne running down the stairs where she is met by him at the door, the next time it is her grandmother at the same door, whispering that he is gone. From the sign on his door, which announces that he went on a trip, she concludes that they must have taken him away.
The two familiar men in Marianne's life, her father and her doctor, are represented as tender, loving, protective and nurturing, yet somewhat unpractical. The two women -- her mother and her grandmother, however, are shown as pragmatic, informed. Their reactions to the events characterize them. The little girl's grandmother and mother engage her in a fake "non-dialogue", only pretending that they are communicating with her while behind her back they gesture to shut up and whisper. As Marianne is caught with her back to either one the impression of "keeping knowledge in", bottling it up, is visually supported by the space: the very tight framing in the narrow gorge of the staircase, with the camera at the top of the stairs looking down at dwarfed, bent over persons.

Although there is no truthful communication between them, the mother remains Marianne's main support while the men are gone. Even sitting on her lap, Marianne is turned with her back toward her. She is distant and feels alone, her head hanging low. Whereas the girl very attentively reads other people's faces, she does not keep much eye contact with her mother, knowing that she will not learn the truth from her. To divert Marianne's attention from the disappearance of Dr. Klug, the mother plays "radio broadcasting" with her. In the course of the play she forces Marianne to concentrate on herself: she is well and has grown to 110 cm, she likes to eat cherry preserves. The only safe thing in these uncertain times is the body. Focusing on one's own private needs and happiness is presented in this scene as the first strategy of living through the fascist years.
The next few scenes exemplify experiences less personal than the loss of a family friend and show varied strategies of coping with the Nazi regime in the public sphere. Marianne who in the previous scenes experienced the disappearance of Dr. Klug, learns in the next two scenes more about the fate of other Jews. However, as the film's composition suggests, for right now these separate impressions remain disjunct elements in the child's mind. They are only connected in the lined up scenes which are, however, separated by abrupt cuts. In the scene where people are arrested and taken away Marianne's mother actively attempts to cut her off from her surroundings by directing her view at an unimportant detail right in front of her nose: in the street, again standing behind the girl, she narrows the space by shoving her into the shop window. When Marianne resists this manipulation and turns around her mother holds her hand over Marianne's eyes. As if to insist on looking, on seeing the world around her, the cut is immediately followed by a much brighter, light close-up of Marianne and a friend looking (into off-screen space.) Only after a while, the viewer can situate this shot in time and space, as the camera tracks back from the mother talking to another woman (as the camera is moving downhill on the sled with the two children.) Distance from the adults indicates freedom to observe. Concurrent with the above mentioned close-up we hear Marianne's mother and the other woman whisper to each other about the cremations at the nearby concentration camp Theresienstadt.

Throughout the sledge scene the camera, in extreme naturalism, stays strictly with Marianne's perspective. The smokestacks of
Theresienstadt, together with the grown-ups, are shown from the children’s perspective in the almost blinding, desert-like, snow-covered landscape. As the mother pushes off the sledge, she is in extreme close-up for seconds, only to decrease to one of two small black figures on the distant horizon. Marianne’s focus changes to her companion in front of her and to the brick works. This shift in object of point-of-view stands out as the first large camera movement in the film, even more accentuated by the unsettling effect of the handheld camera. As they ride downhill, Marianne whispers that the grown-ups are talking about the brickworks. Her friend asks whether she is afraid. They look at the two women waving in the distance. The soundtrack that accompanies the scene is limited to whispering, first the women’s, then the children’s. The scene ends in a close-up of Marianne gazing and finally of what she is looking at: Theresienstadt. Whereas up to this point in the film the viewer sees Marianne in her social context as a protected little child, this scene puts the girl into the position of the subject, demonstrating her clarity of vision, her perceptiveness of the society she lives in. The girl appropriates through her look not only her immediate home environment, but naturally her observation extends to the public sphere. The objects plainly visible in the society are unmasked. When the adults don’t see, it is by choice that they limit their field of vision. The scene documents the women’s awareness. The scene unmasks as lies all the claims of adults that most things they did not learn until after the war. It also demonstrates the authority of the look of the child,
whereas before feminist films women never had the power and authority of the look. Rosenbaum in this film puts not only a woman, but a little girl in the position of the knowing subject, who exerts a lot of power for her limited position in society.

The following scene finally establishes mother and grandmother in relationship to each other and answers the viewers question what they do with this knowledge of the concentration camps. It opens with a medium shot of the grandmother as she is listening closely to an illegal station on the radio. We are then shown the mother at the window, with her back toward the camera. She closes the window and the curtains, turning toward her mother, urging her "Not so loud." In the previous scenes the mother appeared to be intent on staying out of politics, when it is obvious that she is informed about the Klug-situation and Theresienstadt. In this scene her fear of the neighbors becomes visible. She has internalized the mechanisms of suppressing everything inside. Expressing oneself becomes a threat to one's existence. The grandmother, in contrast, is not willing to submit to those rules quite to that extent, as becomes obvious in her blunt remark about the dead girl in the next scene.

As these first few scenes demonstrate, Rosenbaum's mode of expression combines a particular realism with strong naturalistic emphasis on the child's point-of-view. The total experience is composed of countless images that seem isolated until their connections via underlying psychological associations become
apparent. The mix of realism and psychological imagery/stream-of-consciousness is evident in the following scene, at the movies. Rosenbaum includes in the presentation the obligatory Wochenschau, an update on political events, thus reminding the viewer of the Nazis' use of the movie theater as propaganda instrument, rather than the marketing tool that it became later when advertisements filled the time slots of the Wochenschau. The significance of the children's film (a film version of the popular German fairy tale "The Race between the Rabbit and the Hedgehog") on the other hand, lies in the deep impression which it leaves on Marianne. She recalls her friend Dr. Klug, as the rabbit is defeated in the race and lies dead. The movie show is interrupted by a bomb attack and as one bomb hits a nearby building, they pass a dead girl on their way out. Although the mother holds her hand over Marianne's eyes after a while, the sight leaves a deep impression on her. The fairytale movie and the basement scene are equally real to Marianne. Yet she can watch one, not the other. The mother's effort to shield the child is not helped by the grandmother's comment that the girl's lungs have burst. Marianne echoes "lungs burst, lungs burst" as the image changes to a medium shot of her sitting in front of the radio, (now no longer playing "broadcasting" with the milk can as microphone, but yelling directly into the radio with great urgency) addressing her father and asking him to answer back. Apparently she believes the mother's fib that she can communicate with him. She uses the radio as her outlet for the stress of politics and the closed-in personal situation on her life.
The film director introduces the current developments in the women's lives through Marianne's "broadcasting": mother has to work in the ammunitions factory, her grandmother wants to commit suicide. The little girl makes an intuitive, yet ineffective effort to publicize the women's side of the war experience. Rather than comforting Marianne, her mother only cuts off her outburst by telling her that her father can't hear her. Having been told that nobody can hear her, that she has no voice, Marianne falls into a monotonous sing-song, soothing herself as the radio announces the fighter planes which the mother observes.

It is hard to define the ending of the following scene and the beginning of the next, as it is structurally broken up by a great number of cuts, but thematically and psychologically forms a unit. It starts out with a little boy, Marianne's friend, playing soldier, shooting down a fighter plane. Marianne begs to have the toy gun too, but as a girl she is excluded from expressing her fear and aggression through war games. The camera cuts back to a medium shot of the boy shooting off his toy gun, then cuts to the fighter pilot looking down, with a look of resignation on his face. The juxtaposition of the two images demonstrates the parallel between the boy and the soldier, stressing the boyishness of war, its childishness. From a bird's-eye-view we see the boy running and throwing himself down. At first Marianne observes him, then also runs and throws herself down as the plane dives low over them. As she looks up, the boy lies as if he were dead. She goes over to take a look at him and check him out, then furiously shouts in the
direction of the plane "intentionally" scolding the bomber pilot for the aggressive act as she was scolded by her mother for hers. While he sits up one hears bombs exploding, accompanied again by Marianne's repeated scream, "intentionally."

The continuing sound track establishes the connection between play and real destruction. The next image shows Marianne yelling "intentionally" again, holding her ears shut. As the frame widens, the door behind her flies open with a lot of dust and her mother comes running. From Marianne's point-of-view this scene presents the topic of aggression. As a girl she has been taught by her mother not to show aggressive behavior (for which she is reprimanded with the ultimate verdict: "You did that intentionally.") While not being allowed an outlet for her feelings, she observes that to a boy this restriction does not apply. In Marianne's logic there is no reason why men should be allowed destruction either, which is why she reprimands them in the above instances.

At the end of this sequence, almost tagged on, is a short scene in which we observe Marianne's mother walking into the frame from the right with her back toward the camera, carrying a big mirror with which she replaces Hitler's picture on the wall. Only when her family is directly affected and her house partly destroyed by bombs does the mother remove the icon of her loyalty to the Führer. She tries to erase the mark which it left on the wall, but when dust lines remain unchanged she hangs the bigger mirror over it, an action symbolic of the way the Germans dealt with fascism overall: once its weakness was recognized and the war was lost, a
very brief denazification/re-education process was supposed to wipe out that past. New images and new role models superficially covered up the old values. Significantly she replaces the Führer’s portrait not with another person’s (role model’s) photograph, but a mirror, i.e. looking for strength in herself and relying on her own leadership for her family, as she will in the near future.

Eight very short scenes connect to a sequence that depicts the family as refugees. The images sketch the hardships they endure. Here Marianne’s weak position as a child becomes obvious: she gets tired before the adults do and hunger weakens her considerably more. Although the mother is shown as her physical and emotional support (bent over the carriage looking at her) she again tries to divert her daughter’s attention from her real needs, suggesting when she is hungry that she should sleep some more.

The situation is defined most strongly in terms of space. They are crowded with too many other refugees in a box car, only designated to the viewer’s attention as a brighter centered area in the almost completely dark surroundings. The reader of history realizes the role reversal: box cars used to be the means of transport for Jews. Now the master race is subjected to its own device. The end of their plight and the beginning of a new phase in their lives is signaled by a square area of dazzling light as the train door opens (with the camera pointed upward to the sky and music beginning to play), a scene which, once again, parallels the Jewish experience. The new arrivals at their final destinations, the death camps, were sometimes greeted by music. The authors of
memoirs often describe the pain of the blinding light when the box car doors were opened after days of darkness. The light as image of hope is a very ambiguous one as it is followed by a close-up of a Marianne looking very resigned and tired, sitting in the middle of nowhere, with tracks going both ways in the background. In a very resentful voice she says "But dad isn't even here." Her mother, with her back towards the camera, silently looks back in Marianne's direction into off-screen space, and her daughter helps her lift the baby carriage with all their belongings over the tracks. The forward motion in the new direction is interrupted one more time by a look back at the grandmother, bundling up. A stark black figure on the background of the moving train, she looks as if she were bracing herself for more hardship to come. The scene at the railroad station ends with Marianne perched over the carriage at the right edge of the frame from where her mother lifts her up and carries her.

The arrival scene is all-together anticlimactic. The fact that the war is over is mentioned nowhere until the scene in the office of the American military government situates them in time and space. Peace is immediately associated with the presence of the American occupation army whose authority is represented by a courteous, matter of fact officer. For Marianne the most impressive feature is the material wealth: the American officer can afford to smoke his cigarettes only halfway, which tempts her to grab the butts from the ashtray, smiling straight at the officer. Only from the continuation of their trip and the fact that they are taken
directly to the father can the viewer gather later on that the Americans helped locate the father and were instrumental in bringing the family together.

The reunion with the father is seen as an event between him and his daughter. Related from the daughter's point-of-view it does not even include the mother. The new environment is a vast snow-covered plain, with massive, very big but plain-looking white farm houses. Marianne's initial alienation is expressed in curious, yet cautious glances exchanged between her and the local children and the scene in which the father tries to make the toilet acceptable to her by covering the seat with paper. When he is finished she turns around and leaves. He gathers the paper again and saves it. These are unthinkable gestures in the US today, but they reflect standard practice in post-war Germany, and to a German viewer bring back memories of past sensations: the coldness of the outhouse in winter, the lack of privacy, since many families shared one toilet, and the feeling of bad quality newspaper on one's skin.

The following sequence of short scenes starting with father and daughter collecting fire wood by the river (a vast light area in a surreal looking landscape with barren trees adding some grey lines in the foreground) serves to introduce Marianne's new social environment. At the same time, Marianne's father is situated according to his social position during the immediate post-war years. Although he had been a Nazi he is again in a position of authority (the village teacher). His ways of dealing with hard times are symbolized in the little song: "It takes so little to be
happy and he who is happy is king." His artistic talents, his looking at the beautiful details in nature divert attention from problems and hardship. Rather than confronting problems head-on he prefers to reroute energies to dealing with them.

Marianne is getting reaquainted with her father. Having become more mature as a result of having had her own experiences, she can’t accept his approach. She doesn’t sing along, but rather looks silently in his direction. This interaction is connected to the following scene through off-screen voices shouting "Elfriede, air raid warning." The image then cuts to a group of local children who will later become Marianne’s friends, with Elfriede running through the woods ahead of them and throwing herself in the mud. The viewer sees the pathetic little figure of the frightened, apparently not too intelligent, girl in medium close-up, covered with mud accompanied by the laughter of the others on the soundtrack. As Marianne’s father in his capacity of an authority figure takes care of the girl and sets the children straight about their abuse of the protective mechanisms still engrained from the war, another person announces his presence first as an off-screen voice with the greeting: "Praised be the Lord." The father’s self-excusatory remark makes the priest’s exclusive rank in the local hierarchy obvious. Herr Expositus’ appearance marks him as the watchdog over his flock, in a literal sense as he is policing them. He patrols the region on his bike, wearing a long black leather coat (which SS men used to wear) over his priest’s outfit, with a leather motorcycle cap on his head, binoculars around his
neck and a German Shepherd on the leash. His grotesque appearance stresses his position as functionary and watchman spying on people. His dialogue with the group is filmed in non-matching shot reverse shot (he is looking to the left lower corner of the frame, they are looking to the right lower corner) signifying the distance between the school teacher and this spying priest, i.e. the opposing socio-political and ideological camps which these two belong to.

Whereas Marianne and the children only watched the incident from a distance, she now looks up to her father and pulls the cigarette butt out, almost like a reward or perhaps a consolation in the fashion of her mother's displacement of needs. The roles are reversed from before the war. The close-up of her hands makes her digging it out of the little purse an important gesture. When Marianne approaches her father, the camera again assumes point-of-view positions between the two, as before, but the effect is even more extreme since the two stand very close. He is the emasculated loser of the war who has nothing to offer her.

The next cut separates two sequences: one which places Marianne and the other children in the new peace, and another which describes the ways in which Marianne's parents accommodate themselves to it. The opening shot from an extremely low camera angle situates Marianne's father in his classroom behind a high lectern. He is reading in a mumbling tone the oath of loyalty to Hitler printed in the old readers. Then he takes a glue brush and pastes a page over it. Initially dwarfed by this perspective of the extreme low angle, a civil servant obedient to the system, the
camera now tracks up to his eye level. The camera angle downward at
Marianne who is standing at the desk, asking whether she can help
him, dwarfs her as she is looking up. As Marianne's father proceeds
with the books, he gets increasingly irritated, ordering her to put
the fighter plane, with which she was playing imitating engine
sounds, back on the big stack of military toys in front of his
desk. The dwarfing perspective reinforces the impression of a
hierarchy. Marianne is lowest on the totem pole.

As he continues pasting he asks in a frustrated tone "How are
the children supposed to learn to read." As the mother responds as a
off-screen voice "You can write something up yourself," the camera
focuses in medium close-up on the disdainful look he throws in her
direction. His rhetorical question indicates that he considers
reading a skill to be learned regardless of the material, i.e. form
over substance. The camera pans to the back of the classroom where
the mother is tearing up a Nazi flag ("good quality cloth") to
recycle it into a dress for Marianne. Since nobody is supposed to
know the origins of the fabric she quickly stuffs it back into a
sack, as the camera cuts to a boy sheepishly standing in the door.
We watch him drop some tin soldiers on the pile of toys and let one
disappear into his pocket. Marianne observes how her father watches
him and then turns away. She notices her father's intention to
close his eyes at the politically appropriate time. Silently he
proceeds to tear pages out of the books.

The next shot is a view from over top of the waste paper
basket spilling over with half a dozen Führer pictures. We hear
Marianne say with awe in her voice "My Führer," — the way she must have heard it said many times by adults — as she takes one picture out, while laying down her own children's book (Struwelpeter, a standard text in every German household; it is, however, quite extreme in its teaching of law and order) on the top of the basket. She begs her father for permission to keep one Führer photograph. Her father, embarrassed and scared that somebody might watch, orders her to put it back. Hastily he stuffs the pictures into the stove and burns them. Marianne, missing the ideological context, only picks up on the emotional urgency of destroying the existing books. Trying to be a good girl and showing that she understands the necessity to give them up, she starts to tear up Struwelpeter and burns the pages (instinctively a proper reaction, because, it too is a text which serves to preserve an authoritarian order. She misunderstands and understands.) In response, the mother accuses the father of dealing badly with the problem (putting it in terms of a professional failure - bad teaching.) As the father leaves in resignation he steps on a tin soldier which prompts Marianne to accuse him of intentional destruction (once again she plays mother.) At the end of the scene she finds comfort in sharing the loss of her book with her friend who reciprocates by sharing chewing gum with her.

The central point of this scene is the question of how to deal with the remains of the past, the fascist legacy. The flag symbolizes that there is a shortage of everything. One could not afford to throw things out. Anything that did not look too
suspicious was recycled (supplies, but also manpower.) Sometimes surprisingly quick and smooth switch-overs from the fascist regime to the new democracy were made. The same individuals who carried the responsibility for the Nazi past were put into positions where they had to teach new idols and a new ideology. The father's problems in this scene remind the viewer of the unplanned, uncoordinated and individual nature of Vergangenheitsbewältigung. The structural changes had to be carried out with few personnel changes.

From this closed environment where the authoritarian German adult population makes up rules and finds new guidelines, imposing all the restrictions, old ones and new ones, the scene opens to the children's hopes and newly discovered pleasures. In the next shot we see Marianne in medium close-up outside, the background divided between meadow and sky, with her open hair blowing in the wind. She has a very sensuous look on her face as she cherishes the taste of gum which we watch her put in her mouth. Her dance with Elfriede expresses a sense of peace and freedom. The boys are rolling in the grass, unrestricted by any fear. These images are undramatic and harmonious with their lack of hard light contrasts. When somebody hollers "he's coming" the entire group runs up the hill to the road in expectation; the scene is accompanied by a soundtrack with jazzy 40s music. A big black limousine drives up in front of a farm house. The epitome of an American GI pilot (Peter Fonda) in a casual, sporty leather jacket with a big Pepsodent smile gets out. The viewers' look at the scene is doubled by the figure of a little
boy, with the back to the camera, in the lower right corner. A cut takes us back to the kids who are taking in the spectacle in awe, lined up kneeling along the road. With them we watch the GI give the boy a piece of gum and put one in his own mouth. Joining in the fun and aping his actions, the children put gum in their mouths. Again from their point-of-view the camera follows his actions as he enters the house. Nilla, a young woman, looks out of the window.

The children are totally absorbed in their pleasure of watching as the noise of an airplane on the sound track disrupts the scene. The camera cuts to the light grey sky with the tiny dot of a little airplane in the upper corner. Instinctively the children duck and cover their heads until one of them realizes that it is not necessary: the war is over. Their sensation of pleasure and peace is interrupted by the deeply engrained panic which the noise of the airplane still evokes. The children have not yet integrated peace in their emotional lives. As war was their customary form of existence, the peace of the adults is tentative and not necessarily to be trusted. Reacting to subtle signals in their surroundings, nakedness to them becomes the expression of peace. During the war people could not afford the luxury of getting caught unprepared for fear of air raids.

