

Original citation:

Schmitz, Helmut. (2016) Täter lite – unsere mütter, unsere väter and the manufacturing of empathy with German wartime trauma. *German Life and Letters*, 69 (3). pp. 365-386.

Permanent WRAP URL:

<http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/78209>

Copyright and reuse:

The Warwick Research Archive Portal (WRAP) makes this work by researchers of the University of Warwick available open access under the following conditions. Copyright © and all moral rights to the version of the paper presented here belong to the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. To the extent reasonable and practicable the material made available in WRAP has been checked for eligibility before being made available.

Copies of full items can be used for personal research or study, educational, or not-for profit purposes without prior permission or charge. Provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way.

Publisher's statement:

"This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Schmitz, Helmut. (2016) Täter lite – unsere mütter, unsere väter and the manufacturing of empathy with German wartime trauma. *German Life and Letters*, 69 (3). pp. 365-386. which has been published in final form at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/glal.12125> This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with [Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving](#)."

A note on versions:

The version presented here may differ from the published version or, version of record, if you wish to cite this item you are advised to consult the publisher's version. Please see the 'permanent WRAP URL' above for details on accessing the published version and note that access may require a subscription.

For more information, please contact the WRAP Team at: wrap@warwick.ac.uk

TÄTER LITE – *UNSERE MÜTTER, UNSERE VÄTER* AND THE MANUFACTURING OF
EMPATHY WITH GERMAN WARTIME TRAUMA

HELMUT SCHMITZ

Abstract English

Unsere Mütter, unsere Väter, produced by Nico Hofmann's company TeamWorx for ZDF in 2014, was the most expensive German TV production to date and was successfully sold to a global audience, including the US where it was awarded an Emmy, and China. The article examines the mini-series in the context of its German reception and the previous debates around representations of German suffering. It argues that the film combines two previously separate modes of visual representation, the historicist mode, known from *Der Untergang* and *Dresden*, and the traumatised aesthetics of contemporary immersive film and TV productions such as *Saving Private Ryan* or *Band of Brothers*. Particular attention is paid to the issue of the manufacturing audience empathy and film's claim to historical veracity, supported by the two documentaries from Guido Knopp's 'Redaktion Zeitgeschichte' that accompanied the screenings.

Abstract German

Unsere Mütter, unsere Väter, produziert von Nico Hofmanns Firma TeamWorx, war die bislang teuerste deutsche Fernsehproduktion und wurde erfolgreich global verkauft, unter anderem nach USA, wo die Miniserie einen Emmy gewann, und nach China. Der Artikel untersucht die Miniserie im Kontext ihrer deutschen Rezeption und der vorherigen Debatten um 'Deutsches Leiden'. Er zeigt auf, dass der Film zwei bislang getrennte visuelle Modi kombiniert, den u.a. aus *Der Untergang* und *Dresden* bekannten Historizismus und die traumatische Ästhetik zeitgenössischen 'immersiven' Filmemachens, bekannt aus z.B. *Saving*

Private Ryan oder *Band of Brothers*. Besonderes Augenmerk liegt dabei auf der Herstellung von Zuschauerempathie und der vom Film unterstellten historischen Wahrheit, die von den beiden die Ausstrahlungen begleitenden Dokumentationen aus Guido Knopp's 'Redaktion Zeitgeschichte' beglaubigt wird.

After the reintegration of the Nazi past into the official history of the Berlin Republic under the sign of 'ownership' in the 1990s,¹ the first decade of the 2000s saw a vigorous debate around representations of German wartime suffering that re-accentuated the entire culture's approach to the 'unmasterable past' (Charles Maier) from a concern with German guilt and complicity to an exploration of traumatic experience and its legacies. This debate and the forms of cultural representation that accompanied it have been widely studied.² The debate resulted in an approach towards German wartime experiences from an emotional and empathetic perspective, something that Aleida Assmann referred to as 'Wiederbelebung dieser Vergangenheit im Modus des emotionalen Nacherlebens'.³ Johannes von Moltke has identified the audio-visual media, especially film and television, as the predominant locus of this restructuring of German 'Gedenkkultur' towards 'gefühlte Geschichte' (Norbert Frei).⁴ This was facilitated by a significant change in the German television and film industry to, on the one hand, big budget 'event movies' with a global reach for audiences, based on an aesthetic modelled on visual codes from US film and TV productions, and on the other hand a shift in documentary style towards the kind of emotive 'histotainment' formats produced by Guido Knopp, until 2013 director of the 'Redaktion Zeitgeschichte' at the ZDF. Films such as Oliver Hirschbiegel's *Der Untergang* (2004) and Roland Suso Richter's two-part TV film *Dresden* (2006), produced by Nico Hofmann's company TeamWorx, were both national and international media events that changed the visual landscape of German approaches to the past. Paul Cooke has suggested that

the potential for an ‘empathetic portrayal of the experience of the war for ordinary Germans’ unleashed by the EU-wide if not global resonance of the interest in representations of German wartime suffering was something of a ‘godsend to the TeamWorx project’, arguing that *Dresden* represented a significant step towards a Germanocentric visual engagement with the Nazi past.⁵