This scene presents the American GI and his chewing gum as symbols of a new order. A cut separates it from the next image in which we see the group of half-naked children all huddled up in a corner of the room against a wall which divides them from the two lovers. From the high camera angle the image, seemingly overcrowded
with many moving bodies at the keyhole and on the sofa gives a chaotic impression. It is in stark contrast with the rigidity of the people and their environments up to this point. Feeling the new freedom of living in peace, the children adopt Nilla and her lover as role models. They enjoy the feeling of closeness, their bodies touching. The humor of this scene lies in the children's misunderstandings. In their imagination they construct the missing link which turns into an orgy of all their senses. Imitating what they believe is going on next door they feel each other's bodies, hold each other, rub in Nivea creme, chew gum. When they hear the squeaking of bedsprings and the lovers breathing heavily behind the door they start hopping on the sofa (assuming that's what Nilla and Mr. Frieden are doing.)

Later they enjoy a ride with Mr. Frieden in his car. We see Peter Fonda's profile in close-up with big smile, looking over to the children every once in a while, music playing in the background. He waves to the people along the road "Hello" and everybody greets him in a very friendly way. A dialog, of sorts develops between Mr. Frieden and Marianne who sits next to him: from his perspective the camera frames Marianne who looks up in awe and says "Hallo, Mr. Frieden". Reverse shot: he looks down and with a big smile says "Ja, ja". Very proudly Marianne turns toward her friend and tells her "he speaks German very well." After they get out of the car and before he leaves, he generously distributes gum among them.

This scene established the children's relationship with the soldier, the ritualistic pleasures and good feelings connected with
it. It exposes the innocent misconceptions of what adults would criticize as fraternization, and myths that the children generate. The following scene puts Marianne’s interaction with the lovers in the context of her family and the community. Following a cut we see Marianne’s upper body naked in close-up. She rubs her hand on her chest and licks her fingers as she is looking intently. As she takes a few steps, the object of her look is revealed: Mr. Frieden and Nilla on a blanket, kissing. We see him in medium close-up caressing her. Marianne takes voyeuristic pleasure which she pursues with innocence, just as the entire group of her friends has voyeuristically shared the rendezvous of Mr. Frieden and Nilla. The camera suddenly cuts to a view downward at a lower section of the beach where Marianne’s parents are coming ashore, tip-toeing, stiff and awkward.

Marianne’s father is vaguely irritated as he finds her pose suspicious. When he puts on his glasses he finds his worst expectations fulfilled. He tries to divert Marianne’s attention by lecturing her loudly about flies that only live one day. He uses a scientific language which is cold and antiseptic in contrast to the feelings and sensations of the previous images. Since his words do not seem to have any effect, he approaches his little daughter from behind, continuing to invoke different species down to the cormorants. Marianne’s only reaction is an annoyed gesture, waving him away.

We observe the scene with the lovers with Marianne as a figure whose back is turned towards the viewer, a phenomenon that can be
observed in numerous paintings by Romantic artists (especially Caspar David Friedrich.) The viewer does not only see the action from the girl's point-of-view, but she is presented through the act of looking. Although removed from the action Marianne becomes the subject with the authority of the look. The action is transmitted to the viewer by her perception: The feelings and sensations she observes are foreign to her. The movie viewer's direct identification with the observed action is blocked by the alienated viewer within the picture. As in Romantic art we are not to be drawn into the events entirely, but, on the contrary, we are constantly made aware of being "outside of the events", as the child, and especially a child of these parents, is not part of this sphere of the American-German love relationship. What she makes of it is in no way explained. Similar to a romantic tale, the narrator (here through the point-of-view of the camera) leaves it up to the viewer what he makes of the world as it seems to present itself, yet there is always the awareness that our insight is limited. This film uses the child's perception of the world much in the way romantic literature recognizes and in fact counts on the children's ability to see things which adults tend to shut out or take for granted. At the same time, this figure, by her action of watching, has the effect of doubling the spectacle. This visual set-up with a figure whose back is towards the viewer is used repeatedly by the filmmaker. It is a constant for this film's alienated perceptions.

In another attempt to lure Marianne away from the spectacle the father gives a bird imitation whistle which gets the attention
of the lovers and stops them for a moment until also Nilla starts to whistle and they playfully pick up where they had left off, whistling to each other. From the joyous, playful image with the two bodies moving freely and harmoniously together the camera cuts to an image of Marianne’s mother sitting alone, stiff, silently looking on and awkwardly offering Marianne a sandwich and an apple. Once again, she tries to replace the girl’s interest in sex with food. This representation of a family’s inability to face its members’ emotional needs, and its replacement of such needs with the fulfillment of other basic needs, like that for food, represents a typical phenomenon in the later post-war years in W.-Germany during the Adenauer era.  

Since the father is still standing there fumbling with the towel the mother throws Marianne the ball for diversion. The girl throws it to Nilla and Mr. Frieden, who runs for it, plays with it, does tricks and throws it back. As he throws the ball to her mother, he gets the parents involved, the same jazz music sets in again on the soundtrack. They are all taking part in the play initiated by the child. However, Marianne’s father still has his towel in his hands and talks nervously, grammatically incorrectly, repeating again and again "We are not more enemies," verbally expressing the awkwardness which his entire body and that of his wife clearly express.

Although it is an abrupt interruption of their game, it is no surprise that the father freezes immediately and carries the ball back when the priest rides by on his bike at some distance in the
background. On the level of the image there is obvious discontinuity. The game is over, the priest's appearance on the scene stops the parents in their tracks and while the music on the soundtrack continues, there is a cut in the image. A different image follows: in the closed space of the room we see the children pursuing their pleasureable habit of hopping on the sofa in secret, behind closed doors. The expression of pleasure in public is chastized. Sensuality has taken on the taste of a shameful secret.

The next shot shows Marianne and Elfriede in close-up chewing gum, enjoying the taste that to them epitomizes peace and pleasure. However, as the camera pans to Herr Expositus standing next to Marianne holding his hand out for the gum, the girls are put into the context of the classroom where their pleasure is marked as sinful. Avoiding eye contact, Marianne puts the gum in his hand, with a guilty look downward. The figure of authority stands so close that it is impossible and painful to look him in the eye. In spite of his authoritarian air, the priest is, invisibly to the child, shown as ridiculous. Behind his back Herr Expositus tries to get the gum unstuck from his hand. He attempts to knead it into shape as he shouts "Peppermint" and then recites a lengthy quote about Adam's fall from grace through Eve's temptation. He dramatically shouts across the classroom "Try it, said the snake" as he holds up Wrigley's gum. For a few seconds the camera stays fixed on Herr Expositus' expression: his face in close-up with his piercing, fixing look, which has a strong effect on me as a catholic-raised viewer, let alone on the children under his guidance.

Brea
king the pattern of a static camera from cut to cut, the camera then
zooms in on God's eye in the illustration on the wall while we hear
the priest shouting. As Herr Expositus has called Marianne to step
up to a Christ image, we first see Marianne's awed look, moving,
obviously fixed on something. The camera then shows from her
perspective the object of her gaze staring back at the camera in its
glassy, translucent form seemingly following the onlooker along as
s/he moves. The filmmaker first presents us with the impact the
demonstration has on the little girl as it reflects in her fearful,
almost haunted face, before the viewer gets to see the cause of her
terror. The repressive effect of the priest's demonstration on the
children's behavior is immediate. The students take their gum out
of their pockets and slip it into their book bags. At the same time
the priest's double standard and lie become apparent as we watch him
put Marianne's gum into a match box, saving it for himself for
later, while a student recites the ten commandments. When the boy
gets to the sixth commandment, Herr Expositus calls on a different
student, and following that boy's answer repeats, again in a very
dramatic voice, the fact that "impurity of the body" is a mortal
sin. As a consequence Marianne has the mental image of first Nilla
and Mr. Frieden committing the sin (an image from the scene at the
river) and afterwards the two of them lying dead in the same pose as
the girl whose lungs had burst.

From this mental image which does not formally differ from the
preceding images, a long shot takes us back to the entire class,
situating her again in her school environment. This shot is
followed by a close-up, the camera pointed down at Marianne’s open book with her hands folded on top of it. Again there is a seeming continuity of space established by the visual continuity of the image as the next shot shows Marianne in the same position at the kitchen table in her family’s home, marking this environment as a continuation of the in-class experience. The effect of this depiction goes beyond the fact that German school children don’t know "study-hall" and are expected to do their homework at home in the afternoon. It also signifies the interconnections between public and private spheres. It connotes that the ideas of the priest, which Marianne learns in school, don’t leave her. They are with her at home, deepened by the pedantic classroom atmosphere which her father created. Questions are not welcome here.

Following his inquisition and instruction for Marianne not to use "their" bathroom although they are not enemies any more, he is shocked by her question about syphilis. He remains silent, looks at her. The grandmother also remains silent. Instead of an answer Marianne gets meaningful looks, as the grandmother disapprovingly continues to clean the room with swift broom strokes.

Beyond this wall of silence, the children find their own answers to syphilis (which in their words turns into phylisis.) Marianne concludes that "one’s nose will go rotten." The group’s play is now overshadowed by a terrible threat. Their play ritual breaks off entirely and their playing is now directed by the feeling that they are doing something evil which they will have to pay for. The atmosphere is more and more dominated by the fear of sexuality
instilled in religious instruction. Whereas the children hide from the adult eyes, they have been taught that they cannot escape God's eye. Marianne and her friends don't dare to act out their fantasies any more. When Mr. Frieden kisses Nilla goodbye they are passive onlookers from behind the half-closed door. Passive voyeuristic gratification replaces the earlier authentic feelings when they acted out love rituals. The scene is filmed like a dialog in shot-reverse shot with both parties exchanging glances. Finally he gives the signal and they follow him. On their way out they make sure that Herr Expositus does not see them. They duck in the car, for certain people they go even lower. Marianne's earlier friendly, admiring little dialog with Mr. Frieden is replaced by a stare and her thought "what a pity his nose will go rotten and fall off." He notices her look but has no idea how deeply she is troubled.

A key scene in this entire sequence is, however, the scene with the slightly bigger, older boy dropping in on the children as they play on the sofa. In this grotesque interlude he stares at them and abruptly announces that he dares to eat a worm. He then immediately pulls the door shut behind him. The scene demonstrates the penetration of the priest's teaching into the children's circle, as they threaten each other with the "eye that sees everything". The immediate reaction is one of the girls' closing the curtains, only a short scene in this sequence, but a part of a series of images which show attempts at hiding.

The act of looking is the central issue of the film in its implications from a child's perception to voyeurism and the
formation of moral standards. What meaning does "looking" have in this film? From the beginning it is introduced as basic sensual perception which implies an awareness of one's surroundings (which in turn implies political responsibility). Through looking the child Marianne experiences her world. The visual perception is the primary way of learning. A second meaning lies in the barred look: As her mother repeatedly blocks her vision by holding a hand over her eyes, Marianne learns that looking is sometimes bad or forbidden. A third category lies in the opening of vision: Marianne's and her friends' restricted field of vision where many views are blocked out, opens up with the end of the war. It is no longer forbidden or bad to look at one's surroundings. The look can even become pleasurable as the GI and Nilla become a spectacle. The look of the two lovers at each other and their looking at the children and vice versa is presented as a positive interaction. Mr. Frieden and Nilla don't hide their intimacy before the eyes of the public. By letting the children observe, the two lovers share with them their sensations. Yet another aspect of the look is experienced by the children through their own parents: the secretive gaze, looking while pretending not to look or spying on somebody. This is thematized in a number of scenes in various ways, e.g. the mother protects the grandmother from the view of the neighbors by hastily drawing the curtains shut, the priest's carrying binoculars and spying on the children through a peephole, one of the adults' looking into the room through the curtains at the glass door. There is a clear division between the German population and the open look
of the Americans - up to that point in the film. Nilla is an exception, she forms a separate unit with Mr. Frieden. e) The children have been taught that their God sees everything, even those things which are concealed from the human eye. Thus the look can be an all-powerful instrument of control over their bodies, minds and souls, their entire lives. This power is symbolized in the Catholic church by the image of an eye from which rays emanate in all directions. This effigy of God's power is marked as a man-made construct as it is used by the priest as a peephole to spy on the children during the performance of the tableau vivant. The film represents God and the Bible as tools in the Catholic church's teachings, notions concocted by men to reinforce the church's socio-political strategies. This becomes most obvious in the priest's Sunday sermon during which he combines the power of the look and the word. Herr Expositus' piercing look down at the community is made to appear as the direct, human extension of the representation of God's eye behind him on the wall, making that eye seem to come alive. In his sermon he skillfully draws a connection between the star of Bethlehem and the red star of the Russians, i.e. the anti-Christ, giving both the same dimension as to the way their emergence changes the world.

The following three sequences, depicting the children playing out religious roles, both guided and on their own, serve to illustrate the effects of Herrn Expositus' teachings on the children. The children turn to religious themes and their minds become impregnated with guilt and fear. The humor lies in the
immediacy of their adaptations of religious rituals from which result some absurd twists. At the same time these scenes illustrate the man-made nature of the church's rituals, their character as ideological constructs. It is manifest how the religious dogma is put to use for the ideological purpose of maintaining and perpetuating the existing balance of bourgeois male power.

The effectiveness of the fear-inspiring Catholic dogma is evidenced by Marianne's behavior. In the next scene we see her vowing that she will not fall into sin, projecting herself into the figure of the Virgin Mary in a kind of religious insanity. Marianne has absorbed the Catholic belief in suffering. She changes from the girl she used to be: exploring tenderness and love. We see her admiring her own image in the mirror as she has slipped into the role of the *mater dolorosa*. In a wild combination of catholic elements ascribed to different saints she imitates Jesus' suffering during the crucifixion. She displays to her friends stigmata on the back of her hands, fabricated at first by jam, later, in more sophisticated form, by burrs.

The arrival of the MP provides a new external stimulus. The children's attention turns away from their own identifications with the saints and towards Mr. Frieden and the grave accusation of "fraternisation" as the MP drive through the village. The children throw out wild guesses what the term could stand for.

In the following scenes the people in the village witness the consequences of "fraternisation" as the MP are looking for Mr. Frieden and the scene turns into a hide and seek game with people
peeking out from behind the drawn curtains. Marianne's family prevents her from warning Mr. Frieden. They try to stay out of politics both present and past, pretending they don't see and hear. Not even the grandmother is allowed to mention the Nazi past. Both parents treat former Nazi acquaintances as if nothing had ever happened, which the grandmother refuses to do. On the contrary, she tries to pass the truth on to Marianne as the youngest generation, but the parents intervene successfully. Again, as mentioned previously, old people and children are portrayed as having a different perception of the world, which allows for openness anxiously avoided by the majority of the middle aged grown-up population.

As Marianne tries to understand the world and its adult logic she develops her own peculiar associations, led by the pure, narrow logic of a child which is unaware of the contrived twists of adult truth. Marianne loved Mr. Frieden and he disappeared, just as did her beloved Dr. Klug. Thus she arrives at the following conclusion: good people are taken away. Mr. Frieden is doomed, since Dr. Klug never came back.

Sitting in her bed peeping over the footboard of the parents' bed, Marianne observes her father awkwardly kissing her mother. She immediately associates the pleasurable, loving gesture with its penalty: death (as she learned in religious instruction). Thus in the following fantasy her father looks like a walking dead. He takes the place of Nilla's lover. Like Mr. Frieden and Nilla he has sinned against the sixth commandment, a mortal sin. The priest, who
in the other cases ignores wrongdoing, in this case insists on the punishment. He also traps Mr. Frieden and pushes and locks him in the oven.

Like the other images which trace Marianne's way of associating, they are shot in black and white film which later is colored in various techniques. A combination of light blue and yellow tint during Mr. Frieden's flight from the MP creates a deadly sick, ghostlike atmosphere. The slow motion makes this short scene an agonizingly long one in which every incident of betrayal by the villagers (peeking out behind closed doors and windows, etc.) becomes painfully stressed. The slow moving images are combined with music which has a driven, breathless staccato rhythm. The hand-painted lips and faces in yellow accentuate the body parts associated with the mortal sin: the mouth and eyes as sensuous, but also the mouth that remained mute when it was time to speak up, and eyes as witnesses. Together with the color effects a most dramatic combination of sound and image is achieved in this scene which makes it stand out, not only above the "real", but also above Marianne's mental images thus far in the film. Whereas the beginning of the colorization, i.e. the start of the fantasy scenes, is obvious in content, the end of the fantasy scene is hardly noticeable. The scene fades back into Marianne's real life almost unnoticeably; i.e. the fantasy is integrated into reality.

In the scenes which present Marianne's mental images, dreams and fantasies, the influence of the films of the Czech New Wave, notably the films of Jan Nemec and Vera Chytilová, on Rosenbaum's
aesthetic is most obvious. In its attempt to construct an artificial reality, Chytilová's film *Daisies*, provided a significant model for Rosenbaum. *Daisies* utilizes sophisticated editing of motion filmed at an unreal speed, superimposition and optical printing, and frame tinting. It combines black and white with color. Rosenbaum uses such techniques in her dream and fantasy images. These aesthetic strategies and Rosenbaum's point-of-view technique (which almost always follows the perspective of the child) make for the particular visual quality of *Peppermint Frieden*. They lend a special kind of authenticity to the representation of the child's perception. Images that thematically follow the often surprising combinatory pattern of a child's mind, are shot at camera angles which characterize the child's ability to see and comprehend, her "close-up perspective and her sharp focus" (camera angles mostly upward or downward from a child's height but usually not level with the perspective of a grown-up). The logic of this film imitates or wants to be that of a child. The film director calls it a logic of emotion, towards which you must open yourself..... Through emotional associations the meaning is carried on...Dreams are as important as everyday reality...they transcend the present. That is the reason for their presentation in color.33

Much of the protagonist's insight and psychological reaction to events are expressed in her dreams and through the visualisation of stream of consciousness. These "unreal" scenes, however, take on a much more important role in this film about a little girl than would
be the case for an adult, because for children the dream world is not yet separated and relegated to a lower order. In fact, these scenes may represent a higher order since they constitute to a great extent what Rosenbaum terms emblem, rather than the mere likeness of reality. For there to be realism in film, according to Rosenbaum's definition, all characters in the film have to be emblematic figures, i.e. figures made up of a plurality of impressions and facets on various levels, rather than one-dimensional representations of their function.

The following scene at the carpenter's offers comic relief through the dialog with the girl who reports about the priest's reaction to her question about God's whereabouts during the war. A second function of this scene is to set up a contrast between Marianne's and the carpenter's view of religion and politics on the one hand, and the father, mother and grandmother's views on the other hand. The father is totally wrapped up in his own miraculous escape from death. The two women (at first working silently; with their round backs, leaning over their work, they are dark, marginal figures, while the father is lighter and centered in the background) contrast his self-centered tale with comments revealing their religious (the mother) and cynically atheist (the grandmother) views. The mother stresses the role of religious dogmatic elements like suffering and the belief in miracles in her acceptance of the hardships of war. The grandmother's atheism, however, does not justify war. She accepts neither religion nor men's politics as valid systems and sarcastically wishes them to the moon.

Both
these adult perspectives (from the priest and the communist carpenter on the one hand down to Marianne's family on the other hand) are contrasted in turn with the children's perception as they play in the hidden American car. Oblivious to the grown-ups' power system they ask what people are really like. Having met a very friendly unarmed American, the children conjure up images of the Russian. The mysterious enemy is defused by Marianne as she "disarms" him in her show off tale of the Russian visitor at their house. He is not only polite and no threat, but rather possesses human traits and a need for love. The fact that in their imagination he appears naked expresses his capacity for love.

The children's vision of the Russian, partly reality, partly fiction, is in turn contrasted with the political propaganda against the Russians spread by the priest in his Sunday sermon. He calls his followers to arms against the modern day Lucifer: the Communists. Whereas the children's notions are derived from their libidinal potential and needs, the church's representative sucessfully manipulates the believers by creating guilt feelings to activate their latent fears resulting from the unprocessed political past.

The priest's political power over his enemies, both the American and the Russian becomes manifest in the short visit of the two little girls at Nilla's house. While Mr. Frieden is in hiding, the smell of the real coffee and his shirt give him away. Nilla, however, has no longer any time for openly displayed pleasure. Hastily she pulls Mr. Frieden's shirt off the clothes line and quickly disappears behind the laundry draped in front of the closed
doors. The doors, closed for the most part, have turned into protective barriers against the spying, intruding authorities, be it church or military.

On the catholic holiday of the three wise men, the little boys' major concern is which religious figure they are allowed to claim for themselves by representing it, i.e. they demonstrate their superior status over the girls. Marianne and her friend Elfriede play out their trump card by claiming that Marianne is in-fact a real saint. Thus, while identifying with the catholic structures and roles, all of the children, but especially the girls, find their niche. Marianne not only adopts the Virgin Mary as her role model (which in catholic terms is to be expected since she is her name patron saint), but also identifies with her in her fantasies. In her imagination the little girl becomes the Virgin Mary and makes this a better world, fighting all evil such as the propaganda spread through the radio, the killings, sacrifices, wars and other sufferings.

The girl's exaggerated identification with the Virgin Mary which dominates the entire last quarter of the film, is triggered by the blind veteran's quote of the soothsayer's prophecy that the biggest war yet to come will start when women want to be like men. He pronounces this prophecy with the obvious goal in mind: by maintaining the power of all men over all women not to end up on the lowest level of the hierarchy. At the same time he exposes himself as a fake by his own behavior: in the half dark, cozy room when everybody is gathered around the table with their musical
instruments, he uses the opportunity to touch and fondle two of the young, unmarried women present in the party. He introduces his speech with the words "I just read." When Marianne and Elfriede later show up at his home without warning, he angrily hastens to put his "blind veteran" act together.

He is typical of many people who after 1945 preferred to escape into the role of the victim. It assured them monthly support payments from the state\textsuperscript{35} and global sympathy. In Marianne's fantasy, however, he snaps a long horse whip, i.e. he is shown with the symbol of a slave driver, exerting power.

The veteran's remark about women is followed by a medium close up of Marianne as the shocking news about her crucial role in world peace registers. The cut is followed by a number of single images of all the women in the round as seen by the girl: the grandmother who lays tarot cards, the young women with their violins: all of them appear like strong women who have learned to manage without a man around, possibly because they lost their men in the war. Marianne anxiously asserts her own identity as a woman in front of the mirror, tearing her tie off in an effort to resemble more closely the Virgin Mary image which she keeps right next to the mirror.

In the course of these events Marianne gets more and more frantic as what she interprets as the preparations for a new war become more numerous. The priest used the language of war in his sermon, Marianne's mother buys blankets as emergency supplies from a man who "emigrates to Argentinia before the Russians will march in
pretty soon." Marianne is highly alarmed and through the next few scenes we see her double check the meaning of "soon." Since during the war her father's return which he had promised for "soon" in fact never happened, Marianne hopes that this time it is equally uncertain and the grown-ups don't know exactly. However, her grandmother insists that during the war the meaning of the words had changed, but now, in peace "soon" means again "soon." After all of Marianne's tests including a swinging pendulum, which answered the question "will the war start today?" with yes, Marianne sees no other way but to use her own energies to prevent the catastrophe.

The rhythm of the film accelerates as Marianne's fear increases. The scenes are longer, but do not form sequences the way the short scenes at the beginning of the film did. The first half of the film built up the psychological impact and the systematic increase of fear through the teachings in school, events in the neighborhood (e.g. Mr. Frieden's disappearance and the profiteer Mr. Scharrer's plan to go into exile), and political propaganda. In the second half of the film we observe the effect of all these events on Marianne. She has changed. Her fear shows both in her facial expression and in her movements as she runs about frantically. Above all, however, her mental images give a clear picture of the impending danger which Marianne feels. At first the viewer is tempted to discard them as a child's exaggerated reaction, but at a closer look they turn out to contain the real dangers not only possible but actually happening at the end of the film. Thus Marianne's fear that the war will come was correct, the war came,
only this time in a different part of the world, in Korea.

The filmmaker stated\(^3^6\) that Marianne’s mental images have to be in color because they represent a reality of a higher order than everyday life. The fantasy scenes are not isolated from the action, but each constitutes a logical answer to the events. The logic is that of the child in whom a certain impulse triggers a direct response -- pain triggers pity and the attempt to alleviate it. In the child the impulse is not short circuited by the adults’ secondary considerations of risk and ulterior motives. In the fantasy scene following the quote of the soothsayer’s prophesy a wild assortment of war scenes goes through Marianne’s mind. The victims of nuclear war are being ignored by her father sitting on the bed playing his flute, and her grandmother, whose major concern is that her white sheets don’t get dirty. Marianne asks the priest to help. When he laconically answers "The earth is a vale of tears." she starts to scream. Asked by her grandmother why she screamed in her sleep, Marianne insists that she did not dream. This statement is not just to be taken as a pouting child’s answer. The scene contained true insight into their actual but unadmitted political stands and their lack of compassion.

This mental image is interrupted by a scream which turns out to be Marianne’s father’s screaming in a nightmare. The filmmaker thus connects the horrors of Marianne’s visions as closely as possible with the horror of her and her father’s sufferings inflicted by war. Even in the scenes depicting reality, the director plays with our notions of the objective truth. What we see
with Marianne's eyes often turns out to be something else. At Nilla's, Marianne and Elfriede played Mr. Frieden's record. The next shot shows a big black limousine as we hear Marianne's remark: "Mr. Frieden is back." But then the car turns out to be the profiteer's Mercedes (which marks him politically, since this type of limousine was used by Nazi officials.)

The lines between reality and Marianne's very real fantasy world get more and more unclear toward the end of the film. In the middle of a scene showing Marianne and Elfriede as they take care of Jesus' wounds after they took him from the crucifix in the cemetery, following one cut Jesus is represented in the next shot by the carpenter's apprentice, lying in the grass, his wounds being attended by the two girls and he thanks them for their loving care with an embrace. The girls' undertaking originates obviously in the wish to help, and less obviously, to eliminate the Christian religion of suffering.
Notes

1See for example literary works like Christa Wolf’s *Kassandra* and numerous paintings and films by young artists.

2This is a device often used in post-war fiction by authors such as Ilse Aichinger, Günther Grass, et al.

3This has become a popular argument of the younger war generation, that they were two young to have become part of the fascist system, or to be even vaguely affected by it; as chancellor Helmut Kohl called it in his speech in Israel "die Gnade meiner späten Geburt," whereas in reality he was a youth during the Third Reich.

4This and the following biographical information is from the same interview (see note 5 above)


7Reich, 187.

8Rosenbaum (see note 5 above); the filmmaker in this interview indicated the influence that this particular part of
Reich's theories had on her own thinking. However, Reich's theory of female sexuality is as controversial and considered erroneous among feminists as any of the male theoreticians' views. Rosenbaum's concern in this film is only the repression of sexuality in both genders. The distinct differences between female sexuality and male sexuality are not of any concern in this work.

10. Reich, 46.
11. Reich, 24.
12. Reich, 158.
13. Cf. chapter on "Germany, Pale Mother in the Context of the West German Feminist Movement."
14. André Glucksmann, "Der alte und der neue Faschismus."

Neuer Faschismus, Neue Demokratie. Michel Foucault, ed. (Berlin: Wagenbach Verlag, 1972):7-68. This book is a German translation of the special issue no. 310 (1972) of the journal Les temps modernes which is published by the editors of "Cause du peuple". It is not yet available in English translation. Klaus Theweleit has made a similar claim in his book Männerphantasien. Frankfurt: Roter Stern Verlag, 1979. The first of two volumes is now available in English.

15. Glucksmann, 16.
16. Rosenbaum (see note 5 above.)
17. Reich, 24.
18. Reich, 73.
20. Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf. 269: "Running parallel to the
political, ethical, and moral contamination of the people, there had been, for many years, a no less terrible poisoning of the national body. Especially in the big cities, syphilis was beginning to spread more and more."

21Reich, 69.

22Mühlhiasl, Mathias Lang from Apoig, who worked at the nearby mill which was part of the Windberg monastery. He lived from 1758 to 1825. Quoted in Johannes Békh’s Bayerische Hellseher. Pfaffenhofen: Ludwig Verlag, 19804 p. 41 as: "Wenn sie in Straubing über die Donau die große Brücke bauen, so wird sie fertig, aber nimmer ganz; dann geht’s los." Die Donaubrücke in Straubing war im September 1939 fertig bis auf die Betondecke."

23Rosenbaum (see note 5 above)

24Rosenbaum (see note 5 above)

25In this I also see a hint at the development of a passive and masochistic homosexual attitude which results from the church’s sexual repression in children and adolescents. See Reich, 140.

26Reich, 140.

27Peter Fonda was cast in the role of the GI primarily for financial reasons dictated by the German production system, which asked for a famous actor to draw a larger audience (Peter Fonda became very famous and popular in West Germany with Easy Rider.) However, much more important is the image which he represents both as a character within the movie and what he stands for as a person, who, like his sister Jane Fonda, is known in
Germany for his political stands on peace and disarmament.


29 The Austrian author Ilse Aichinger uses the same symbol in the short story Port Sing. On Jewish tombstones there are often rabbits. According to the Pentateuch the hare is one of the prohibited animals (Lev. 11:6; Deut. 14:7). Although rabbits are extensively hunted, their rapid propagation prevent their extermination.


31 See Jutta Brückner's film Years of Hunger.

32 Cf. Theweleit, Männerphantasien about the heroic death of the mother in Nazi ideology; the mater dolorosa in this film seems to be an extension of it.

33 Interview with Marianne Rosenbaum conducted by Gabriele Weinberger in November 1985 in Munich.

34 Rosenbaum (see note 5 above).

35 See many post-war works, such as Wilhelm Borchert's drama The Man Outside and Jutta Brückner's film Years of Hunger which quotes an example of a women who could not afford to remarry, for fear of loss of her widow's pension.

36 Rosenbaum (see note 5 above).
CHAPTER III:

Years of Hunger: Jutta Brückner’s "Fräulein Wirtschaftswunder."


Years of Hunger reached its American audience as part of a
ten-film series of recent works by German Women filmmakers organized
by the Goethe Institute Munich, which toured American cities in
1981. Brückner succeeded in her attempt "to bewilder, to disturb,
to irritate." The film had a more shocking than pleasing
effect on audiences. Whereas Sanders-Brahms' Germany, Pale Mother
found a very strong -- if often negative -- echo on the part of
American critics, not even an entire article exclusively on Years of
Hunger has been published. In the publications thus far,
Brückner's film is either described as a work representative of the
German Women filmmakers in general, or is lumped together with
other films in which the theme of motherhood is central and is given
less than two pages of critical evaluation. Whereas the imagery of
Germany, Pale Mother allowed for an easy reception of that film in
America as an unpolitical melodrama, Years of Hunger does not
allow such an escape.

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Many reasons could be named for its rather reserved — although generally positive — reception, among them probably the film’s expressionistic aesthetic, its negative portrayal of motherhood, its special kind of sexual explicitness, ending in a suicide attempt and the interspersed violent visual clusters of German political memory which have neither denotational nor connotational meaning for the American audience. German audiences had a chance to see Brückner’s Do What’s Right and Fear Nobody (1975) in which the film director tried to do justice to her mother as an individual entity. Only after that was it possible for her to be critical of her mother’s role regarding her identity crisis as a girl and come to terms with her mother as a daughter. Through this "precursor" film, Years of Hunger thus had a context of presenting woman in her historical and social context.

Germany, Pale Mother and Years of Hunger were the first two films which thematized the women’s position in the German restauration of the 1950s. In Sanders-Brahms’ film, however, the postwar years are only a small portion of the entire work. With the exception of mention of the political climate in a few instances, the director focuses on the effect that the past and the present have on one family. The narrated time in Jutta Brückner’s film on the other hand is a span of three years (1953-1956) in the Adenauer era. Brückner’s statement that in Years of Hunger "history can only be represented as biography and biography only as history, where time and place are sediments on an individual”⁵ points to the fact that both aspects in this film are linked as they have been
inescapably linked in German society after the war. Each aspect by itself, the creation of the girl's sexual identity as well as the political restauration under Adenauer's Große Koalition have never been undertaken in a comparable way before, not in film or any other medium. Linking the two in an analysis which exposes the internationally propagated, glorified "Fräulein Wunder" as the lie and myth it really was, is another totally innovative achievement on the director's part. With this film Brückner opened up a feminist political discourse of the 1950s.

Before Years of Hunger, socio-political studies of postwar Germany were published in the late '40s and '50s only by authors from the occupying countries, America and Great Britain. The experience of the German population that political involvement can be self-destructive provided a high motivation for staying out of politics for years. Supported by the neutralization and demilitarization policies of the Allies, the Germans turned into an "unpolitical" mass, and "politics" became a bad word. On the literary level this phenomenon can be found in the work of the Gruppe 47, the prevalent "werkimmanente Literaturkritik" and existentialism. In film only outsiders such as Wolfgang Staudte drew a connecting line between the fascists in the Third Reich and the fascists in postwar Germany. His films Rotation (1948/9) and Kirmes (1960) were moral tales in the fashion of Brechtian "Lehrstücke" and therefore negatively received as being too ideological. As under the fascist regime, the political left continued to be regarded as the enemy of the state. During the
Große Koalition any German who wanted to be regarded as "decent" was aligned with the Christian democratic parties. The left struggled with "Abgrenzungen" within their own ranks (Socialists refused to accept communists, especially after the Socialist party in the eastern zone was subsumed by the Communist party). Under the new freiheitlich rechtliche Grundordnung "ideology" connoted leftist politics, whereas the official course was propagated with the slogan "freedom and democracy." Almost all oppositional views, criticism of the official political line, were stigmatized as leftist, made illegal and thus relegated to the underground. Therefore the critical political voices in Germany had almost no outlet, with very few exceptions, such as the magazine Konkret which were circulated exclusively among the left. Only there, journalists such as Ulrike Meinhof took the liberty to comment on the current precariously reactionary, revisionistic politics intended to restore the old German society rather than create a truly "new Germany." Apart from Meinhoff's attempt at disclosing the real conditions and buried scandals (she was editor of Konkret from 1959-1969), Brückner's film for the first time draws a realistic picture of the German family structures under the Adenauer regime, and for the first time a feminist picture. Brückner has a strong political background (a doctorate in political science). She combines political insight with a feminist analysis. In her view therefore a woman's condition is always determined by both factors, gender and class. Years of Hunger is a study of social class and womanhood. The neurosis of the girl protagonist is the collective neurosis of a generation of
women in Adenauer Germany. In this sense Brückner calls her film a Kultur-Film, a film which makes a critical statement about German postwar culture, its political and private structures. It is this aspect which gives the figure of the grandmother her raison d'être. Just as Germany did not start from a "zero point" in 1945, the mother-daughter relationship between Mrs. Scheuner and Ursula has its own history. Mr. Scheuner's identity has been formed by his mother, the second grandmother in the film.

Mrs. Scheuner's mother is a sexually repressed lower middle class woman who associates sexuality with danger, used motherhood to gain social status and flourished as a widow. The emotional and intellectual immaturity of her two daughters guarantees her power. Happy to have escaped male domination through her husband's death, the grandmother can only feel pity for her daughter who has to continue acting the good wife all her life, despite the fact that her husband sees another woman. For the grandmother sexuality, her body (the small feet of which she is proud) are marketable assets, instruments that assured her a social position through marriage.

Her two daughters are not her companions on an equal basis, they are her servants — making coffee and doing the old woman's pedicure. The authoritarian nineteenth-century family structure is still intact for the old matriarch who is a representative of the German lower middle class who lost its economic basis in the depression, but firmly holds on to bourgeois values. This also entails keeping up a front of marital bliss, when one couldn't care less about the husband's attention.
Well beyond menopause, and thus beyond the sexual bind her daughter finds herself in, the grandmother speaks in a lofty tone. From this advantageous position she can give womanhood an idealized, mystical touch. The old woman assumes great airs as she makes ideological statements about women: "A real woman will always do what she wants." ... "A woman either can dance or she can't and instruction won't help either." However, when her body, the physical reality is involved, the lack of knowledge and its substitutes, myth and degrading cover-ups, become obvious ("I don't know what d.u. means. Our mother never explained that to us.") Before Ursula asked, it never occurred to any of the women to raise questions and both mother and grandmother are utterly taken by surprise. The women's reaction in this scene implies that not knowing too much makes life easier. Not only is it unnecessary to know, but for women, seeking the answer to everything is inappropriate curiosity. Asking too many questions tended to be risky for anybody during the fascist years. In the postwar years most questions of the young generation were met with silence. Those who were adults during the fascist years still associated knowledge with fear of consequences, with danger. Playing dumb had become a way out of the social political dilemma, a strategy which everybody used and which was generally accepted by Germans. Both mother and grandmother pass the old myths about womanhood on to Ursula and are thus instrumental in training the girl to see her body as object and a future asset.
Mrs. Scheuner's views on life are a conglomerate of fears: her own from the recent past added on to the grandmother’s fearful, narrowminded conservatism. Mrs. Scheuner and her sister, an old maid, never became independent but remained subservient children in their psychological constellation toward their mother -- in conversation the grandmother still addresses Ursula's mother as "child." Mrs. Scheuner was never allowed to have a child's freedom, instead she was held in fear and ignorance, especially about her sexuality, which kept her in the lifelong position of the "good girl." As Mrs. Scheuner relates in one scene, all her beliefs are those her mother imprinted on her. She does not look critically at the way in which her mother kept total control over her life. Her mother is still Mrs. Scheuner's only support and resource for advice about women's problems.

Brückner's presentation of Mrs. Scheuner's mother transcends the statement of a generalizing feminist argument, that "she (the mother) has been rendered powerless by a society whose values she had no voice in determining." On the contrary, Brückner's presentation of Ursula's mother and grandmother identifies this "society," or rather who in this society transmits the patriarchal power over women: women. As a widow the grandmother is a free agent. She has no more sexual obligations. She does not veil her true identity as matriarch. She abuses her power to keep her daughters emotionally and economically dependent. Although independent in a larger context, she lives outside a family structure presided over by a patriarch, she even usurps the
patriarch's position, feeding her daughter's lack of self-esteem with statements such as "A woman alone in this world is a nobody." Despite their real-life strengths as independent working women, both mother and grandmother perpetuate the belief that they cannot make it on their own, a behavior grounded in the fear of loss of social acceptance as real women. This fear was deeply engrained in women by the bourgeois and Nazi ideologies. The two women's psychological structure is based on sexual repression and exemplifies the perpetuation of the value system of these ideologies. By contrasting these women with the father's mother, the filmmaker marks their values as conditional upon social class. Mr. Scheuner's mother has a proletarian consciousness with all the limitations that go along with it, having fought for women's political equality. She can only come to the conclusion that she must be ill when her granddaughter cannot cope with how womanhood has been defined for her. She takes the fact that women have gained a foothold in the professional and public spheres as an absolute victory in the fight for women's liberation, never asking about issues of women's sexual identity.