If the culture of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* turned on the tortured and sometimes tortuous exploration of German identity under the shadow of Auschwitz, the contemporary cultural engagement with this past is, at least in the visual mass media of cinema and television, marked by a vigorous self-confidence. Central to this new self-confidence is the linking of a historicising approach with an emotive representation of collective traumatisation. Big-budget entertainment films such as *Der Untergang* or *Dresden*, until then the most expensive German TV production, were dominated by a historicising approach that suggested that viewers were witnessing actual historical events. Both films relied heavily on historical research and documents and received praise from noted historians who declared that the films depicted authentic history. Apart from basing the film on Joachim Fest’s Hitler biography and Traudl Junge’s memoirs, the production team for *Der Untergang* employed Christian Hartmann, Professor at the Munich Institute of Contemporary History, as ‘wissenschaftlicher Berater’.⁶ British historian Richard Overy claimed that *Dresden* ‘managed to reconstruct what life was like in the Second World War’.⁷ The historicist agenda, suggesting the historical veracity of the narrated events, was thus central to the legitimization of a Germanocentric perspective on Nazi history. I have described this elsewhere as ‘historicist empathy’ insofar as the suggestion of historical veracity legitimises an approach to German wartime experience that allows the audience to adopt a perspective of empathy with the traumatised German victims.⁸ Sabine Hake’s detailed analysis of the historicist agenda of *Der Untergang* locates the film in ‘two larger developments in the mediatization of the Third Reich: the emergence of nationally

specific forms of heritage cinema [...] and the unabated popularity of historical docu-dramas and miniseries on television'.⁹ Hake links the agenda of *Der Untergang* both to the Historians' debate of the 1980s and its attempt to normalise the Nazi past in a process of historiciation, and the nineteenth-century school of Historicism with its desire to tell history 'as it really was', in Leopold von Ranke's words.¹⁰

Both Hake and Johannes von Moltke argue that Hirschbiegel's and TeamWorx' historicist agenda are part of the cultural backlash against the politicised aesthetics of the post 1968 generation; a determined move beyond the ethics of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*.¹¹ Both mainstream entertainment and the kind of collective history produced by Guido Knopp's 'histotainment' factory rely on the production of consensus,¹² the first for budgetary reasons, and the second for the production of the type of collective narrative that is central to Knopp's 'heritage' approach to German history. The issue of trauma is an essential element in this type of collectivising emotive approach to German experiences of Nazism and the war as the immediacy of traumatic experience de-historicises and depoliticises the traumatic event by the isolating and individualising force of the event. In traumatic experience everyone is, in the first instance, an individual victim, that is, in the words of Daniel Fulda, 'someone suffering violence'.¹³ This radical individualisation and de-contextualisation of trauma is open to historical re-contextualisation and collectivisation.

HISTORICISM AND TRAUMA

It might appear that historicisation and trauma are two mutually exclusive modes as they have a diametrically opposed relationship with historical time. A historicising approach represents the past event as closed off and concluded with no connection to the actual present, something Hake describes, with reference to *Der Untergang*, as '[e]ntombing the Nazi Past'.¹⁴ In contrast, trauma by its nature as an event that has broken through the subject's protective mental

apparatus and thus has not been able to be accommodated into the subject's history, extends forward into the present, for example in the symptomatology of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).¹⁵ A historicist approach and a story of traumatisation suggesting a lasting legacy would then appear to be mutually exclusive. That this is not the case is demonstrated by *Unsere Mütter, unsere Väter* (henceforth *UMUV*) which merges both modes to a hitherto unprecedented degree.

UMUV was broadcast by ZDF in three episodes of ninety minutes at the prime time of 20:15 on 17, 18, and 20 March 2013. Two of the episodes were accompanied by forty-minute documentaries from Guido Knopp's 'Redaktion Zeitgeschichte'. *UMUV* was produced by Nico Hofmann's company TeamWorx; the scriptwriter Stephan Kolditz and ZDF producer Heike Hempel were also part of the production team for TeamWorx' production of *Dresden*. Paul Cooke cites Hofmann in 2006 as working on a project called *Generation 21*, the story of five individuals 'aus dem Jahrgang 1921', which Hofmann then described as 'eine Art deutsches *Band of Brothers*'.¹⁶ *UMUV*, which took eight years to make, is the final result. With a budget of fourteen million Euros it is the most expensive German TV production to date. Audience figures varied between 6.6 and 7.7 million or 19.4-24.3% with younger audiences (14-49) making up between 14.4 and 17.6%, significantly lower than *Dresden* with viewing figures of 30%. It was awarded the *Prix Europa* for the best short series in October 2013 and was successfully screened under the title *Generation War* in the US, where it was awarded an Emmy, and in China.¹⁷

UMUV stages the most sustained representation of German wartime experience as traumatising in the German visual media to date. I am less interested here in the psychopathological aspects of trauma and trauma theory than in the link between the issue of trauma as both a 'kollektives Deutungsmuster'¹⁸ or 'kulturelles Erinnerungsnarrativ'¹⁹ and the suggestion of trauma as an aspect of immersive event cinema. Axel Bangert notes in his recent

The Nazi Past in Contemporary German Film that the issue of trauma is central to German event movies such as *Dresden*, insofar as it links the connection between private and public histories on screen, ‘an effect that the film creates through techniques of immersion and special effects emulating those of Hollywood productions’.²⁰ Bangert argues that the ‘difficulty of representing trauma as a psychic pathology stands in a paradoxical relationship to the widespread simulations of trauma in film and other audiovisual media’. He notes that in contrast to the concept of trauma in psychology and psychoanalysis, where it is marked by notions of absence and incommunicability, in visual media ‘it means the emphatic evocation of its presence’ through ‘advanced technologies of vision and sound while concealing their role for the sake of diegetic illusion, creating a viewing experience that suggests traumatic overexposure’.²¹ The issue of the non-narratability of trauma is central to trauma theory and founded on the idea that the excessive and abrupt nature of the violent exertions on the body and the senses destroys the experience of the event itself. The result is that the content of the experience does not enter the sensorium of the survivors. Cathy Caruth describes this as a ‘breach in the mind’s experience of time, self, and the world’ and as something ‘experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and [is] therefore not available to consciousness [...]’.²² However, as Bangert’s comment on the evocation of traumatic presence in visual media makes clear, the issue of the communicability of trauma by traumatised subjects after the event has to be separated from the visual representation (and representability) of the traumatic event and the representation of the effect of the traumatising event on subjects at the moment of its occurrence. Only the latter is central to *UMUV* with its representation of the continuous traumatising of its fictional characters, the question of the communicability of trauma belongs to the film’s socio-political context and will be discussed further below.