Ursula puts the new German wonder woman in a nutshell when she describes her mother's dreams that she be "just like her (the good mother and homemaker), but at the same time be different (the self-sufficient professional)."

The various mothers and grandmothers in the film are a critique of both professional liberation and political liberation/equality that the old women's movement demanded. The film shows that the women did not face their own identity as women, their sexuality. It
shows that there is a discrepancy in German society between professional and political freedom (the questionable success of both is made clear, also) and the sexual self-incarceration of women. The new women's movement put the finger on sexual identity and raised the consciousness of how sexual identity affects women's lives.

The character of Ursula's mother is typical of the unpolitical, authoritarian personality described by Wilhelm Reich et al. in studies of the political fears of the sexually repressed. When she tries to keep the young girl in the safe environment of the home as long as humanly possible, she not only conforms to ideas firmly implanted by her family background (her mother's absolute reign), but unconsciously Mrs. Scheuner's need fulfillment through her family life is guided by the common postwar German family structures. After Germany's defeat, when the country lost its political and ideological identity, the safest thing to hold on to seemed to be the private, supposedly unpolitical family structures. Therefore, in postwar Germany the family assumed increased meaning and a new function. It became hermetic in structure, characterized by mistrust of other people. Since the public realm, organizations and masses were identified as the carriers of the political virus, families stuck to themselves. This fostered the illusionary trust in the home as the one safe realm. As a consequence the home became a prison. Social life and involvements were neglected since all energies went into upgrading the home (new appliances and furniture, a party basement with ping pong table etc.) and possibly the flight from the home into a vacation which again had the function to
demonstrate how well off the family was (along with all Germans during those years, Ursula's mother dreams of a trip to Italy.)

Mrs. Scheuner's sole outlet for her ambitions is to push her husband's career and her daughter's education. This autobiographical detail is not an individual one but a collective trait of postwar German women who had left their jobs after the war to make room on the job market for their returning husbands. They realized their powerlessness in the patriarchal structure without good professional training. When many went back to work when the economy needed the extra work force (industrielle Ersatzarmee) they were underpaid, exploited and discriminated against (lack of pension plans etc. on the level of unskilled labor employment.) With their husbands' return, the women who had held jobs during and after the war lost their social status. They were socially demoted both within the family (as head of household) and at work (losing the jobs to the returning men). While they were needed as Mitverdiener of the double income during the later period of reconstruction, the home was considered their appropriate place, being with their children. The need for a second income was a social stigma and had to be kept silent to spare the already broken ego of the head of the household. Mrs. Scheuner is made to feel guilty for leaving her daughter alone -- not by her husband who is concerned about his own leisure time -- but by her mother, her sister and other women. Brückner shows that it is not the impersonal "oppressive patriarchal system"¹² which women have to blame for their misery, but people who are exerting pressures to perpetuate that system for a
specific reason. In a much more differentiated statement than Jan Mouton’s claim that "...behind the pain and enmity in the relationship lie the damaging values of the dominant culture,"13 *Years of Hunger* exposes the middle class women’s part in reinforcing and perpetuating the dominant system (instead of reducing the condition of the German family to feminist clichés).

Mrs. Scheuner has internalized her mother’s class consciousness and her wish to preserve the daughter’s virginity for the highest bidder on the marriage market. On the other hand, her own experience as a working woman has given her a sense of economic (professional) vulnerability: without professional training she cannot earn a satisfactory income or even an adequate salary and is threatened by her husband’s escapades. Because of her financial dependency she has to hold on to him despite his infidelity. If it is not her husband who supports her, it is going to be her daughter just as it first was her mother. As her family life falls apart (her husband philandering and her daughter withdrawing from her) she has to ground her self-image entirely in professional (i.e. financial) success. Since she is convinced of the liberating effect of a career, Mrs. Scheuner has set the goal for her daughter to become a successful professional woman. However, at the same time Ursula is to follow the mother’s ideal of a homemaker restricting her life to the private sphere. This leads the child into a double bind situation.

In this family mothering is restricted to setting the limits of a daughter’s movements (her social life) and trying to prevent the
social (sexual) fall from happening. Since Mrs. Scheuner was confined to her mother's realm all her life, even when she was married ("Going to the theater, movies and dancing -- I didn't have any of that") she considers the rules she sets for Ursula in the best tradition of her own conservative bourgeois upbringing. Since she never experienced them, she associates such activities with decadence. Mrs. Scheuner's ideological background is a mixture of bourgeois and Nazi values under which the distractions a city offers are condemned as "abartig." To Ursula's mother sexuality is synonymous with pain, fear, risk of losing one's social position and the shame associated with it. Sexuality (the ability to procreate) is seen as the determinator of one's social status and financial security in a marriage. With such a possibility of a "moral" use of sexuality comes the possibility for an immoral use: living sexually outside of the family and risking financial gain as well as loss of social and moral acceptance. For this reason, Mrs. Scheuner dislikes the school's influence on the girl. The different social standards Ursula learns about threaten her mother -- both in terms of social/professional achievement and attitude toward sexuality. As lower middle class woman, Ursula's mother views the upper class morality at school as loose and amoral. The bourgeoisie and upper class pose a political, social (wealth) and sexual threat. She regards the social contacts (dance lessons and parties) as decadent activities which jeopardize her daughter's moral standards.

Through the figure of Mrs. Scheuner, Brückner demonstrates women's sexual history of self-hate - self negation - reduction to a
function. The German mothers of the 1950s functioned extremely well in the framework of an ideology of use (Verwertbarkeit), displacing their needs while believing in the merit of their efforts for the long-term goal of improving the status of women through professional roles.

II. The Visual Code of Representation in *Years of Hunger*

Jutta Brückner’s *Years of Hunger* and Helma Sanders-Brahms’ *Germany, Pale Mother*, both of which premiered in 1979, have a lot in common. Although a direct comparison is not my intention, I will point out parallels and similarities between these two works. Both films’ opening scenes show the same objects: buildings of a boat club, boat and body of water. Apart from this parallel, however, the two respective scenes stand in stark contrast. In Brückner’s film, the dark, gloomy view of a boathouse/beach club restaurant and the docked boats, at dusk and hardly lit, is a long take in black and white (as is the entire film *Years of Hunger*). The stillness of the image, underscored by the monotonous, somber rhythm of a tuba or oboe which reinforces the oppressive mood that the image conveys, contrasts with the director’s wordy voice-over commentary about the way she remembers her past. The viewer’s look is held on the opening shot for almost the entire duration of the director’s programmatic statement about the restless flight from this past which left her with petrified structures of self. The commentary points out repression, illness, and attempts to escape painful
memories through a frantic work pace. While we hear this opening statement, a cut separates the first long image from a second, shorter image of an empty row boat on the surface of the water. The high angle shot gives the water a mirror-like, impenetrable appearance, reflecting the blinding light of the sky. In the opening scene of Germany, Pale Mother which introduces the viewer to time, locus and personae, the environment mostly serves to situate the people in their socio-historic context. Brückner's establishing shot is an image from the director's memory. The image does not disclose its meaning. The director's commentary leads the viewer into the film. The image contains no people, the personae are introduced in the following sequence. This prologue does not speak of the socio-political context of post-war Germany, but rather points at the illness, the neurosis which it has inflicted on this person, the filmmaker.

The female off-screen voice provides the temporal frame for the two images: we witness a thirty year old woman's memories of a location which played a key role in her past. The filmmaker's memory recalls only the locus of her past but cannot situate herself within this past. This phenomenon was shared by millions of Germans after the war, in whose memory the places of their past recalled events from which their identity was disconnected. The establishing shot provides the context of a woman's re-constructing the memory of her own self. The images of the boat club and boat present both the limitation of her memory capacity up to this point and the starting point of her attempt to construct her memory. She
is not a part of these images of her earlier life.

As the allegorical Brecht poem (raising the question of national image and standing) and the focus on the image of the mother in Germany, Pale Mother indicate, Sanders-Brahms' film centers on the identity of the filmmaker as mother and on questions of motherhood. Void of human characters, Years of Hunger in its first image signifies the lack and loss of identity, and the need to establish it, gain it back as it were through the production of images. Jutta Brückner comments on Sanders-Brahms' film aesthetics in Germany, Pale Mother as an emotional explosion to which she compares her project as an implosion. The first scene of Brückner's film possesses the proverbial calmness before the storm. Both the matter-of-fact voice and the stark image speak of long petrified, neurotic structures about to break open. The long establishing shot with its postscript second image is a forewarning of the implosion about to take place.

The first few scenes of Germany, Pale Mother are marked by Sanders-Brahms' voice-over commentary as constructions outside her own memory. The images, especially the scenes with her parents as newlyweds, are obvious as constructs, staged for the express purpose of demonstrating social chiffres. Brückner's approach, however, is a strictly psychological one. Thus the viewer is confronted with an image of which s/he cannot decode the personal significance. We are only told that this location was significant in her past. As we learn later, the establishing shot shows the locus of her first sexual encounter. Initially the image in its harsh contrasts only
sets the stage and the mood for the subsequent tracing of an illness. In a discussion at Sceaux, the filmmaker called the water "le lieu névrotique" which reoccurs in several scenes dividing the film into three parts. The boathouse first appears in the morning. When it reappears, it is noon, and finally we see it again at night. According to Brückner the film traces "the birth of a neurosis," starting when she was thirteen years old. Ursel’s neurosis is both an individual one and the collective one of the German postwar generation.

At the cut from the second image to the next scene, the voice-over commentary of the director is followed seamlessly by the voice of the 13 year old protagonist. The cut from the almost idyllic stillness of the boat image to the next -- the very drab looking front of a 1950s German postwar housing project -- as the camera moves alongside the facade, seemingly searching for traces of life, disappoints the hope of the viewer for a sign of human life. The image contrasts dramatically with the colorful splendidness of the fantasy love scene that the girl’s voice recites. With these images, as in many instances through the film, we hear on the soundtrack a voice "thinking out loud," not a dialogue or even a monologue, but thoughts made audible, a filmic "inner monologue."

The filmmaker introduces the reality of postwar German life -- cheaply and quickly built housing projects which offer little more than four walls and a roof overhead -- along with high hopes. These hopes and dreams of fulfillment, however, only exist inside the individual. They do not have any reality, not even at the level of
language as utterances in a communication. They are only lines on paper. The mention of wonderful exotic objects like silk scarfs clashes with the image of her family's belongings — an assortment of very simple wood furniture — heaped up in the yard of the apartment house. The protagonist's, a half grown girl's, worried inquiry whether she'll find new friends is answered by her father with a seemingly ironic "Of course, in such a beautiful part of town." The remark is, however, made in all seriousness, since these depressing apartments were the best available housing in 1953 and very hard to come by as the following bedroom scene illustrates.

On an almost completely dark screen the viewer can make out the girl, Ursula, lying in bed, listening to her father talking about the former residents who were evicted from this apartment. As the first part of the film's title Years of Hunger comes on (the subtitle In a Rich Country will be added later, superimposed on another image), the scope of the family's social restrictions becomes clear: the camera tracks along the bed to the mother and father, all three of them in one bed side by side lined up as in a funeral home arrangement. With Ursula we learn that the Scheuner family not only owes their proud possession of the apartment to another couple's eviction, but also about the exact circumstances of this couple's social dilemma, the Onkelehe: the widowed woman lived with a man whom she could not marry or she would have lost her pension. As the father explains the term to Ursula in a whispering voice, the mother annoyedly tries to put an end to the discussion "One does not have to know everything." This statement is more than
a mother's awkward attempt to stop a nosey adolescent from asking questions. It reveals the residue of fascist philosophy. The authority to ask questions was restricted by hierarchical structures, and submissiveness to authoritarian rule was deeply engrained in German citizens. During the postwar years, asking questions was like walking over a field with unexploded buried mines (the brown past of the fascist years). One could step on a mine at any time. However, not only the Nazi past needed to be repressed in the fifties. As this example demonstrates, present conditions and actions had to be hushed up as well. Thus neither social conditions nor ensuing interpersonal mechanisms changed much after the Nazi regime had ended. In this scene, the bedroom is not a space for affection. The intimacy among the three only extends to sharing these whispered secrets about other people's private lives.

In the next scene we see Ursula as a dark figure and her mother in front of the kitchen window. The scene starts with the girl looking out, planning in her mind how she will make the other children let her play with them. To the mother she expresses her concern about finding a new friend. Image (the action of looking) and soundtrack put the girl into the context of her social environment in school and in the neighborhood. Her mother does not share her interest in making contacts outside the home. This is encoded in the composition of the image: Mrs. Scheuner, facing the kitchen table, is framed by the window as a backdrop. Her look is not a directed one but a dreamy gaze into the room. She does not respond to her daughter. Instead she asks Ursula what she would
like for Christmas, only to proceed to answer her own question, "Didn't you once want a big accordion," as she puts the household money into various envelopes. The goal of her monologue becomes clear as she informs the father, "Ursula just told me she wants an accordion." Again we hear the continuation of this "conversation" between mother and father not as words spoken to each other, but as their thoughts which are related in voice-over.

The family is faced with the mother's determination to take a job, as the viewer is faced in the next image with the fait accompli of her new status as a working mother. A close-up of canned and preserved foods follows the abrupt cut. The mother does not answer Ursula's inquiry about the contents of a package directly, but only informs her: "Just in case, if we see bad times again." Stocking up food was a common practice during the cold war in Germany. It was, beyond a certain limit, also a criminal act, so it had to be done discreetly. (My parents continued this practice through the sixties and periodically bought new emergency supplies for the entire family.) Many people not only took pride in eating well and plenty, but they actually piled up emergency supplies and prepared the basement of their homes as emergency living quarters. From the close-up of the food, the camera angle widens to the entire scene of the family gathered around the kitchen table, visualizing the importance of food as the one most important thing around which their family life revolves. The father silently sitting behind the table in the background is dwarfed by the heaped up cans, hams, chocolate and coffee. Mother and daughter, standing at the table,
frame the bounty as Mrs. Scheuner defends her job to both of them. Ursula uses her mother's defensive position to ask whether she can bring home a friend so she won't be alone. The mother's guilt feelings at having abandoned her daughter make her hand out chocolate for compensation, substituting one need with the fulfillment of another. On the soundtrack we hear the director's voice listing unfulfilled emotional needs. When the mother finally addresses the father, he only gives a resigned "if you insist." In this first sequence of short scenes, the Scheuner family (especially the mother and daughter) are defined by their social context. As the film director said, she "wanted to show how individual and class cannot be separated." The Scheuner family is a typical lower middle class family. It was this class that provided the mass support for Hitler's fascist regime.

The cut after this scene in the kitchen is followed by a close-up of someone polishing black and chrome parts of a car. Neither car nor person are at first identifiable. Thus the viewer only observes the compulsive action of spit-shining. The family is united in labor around this symbol of their social success. The car is introduced in its visual presence as a means of class distinction vis-à-vis those who still ride a bike (bicyclist passing). In a long shot the Scheuners drive up in front of their apartment complex, when the film's complete title appears: Years of Hunger. In a Rich Country.

During the Adenauer era the Germans' wealth increased dramatically and the Scheuners were successful in their effort "to
be somebody again": they unload big, heavy bags with groceries, and
the table set up for a party in the backyard is loaded with a number
of cakes and tortes. Gernot (note the Nibelungen name), the
neighbor boy, is the obese adolescent typical of the time. He
symbolizes the effort of German parents to make up to their children
for what they had lacked in their younger years. The radio voice in
the background is another reminder of the sacrifices made for
material success, as refugees from the eastern occupied zone greet
the relatives they left behind. Material goods have to make up for
the people's absence, the love and closeness missing in their
relationships. Many of these people often sent clothing, coffee,
etc. back to their "poor relatives" in the East. With abundant food
as pacifiers, the pubescent children are left to themselves. The
boy can express his repressed sexuality in obscene intimations which
Ursula doesn't understand. Her questions are never answered,
probably because he doesn't have an answer.

The next scene shows the mother as she is performing her
housewifely chores (mending clothes). Her place in the house is
again at the window, but as always facing towards the inside of the
room. When Mrs. Scheuner complains about her double workload -- her
husband doesn't help her at home -- the grandmother counters with
musings about her own situation, that she was ready to take on any
burden, to not ever complain, if only she had her husband at her
side. She warns her daughter that a woman alone is nobody in this
world. However, only seconds later the grandmother admits the
fallacy of her position: that she managed very well by herself and
felt good about it. Mrs. Scheuner's talk about her doing the laundry on Sunday exposes the woman's double bind: she does it with guilt feelings (she is conscious of the fact that society does not approve of her not being with her daughter) and with a sense of being a martyr.

The women's relationship is visually marked as hierarchical. The grandmother dominates her daughter through her positioning, gestures and her commanding look. The grandmother calls her "child." We do not see Mrs. Scheuner alone; she forms a unity with her mother or is with her husband (which visually coincides with her life situation as she describes it: she gave her mother her last penny as she left to join her husband and put her life in his hands).

However, as the film progresses, we see her daughter Ursula alone in the image in an increasing number of frames, starting with her discovery of menstruation in the bathroom scene.

The image following the cut confronts the viewer with the girl sitting on the toilet. This image violates a strong taboo in America whereas in German films this is quite a common image. Not, however, what follows: she gets up from the toilet and inspects her underpants, turning them to the camera, so that blood becomes visible. She then looks into the toilet. To confirm the unexpected finding she wipes herself with a towel from the laundry basket and looks at the bloodstain, holding it in plain view of the camera. The viewer's observing is not a voyeuristic, pleasurable action, but an act of violence, as Brückner defined it.17 The camera's exposing the menstruation blood violates a taboo in both the German
and the American cultural context. No representation of murder, rape or other aggression on screen will raise an eyebrow, but the showing of menstrual blood — the absolute taboo\textsuperscript{18} — caused strong reactions even from the film production team (the male crew members refused to touch the napkin, the director had to do it herself),\textsuperscript{19} as well as in the spectators and critics.\textsuperscript{20}

This scene shocks by exposing the alienation effect that the first encounter with menstruation has on the girl. Her immediate deduction is that she is ill. Blood has only one (negative) connotation of something being wrong, so the reaction is one of great panic. Yelling for her mother, she runs to her. The impact of the scene on the viewer is heightened by contrasting the girl’s experience of an existential threat and her mother’s impersonal, cold reaction. When she tells her mother that she is ill, that her panties are bloody, hoping for the mother to take care of her body, she only finds that her mother avoids even speaking to her, of her person and her menstruation directly. Instead Mrs. Scheuner addresses the grandmother: "This is how I know I am getting old," thus the effect of the menstruation for Ursula’s mother is only a negative one on her personally. She does not even react to it with regard to her daughter. As she fits Ursula with a girdle with a feminine napkin attached to it, she only instructs her not to mess with the boys any more under any circumstances, and her grandmother adds that she is not allowed to bathe or change her underwear during that time of the month. When Ursula desperately inquires whether there isn’t anything that can be done about this, her mother
projects her own self-pity: "I know it's not nice. But somebody has to have the babies." Ursula cannot make this connection. Again the contradictions of the two women's own age-old myths are handed down as Mrs. Scheuner holds a new dress up to Ursula and says: "You will yet see how nice it is to be a woman." Mother and grandmother consider themselves as objects in the patriarchal world. In an unreflected way they hand down what they perceive as the positive and negative aspects of their existence. Mother and grandmother perpetuate nonsensical rites of secrecy ("say you are d.u."); they admit that they don't even know the meaning of that.

From their reaction Ursula does not learn anything except that her gender is her fate, and that it is not a happy one. When her father comes in, she flees into his arms, trying to escape from the women's camp. In response to her father's worried question her mother makes up lies about a bellyache from eating too much cake. Not only is Ursula supposed to keep the bleeding a secret, but the mother's lie implies that her condition, her pain, is a self-inflicted and shameful one. According to Ursula's mother and grandmother, womanhood is a punishment, "a cross to bear" in biblical terms. The picture of female sexuality is completed in Ursula's mother's and grandmother's discussion about the illegitimate children of women on the father's side of the family. Mrs. Scheuner's bottom line is: having children is lack of self-control and a curse for which the woman bears guilt. In this scene the grandmother, Mrs. Scheuner, and her sister (a bigoted "old spinster") express not only their fear of Ursula falling prey to her
sexuality but imply that her mother's job puts the girl at a higher sexual risk as a "latchkey child." The aunt pleads with the mother to watch over Ursula so she does not get into the wrong circles "which don’t have the right fear of God." Almost like a curse, the grandmother pours salt on the mother’s wound by saying "There is no taming a real woman."

Ursel seems to prove her grandmother right, but it is the child in her that her mother can’t tame at this point. She does revolt against her own body's change and the uncomfortable gadget under her dress. We are used to seeing men touch their clothing and themselves. Both men and women masturbate on screen, but seeing Ursel fiddle with her menstrual hygiene girdle goes against the taboo that a woman's menstruation is supposed to be unnoticed in public. Advertisements in all media are trying to convince us that it is invisible. Brückner, the film director, makes the invisible visible. As we watch the girl take off the contraption in a corner of the backyard, the camera focuses on the napkin for a long moment. Ursula forms the light center of the very dark image. The white, blood-stained napkin, shot from a high angle, is centered in close-up on the dark background. The scene starts out with a very strong rhythmical beat of gloomy piano music. After a crescendo the music stops as Ursula gets rid of the napkin. She goes and plays with the fat neighbor boy running between the white sheets -- a symbol of the immaculate, of virginity -- hung in the sun to dry. These images of insistence on or retreat into childhood play are accompanied on the soundtrack by the director's voice-over commentary enumerating
childhood sensations and feelings gained from these activities. Ursula’s play is interrupted by the mother’s admonition that she is wearing "the good dress," on a symbolical level a plea to stay pure.

In the next scene we see the tamed Ursula no longer the one who would risk her "Sunday dress" in horseplay with the neighbor boy. The new girl is the epitome of the sad "good girl" who helps her mother with the household chores. Through the rigidity of her slow movements, her body expresses the repression, the closed up facial features, the somber look. She seems to have not grown up but grown old. The space she commands is reduced to the narrow corner between her parents’ bed and the open window, which is half barricaded by the down covers being aired out. From there she can only experience the outside through the pensive look. As she folds her father’s pyjama, she inspects the opening in front, pokes her finger through it with a thrusting motion. When on the soundtrack we hear children outside sing an obscene song, Ursel retreats further into the enclosure of the room, sitting down on the bed, her back to the camera. The image suddenly cuts to Ursel’s mental image of the figure of a naked woman (seemingly her mother) lying in the grass on her back and the dark shadow of a man with a hat cast over her body. The children’s obscene song continues as we watch Ursula shake her head, holding her ears shut. In Ursula’s mind sexuality has been established with all its negative connotations of sleaziness and threats (the dark shadow of a man who has power over the naked woman lying defenseless on her back).
The following three scenes conclude this sequence of Ursula's initial confrontation with becoming a woman. From Ursel's profile in close-up the camera pans 90 degrees over to her image in the bathroom mirror, where we see her upper body. On the soundtrack we hear Ursel's whispering voice reciting the verse about the pastor whose "tam-tam" has been eaten by syphilis. She very slowly pulls her top down to where she can almost see her breast. The long stare at her mirror image is interrupted by Ursel's abruptly sticking her tongue out. This inspection and others in various scenes in the bathroom, is action which even contains the elements of suspense and transformation. When Ursula faces her body in the mirror she takes a different position towards it in every instance, literally appropriating her body through the act of looking. In this instance there is yet another level of significance in her action of pulling down the shirt: as she starts to lower the shirt, the voyeuristic expectation of a bare breast is built up only to be broken off with this defiant gesture of sticking out her tongue. Whereas in this instance the look at her breasts is not possible, in front of her friend she can show off her breasts bulging under the tank top.

When the friend does not surrender in the breast competition, but lifts up her shirt to show her breasts, Ursel's second chance in winning is a comparison of muscle strength. The first part of this competition captures the awkwardness of pubescent girls. The camera angle in the beginning of this scene is low, emphazising the girls' height and bulging shapes, their grown-up posing with the three-fold mirror between them. During the wrestling match the camera is
looking down at them. Their dual character of grown girls and playful children is expressed in this presentation.

Their open comparison of their bodies stands in sharp contrast to the next scene in which the mother undresses in the dark underneath her full length nightshirt. We watch almost the entire process in real time. Again, the contrast between the girls’ interest in their bodies and the mother’s shameful hiding from her daughter could not be stronger. She does not even look at herself. Mrs. Scheuner goes to the open window and stands by Ursel’s side, who was watching two young couples walking in the dark. The mother comments on their behavior: "Stupid girls. Then they are in a terrible position with a child. Then it’s too late." Ursel does not show any interest in the action going on outside nor even comprehends the relevance of her mother’s commentary. She expresses her own vision of personal freedom which is unrelated to gender: "When I’ll be 18 I’ll go on a tour of Europe on my bike." While Mrs. Scheuner immediately stops her: "You don’t think I would give you permission for that." her action of closing the window is an impotent attempt at control, as if she could shut the world and its dangers out of their home.

The dialogue between mother and daughter exposes the two different levels on which they talk past each other. To Ursula the gender-coded fearful thinking of her mother is incomprehensible. In this sequence for Ursel the connotations of becoming a woman are loss of freedom, whereas for her mother the daughter’s sexuality means fear of loss of control over her own life. In her middle
class thinking her daughter's sexuality is an extension of her own. Sexuality for Mrs. Scheuner as a lower middle class woman has only one connotation: social status. This sequence is followed by a sequence of scenes which defines first her father, then her mother and finally Ursula in their respective political context.

It is most significant that the father's political identity is introduced in a private setting, a dark room in which only a small group of friends is gathered around a radio set under a naked light bulb, reminiscent of people during the war illegally listening to enemy radio broadcasts. As the radio reports the incidents of June 17, 1953, the group argues whether the socialist administration shot workers (as the father believes) or provocateurs who had come to East Berlin from the West (as another member of the group claims). In the newly democratic West German society, oppositional political opinions are still only expressed in the private sphere. When personal political views fly through the room, one of the men immediately closes the shutters, still afraid they might be overheard. We learn in a later scene that a concrete experience caused this protective reflex: mutilation as a political prisoner in a concentration camp. The documentary footage which immediately follows the action of closing the shutters demonstrates the continued persecution of communists in the 1950s. As a consequence, not only communists, but many people with liberal leftist inclinations exercised self-censorship. The home is the only safe place for politics. As later scenes show, the free German state does not allow for free expression of the father's political convictions.
This short first scene in the sequence is followed by documentary footage from newsreels, offering a number of glimpses at the historical events in Berlin. They are accompanied on the soundtrack concurrently by two commentaries, that of the official East-Berlin radio commentator and that of the West German chancellor Konrad Adenauer. In this scene Years of Hunger presents the viewer with bits of political memory, visual memory and language used to explain and assess the incident. The psychological recall of these years is twofold, on the personal level and on the public (political) level: the documentary scenes have a direct emotional impact on Ursula; they also inform the viewer, depending on his/her degree of familiarity with the events. Although the presence of CIA directed provocateurs is a documented fact, the June 17 uprising was exploited by the West German government to assert itself in the mind of its citizens as the only democratic German state by not only condemning the incident but declaring it a national holiday of German unity (i.e. the striving for reunification of the divided country under the capitalist system.) At a time when the restrictive measures which outrage Americans today (no free travel of citizens under age 65, the Berlin wall and automatic shooting devices at the border) didn't exist in East Germany, the term "freedom" was the most abused political slogan around which pivoted both the East German and the West German commentaries on the uprising.

As the image cuts from the newsreel footage to the radio in the Scheuner home, the voice from the radio commentator is continuous.
The frame widens from the close-up of the radio to Ursel listening to it, sitting on the left side of the room, and her mother on the right side, dusting. The girl does not understand the political context of the reported events, and directed by government propaganda she can only react with a confused question why the East German authorities wouldn't give the citizens their freedom. Mrs. Scheuner is no source of political information. As housewife she has reduced herself to fear for her personal well-being: "I hope there won't be another war. Then everything would have been in vain." Since this fear gives her sleepless nights, she dusts and polishes her possessions. The shootings in East Berlin bring back her memories of bomb attacks from which they narrowly escaped. Ursel urges her mother to bury that fear. The girl concentrates on finding out the meaning of the all-decisive term "freedom," by which she is told her life differs from those unlucky ones behind the Iron Curtain. The mother finally answers this question: "When we have everything we need and don't have to be afraid." Her statement is typical of middle-class Germans in this era with its preoccupation with economical reconstruction and personal wealth. With their emotions directed by the Allies — collective guilt and fear of the communist threat — the German population's profile of political behavior had not changed. What had changed was only the direction they followed.

In Years of Hunger, the prime example for political behavior of Germans after the war is the school teacher, a typical Mitläufer. As we learn later, she had been a group leader in the BDM, Hitler's
youth organization for girls. Her behavior models have not changed, only the system she is aligned with has. After the war she switched scripts. Now she follows directives by instructing the girls to send food packages to East Germany and by posting the information leaflets asking for contributions to the fund for the care of veterans' grave sites. We hear Adenauer's speech on reunification of the two German countries as we watch the girls writing in their notebooks. Again the official party line (only in the postwar years it is the Grand Coalition led by the Christian Democratic party) is soaked up obediently, without questioning.

When Ursula shyly asks the teacher after class about "freedom" and what her father said about the commandant of a KZ having been set free with that argument for freedom, the teacher praises her for not speaking up in front of everybody and scorns the statement (and by implication Ursula) as "propagandistic." The schoolteacher is exposed as a politically repressed character. She doesn't have a critical opinion of her own nor feels free to talk. She suppresses Ursula's attempt to get underneath the slick surface. Children's questions about politics posed a threat to the adult population, and a political understanding on their part had to be prevented or boycotted at all cost. The political climate in Germany is marked as one of repression and intolerance. The voice of the "other" in Years of Hunger therefore has to come from the East, not from opposition within West Germany.

The political environment in which the protagonist lives is further marked by the last three scenes in this sequence. As Ursel
hangs around her mother scrubbing laundry, the girl learns about her parents' romantic moments as young people. Her father's work in the political underground is regarded as a dark chapter by Mrs. Scheuner. Mr. Scheuner tells about placing the rockets dispersing anti-Nazi propaganda as his adventurous life, to which his wife put a stop. When Ursel innocently asks why she did that, the mother's long silence is ended by snapping "would you have wanted your father to be sent to a KZ?" Sensing the father's defeat, Ursel tries to bolster his ego by assuring him of her love. At night she goes to his bed, where he is finally free to talk about his political actions during that period.

From the father telling his story, the image cuts to a medium close-up of Ursel, staring into off-screen space to the left, while we hear her father's voice. That we are already in the next scene only becomes clear as Mrs. Scheuner interrupts her daughter's "daydreaming" by stroking her head, arranging her hair as if she were a little child. From the father's bedside Ursel is transported in this scene into a cafeteria, seated at a table with two of her mother's colleagues. The girl's talk about a political poster prompts inquisitive probing on the women's part "Are you commies perhaps?" Flustered, the mother stutters incoherent phrases like "from those days... my husband's family... well it was... an old habit." When the colleagues notice that they touched upon the fascist past they immediately retreat, out of their great vulnerability: "My husband had committed a few such sins in his youth also."
Thus, all political actions during the fascist years are quickly excused as errors committed by children who didn't know what they were doing. The adults absolve each other from their sins. Politics could be regarded as a matter of the past if it weren't for Ursel. In their ignorance the children in postwar Germany served as the voice of truth or as the bad conscience of the parents, which does not let things rest in the past. Ursula simply has no idea why politics is a dirty word. In her childish naiveté she is proud of her father's anti-fascist activities and cannot understand why her mother restricted them and is ashamed of them in public. Nazi ideology and Communism are valued the same in some vague notion of "Totalitarianism."

Ursula's remark about Mr. Scheuner's present position as chair of the workers' council of his firm prompts the response "But why, your husband isn't a blue-collar worker." Being a worker would be the only possible excuse for union activity. In typical helpless authoritarian fashion the mother tries to shut the girl up, telling her that she has no place in a conversation of grown-ups. Whereas the colleagues excuse the child, they do not forgive Mrs. Scheuner for her husband's political opinions and activities. Although they don't know anything specific, they leave in protest. When they are gone Mrs. Scheuner instructs Ursel to keep "family matters like that private." The scene ends with Ursula revolting against her mother's authority by pointing out her colleagues' stupidity. Although the child does not understand the political ethics of her surroundings, she understands her mother's vulnerability and turns it against her.
The individual scenes within this sequence do not stand separately, but are formally all closely connected as mentioned above. The unifying element in the content of these scenes in different social environments is the attempt to shut politics out entirely. Politics has the taste of dirty business. In Adenauer Germany there is only a very narrow scale of views which fit into the official ideology. This fact becomes even more evident in the second political sequence.

Brückner alternates sequences of personal politics with those which define political identity and limitations. The next sequence starts with Ursula's creation of a self-image, the chic, worldly intellectual type with a French existentialist look (bonnet, and cigarette held in her mouth in a casual way). This image is a montage of body parts, the back of her upper body on the left edge of the frame and her head and legs in two different mirrors. The total image is as fragmented as Ursula's self is incomplete. The image has strong vertical and diagonal lines and shadows like expressionist images. This construction of the other Ursula introduces her encounter with her father's other woman and the subsequent reevaluation of her position towards father and mother. When Ursula answers the door the woman gives her the letter for her mother, showing surprise and sympathy for the girl when she learns that Mrs. Scheunen works.

In the following scene we see Ursel secretly open the woman's letter over steam in real time. During that scene the camera stays immobile, focusing on Ursula fiddling with the letter. However,
time here seems compressed: as we watch her trying to get access to
the letter (shot in real time), we concurrently hear the content of
the letter being read to us, so Ursel's opening is immediately
followed by her outraged reaction. With the image of her father in
medium close up, still in his hat and coat, we hear Ursula's
question, "How dare that woman do that." The image cuts to Mr.
Scheuner sitting at his desk, shot from a low angle in the very
bright desk light which resembles the lighting in a police
interrogation scene. He very lamely defends himself by saying that
he had sympathy for that woman who lost her husband and that Ursel
would only understand it when she is grown up.

These scenes alternate between Ursel standing motionless
staring and sudden jerky movements, slamming the door, dumping the
cake in the garbage can in protest. These images resemble
expressionistic images in their absence of dialogue, their dark
shadows in which the characters are barely outlined but not clearly
visible in their facial expressions. The camera angles are low as
the look is directed down, or we see a blank stare into off-screen
space behind the camera.

Food becomes the red herring: as other needs are not fulfilled
and the distance between the family members becomes more pronounced
in every scene, nearly every image contains food -- spaghetti,
coffee, etc, but mostly cakes and chocolate (with which Mrs.
Scheuner wants to make Ursel feel better when she finds her crying
in the kitchen, not without instructing her not to eat it all at
once; also Mr. Scheuner's mother offers her food). There is a
connection between food and moral standards. Ursula’s throwing into the garbage can the cake which her father bought after the confrontation about his lover is a very aggressive gesture, since refusing and throwing away food during that period in Germany was like a sacrilege. When Ursula later goes to retrieve it from the garbage can she can only eat it while shouting out curses at the woman: "Whore. Filthy broad." The image cuts to grandmother and mother sitting in the backyard, framing a table on which coffee and cakes are set up. The two women and the table form bright areas on the dark background of the trees. While the grandmother acts as if nothing had happened, the mother suddenly sinks to the grandmother’s side and into her arms for consolation. Going beyond the expressiveness of pre-Weimar cinema, this scene is reminiscent of silent films, through its lighting (natural lighting with strong shadows), the grandmother’s dramatized acting style and look with dark shadows around her eyes. The silence creates an oppressive tension until finally Mrs. Scheuner bursts out: "I am happy that he leaves me alone. But that can only mean that he has another one. Mama, do I have to put up with that?" Her mother instructs her to fake orgasms, "because men only like it when women act as if they cared about sex." Proper appearance as a functioning wife is the only concern in this marriage. There is no room for the woman’s feelings; neither are they expected (acting them out is all the husband can demand from his wife) nor are the mother’s real feelings of hurt acknowledged. The consequence for both Ursula and her mother is isolation.
In the next image, Ursula's clothes and gestures are again those of a child, since the father's lover had worn the same type of bonnet as she had tried on in front of the mirror as the worldly young lady. Her feelings hurt, the girl regresses and retreats into childhood, playing by herself with marbles. Mrs. Scheuner finds consolation in being with her daughter. As a professional woman with a secure income, Ursula will replace the grandmother's position of authority and provider in Mrs. Scheuner's life. The mother will move in with her and take care of her household. A hint of guilt feelings at having counted the father out, at being able to replace him emotionally, is quickly covered up by saying: "Of course only if he dies before I do" (almost wishful thinking). Ursula provides emotional support for her mother by promising to work hard in school, to getting ahead. Following this talk about their life together, which is entirely restricted to the realm of work and achievement, the mother -- almost like a postscript -- remarks that they should buy Ursula her first bra, thus bringing up the topic of sexuality which Ursula is avoiding.

However, it is everywhere, as her father's pyjamas and briefs hanging on the clothesline show and, following a cut, Ursula -- in the dark, hardly discernible -- listens intently to the sounds from the parents' bedroom as the father has an orgasm. Disgusted by the heavy breathing and screaming, the girl runs to the bathroom where we see her sit on the toilet flushing it for a while so it drowns out the father's sounds. In reaction to this experience with sexuality she throws herself on the dimly lit bed and cries while we
hear her voice on the soundtrack reciting esoteric impressions of beautiful objects.

The voice continues, but now it recites a love scene from a novel with very chauvinistic undertones. The image cuts to the boathouse, which was in the very first image of this film. We hear again the gloomy oboe music. Now the time is the middle of the day, and we observe a few men chasing and cornering a young woman. From this very short scene the image cuts abruptly to images of women parading in swimsuits in a beauty pageant. The women's bodies are lined up, the camera tracking along their bottoms in close-up. These images are accompanied on the soundtrack with loud laughter and a male comedian telling obscene jokes ("Frau Wirtin" verses). When the beauty queens are lining up in gowns the image freezes as one of them, looking at the camera, winks while we hear a male voice talking about a man masturbating.

This entire scene, old footage edited by Brückner, is obvious as a montage, in which the image exposes the object status of women, with which the soundtrack combines male sexual fantasies and laughter. The female body, as this culture sees it, is marked as a male construct and subjected to ridicule. These images of the public object "woman" are contrasted with Ursula's image, which in turn introduces an entire sequence of her self-definition as a woman, her struggle to learn what is expected from her and the conditions under which she has to do it: by herself, in isolation. We see Ursula sitting up straight and rigid behind a pile of books, in her striped sweater (her "prisoner in her own home" outfit).
With fat hamster cheeks she gives a blank stare across her books into off-screen space behind the camera. As the focus rests on this captive, highly restrained body we hear her voice (disconnected again, as always) monotonously reading declarations of love. These lines from novels are her only emotional outlet. For Ursula, love is nothing but a concept on paper. Rather than having real life experiences with people, Ursula's life is reduced to love scenes from books.