With respect to the the historicist agenda of *Der Untergang*, Hake identifies a series of characteristics of historicism, such as a naturalistic mise-en-scène, an ‘aesthetic of simulation

that [...] creates an illusion of objectivity and authenticity', attention to detail with respect to costumes and set design and a vision of history as, on the one hand, decided by individual agents, and, on the other, as catastrophe without agency for the 'little' people.²³ The historicist agenda in recent German film about the Nazi past, Hake argues, is tied to the representation of German history as a 'series of crises, traumas, and failures' that 'facilitates the self-recognition of contemporary German audiences as victims of their own history.'²⁴

All of this applies to *UMUV*. The absence of any real historical figures in *UMUV* serves to underscore the representation of history as something that the characters suffer and endure. If *Der Untergang* and even *Dresden* with its adversaries Hitler and Arthur Harris, present history as 'a series of individual decisions and personal relationships', *UMUV* is dominated by the same 'primal scenes of powerlessness' that determine the world outside the bunker in *Der Untergang* and that mark history as catastrophe for the individual.²⁵ Moreover, *UMUV* avoids any drawing out of the traumatic legacy of the past into the viewer's present. Unlike key films of the 1970s and 1980s that explicitly engaged with the impact of the suppressed or traumatic past on the present either through visually suggesting a continuing legacy (e.g. Fassbinder's *Die Ehe der Maria Braun*), or through a narrative framework that explicitly locates the second generation as recipients of the legacy of parental trauma (e.g. Sanders-Brahms' *Deutschland bleiche Mutter*), *UMUV* locates the traumatic content of its story firmly in the represented period that remains closed off to the viewer's present. The future-oriented aspect of trauma, its continuing legacy, is thus subsumed under *UMUV*'s historicising approach.

The reason for this is that the intention of *UMUV* is distinctly not an examination of the traumatic legacy of the Nazi period in post-war and contemporary Germany but rather to 'endlich unerzählte Geschichten erzählbar zu machen'.²⁶ That is to say, the desire of *UMUV*'s producers is that the film should act in *loco parentis*, to tell the stories the experiential generation did not tell, could not tell or was afraid to tell. Its rhetorical function is that of a cue,

a trigger for a dialogue between the generations. Both producer Nico Hofmann and scriptwriter Stefan Kolditz describe the film as an imaginary dialogue with the generation of war participants, with one of the character's experiences partially based on the war diaries of Hofmann's own father.²⁷ *UMUV* thus tells the story of the Second World War as family trauma.²⁸ The intended affective effects of *UMUV* is underlined by the creation of a blog where viewers could share their own traumatic experiences by the film's broadcaster, ZDF. The naïve naturalism of the film is accompanied by the same naïve belief in the communicability of traumatic content in the world outside the film.

UMUV thus shares the historicising agenda of *Der Untergang* and *Dresden*, but with a rhetorical twist. As Johannes von Moltke argues with respect to *Der Untergang*, the audience is led to empathise with the central character, Hitler's secretary Traudl Junge, but not to identify with her 'in the sense of imagining ourselves in her shoes'.²⁹ However, this is precisely what *UMUV* wants its target audience to do.

EMPATHY WITH TRAUMATISED 'TÄTER': THE MANUFACTURING OF AFFECT

To facilitate the imaginary dialogue between the generations, Hofmann argues, it is necessary to suspend what he perceives as the judgemental post-war attitude of the younger generations towards the Nazi past. Hofmann distances himself and his film sharply from an approach he describes as the dominant 'didaktische Blick auf diese Zeit. Wir haben jahrzehntelang mit einer unglaublichen Schuld-Sühne-Pädagogik gearbeitet. Die unmittelbar persönlichen Erfahrungen und Emotionen der Deutschen aber wurden ausgeblendet'.³⁰ This moralising perspective by the 'Nachgeborenen', says Hofmann, prevented the experiential generation from revealing their traumatic experiences to their children and grandchildren for fear that they might be judged. To undercut this moral distance, *UMUV* works with a visual structure that not only creates empathy with its characters, but deliberately subverts any clear-cut moral perspective by

aligning the audience with the increasing involvement of its characters in Nazi crimes. It will be seen, however, that *UMUV* invites the audience to empathise both with the characters' experiences as passive victims and with their actions as a result of entanglement with Nazism, subsuming both under the master narrative of traumatising.

The collective traumatic subtext of *UMUV* is already made visible by the collectivising title that transfers the experiences of a handful of protagonists to the level of a collective foundational narrative. *UMUV* tells the story of five young friends, four *Volksgenossen* and a German Jew, from the eve of the German attack on the Soviet Union to the end of the war. The brothers Wilhelm and Friedhelm are part of the Wehrmacht's attack on the Soviet Union, Charlotte is stationed as a nurse in a field hospital behind the German lines and Greta, who is in love with the Jewish Viktor Goldstein, begins a career as a 'Schlagersängerin'. The trajectory of the four non-Jewish German³¹ characters is one of growing disillusionment and progressive entanglement in Hitler's war of extermination in the East. After the initial enthusiasm in the face of an almost unfettered advance – 'Es ist eine Lust vorzustößen' comments Wilhelm – the viewer experiences the terrible conditions of the Russian winter of 1941 when the German advance grinds to a halt. Over the 4.5 hours of the three episodes all the 'German' characters are increasingly implicated in the criminal nature of the Nazi enterprise. Charlotte denounces a Ukrainian assistant nurse when she suspects her of stealing morphine and discovers that she is Jewish. Wilhelm has to execute a captured Russian political officer. Greta begins an affair with the Gestapo officer Martin Dorn to provide Viktor with papers and to further her ambitions as a singer, becoming a part of the Nazi entertainment-industry. Friedhelm, who is initially the most unwilling of soldiers and sceptical about the war – he articulates the moral of the film, 'Der Krieg wird nur das Schlechteste in uns hervorbringen' – has, by the beginning of the second episode, transformed into a soulless *Frontschwein* whose increasingly traumatic

experiences have left his moral compass in ruins. Over the rest of the film he becomes a willing participant in atrocities such as the execution of Polish partisans.