This view of the lonely, isolated girl is followed by a scene of confrontation between mother and daughter in the cafeteria. When they are alone Mrs. Scheuner keeps nagging, but when her boss joins them she abruptly switches her tone and uses her daughter to show off. Ursula's body retreats into the shell of a big coat. Bent over forward and covering herself with a briefcase she is reduced to a bulky object which separates Mrs. Scheuner from her boss. These two women define her identity: one as the model daughter and the other as the bookworm. Ursula fights her life as the "good girl" who does not know the things her classmates get to do (take dance lessons, etc.). She tries to connect with the girls her age and wants to do what they do. As a result of this attempt to be with her peers she ends up with the all male accordion club.

In her mother's perception, the danger for the girl is womanhood, ergo in a strategy of isolation she keeps her away from other women. In the accordion group, however, Ursula as the only girl has no role model to teach her how to handle both the obscenities and the shy, polite approaches that she encounters. On
the way home Ursula feels threatened by two men, one who follows her and a security guard who is concerned about her safety. She panics when either one comes near since she has nothing to go by to differentiate between a man's offer to help and a threat. She is easy prey and very impressible because of her lack of experience, even when it comes to talking with other people as the scene in the milkbar shows (it is comical how she makes up for all the contacts which she did not have in the past by demonstratively using the "in" expression chic again and again.) Her walk home from the lesson, however, takes on the serious character of a Spießrutenlauf. Her frightful encounter with the two men is followed by a short scene of another man, painting communist graffiti on a wall, who has to run away. The film director thus connects the two groups of people who are not safe in the streets at night: women and political activists, i.e. sexual fear and political fear. The scene with the man painting political graffiti is not shot from the point of view of the girl; whereas she hastens home the camera rests on this scene for a while, making it obvious as a visual statement rather than a narrative element within the fictional frame.

This last scene, the cafeteria scene, and the visual quality of the accordion group scene provide the context of the prevalent public sphere. Whereas the camera in Years of Hunger is usually stationary, pointing insistently at a place like the boathouse or at a character, the accordion group is introduced by a 180 degree pan of the auditorium, a typical German Vereinshalle (club meeting hall) in which a few years earlier the local fascist meetings were held.
Only after the grim atmosphere of this place is conveyed does Brückner present the source of the music in a long shot from the point of view of the missing audience. The small group looks lost in the huge auditorium. They are practicing one of the folksy tunes which the Nazis also promoted, only now it is performed with less enthusiasm, which gets the director of the small group — he looks like he comes straight out of The Private Film Collection of Eva Braun — into a rage. When the director speaks to the group his words (Nazi slang, for which one of the men apologizes to Ursula during the break) are not directed at Ursula at all, neither in their content nor indicated by his position as he addresses the men.

Mrs. Scheuner's choices of safe leisure time activity for her daughter, organizations such as the Naturfreunde, Wandervögel, and folk music clubs are groups that had an important function in the Nazi ideology. These conservative groups provided the physical and emotional environment which Hitler called for in his rejection of the urban, industrialized, cerebral culture. Modern city life was denounced by Hitler as Weimar Germany's sexualized and decadent culture (he also calls it Judenkrankheit; i.e. Jewish plague, a term by which he also refers to prostitution and syphilis). In reaction to this life the German fascist society promoted a pseudo-closeness to nature intended to reconnect the uprooted modern German masses with their national-regional origin. After the war, despite the appearance of these associations as innocent clubs which upheld the folk traditions and provided good clean fun for the youth, these folk clubs had an increased
cultural/political function of compensation for millions of Germans who had lost their home forever and yearned for the nation's reunion with the lost territories. Mrs. Scheuner's falling back on this typical middle-class retreat of the '50s is in fact neither a "safe environment" nor unpolitical and unideological. The sequence is ended with another image connotating this reactionary political environment: in the classroom we see a poster of an organization which built war memorials and veterans cemeteries, symbolizing various reactionary activities of the Kriegsgräberverbände, Heimatverbände, and Landsmannschaften.

The following scene adds information about the mother's socio-sexual context. In the first almost completely dark image, under a massive body in striped pyjamas -- Mr. Scheuner -- we can make out Mrs. Scheuner in bed, on her back with her hands up (the submissive "surrender" position.) She rolls her husband, who looks like a beached whale, off her body and tiptoes hurriedly to the bathroom. The soundtrack captures the noises of these motions as the camera focuses on her holding her hand on her crotch on her way to the bathroom. Next we watch her squatting in the bathtub, in the long nightshirt, washing her genitals which are visible, centered in the image, while we hear her scorn her womanhood: "It's unfair that we are built that way. One should have one's ovaries torn out. Always the fear of getting a big belly again." From this impression of her hateful feelings about her sexual identity and her fearful sex life the camera cuts to Ursula's bedroom where Mrs. Scheuner as mother in a bathrobe turns her bed up when Ursula comes home with
her accordion. The interrogation is brief and monosyllabic: "Was it nice? Yes, it was nice." The girl undresses to her underwear, then looks in the mother’s direction and says "good night." She cuts off the conversation now as her mother used to (see the first bedroom scene with Ursel’s questions about the Onkelehe). Awkwardly her mother stays in the room. When she finally makes an attempt to talk she interrupts herself immediately by saying "but you read a lot anyway". Although troubled she just says "good night" and leaves. This scene not only illustrates her inability to communicate with her daughter but also her inner struggle and ambiguity. She attempts to overcome her own limitations for her daughter’s sake, but it is impossible. These problems of dealing with her own and her daughter's sexuality are put in context of her past in the immediately following scene with the mother’s biography. Alone in her bedroom Mrs. Scheuner stands at the window, her back to the camera. This time she is looking out, showing some of the longing her daughter had in an earlier scene where she mentions the bike trip through Europe. She does not speak, but separate from her body, only a voice on the soundtrack, we hear her recite an account of her missed youth due to her mother keeping her in check. As we see Mrs. Scheuner’s broken reflection in the three-fold mirror, the voice admits that although she did not miss not having any of the entertainment when she was young, she now has the feeling that something escaped her. These fragmented images of Ursula’s mother convey her awareness of something being amiss. The brief moment of honest questioning her past is almost taken back by her final
remark, "Well, one never knows what it might yet be good for."
After a moment of opening up to her true feelings, this immediate
closure is also inscribed in her body as she is lying in bed rigid
and protected by the shield of the down covers which she holds down
with her hands.

Through the biography in this scene we learn that she has
nothing to tell her daughter, because she does not really know
herself. She is hiding her sexuality and sex life. If she talked
to Ursula about sexuality, especially in positive terms, she would
have to lie. As the scene with the laundry revealed, her strategy
of avoidance is to talk about the romantic moments that she used to
share with her husband, which significantly are associated with
food: the two of them are sharing a bag of candy. Even in this tale
their bodies remain separate entities. Physical closeness such as
hugging is impossible.

From this image of the solitary mother, another cut takes the
viewer to Ursula's attempt to break through her isolation. The
scene in the milk bar offers both: tension, as obviously new
territory for the girl and comic relief, as Ursula finally manages
to escape her mother's sphere of influence with an older boy, Mr.
Bunker, who looks overly correct and acts pubescent. The two hardly
communicate, but rather use the opportunity to show off to each
other, using all the expressions which were "in" in the '50s (chic,
etc.) and drinking coke with a straw. At the end of this scene
Ursula's parents march in. Her mother gives her little speech and
Ursula's date apologizes to the parents of the "Fräulein Tochter."
Watching this scene is an intrusion into a very private, highly embarrassing situation.

One moment she is a date, the next moment she is grounded, returned to her prison. In the next image we find Ursula lying in bed like a child who is sent to her room. Brückner positioned the camera at the head of the bed, which makes Ursula a marginal object and Mrs. Scheuner the focus of attention as she keeps stroking the bed covers, flattening the down into a hard, packed armor-like structure. While Ursula lies there lifeless, stiff as a board and mute, her mother pleads with the girl, saying that she would kill herself if her daughter "would throw herself away like that." In final resignation (as far as communication goes) and desperate determination (from the point of view of her fearful authority), she pulls her daughter's hands out from under the cover and aligns them on the bed cover. This position used to be demanded from students in boarding schools and military academies; it is a very blunt gesture of discipline, mistrust, and fear. Since the mother wouldn't even dare to say to Ursel that she is not allowed to touch her own body, she can only express her fears through this gesture. Moving to the head of the bed, the mother completes her arrangement by flattening and straightening the thin pillow. With her eyes open Ursula stares at the ceiling. After the mother has turned the light off and left the on-screen space, the camera pans to the right following her big, dark shadow which hovers over Ursula who for moments is lying there like a corpse. Finally the girl sits up and in a rage bangs her fists on the covers. As the following image
suggests, the only escape for her is the way into the kitchen and the refrigerator. We observe her retrieve a huge piece of meat from there. As she eats it, her voice on the soundtrack recites scenes of excitement and adventure.

This ending of the sequence is almost a relief after the pressure cooker atmosphere to which the sequence had built up. The entire sequence delineates the mother’s limits, her hate and denial of her own body and how she imprints them on her daughter. It documents the hardening of the front between the two women, on both sides inscribed in their bodies. As Ursula fights for territory the mother gets more and more afraid, which marks her body in turn by an increase in rigidity. The gestures of discipline and control which these scenes contain were very common, shared by the entire generation and therefore have the function of recall of the viewers’ own particular experiences.

The film in its claustrophobic pattern of alternating scenes between home (mother, grandmothers and father) and school provides the viewer with a sense of Ursula’s being closed in, of her home as prison. The last time we saw Ursula commanding a wide-open space was at her refusal to accept menstruation and become a woman. Ever since, she is confined to narrow interior spaces. Her life is limited to these different battle zones. Each one becomes a Gummizelle (insulated, soundproof cell), in which her needs are not heard. They bounce off the walls. The concerns of the bourgeois world around her deny her a positive sense of self. The people in her environment -- supposedly role models and figures of authority
like the mother and the teacher — cannot deal with her, so her only solution is to take refuge first with different people (her other grandmother, later the boy who forces the entire contents of a bottle of alcohol down her throat, and the Algerian) and ultimately in her suicide attempt.

Whereas the image of Ursula has vague contours and towards the end seems out of focus at times, the parents in their living room are clearly set off in harsh contrasts. The director shows us in cold, hard images the girl's parents' striving for the complete reconstruction of their bourgeois dream. The economic improvement is symbolized through the overabundance of food. A mass of material goods — no real possessions but objects they long to acquire — cover up the interior void, the emotional deficiency of the people. When Mr. and Mrs. Scheuner share a frame they are always separated in different areas of the image through objects or shadows, often facing in different directions. Throughout the film we only see the parents touch each other during intercourse, and even there they look like dead bodies who ended up on each other by accident fully dressed. Their lives are reduced to the social struggle for professional advances and a middle-class home — with its symbols of increasing wealth the dining room and the study for the father. Apart from the direct personal importance of Mr. Scheuner's language study, his attempt at learning English also signifies on another level what the entire German people adjusted to and followed ideologically and economically: their new leaders, the Americans. Ursula's concerns and worries — attention and recognition from her
fellow students as much as the political events of the time — offer a critical contrast to the parents' wishes. In turn Ursula's grown-up fantasies of her personal life are contrasted with the teacher's childish drill of local geography, signifying the syndrome common in German high schools during those years: memorizing the names of rivers took priority over discussing historical sites. Trivial fact knowledge about unimportant things was beaten to death while real questions of learning about Germany's recent history were pushed aside ("You will get to that just before your graduation."). Ursula feels that she has no place among her fellow students who are herded together and strictly supervised during the break. Her sense of isolation is confirmed by the fact that she had not been invited to her classmates' party.

The alternating scenes of the Scheuners' living room contrasts the cluttered narrow space and rigid, silent characters with the voice-over thoughts of all three family members. The reality clashes hard with the ideas in their heads. The entire family, including Ursula, has been reduced to the concern of social prestige. The interaction between the three is limited to attacks. Following their fight we see Ursula sitting on the floor of the bathroom leaning at the side of the tub. Her deterioration is progressive. We witness her regression in loss of speech, the slow collapse of her body, in fetus position on her bed, sucking condensed milk like a baby. While Ursula reacts to her home and her parents by losing her self, her mother complains to Mr. Scheuners about her daughter's lack of respect. Mrs. Scheuners is typical for
the postwar German woman as David Rodnick describes her:

In return for the affection and protection she gives the child, the mother expects complete obedience and conformity to her orders. This mother-child relationship is an epitome of the relationship of the German state with its citizens: in return for obedience and conformity the individual receives the benevolent protection of the state.25

Whereas the mother insists on her authority which in reality she has long lost, Mr. Scheuner resigns his position of authority entirely -- since he has a sense of failure both politically and in his relationship with his wife. Thus Ursula's mother is left with all the responsibility, although without authority as a woman or as a self-sufficient, responsible individual. Ursula sees her mother's fearful dependency, and in the following scene Ursula renounces her mother in a very aggressive manner.

The image cuts from the living room to the bathtub over which the mother is washing her naked upper body. When Ursula comes in Mrs. Scheuner turns away from her so her daughter cannot see her breasts. With the ridiculous gesture of quickly pulling the slip up and then drying herself with a towel under the slip she attempts to preserve her privacy which has been violated by the daughter's unabashed look. Intercut into this scene is the image of the mother, lying naked in the grass. In her mind Ursula is undressing her mother, making her vulnerable and defenseless, recognizing that her body, her sexuality is the mother's weak point. She carries a clear victory as she dominates the picture as a tall figure on the
left. Looking into a mirror off-screen she triumphantly declares that they don't look alike at all. Both women look into the mirror, however, Ursula's self-assured, almost aggressive look differs fundamentally from her mother's shy glance in that direction.

When Ursula comes to her for help, the second grandmother (Mr. Scheuner's mother) offers the girl food along with her analysis of Ursula's mother and her social restrictions from a leftist point of view. However, all the grandmother can provide for the girl is a short-term distraction in political activity (sorting material.) This grandmother has good intentions but nothing better to offer than the advice "Don't think about it anymore" and Ursula is left with the same existential problems.

This woman with her working-class consciousness is contrasted in the subsequent scene with the lower middle-class women of the mother's family, Mrs. Scheuner's mother and her two daughters. This scene exposes the total submission of the two: in a very direct manner to the grandmother who is exerting a more patriarchal than matriarchal dominance over them, and also the aunt's subordination to the religious power structures. Mrs. Scheuner's submission to her mother's authority is expressed in the lowly service of the pedicure (pointing towards Mrs. Scheuner's family's origins in rural society and its traditional hierarchical class system; the gesture would be a demeaning act in bourgeois circles to which Mrs. Scheuner aspires). Whereas Mrs. Scheuner anxiously covers her body up even in the most private situations, her mother is sitting there only covered by a white bath towel, looking and acting a bit like an
old retired madam who no longer has to worry about business.

Mrs. Scheuner complains to her mother about Ursula always wanting to have things. The struggle for identity is played out through the possessions. The girl uses the mother's social striving as a weapon against her, showing her that she cannot impress Ursula with what she achieved for herself. These terms for the fight were set by the mother originally and turned against her by Ursula. She hates the daughter for being like herself, having adopted her goal of social striving, but having long surpassed her through her education and the company she is used to from school. The daughter does not have the submissiveness expected by her mother. In Mrs. Scheuner's view, the fact that she makes an education available to Ursula makes her daughter owe her respect and financial support. Her relationship with Ursula is defined by her in terms of dominating power, only her daughter is not the submissive good girl she was. The grandmother warns that Ursula "has a sense of adventure," i.e. she is not willing to accept the role model of womanhood provided by her mother. When her mother inquires whether her husband at least acts the way he should and gives her jewelry, she can claim a success in that department: her husband is now being good and staying at home. He is no longer involved in politics and other women, i.e. political and sexual freedom are shown as being linked. The scene ends with Mrs. Scheuner's reminiscing about her own fixation on the authoritative power of her mother, putting it in terms of love. Power and love are inextricably linked as Mrs. Scheuner hopes for submission to her power as a sign of love from
her husband and daughter.

This scene about the women, especially Ursula's mother, is coupled with a short scene about her father. We see him aimlessly kick around a soccer ball. The voice-over informs us that he lost his youth to the fascist political events, making him appear a victim of the times. The viewer is told that he never had time to play. We see him at play now and in the old photograph, and the viewer might wonder whether in this statement an excuse for his philandering is implied. The social circumstances provide the explanation for his noncommitment. While we hear his story we look at the photograph of a group of young men on their bicycles. He finishes his commentary by saying that fifteen years of his life were stolen from him. The camera rests on the photograph for a few moments in silence, letting the picture alone affect the viewer. The father shows no sense of a politically responsible subject; rather he presents himself as the victim of history, as an antifascist who barely survives by going underground. From his reminiscing about antifascist activities we learn that he fit neatly in the hierarchical structure as someone who executed orders according to the instructions he was given. In postwar society he fits into his professional niche much in the same way: executing orders in the given structure of his employment situation without taking the initiative.

This scene connects the sequence delineating power structures within the family with the second sequence revolving around politics. At the beginning of the following scene we see the girls'
physical education class: a group of them throwing balls and clubs rhythmically and as gracefully as possible. Both visually and ideologically, the continuum from the gymnastics favored by the fascists is established. These images of the girls' rhythmic exercises could have been borrowed from Leni Riefenstahl's propaganda film about the Olympic Games. In the Adenauer era the goal of women's physical education remained the same as it had been in the Nazi era: to train an aesthetically beautiful body for its tasks as wife and mother. Any heavy exercise, activity which could result in stronger muscles was regarded as unfeminine and thus unacceptable. Not only were the ideological fundamentals of women's education unchallenged and unchanged since the war, the goals set for women in the German postwar society were essentially the same: back to the homemaker and motherhood to rebuild German society and make up for the millions of men lost during the war.

The scene exposes the school teacher's former Nazi activities and sympathies and her subsequently persisting nostalgia -- triggered by the evocative power of a picture (a photograph of girls in BDM uniforms). She associates this period with the sense of belonging, with a function which she fulfilled in society, a meaning which had been given to her life. She excuses her enthusiasm as Verblendung and uses the standard claim of ignorance: "When we woke up there were 6,5 million dead Jews and God knows how many dead soldiers." Victim and perpetrators are mourned together. This statement makes evident the total lack of moral understanding. The acknowledgement of the crimes is thus obvious as mere lip service which is followed
by highly sentimental nostalgia. This split is typical of many Germans who lived through the fascist years. The words are not her own, they are structures only superimposed by reeducation. The official version which she transmits to her students is thus exposed as a thin new veneer under which her real feelings persist unchanged, and they can be easily found by barely scratching the surface. They are retrieved through a photograph of a BDM group hoisting the flag. Brückner presents the teacher's mental images through photographs of BDM groups. For the teacher these images, ending with the dorm, are as much reality as the gymnasium she is in. The old photograph of the dorm fades out and the gymnasium fades in. The image does not suggest a break in the continuum of the social environment. The montage of different temporal and spatial elements in this sequence, some of them fictional, some documentary, is completed by the documentary footage of the banning of the KPD, the communist party, the once prime enemy of the Nazis. Brückner mixes film footage with photographs, again disclosing the contrast between official political slogans in speeches by politicians and actual police brutality (arrests and beatings in demonstrations). The camera insistently rests on these images. The montage seems structured by the director's associations.

The following scenes of family and friends invites a comparison with the scene in Germany, Pale Mother where Hans recites the "Osterspaziergang" from Faust. In the respective scenes of both films, men and women are polarized along gender lines. They are discussing politics, drinking alcohol and are drunk to various
degrees. Once the barriers are lowered by alcohol, politics -- strictly repressed in daily life -- finally break out. The tone is one of general disillusionment, of having been betrayed by politicians, and therefore "politics" has been declared a bad word. The "good citizen" front is torn down in this state and all the resentments (between Mr. Scheuner and his communist friend it is the lack of steadfast political commitment and courage) can be voiced. These "friends" are divided along political lines, with the women more fearful and conservative. They are not real friends. Among the women we find the father's mistress. As the father is making advances to another woman at a separate table using the old war hero stories, the limping former mistress butts in, bringing food and telling the same war story in a half-ironic, half-bored voice. Mr. Scheuner expresses his annoyance at her intrusion through a comment on the overabundance of food. Under the surface of peaceful coexistence are a lot of buried antagonistic feelings and some sympathy for the hardship endured in the past. When Ursula confronts her father he thinks that he fended off her question about the past rather well with the argument that she does not know what it was like to live under such a regime. But his daughter insists "But now, what do you do now, you only talk." Mr. Scheuner can only admit that he is no hero. Nobody is ready to risk his fairly secure position in restored German society, and all that is left for Ursula is to pray desperately for things to change.

Although it puts her into a different environment, the next scene continues to show Ursula's lonely struggle. Together with two
boys and a girl she is roaming around in a swampy area. Very insecure, she is determined to show courage and play the experienced and daring woman. One of the boys (obviously older) doesn't believe the fantastic stories about her free life and forces a whole bottle of alcohol down her throat. Although having escaped from her home, Ursula is unfree again and submits to another form of violence. Despite the fact that the transgression is not sexual (oral penetration, the bottle as weapon), this is a form of rape nevertheless. The camera centers Ursula, framed by trees in the foreground which look like prison bars. Concurrently we hear boys' laughter on the soundtrack. The image of Ursula's face, expressing the violation of her body and her dignity, is held for a few seconds by the camera.

This disastrous encounter with the male gender is followed by the image of the boathouse by night (with the year 1956 superimposed on the image). This image ties the previous event and act of aggression even closer to the rape which follows soon in the surroundings of the boathouse, at the water. The seemingly unconnected series of changing visual spaces (swamp, lake and boathouse, ballroom with dancers in gowns, and Ursula on her bed in exotic outfit) all have to do with different definitions of sexual identity, some public, some social and some that exist as a construct of Ursula's mind.

In two instances the pictures of a ballroom with dancing couples and music are contrasted with Ursula alone lying on her bed smoking, with a flower in her hair and a pseudo-harem outfit. In the first
image she is under a light dome which covers her bed, surrounded by the dark grey shade of the room. This image presents Ursula as a Snow White figure, not dead yet not fully alive either. Her mother — as much an enemy figure as the stepmother in the fairy-tale — has put her into the light coffin out of jealousy of her sexuality. Unlike the fairy-tale mother, this mother does not poison the daughter, but nevertheless food (an overabundance of it) is the weapon against her daughter's sexuality. Even her solitary pleasures and secrets are taken away from her when the mother discovers the cigarettes and laxatives. Mrs. Scheuner's punishment is to deprive her daughter of attention. She does not even argue with her but rather ignores her. Isolated and subjected to social deprivation, Ursula retreats more and more until in the following short scenes she becomes unable to speak (scenes at home on the phone and in the store.)

Towards the end of the film much of the long process of the girl's development is related to the viewer through a narrative account (in the director's voice from the perspective of the adult looking back.) This narrator's voice-over commentary breaks the spell of identification when the girl's condition is getting rapidly worse. Thus the viewer is kept at a distance as an analytic observer rather than emotionally involved. The narrator's voice switches between two codes: the tone of a doctor's report (a factual description) and that of poetic symbolism. Neither one of them lend themselves to furthering identification of the viewer with the subject. Ursula obviously cannot function any more and we see her
go through different advanced stages of her psychosis. We observe Ursula in a number of different contexts: at school where she tries to run away, in the milk bar, in the store, and finally at home. Her state is expressed in terms of substance abuse and food consumption: she now chews uncooked spaghetti and anything else she happens to find. Her collapsed body lying on her bed is intercut with images of explosions, a nuclear explosion and debris and puppets arranged like dead bodies.

The image cuts to a long shot of the classroom, the camera positioned in the back pointed at the blackboard on which the year 1789 is written in huge script and underneath very tiny the terms "thermidor, messidor." The camera slowly approaches Ursula from behind she sits in one of the empty benches, carving into the wood with a pair of compasses. As she starts to use it on her wrist we hear on the soundtrack the girl's voice repeating over and over "to destroy the coldness, to break the coldness." Starting as a whisper the voice becomes louder and louder and more urgent. Ursula's slow cramped motions create suspense. Just when she is about to cut into her flesh the janitor shows up and shuts her into the classroom.

The scenes of deterioration build up a certain expectation in the viewer of a terrible ending to happen very soon. However, in the next scene we see Ursula in a park, out in public again, set free from the "bürgerlichen Wohnstuben" and the classroom. Even there she is criticized: an old woman who passes by looks at her disapprovingly and a park employee enforces the rules ("No swimming here!!") as the black Algerian man lifts his shirt to show Ursula.
his scars from the war. Being ignored and not taken seriously by anybody, Ursula in a self destructive action sets fire to her skirt over her genital area. As the skirt starts to burn she jumps up to put out the fire, and is helped by the Algerian. This incident leaves her with a hole in the skirt where her sex is. Guarded by her mother until none of the men she encounters takes her seriously as a woman, she creates her sex, opens it and thus marks her sexual identity, performing a kind of self-defloration by setting it on fire.

As a foreigner the Algerian does not identify with German society. This makes for common ground with Ursula (the foreigner in her own country, cf. her fake French) who struggles with not fitting in. He does not bring the same expectations and standards as Ursula's German parents, teachers and classmates to their conversation which makes it possible for Ursula to open up. However, as a man he imposes his will on her; despite her protest they go off together in the boat. She can talk freely about herself, about her existential feelings, and her image, evenly lit and with many nuances of grey, shows more harmony at that point than ever before in the film. Ursula alone is in the frame and we see his hand reach into the frame from the right. Only after that the camera moves to the right and integrates his body into the picture. He shows sensitivity to her unhappiness and starts to caress her. Now both of them are centered in the image. What follows is a series of acts from both parties, which are not understood by the other. Despite Ursula's repeated protests and resistance he puts his hand under her
skirt and throws his body on hers assuring her again and again that nothing will happen. As he masturbates between her legs the camera focuses on Ursula as she is pinned under him, her expression in medium close up staring blindly into the distance. When he is finished she stays in her position, lying motionless as he wades naked off into the water to perform the ceremonial Islamic cleansing ceremony after sex -- which implies she is unclean after all. She still lies like a corpse, in the same posture as we saw her mother in bed and in Ursula's mental image. We watch her pull her skirt down and sit up. The image changes back and forth between the two figures as he takes his shirt off and it brings them both together in one frame: he as a dark naked figure against the bright background of the water performs his ritual of cleansing and she (we only see her back looking out over the lake) as he goes to her and strokes her head. Brückner records the entire event almost in real time with very few cuts, thus contrasting this rape scene with the rest of the film which either contracts or expands real time. Also in opposition to most of the film which seems slightly out of focus, only differentiating between light and dark areas, this entire scene is marked by high contrast, the presence of all shades from black to white, the extreme expressiveness of the details in the composed images. Only the scene of her date in the milk bar and the swamp scene showed similar qualities. Thus the director lifts the key events of Ursula's encounters with the male gender, i.e. moments in which her sexual identity is defined by men out of the surrounding images.
This scene of the rape is followed by a dark shot across the lake into the woods, at dusk. As he opens her hair she again says she wants to go home, but he insists on spending the night there. The sequence of their encounter ends in front of the boathouse, which we know from three different perspectives. The frogs' noise and the light at dusk connect this image to the last incident. Ursula and the man sit at one of the tables across from each other. As he writes down his address he tells her that he has to go back to Algeria, ending in the simple question "Sad?" Trying to conceal her shock and disappointment she says "I don't like to write anyway." When he does not understand her she furiously yells it in his face.

The Algerian man is the only one who regards and treats her as a woman, appropriating her as a woman in his cultural system (taking her from the mother). Ursula's attraction to him and trust in the man stem from her impression of him as a "revolutionary." However, he turns out to be one of those men like her father who play big and mysterious heroes without much behind this facade. He is on a personal level no less a loser than all the rest. He talks about the war but acts like a tourist whose vacation in Germany has come to an end. Implied in this figure and his presentation is the filmmaker's criticism of male politics as boys' games.

Although she immediately assures her mother that nothing happened she is greeted with silence and the final comment "Do what you like." After a call to the police to stop the search for her daughter, Mrs. Scheuner goes off to work slamming the door shut. When Ursula opens one of the windows, where one would expect a view
of the yard or the street, we only see the neighbors' windows across from hers. In three different windows we see the objects of German love: a German shepherd (who looks like Hitler's Blondie) in one window, a baby in another, and plants in a third. The fourth window shows a woman who knits at first and then takes a looking-glass and stares at Ursula. As Ursula closes the window and the curtain to shut this world out, a voice announces her plan to bake a cake. Again shot in real time, we watch her collect all pills from the medicine chest in the bathroom. Ursula is only in the upper right section of the frame. Centered are the pills, her hands and the food piled up on the table. The camera shows the girl's upper body in medium close up as she swallows the medication and food and gulps down the drink, alternating between them. The film ends with a close-up of her photograph being consumed by flames. This image is combined first with the voice-over of her mother's non-understanding commentary "But child, why didn't you ever say anything?" and with the narrator's last commentary "In order to accomplish something, something has to be destroyed first - one's self."

In this last scene, finally, the significance of the boathouse which appeared at different points in the film is disclosed. Water in various forms (the lake, the swamp, the fountain and the barrel with rain water) is identified in Years of Hunger with Ursula's crucial, disillusioning or violent encounters with different men, from the disappointing admission of her father that he is a coward (she lets the rain water trickle through her fingers,) to the first encounter with the black Algerian (she learns about the war in
Algeria and sees his scars at the fountain,) to her show-off tour to the swamp where she ends up being violated (the water here seems treacherous, she is surrounded by it, positioned between the water and the boy she cannot handle) and at the end the sexual act against her will at the lake (its surface looks quiet and impenetrable.) In this last scene the water visualizes this sexual encounter: it is a distinct separate body which has an oily character and yet it is harmonious, still, as Ursula and the man remain separate units in their intentions and sensations. Yet they do touch and connect for a brief period: through his understanding of her unhappiness and fear.

If water is a signifier in Ursula's encounters with men, the bathroom is the space in which her womanhood is defined. In film history, the bathroom has either been a hiding place for the extra man in comedies, or in thrillers the space in which murders are planned (the overdose of pills from the medicine cabinet) or executed (Hitchcock's Psycho and numerous other thrillers). In Brückner's film, however, the bathroom is the space in which many scenes take place, in which Ursula discovers the changes of her body. The film director breaks all the taboos of filmmaking by insistently pointing the camera at the physical attributes of women's intimacy, of female sexuality and identity as a woman. Alone in the bathroom Ursula is faced with her woman's body. In front of the bathroom mirror Ursula faces her self. Whereas in the first bathroom scene Ursula runs from it to her mother, in the last two scenes in the bathroom she asserts herself against her mother
(in the final one it is an escape from the mother, removing herself from the mother’s sphere for good). Whereas bedroom scenes are mostly dark or at least the on-screen space is sectioned by strong shadows and the living room has as much atmosphere as a doctor’s waiting room (i.e. the family’s living space is made to look more confining than the actual rooms are), the bathroom as visual space differs vastly. It is brightly lit in contrast to all other scenes where natural light casts dark shadows over large sections of the frame.

Conclusion

Using expressionistic images of psychological, symbolist content, Brückner’s film establishes a girl’s impossible task of developing a coherent, non-neurotic self in a neurotic environment. The private and public spheres in Adenauer Germany are exposed as being equally restrictive, characterized by an atmosphere of oppression.

The slogan "Freedom and Democracy" is unveiled as a thin cover for an obvious climate of fear. Although Mrs. Scheuner -- representative of the German middle-class citizen -- tries to convince herself that they have freedom since they "have everything they need and don’t have to be afraid," the film exposes the fears which rule her life, and -- it could be argued -- that of many Germans: sexuality and politics.
Notes

1Jutta Bruckner in an interview with Marc Silberman.


3Robert Acker, "The Exemplary Nature of Jutta Brückner’s Hungerjahre in West German (Women’s) Cinema," Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the National Coalition of Women in German, Portland, Oregon, 1985. Acker writes of the film as a work representative of the German Women filmmakers in general which is necessarily an oversimplification, considering hundreds of women
filmmakers were productive at that time. The Verband der Filmarbeiterinnen, e.V. has published a catalog of films by women. In 1985 almost one thousand women were listed.

4 Cf. chapter on *Germany, Pale Mother*


6 See *Frauen und Film*, 35 (1983) the first entire issue on film in the fifties.


10 Mouton, (see note 2 above): 74.


12 Mouton, (see note 2 above): 74.

13 Mouton, (see note 2 above): 74.

14 This phenomenon has been documented in various accounts. See e.g. the commentary about the memory of unpolitical Germans in Charles Schüddekopf, ed. *Vor den Toren der Wirklichkeit*. Berlin: J.H.W. Dietz Nachf., 1980: 100.

15 Interview with Jutta Brückner that I conducted in Berlin in November 1985.


18Menstruation is the only taboo which even Amos Vogel in his book Film as a Subversive Art only mentions once in his chapter on "Forbidden Subjects of the Cinema". Menstruation is excluded from his argument and collection of filmic examples of taboos. (Amos Vogel, Film as a Subversive Art. New York: Random House, 1974, 192.)

19Interview with Jutta Brückner that I conducted in Berlin in November 1985.

20Rosemarie Rehan reproaches Brückner with compulsiveness due to suppression in Wochenpost, Berlin, DDR 12 (1980)

21See Fassbinder in Germany in Autumn (1978) and Bergman's film The Silence (1963).


23Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf, p. 276-280.

24See Klaus Theweleit on "Der Umbau des Leibs in der Kadettenanstalt" in Männerphantasien Vol. 2, 167-178; see also Leontine Sagan's film Girls in Uniform, and Schlöndorff's Young Törless.


26See the original film script, p. 10.
CONCLUSION

Theory and Feminist Film Practice.

Germany's postwar cultural-political development was marked by a restorative climate that allowed only a very limited, selective reception of the progressive achievements of the Weimar Republic (non-fascist thought as well as expressionist and other modernist art). A great number of anti-fascist leftist figures and their work remained unknown in West Germany for many years (cf. the reluctance in honoring Carl von Ossietzky). As was the case during fascism, the consciousness of large parts of the population of German workers was lower middle class rather than a working class consciousness, placing them in the conservative political camp. German communist and marxist parties were destroyed and outlawed after 1945. The feminist movement had also been destroyed during the fascist years. Progressive traditions had forcibly been broken. Thus the progressive forces in West Germany (scattered across the different social strata: some upper class intellectuals, some labor) found themselves in isolation. Whereas in the late sixties' student movement in France the leftist forces of the
students united -- if only for a brief period but rather effectively -- with the proletariat, the German students met with a different situation. The German progressive elements were in a void: socially (class division), historically (break up of the old party institutions; suspicion of both traditions and people; the historical struggles within the leftist parties – the refusal of the social democrats to join forces with the communists) and psychologically (loss of social context: either through death of most family members or destruction of the social fabric of authority and respect especially in the family).

All of these factors determined the particular nature of the West German student revolt in the late sixties. The young generation was motivated by idealistic revolutionary leftist theory and by disgust with old Nazi functionaries' being back in power positions, something which was only a symbol for the collapse of any positive authority. In its turn against authority the young generation emphatically embraced a few idols of the communist international while other possible role models who could have joined them in their cause were regarded critically and with suspicion. The young generation's radical premises made cooperation with the few remaining older progressive elements in Germany (in film Wolfgang Staudte) impossible since those elements had surrendered to the capitalist system and its restorative forces. Since the young generation's tone and ideals were revolutionary, with few exceptions all their role models were either non-Germans or exiled Germans. Progressive work by Germans in Germany was either
not widely enough known or met with suspicion of the establishment and the CDU dominated public. As compared to the new left (Ho Tachi-Minh, Castro, Che Guevara oriented), however, the older (Brecht oriented) generation was lacking revolutionary fervor.

The driving force behind the student movement was not a purely rational Marxist-Leninist political discourse, but rather a heavily emotional-psychological motivation. The slogan "Don't trust anybody over 30" expressed the deep generational breach, the students' mistrust of the generation of older Germans. By definition this attitude also included a certain refusal to study history, since no truthful, complete answers could be expected from within the system (schools and official historical accounts). Rather than learning about the long German tradition of failed revolutions, Berufsverbote, etc., the young generation felt that it was in a uniquely different, new situation. Political and emotional needs and their frustration were mixed into an undiscernable amalgamation of opposition to the Federal Republic, much hated successor state of the fascist Third Reich. In the mid-seventies, the chaotic years of terrorist activities, with the state's more and more oppressive reaction to this threat, the term 'Fascism' circulated again in Germany. As Klaus Eschen writes in an essay on "The Usage of the word FASCISM": ".... many of us use the term because we need it for our argumentation as amplifier of emotions." Eschen's article is part of a collection of ten pieces in the 1978 issue of Ästhetik und Kommunikation which is entitled "Fascism today?"4 The contributions illuminate different aspects of the question "What is
fascist?" from different perspectives (historical, synonymous with national-socialism, or with capitalism (Horkheimer) or the 'new fascism' - synonymous with the power of the state (Glucksmann), or from the term's renewed relevance in direct reaction to incidents of violence against citizens, etc.) reflecting the debate that took place in broad circles of the German population during that time. Some of the articles seek to fill the information deficit still present in the mid-seventies, which the Geschichtslosigkeit (ahistoricity) of the West Germans -- promoted by the Christian Democratic Union -- had caused. The Social-Democratic administration initiated a political thaw and reforms -- all too timidly for the student APO (außerparlamentarische Opposition; opposition outside of the parliament). While constituting an attack against the power of the parent generation implicated in war crimes, the students' revolt focused on what they considered the bastions of power of the unchanged reactionary political alliance between large industry and the bourgeoisie, which now used a democratic front as cover. The lack of historical knowledge which led to a narrow focus and limited perspective, combined with emotionalism, were badly concealed behind slogans excerpted from Marxist theory. While fighting the bourgeois class system, the student movement stumbled over the class system perpetuated within their own ranks as the same old deeply ingrained authoritarian hierarchical power structures. The male students established themselves as the leaders of the political struggle generously granting the women in the student movement supporting roles (painting posters and duplicating handbills) but otherwise
excluded them from important tasks and positions, and relegated them
to inferior roles. These women learned that joining men in their
Marxist-Leninist fight was not enough, that the social problems ran
deeper than the issues addressed by communist theories. Out of
opposition Alice Schwarzer and a number of women left the context of
the student movement to extend their struggle from class to gender
in the new West German feminist movement. Women started to analyze
the reproduction of repression on a different level in what the left
deemed progressive models, and they became conscious of the
myth-making in male discourse. Feminist theory developed out of
this analysis of the limitations of male theory (i.e. Marxist
political theories).