UMUV presents the experiences of the 'German' characters from a perspective of full immersion that, technically, owes much to Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan* and to the TV series *Band of Brothers*. Battle scenes are filmed in a heightened naturalist style with disorienting handheld camera, and a soundtrack that echoes the extreme realism of *Saving Private Ryan*'s depiction of the landing on Omaha Beach, with bullets whizzing past the viewer's ears and deafening explosions that numb the senses of the disoriented protagonists filmed in muted sound and slow motion. The battle scenes and the scenes in the field hospital are unflinchingly gruesome, in keeping with the globalised aesthetics of shock situations with extreme close-ups of blood-spluttering neck-wounds, spilled guts and broken bones.

One of the central issues in the debate around Germans as victims is, as Bill Niven has pointed out, the distinction between a representation of Germans as 'absolute' or 'relative' victims.³² However, while *UMUV* goes to some lengths to subvert both any clear-cut divide between victims and perpetrators and the representation of its characters as 'absolute victims' by establishing the 'Verstrickung' of each of the characters in great detail, the film does, at best, present us with 'Täter lite'. Initially, audience empathy with *UMUV*'s characters is created through their alignments with contemporary audience sensibilities. All four 'German' characters are, at the beginning of the film, presented as 'normal', in the sense that none of them is particularly nazified and everyone is portrayed as being essentially 'like us'. This ideological unaffectedness is affirmed by the film in the same way that *Dresden* establishes its protagonist Anna: by their carefree dancing to forbidden Jazz music. Once aligned with the characters, audience sympathy is progressively reinforced with respect to both the characters' traumatising experiences *and* their increasing entanglement in the ethical quandaries of Nazism. The scenes suggesting an experience of traumatic excess are accompanied by a set of facial closeups that

imply the successive traumatising, numbing and destruction of the characters' selves. The scene where Friedhelm and a fellow soldier witnesses the Ukrainian *Hilfspolizei* clearing a Jewish settlement is structured by series of facial closeups of Friedhelm alternating between what he sees and his horrified and shocked reaction. The following scene where *SS-Sturmbannführer* Hiemer shoots the Ukrainian Jewish girl that Friedhelm and his comrade soldier have rescued from the *Hilfspolizei* is again constructed through a series of alternating over-the-shoulder-shots from Friedhelm's perspective and facial closeups of Friedhelm's face. When Hiemer visits the soldiers' camp in the next scene, Friedhelm walks away and breaks into tears. He comes to halt at the edge of a swamp which is buzzing with flies. Squashing one of the flies on his cheek, he notices blood. Again the camera follows his eyes to the ground and his realisation that he is standing foot-deep in blood from a mass grave. The camera then cuts again to his face in closeup which is numbed by shock, a shot that lasts for 3-4 seconds.

With its repetition of facial closeups, *UMUV* is structured around what Carl R. Plantinga calls 'scenes of empathy':

The narrative momentarily slows and the interior emotional experience of a favored character becomes the locus of attention. In this kind of scene, which I call the *scene of empathy*, we see a character's face, typically in closeup, either for a single shot of long duration or as an element of a point-of-view structure alternating between shots of the character's face and shots of what she or he sees. In either case, the prolonged concentration on the character's face is not warranted by the simple communication of information about character emotion. Such scenes are also intended to elicit empathetic emotions in the spectator.³³

UMUV's scenes of empathy are predominantly constructed through point-of-view structures. They are re-enforced by a repetition of the principal alternation between closeups and what the characters see, noted by Plantinga. The camera cuts back to the character's face several times. In the scene where Friedhelm sees one of his fellow soldiers being blown up after stepping on a mine, the camera cuts back and forth three times between Friedhelm's face in closeup and the smoke settling on the place where the mine exploded, finishing with a final 3-4 seconds closeup of Friedhelm's face. This technique is used both for scenes in which the characters suffer a distressing experience and for scenes in which the characters (are forced to) engage in immoral activities, for example when Wilhelm is ordered to shoot the captured Russian commissar, when Friedhelm is executing Polish hostages and when Charlotte betrays the Jewish identity of the Ukrainian assistant nurse, Lilja, to the German field police and Lilja is deported.

UMUV essentially employs the same technique of creating audience identification and alignment with character experience for scenes where something traumatic *happens* to the characters and where characters are involved in situations that forces them to *do* something that is out of line with our contemporary moral sensibilities. The tortured, distorted, and increasingly expressionless faces of the main characters convey the progressive destruction of the characters and their ultimate numbness. Hence, *UMUV*'s visual technique suggests its protagonists are traumatised just as much by their deeds as by their experiences. By the end they have become, in Thomas Elsaesser's term for the heroes of contemporary immersion cinema, 'dead men' (and women), they have suffered 'an excess of "experience" as limit-*Erlebnis*, obliging [them] to "play dead" to human emotions: they have become "too much"'.³⁴

UMUV offers to the audience what Greg M. Smith calls an 'invitation to feel', to align themselves with the characters' distressing experiences.³⁵ The continuous closeups thus have a dual function: To demonstrate to the viewer both the continuous traumatic destruction of the

characters' selves and to elicit audience empathy for the characters in those situations. Since what happens to the characters is marked by excess, the characters' 'normality' at the outset of the film is progressively destroyed. The viewer is thus increasingly invited to sympathise with a character's experiences that is outside his or her own sphere of experience. The closeups thus simultaneously bring the character's experience closer to the audience through eliciting empathy *and* demonstrate that this experience is distant from their own life-world. As the audience essentially empathises with a set of characters that is constructed, from the onset of the narrative, on an axis of 'normality' (i.e. like us), what the manufacturing of empathy in *UMUV* is designed to create is empathy with the characters' activities in situations of moral and emotional duress. Plantinga refers to this as 'emotional contagion' which 'results in part from the observation of another's posture, gesture, voice, and/or facial expression'.³⁶ *UMUV* presents the viewer with a high degree of what Plantinga calls 'internal character engagement'. While in external character engagement 'allegiance arises from the spectator's positive moral judgment of a character', internal character engagement is elicited by emotional contagion, 'in that the viewer shares some of the experience the character is thought to have [...]'.³⁷

It is important to note in this context that *UMUV*'s structural device to enforce empathy through repeated alternating closeups does not extend to the Jewish character Victor. In contrast to Plantinga's 'scenes of empathy' Victor's closeups are either narratively motivated, i.e. part of a dialogue scene, or frequently cut short by Victor moving his head or the camera moving across his face. In Victor's most emotional scenes, for example when he says goodbye to his parents or when he returns to the empty flat to discover his parents have been deported, there are no closeups of the kind reserved for Wilhelm, Friedhelm, Charlotte and Greta. As Victor's experiences as a victim of Nazism are morally clear-cut, there appears to be no need for enforced audience alignment. As a result, Victor appears as the least traumatised or emotionally destroyed of the five protagonists.

Moreover, *UMUV* ultimately exonerates its 'German' protagonists by making everyone atone for their actions. Wilhelm deserts and ends up in a *Bewährungsbattalion*, saying to his superior officer 'Man muss sich nur entscheiden: sterben oder lügen.' Charlotte strikes up a friendship with Lilja's successor Sonja and tries to save her from the Russian army and is nearly raped when the Russian army takes over the field hospital; in an implausible turn of events it is Lilja, who returns as a Russian officer, who intervenes and stops the rape. Greta refuses to sign Dorn's *Persilschein* which states that he assisted Victor to flee the country and is eventually executed for treason, and Friedhelm finally sacrifices himself to motivate the teenage boys from his *Volkssturm* unit to surrender. All four protagonists are thus, to put it in German, 'unschuldig-schuldig'.

The traumatic destruction of the characters' selves is reinforced by the eyewitnesses in the accompanying documentaries who testify to the numbing of their emotions. Ex-Corporal Willi Reese comments: 'Das ist entsetzlich ein Mensch zu sein und ein Soldat.' When talking about the *Wehrmacht's* treatment of the 'heimtückisch' (Reese) partisans and the practice of arbitrarily shooting civilians as a means of deterrence, Reese's memories are framed in the usual passive voice of disavowal of participation. The first person pronoun only returns in Reese's description of his feelings about this, after which he bursts into tears: 'Da wurde kurzer Prozess gemacht. [...] Das liegt mir heute noch so auf der Seele'. As none of the four 'German' protagonists are, at the beginning of the film, either particularly ideologised or presents any sentiment that can be construed as more than that of a mild 'Mitläufer' opinion, *UMUV* operates, despite the progressive undermining of its protagonists' moral purity, with a clear-cut distinction between real (i.e. evil) Nazis and 'normal' (i.e. not ideologised) Germans that was already characteristic of *Dresden*. The only 'real' Nazis in *UMUV* are the Gestapo Sturmbannführer Dorn and SD-Obersturmbannführer Hiemer, both caricatures of evil. Ulrich Herbert, one of the few harsh critics of *UMUV*, has pointed out that the protagonists, born

around 1920, ‘gehören einer Generation an, die alle Sozialisationsinstanzen des NS-Staates durchlaufen hat und in der der Anteil der NS-Begeisterten besonders groß war’.³⁸ Although they live in ‘eine andere Zeit’ and ‘ein anderes Land’, as the titles of episodes one and three suggest, they are presented as essentially like our contemporaries and we are supposed to think of their experiences as potentially ours. The otherness of the time and the country is thus highlighted not to facilitate judgement but to undermine it.

Instead of blurring the boundaries between perpetration and suffering, pointing to a historical field of moral ambiguity that is in conflict with the clear moral categories of today, the film subsumes the characters’ acts of perpetration and situations of suffering under the meta-narrative of traumatising, what Johannes von Moltke calls the ‘totalizing grasp’ of a film’s affective appeal: ‘emotional investment may always involve cognition, but it is synthetic, not analytic; in other words, to charge [...], a film, or a historical moment emotionally means to subsume its various aspects, and even its contradictions, under the totalizing grasp of an affective response [...].’³⁹

A NEW PHASE OF AUFARBEITUNG?

Participation and witnessing, described by Elsaesser as the codes of immersive cinema, are very much the mode in which the creators of *UMUV* wish to see the film being received by its audiences. The production’s intended direction of impact becomes clear when considering TeamWorx’ press campaign and the film’s reception. The screenings were accompanied by a media campaign of truly gargantuan proportions. All national broadsheets not only reviewed the film but for several weeks carried articles, analyses, interviews with Hofmann, Kolditz, director Philipp Kadelbach and ZDF producer Heike Hempel and round-table discussions with historians and experts such as Götz Aly. Yet more newspaper column inches were provided by the Polish ambassador’s sharp criticism of the film’s representation of the Polish resistance as

anti-Semitic and the overwhelmingly negative reception in Poland on the broadcast of the series there in June 2014.⁴⁰ Everything about *UMUV* communicated that this was an enterprise of truly collective proportions that broke new ground in Germany's relationship with the past. The idea that *UMUV* was ushering in a new phase of German engagement with the Nazi past was generally shared by the almost unanimously positive reception in the German press. Ralf Wiegand in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* described it as 'epochal', Klaudia Wick in the *Frankfurter Rundschau* praises the 'drastische, ehrliche Inszenierungen' of the 'einfühlsames und doch schonungsloses Filmepos', Frank Schirrmacher in the *FAZ* saw the film as opening a 'neue Phase der filmisch-historischen Aufarbeitung des Nationalsozialismus' and Christian Buß in *SPIEGEL* referred to the film as a 'Zeitenwende'.⁴¹