In the early years of the new feminist movement, women
struggled with questions of identity, dismantling the construct
'woman', a projection of patriarchal society, and setting out to
replace this myth with many images of real women. Freud's question
"What does woman want?", as crucial as it was, was bound to disclose
only a male projection of female sexuality, but not female sexuality
itself. Feminists promoted the awareness that woman had been
defined by male discourse, that theory — in all fields — was male
theory. Even women's voices with very few exceptions had adopted
the male discourse and in some cases fell prey to essentialism, the
confirmation and elaboration of male biologist myths and theories
which construct woman as nature personified, by implication
accrediting her with a potential (thought superior by some men and
women) which man as essential mind and spirit does not have. Thus
the women's movement had to face the problem of its self-definition, which included battling with politically dangerous implications of biologistic views. Whereas previous attempts at women's liberation in the nineteenth century had succeeded in the establishment of women's status as citizens (including legal rights to vote, to do business and inherit money), a progress acknowledged by the new feminist movement, their more radical approach transcended these questions of women's political status and aimed at women's autonomy, their self-definition and appropriation of their own bodies.

Concurrently, in the seventies, long suppressed fascist history came to the surface of public discourse. The changes in the West German political scene -- in conjunction with the need to fill the knowledge gap concerning recent German history -- inspired numerous new publications on fascism and fascism theories in the late sixties and the seventies. Whereas between 1941 and 1960 the first wave of publications on fascism by Fromm, Reich, Canetti, Adorno, and Arendt were published outside of Germany (except for Canetti's studies) and had found no broad-based reception in postwar Christian Democratic Germany, during the Social-Democratic years (in the early to mid-seventies), a new discourse on recent fascist history had finally made a second wave of publications on fascism by Ernst Nolte, Reinhard Kühnl, Wolfgang Wippermann, and Gerhard Schulz possible. With the exception of Hannah Arendt's study, all fascism theories were written by male historians who consider fascism as a historical, political phenomenon purely from the male point of view. Attacking the problem from different vantage points, they
were exclusive studies, i.e. they chose one aspect to exclude all others (e.g. the question of leadership, the question of the economical structure, etc.) Only some of the theories of the first wave, in particular Reich and Adorno, went beyond isolating the phenomenon from its context and analyzed the underlying fascist personality structure, i.e. the fascist person as a social being in a mass culture. These studies of the first wave finally found a broad reception in the late sixties and early seventies and played a decisive role in the ensuing public discourse on fascism.

As feminist theorists started to analyze male political theories, they were able to point out the erroneous subsumption — and exclusion by implication — of woman as Other. Feminist theory exposed the false objectivity of these theories, their 'blind spots' and the holes in the neatly established exclusive systems. Women felt especially left out from the male accounts of war and fascism. They realized that they had to ask their own questions about fascism and its effects on women. They have attempted to give their own answers in numerous works since 1979. The three women filmmakers whose works are analyzed in this dissertation filled a gap of representation of women's political experience during this historical period.

From this situation ensued the problem of finding an adequate expression of feminist discourse (both in language and other forms, such as images) outside the existing male discourse. The problem to be overcome was that the mothers had had no language of their own, and the only language woman could have acquired was the father's
language, the dominant male discourse. Thus the question of a feminine aesthetic was a precarious one. Silvia Bovenschen, Helke Sander and Sigrid Weigel each in a different context, pointed out the impossibility of expressing a female identity through a male language. Women found themselves in a position where they wanted to express new and different content. The only available form of expression was the male language, that men had used against them as means of oppression. As women were struggling to acquire forms of expressing themselves, Helke Sander warned of the danger of a false definition of feminist aesthetics imposed by expressions which are necessarily characterized by the limited availability of means (artistic forms of expression and financial, material resources) to women. For the women in search of their own means of expression, every step away from the male language and discourse as role models, every attempt at an expression of their own, a language of their own was exciting and risky (e.g. Verena Stefan's Häutungen was the first prominent example of women's writing in Germany, expressing lesbian sexuality in revolutionary, explicit ways. Their linguistic innovations included the introduction of the new female pronoun "frau" to replace "man" (Engl. "one," although its spelling differs phonologically it does not differ from "Mann" - Engl. "man"); cf. Anja Meulenbelt, Die Scham ist vorbei.9).

Paradigmatic for many women's struggle with the existing discourse is the filmmaker Jutta Brückner's intellectual and artistic development: she learned to speak the father's language (having studied the male political discourse and received a
doctorate in political science) only to come to the realization of
the split between this discourse and her own reality and how far the
discourse had removed her from herself. At this point she proceeded
to retrieve the structures underneath, starting her own creative
work in personal and political areas of the women's discourse as a
script writer and filmmaker. In this context it is significant that
almost all West German feminist filmmakers were inspired in their
professional and artistic development by the foreign avant-garde
(especially Godard, Pasolini, Dreyer, Mizoguschi, Nemec). Avoiding
the German male models was the least distance these women could put
between them and the particular, authoritarian male dominant system
they grew up in.

The new feminist movement's analysis of the dominant male
discourse in Western cultures resulted in a critique of the answers
— sometimes found all too quickly and made possible only by way of
exclusion, in order to create closed systems of thought. Although
some attempts at establishing counter theories were made, and in
some cases simplistic reversals of the old value system occurred,
the most far-reaching attempts at transcending the limits of male
discourse had to remain open-ended. I share the view of many
feminists who see the revolutionary potential of feminist analysis
and thought not in replacing these neatly closed systems with other
closed systems, but in exposing false closures and demonstrating
what these traditional theories overlook. This feminist discourse
by definition does not attempt to provide new answers, neatly
packaged in theories. It attempts to deconstruct present theories
in order to expose their "blind spots," to ask new questions, and to point out directions of thought thus far excluded in the discourse of modern Western cultures.

The feminists' questioning of male categories and value systems led to the reevaluation of dichotomies and values traditionally attached to them. One of the most central and far-reaching issues raised was subjectivity/objectivity and their traditional associations with immanence (feminine) and transcendence (masculine). As part of a general attempt by the women's movement to attach positive values to femininity, subjectivity was now easily established as a positive goal, a politically correct mode of expression. In reaction against the male discourse and older feminist writings (Simone de Beauvoir), objectivity could now be shunned as "false objectivity." By implication, this re-evaluation of objectivity gave some feminists the authorization to ignore theory and deny the need for theory on the part of the women's movement. Often hidden behind this impulse was the reluctance in dealing with the complex structures of established discourse. Both the newly authorized subjectivity and the need for a theoretical base are reflected in the film journal Frauen und Film. The journal, originally published by a group of women filmworkers in Berlin, fulfilled many diverse functions, such as providing a public voice for the "Verband der Filmarbeiterinnen," a collective representing all West German women working in film. Since 1974 Frauen und Film is the only feminist film periodical which continuously offers a forum for feminist film criticism and
theory. The articles' varied nature (each issue is devoted to a different area within cinema, e.g., editors, actors, individual filmmakers and phenomena such as the Riefenstahl revival; contributions differ largely in format) is testimony to an active public feminist discourse. In its first period of publication in Berlin the journal was a means of self-expression for a large group of women working in film and documented all aspects of the development of feminist film in West Germany.

Although only one issue (No. 11) is devoted to film theory (or rather the need for it), different issues of Frauen und Film contain original short writings about single aspects of feminist film theory. In her article on pornography, Jutta Brückner develops her theory of the specificity of women's way of seeing in opposition to the male gaze through observations about the male look in pornographic film. Brückner interprets the pornographic look as the purest form of the male look:

Here there are no metaphors or symbols which would veil the matter, as women are used to; the sign is replaced by the object, representation by presentation. Penis and pubes are body parts and not carriers of happiness or unhappiness, life or death, fulfillment or nonfulfillment... that the pornographic film projects a mechanistic image of the world. Women's wandering perception which is on the lookout for identity is relegated to distance, frontiers, matter, function, and causality. The leap from the de-materialized notion which she had of her sexuality, into the concretist view of the
The camera is the immediate confrontation between infinity and matter.... The male look is as it presents itself here: the look at the woman's sex. (20)

This direct search for the object, the look at the parts is not erotic to women to the same extent since Their desire is not bound to the visible, which makes sense since their sex is not visible and their sexual desire and excitement cannot be measured by an erection. They receive pleasure from being seen..... It is not by accident that women are equally or perhaps more susceptible to the erotic of power than to physical beauty. Women's look, which only sees so much because it does not look too closely, because, also turned inwards, it opens up to the images of fantasy and amalgamates them with the concretistic filmic images, is the basis for the identification which women are especially looking for in cinema. (19)

Whereas Laura Mulvey's answer to the question of women's pleasure in male dominant cinema was either an alienated forced identification with the male look or masochism, Brückner's thesis of women's specific way of seeing adds another dimension to this argument, the existence of a level of seeing between concrete images, which allows for an identification on the part of women spectators without the assumption of forced identification or masochism.

Especially the films which were made for women have a particularly forceful system of directing the look of the
viewer as identification with the male look which organizes the filmic space. .... Women were in the hands of the guiding male gaze, which subsumed theirs. They were not conscious of that because the cinematic apparatus did everything possible to hide it. This in turn played up to their organization of perception because the fluid camera movements, the invisible editing..... permitted them to forget the limitations of the single images. It offered itself to their way of fluid perception without borders. Thus the identification was double and contradictory: identified with the male look at the woman, editing and rhythm identified with their kind of perception. .... Through all these means a sensuality was produced which took hold of the woman's entire body and gave her the impression of an "enriched seeing," a seeing which was not limited to registering and recognizing, but which was in fact experiencing.

Pornography then as the most extreme form of women's objectification is the epitome of male appropriation of the world through looking. Hollywood cinema employs a milder, censored version of the voyeuristic male code:

Women, who, like men, cannot escape the directing of the look through the dominant focus in the film, become voyeurs of themselves. This corresponds exactly with the position which they had thus far. Pornographic cinema is the most extreme consequence of a culture in which women have delegated their look to men. And in this sense the look which they directed at themselves was always a pornographic one. (20)
Pornography, for Brückner, has a potential: by alienating the look women learn the limitations of their own look and the myths that they have created for themselves. Brückner ends in postulating a different way of seeing for women, claiming that the pornographic look can become a kind of

birth canal for a kind of seeing which makes possible a female identity on the basis of women's real, limited image of space, character and extent of their body, which is not built on the chimera of a mystery and does not believe that the mind which seeks a body can create it ad libitum. (21)

Thus the nature of the pornographic look has a positive potential for destroying women's own myth building. Brückner's article is an important example of feminist writing which attempted to generate insight into forms of the dominant discourse about the gender-specific look which could then become productive towards the development of a feminist aesthetic allowing for women's desire.

Although the journal underwent a metamorphosis when it was given up by the Berlin editors and taken over by the Frankfurt group, one of the continuities lies in the continuation of this type of contribution. In her recent article,¹³ Miriam Hansen discusses in great detail the extent and direction of refocusing which the journal underwent in the second phase of publication in Frankfurt (since 1983), edited by a collective of only three women (Gertrud Koch, Heide Schlüpmann, and Karola Gramann). Whereas the Berlin journal often reflected women filmworkers' political struggle or individual conflicts (such as the one between Helma Sanders-
Brahms and the editorial collective), "the Frankfurt group, true to local tradition, displayed a greater interest in theory (as well as in theoretically motivated historiography)."¹⁴

According to Hansen:

the most salient distinction between Frauen und Film and the predominant direction in English and North American feminist film theory, at least until recently, is its critical focus....While the journal's editors and most of its contributors tend to endorse the psychoanalytic/semiological analysis of the apparatus as fundamentally patriarchal, they appear as much interested in refining that analysis as in tracing counter currents which point towards an alternative organization of cinema.... The feminist critic's task, according to Schlüpmann, is to put the fragmented and suppressed history of female desire onto its feet, or, rather, 'from the male genital onto the female head'.

I consider the recent increase in reception of the English and North American work in theory and criticism as a positive development, especially when one considers that West German feminists have not produced a book-length study of the depth and caliber of Teresa de Lauretis' Alice Doesn't.¹⁵ The book is a major contribution towards a feminist critique of major male semiotic and psychoanalytic theories. In this theoretically sophisticated book De Lauretis insists on the necessity for a theoretical agenda for feminism. She is more thorough than anybody else in earlier studies¹⁶ in terms of her engagement with the quoted theories, being both inside
and outside the theoretical systems that she describes. She refuses to reject Levi-Strauss's structuralism and Jacques Lacan's psychoanalysis just on the basis of their being male constructs, but ultimately she has to reject them because of their inability to account for woman as subject and for woman's desire. De Lauretis resists what has been perceived as an anti-theorist stance on the part of feminists. She shows convincingly the differences between the above two on the one hand and someone like Umberto Eco and Pasolini on the other whom she sees as problematic, yet much more useful in terms of feminist film theory.

The basic problem set up in her book is that woman, both the source and the goal of Western discourse, is constantly absent as subject. The discrepancy between real women and woman as representation forms the center of the book. De Lauretis points out that narrative is constructed on sexual difference and on ideology. The function of woman as object is posited as prior to culture, whereas supposedly the focus of this methodology is culture understood as a system separate from biological determination.

De Lauretis looks at the assumptions behind given theoretical constructs. In her criticism of Lacan she goes further than Christine Gledhill17 by showing that his theory depends on what he does to the status of women. The theory itself is defined by the objectification of women. As Lacan claims the coincidence of castration and the acquisition of language, his theory cannot account for woman as subject.
De Lauretis' book looks at the way in which film engenders certain kinds of relationships in a given culture. From the author's point of view, film is not just an art form among many. For de Lauretis, cinema is a privileged form of representation that defines the coming together of a number of different discourses. Cinema allows a certain vision of the world which de Lauretis sees as very much representative of the time in which we live. Thus the analysis of cinema has a strategic importance of cultural necessity.

The key issues in de Lauretis' analysis of cinema are the question of desire and the question of the subject of narrativity. Both questions point in the direction of psychoanalytic theory, and within psychoanalytic theory to the concept of the individual and individualization. As Jessica Benjamin has pointed out, feminist psychoanalytic theory has made progress in the deconstruction of phallic monism, of the one-sided autonomy of individualization in Western cultures.

As Benjamin's study demonstrates, feminist analysis exposes the assumptions behind male psychoanalytical constructs. Feminist psychoanalytic theory is productive because it goes beyond the limitations of traditional male theories, exposing the celebration of individuality as a gender-related project. Benjamin notes the "monopoly of the phallus in representing desire," yet she leaves the counter-balancing of this monopoly which she calls for, for the future (see her concept of "freedom to" rather than "freedom from" with which she ends the article). Despite her criticism of the all-pervasive presence of the categories of the phallus and power
which are set as equal, she herself subscribes to the coordinates of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic theory — penis envy, castration, that women lack a desire of their own. I agree with Benjamin that it is not a question of women constructing female desire, but rather of identifying it. Steps in this direction have been taken in various ways, theoretical and practical, for example in Luce Irigaray's analysis of the female sex. The problem with feminist psychanalytical theorists in general (Jessica Benjamin's and for that matter Juliet Mitchell's and others) is, that they ultimately hold on to the symbolic significance of the phallus ("The phallus still has the power to represent desire." Benjamin, 91) and to the above coordinates of Freudian and Lacanian theories. I see the most important step towards a reassessment of female desire and subjectivity by correcting the psychological parameters of female sexuality, by replacing the male assumptions about female anatomy and femininity underlying present psychoanalytic theories, with knowledge about female anatomy and femininity.

Benjamin has pointed out the evolving integration of object relations theory with feminism that began with Nancy Chodorow's work. Benjamin identifies the key issue as desire which she equates with power and although "maternal identification theory leans toward the revaluation (sic!) of the mother, whose influence Freud neglected in favor of the father, and is less likely than the theory of phallic monism to emphasize the negativity of the female condition."(90) Motherhood does not provide for female desire,
since "the mother is not culturally articulated as a sexual subject, one who actively desires something for herself - quite on the contrary."

The question of female desire, power and subjectivity are the central issues in the three films by Sanders-Brahms, Brückner and Rosenbaum. Each in a different way presents in visual terms the problem of woman's desire and the death of woman's desire. Especially Germany, Pale Mother and Years of Hunger illustrate that "once woman is no longer mother, we are at a loss for an image of woman's sexual agency." In these films freedom and desire do not remain the unchallenged male domain. They all pose as problematic woman's image as righteous and deeroticized, intimate, caring, and self-sacrificing.

The three films have a woman narrator, a female subject and object. Lene, Ursel and Marianne are both subject and object. Germany, Pale Mother is the negative story of femininity in which Prince Charming destroys Sleeping Beauty. The film delineates the psychological parameters of desire and nonfulfillment in motherhood. Years of Hunger is the narrative of the analysand. Brückner eliminates the intervention of the male analyst and has the analysand develop her own narrative. For Ursel as the prepubescent girl, psychological identification is possible both with the mother and father. With the onset of sexual maturity the father becomes the representation of power and desire which he both loses. The father's power is marked in the film as a function ascribed by woman and he subsequently loses both desire and power through women's
agency. Thus Ursel's "using the father as a vehicle for separation, of internalizing the father qua phallus as a representation of agency and desire"\textsuperscript{22} fail. Significant are the changes which Brückner made from the original filmscript, in which the mother-daughter relationship is still a love-hate relationship. It turned into a much more clear-cut negative relationship of hate in the film. The plot of the original script is more realistic -- in a documentary style -- less psychoanalytic. Whereas this script differentiates between the first sexual encounter and the revolutionary (a figure for which Jutta Brückner's ex-husband was the model), in the film the sexual encounter which was not really one, but was perceived as one by the girl, is turned into an actual sex act. The film collapses the two separate instances into a single one of sexual agency and power, a function of the woman's sexuality, of unfulfilled desire. \textit{Years of Hunger} demonstrates the different levels of discourse: the public images of the body, sexuality, desire and power defined by men, which are in opposition to the psychological and real dynamics of sexuality defined by women.

All three of the films analyzed here are informed by the ongoing theoretical feminist discourse on motherhood, and by the attempt at a reassessment of female subjectivity and desire in feminist theory and practice.
Notes

1 Carl von Ossietzky was a pacifist and the editor of the journal Die Weltbühne. He was arrested and put into a concentration camp in 1934. In 1936 he received the Nobel Peace Prize, but was not allowed to accept it. He died in police custody in 1938. A West German city's initiative to honor him by naming a square "Carl von Ossietzky Platz" caused considerable resistance and the plans were abandoned.

2 When 12,000 students in Berlin demonstrated against the Vietnam war, holding up flags of the rebel Vietcong and pictures of Ho Tschi-minh and Che Guevara, German workers spontaneously took to the streets, burning red flags. The police had to prevent them from torching the building of the student organisation. (see BZ, Feb. 19, 1968)

3 Wolfgang Staudte made Die Mörder sind unter uns, the first German postwar film in 1945 in DEFA studios. This and later films such as Rosen für den Staatsanwalt (1959) and Kirmes (1960) are moralizing anti-fascist works in the Brechtian tradition. The reception of Staudte's films was so bad that he had to work for television to pay the debts from them for years to come.


(biological, concerning considerations of women's and men's sphere of activity, etc.) see pp. xxxiii, 71 and 713.


13Miriam Hansen, "Messages in a Bottle?" Screen, 4, 1987, 30-39. This article introducing the journal "is, in more than one way informed by a Frankfurt perspective." (Hansen)

14Miriam Hansen, 34.


21 Benjamin, 80; cf her note 4.

22 Benjamin, 87.
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Filmography

**Deutschland, bleiche Mutter** (1979, Germany, Pale Mother) Written and directed by Helma Sanders-Brahms. Distributed in West Germany by Basis Filmverleih and in America by West Glen Films.

**Hungerjahre**. (1979, Years of Hunger) Written and directed by Jutta Brückner. Distributed in West Germany by Basis Filmverleih and in America by West Glen Films.

**Peppermint Frieden** (1982, Peppermint Peace) Written and directed by Marianne S.W. Rosenbaum. Distributed in West Germany by Basis Filmverleih and in America by West Glen Films.