The issue that was felt to be so groundbreaking was, beside *UMUV*'s gruesome and graphic focus on the traumatic experiences of its main characters, its portrayal of their progressive entanglement in Nazi crimes and atrocities from a non-judgemental and non-moralising perspective. However, *UMUV*'s approach is not as new as Hofmann and Kolditz make out. Hofmann's argument about the suspension of post-war judgemental perspective was already part of the debate around Martin Walser's speech on the reception of the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade and his novel *Ein springender Brunnen* in 1998, as well as the exhibition 'Vernichtungskrieg: Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941-1944' in the same year and Dieter Wellershoff's memoir of his time as an eighteen-year old soldier at the Eastern front, *Der Ernstfall* (1995).⁴² Wellershoff argued for an attitude of listening, unencumbered by judgemental attitudes toward the moral aspects of the Third Reich, a perspective that suspends what he sees as the essential moralising position of the *Nachgeborenen*: 'eine Haltung, die das Böse, Mörderische, Wahnhafte des historischen Handelns der Menschen als ein fremdes Phänomen außerhalb der eigenen gesicherten Grenzen ansieht, exterritorial auch zur eigenen Position.'⁴³ What is new about *UMUV* is not the argument about the suspension of judgement

but, as Aleida Assmann has noted, the reversal of rhetorical position: It is no longer the generation of the 'Zeitzeugen' which is telling their story to the younger generation(s), but the children (Hofmann, Kadelbach) who are imagining their parents' story.⁴⁴

The perspective of listening to someone else's trauma without judgement is of course that of the therapy session. The much criticised Cathy Caruth associates the eliciting of traumatic experiences with an ethics of listening that at least potentially allows for a therapeutic overcoming of the trauma in narrative.⁴⁵ Hofmann's cue to listen to the traumatic experiences of the experiential generation for cathartic purposes without burdening them with a perspective derived from the post-war shock of the Holocaust was widely echoed in the review pages. Frank Schirmacher, describing the film as a 'soziale Plattform', emphatically argued that *UMUV* was 'die letzte Chance, über die Generationen hinweg die Geschichte des Krieges zu erzählen'.⁴⁶ Schirmacher explicitly praised the fact that none of the film's characters is a 'real Nazi', thus facilitating the viewer's identification, insisting that without identification there would be no story: 'Die Frage war immer eine ganz andere: Was war es, was ihr nicht habt erzählen können? Die Antwort darauf war nicht nur moralisch prekär. Sie war es auch grammatikalisch. Sätze brauchen ein Subjekt, Erzählungen brauchen Identifikationsfiguren. Was aber, wenn da nichts zum Identifizieren ist?'⁴⁷ Schirmacher's argument about the lack of narratable stories from a perspective of identification, like *UMUV* itself, blurs the distinction between the absence of narratable stories as a result of trauma and the post-war silence surrounding war participants' experiences and actions due to the legacy of guilt and shame. It further blurs the principal distinction between the perspective of the experiential subject and that of reception, thus revealing the centre of *UMUV*'s drive for empathy with the traumatic experiences of the 'Kriegsteilnehmer': to suspend the ethical distinction between 'Germans' and Nazi victims that was central to the Historians' Debate of the 1980s. Consequently, the film's undermining of the viewers' moral safe ground is the prerequisite for a perception that

what the film depicts could have happened to anyone: ‘Wer wäre man selbst in diesem Film gewesen? Wer wäre man geworden, wenn man 1941 zwanzig Jahre alt gewesen wäre? Das sind die zukunftsweisenden und am Ende unabweisbaren Fragen, die Nico Hofmanns großes Werk im Zuschauer zurücklässt.’⁴⁸ Schirmmacher’s claim is that the questions that are opened up by *UMUV* suggest the beginning of a process of historical understanding in the viewer. However, rather than an understanding of the historic specificity of the represented period, *UMUV* confirms, through the manufacturing of alignment with the characters’ experiences, the idea of an ahistoric human condition under hardship and forsters an ‘understanding’ that one would have behaved no differently under the same pressures.

Gillian Rose has argued that the representation of National Socialism in visual media generally relies on a binary distinction between victims and the the fascist as ‘other’ for the purpose of audience identification with the victim. Rose maintains that this form of empathetic divide is essentially voyeuristic, moreover, it leaves our identity as voyeurs intact as it does not lead us to a questioning of the mechanism by which empathy is constructed for us. Rose argues for a film ‘which follows the life story of a member of the SS in all its pathos so that we empathise with him, identify with his hopes and fears, disappointment and rage, so that when it comes to killing we put our hands on the trigger with him, wanting him to get what he wants’.⁴⁹ Despite the blurring of boundaries between the character’s involvement in acts of perpetration and their traumatising, *UMUV* keeps the boundaries between the ‘normal’ Germans (Wilhelm, Friedhelm, Charlotte, Greta) and the Nazi ‘others’ (Hiemer, Dorn) clear. The purpose of the identificatory perspective is not the viewer’s realisation of his/her own potential for being manipulated but the ‘Schulterschluss’ between the generations addressed in the title as ‘unser’. To explore this further, it is necessary to have a look at the blurring of fiction and history in *UMUV* and the collectivising *Gestus* of the film.

BLURRING THE BOUNDARIES BETWEEN FICTION AND HISTORY

Thomas Elsaesser describes the recent paradigm shift in film studies from semiotics or apparatus theory to emotion as involving ‘the presumption [...] that the cinema involves neither miscognition nor illusion, but is best understood as a perceptual act like any other, heightened perhaps by its immediacy and immersiveness’.⁵⁰ This conception of film as indistinct from what we normally call visible reality disregards the mediatedness of the immersive event by an apparatus. It eliminates both the distinction between ‘reality’ and a screened event and the distinction between *res factae* and *res fictae*. This blurring of the boundaries between ‘reality’ and fiction is a central feature of the TeamWorx approach to history with its self-confidently historicist reliance on the authenticity of its sources and its close link between historiography and fiction at production level, resulting in the final product presenting the fictional material with the *Gestus* that belongs to the veracity of a historical document.⁵¹

The blurring of the distinction between fiction and historiography, fiction and document already occurs in *Dresden* at various moments, for example when Robert and Anna are walking through the ruined city after the bombing night and the colour footage shifts to a grainy black and white, as if the viewer was watching authentic footage, when Robert’s gaze at the panorama of destruction on top of the Frauenkirche is cut to the famous panorama photograph of 1945, or when in the final moments of the film the words by Pfarrer Stephan Fritz from the ‘Festgottesdienst’ of the rebuilt Frauenkirche are followed by a voiceover by the fictional Anna. In *UMUV* however, this blurring of historiography and fictionality, authenticity and invention not only occurs on a visual level but on the level of the narrative as a whole. While in *Dresden* the fictional and historical aspects of the film were fairly clearly distinguishable, so much so that reviewers bemoaned the overlaying of the traumatic narrative of the city’s destruction with a barely plausible romance,⁵² history and fiction have entered such a bond at the level of production in *UMUV* that they become virtually indistinguishable. At the close of

the film, birth and death dates of each character are superimposed onto the photo that is taken at their last get-together in 1941 with Wilhelm being the only one 'still living' in 2014, suggesting that what we have been watching is based on the lives and experiences of five real people.

The first of the two forty-minute-long documentaries that accompanied the screening of *UMUV* opens with the group photograph that the five protagonists take at the beginning of the first episode of the film. This is followed in the documentary by five passport photos of different individuals being placed onto the fictional group photograph and a comment that suggests that the *UMUV* is based on the lives of these five people: 'Was der Spielfilm nachempfindet, haben sie am eigenen Leibe erfahren, an denselben Orten, zur selben Zeit.' That this is only half the truth is revealed in the course of the two documentaries. In fact, the five characters are made up of the amalgamated experience of several people. Wilhelm Winter's perspective and experiences are tied to the stories of about half a dozen soldiers, among them two survivors of the notorious 'Bewährungsbataillone'. Charlotte's perspective likewise is documented by several witness statements and Greta, finally, is created from the singer Ingeborg Meyer (née Biermann) while her death is borrowed from that of actress Hanne Martens who was executed 11 days before the end of the war. Crucially, the trajectory of the Jewish character Viktor is composed from two wholly incompatible survivor perspectives, that of Walter Frankenstein, a German Jew who survived in Berlin in the underground, and that of Aaron Bielski, a member of the Polish Bielski partisan group, the largest Jewish partisan group of WWII, which was the subject of the film *Defiance* in 2008. The terrible conditions under which this group survived are thus absent from the film as Viktor is part of a fairly well-fed Polish partisan group whose anti-Semitism is also evidenced in the documentary.

Almost every crucial incident both of traumatic experience and Nazi perpetration in the film such as the *Führerbefehl* to shoot Soviet commissars or the 'scorched earth' policy to burn

down Russian villages on retreat is evidenced and contextualised in the documentaries by historian Christian Hartmann from the Munich 'Institut für Zeitgeschichte' who already served as advisor for *Der Untergang*. Furthermore, most of those incidents are supported by statements of survivors. Even for Wilhelm's dramatic killing of his 'Bewährungsbataillon' sergeant there is a parallel as survivor Günter Debski relates the shooting of his superior officer by a comrade. There are, however, several exceptions: Charlotte's denunciation of the Jewish assistant nurse Lilja has no parallel in the documentary, just as the bad treatment of the assistant nurses reported by Maria Vitkievich is barely visible in the film, as is the mistreatment of Russian soldiers by the *Wehrmacht*. As the documentary's interviewees speak from a contemporary perspective, all ideological and anti-semitic perspectives have been carefully screened out. While Hitler's scorched earth policy is illustrated in the documentary by a soldier relating the burning of Russian peasant's residences, the film turns this on its head. When Wilhelm is ordered to burn down a Russian peasant hut he discovers a terrified old Russian couple which invites him to tea in the hope that this gesture might deter him from burning down their home. Wilhelm returns to his 'Bewährungsbataillon' unit without having fulfilled his task which almost costs him his life for defying orders – his sergeant is only prevented from executing him on the spot by a telephone call from headquarters that the scorched earth order has been revoked. Finally, and most crucially, Friedhelm's perspective, the perspective of the dehumanised soldier who without blinking fulfils any order and commits any atrocity, is absent from the documentary altogether, just as Friedhelm cannot survive the narrative, because his perspective cannot be accommodated within *UMUV's* foundational narrative of collective trauma and redeemability.

While the documentaries reference Nazi atrocities and the Holocaust, both of which are merely indicated in the film, they do so for the purposes of relativisation with respect to the film's characters. The documentary makes the central involvement of the 'Wehrmacht' in

Hitler's policy of extermination unmistakably clear: 'es ist die Wehrmacht, die im Frontgebiet das Kommando hat'. The creation of ghettos and the registration of the Jews in the occupied territory are 'Aufgaben, die oft die Wehrmacht übernimmt'. With respect to the 'Einsatzgruppen', who begin to execute Jews behind the German lines, Christian Hartmann states that 'auch Wehrmachtssoldaten sind dabei'. The Ukrainian Vera Wolkova witnesses a pit full of murdered Jews, which is followed by a reference to Babi Jar, the 'größtes Massaker' on Soviet soil in which soldiers of the *Wehrmacht* also participated. Most crucially, the documentaries reference the death of 2 million Soviet soldiers in German captivity, 'das größte Verbrechen der Wehrmacht'. However, whereas this raises the spectre of perpetration and the question why all of this is absent from the film, the documentary quickly provides an explanation by distinguishing statistically between institutional and individual response, as individual participation remained 'relativ klein'. Christian Hartmann gives the number of perpetrators in the *Wehrmacht* as 'einige 10.000 Mann von 10 Millionen. [...] Ich denke, jeder hat es gewusst, ob jeder es miterlebt hat, ist eine andere Frage'.

The function of the documentaries is predominantly to shore up the traumatic narrative of the film with historical veracity with the claim that the fates of the five characters 'spiegeln die Wirklichkeit jener Generation unserer Mütter und Väter. Geschrieben vom Krieg'. Formally, the documentaries repeat the blurring of the boundaries between visual documents, historiography and fiction by using footage from the film to illustrate both Christian Hartmann's commentary and the witnesses' statements.

The documentaries thus underwrite the perspective of the 'normal' soldier as one of guilt by association. The film's marginalisation of the Jewish perspective on National Socialism is repeated in the documentaries by legitimising the 'German' perspective, and thus the perspective of war experience as that of the majority. *Unsere Mütter, unsere Väter*: this is the post-war German collective, and by implication the foundation of the viewer's own present,

emerging not from National Socialism as a historical experience but from the trauma of war on 'normal people' placed in perpetrator positions. The film's narrative of collective trauma is echoed at the end of each of the documentaries: 'Unsere Mütter, unsere Väter, sie hatten ihre Zukunft noch vor sich, damals, als die Welt aus den Fugen geriet.' And: 'Die traumatischen Erinnerungen quälen bis heute. Es sind unsere Mütter, unsere Väter.'

COLLECTIVISING GERMAN AND JEWISH PERSPECTIVE?

The title *Unsere Mütter, unsere Väter* poses the question of the relationship between its collectivising stance, the narrative perspective and the Jewish perspective personified by Viktor. While *Dresden* presents 'a subjective experience of shared victimhood', e.g. through Simon Goldberg (Kai Wiesinger) tearing off his Jewish star,⁵³ *UMUV* keeps the trajectories of Jewish and non-Jewish German experience apart. In a poignant moment, the camera captures the photo of the five friends from which Greta has just cut out Viktor's face to be used in his fake passport, thus symbolising the split between two different experiences under National Socialism in the creation of two different collectives. This is reinforced by the film's ending. As the surviving friends Wilhelm, Charlotte and Viktor meet after the end of the war in the delapidated bar from where they set out at the beginning of the film, the bitter and distrustful glances that are exchanged between Wilhelm and Viktor appear to create an insurmountable distance thus testifying to the creation of two incompatible experiences and perspectives on National Socialism. However, it is Wilhelm who pours three shots of drink and gestures to Viktor to join them with the words 'Gut, dass du lebst'. The three survivors drink to the memory of their dead friends Greta and Friedhelm. The camera then cuts to the black and white photograph of the five friends taken on the evening of their last reunion. From this we cut to a set of edits from this reunion in colour, the friends dancing and joking, without diegetic sound, accompanied by non-diegetic piano music that is at the same time wistful, nostalgic and

melancholically joyous, suggesting lost days of carefree union. The loop at the film's finale resembles the loop at the end of Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch* where we see edits of Pike, Dutch, Lyle and Tector, who minutes earlier died under a barrage of bullets from an entire Mexican army, laughing and joking during an earlier moment of respite. Like in *The Wild Bunch*, this stylistic feature is a memorial for the dead – and this includes the survivors Wilhelm and Charlotte who look and move like old people in the final scene, testimony to the destruction of their youth in the war. Testifying both to the authenticity of the group's collective innocence and to the destruction of their characters through their traumatic experiences, the loop thus re-affirms the collectivising gestus of the entire film, thereby both in- and excluding the Jewish perspective in the overwriting of the photo without Viktor's face by the re-establishment of the memory of an 'intact' community of Germans and Jews in 1941.

How, then, are we to read the collectivising 'unsere' in the title; does it include or exclude Viktor? If we read it as including Viktor, the film subsumes the Jewish experience of National Socialism, one that cannot be accommodated as 'unser', under its paradigm of collective trauma through war. If we read the title as excluding Victor, the 'truth' of *UMUV* is yet once again that the suffering of the *Volksgenossen* has more affective potential for the contemporary collective evoked by the film than that of the Nazi's 'other'. Given the fact that Viktor's experience can, in contrast to Wilhelm's, Friedelm's and Charlotte, hardly be described as representative, we can conclude that *UMUV* overwrites the difference of German and Jewish experiences. Consequently, and in keeping with the historicist agenda of the film's narrative framework, the Holocaust remains what it was for the majority of Germans, a rumour.

TRAUMA AS VISUAL *ERLEBNIS*

With respect to the representation of traumatising events in *UMUV*, it is necessary to distinguish between the represented traumatising of the characters as the film's narrative

content and *UMUV*'s visual form which frequently represents these traumatisations in an immersive visual style that aims to put the viewer in the middle of these excessive events. Thomas Elsaesser has noted that the recent turn towards emotion in film studies 'presupposes film to be above all an event [...], a perceptual act like any other' which casts spectators 'not as voyeurs or across the imaginary identification of the split subject, but as witnesses or participants'.⁵⁴ Introducing Walter Benjamin's distinction between *Erfahrung* and *Erlebnis* into the debate, where *Erfahrung* denotes the communicable and transmittable sum of lived experience and *Erlebnis* the fragmented and incommunicable shock-experience of urban modernity,⁵⁵ Elsaesser argues that the 'shattering, immersive and at the same time fragmented experience' alluded to in the contemporary 'cinema of immersive experience' reproduces 'the breakdown of *Erfahrung* into *Erlebnis* also on the side of the viewer'.⁵⁶ The breakdown of *Erfahrung* into *Erlebnis* is, as Elsaesser notes, the domain of trauma, originating in Benjamin's Freudian reading of the shocks of urban modernity as not leaving a (narratable) memory trace: 'The name for this "failure of experience" in contemporary culture is trauma, not only because the traumatized person cannot put his or her experience into discourse, but because the shock of trauma is often said to leave no visible symptoms, no bodily marks'.⁵⁷

Elsaesser's analysis of the 'traumatic' formal aesthetics of contemporary Hollywood cinema culminates in his thesis that the immersive *Erlebnis* of contemporary cinema without *Erfahrung* is a symptom of a 'crisis of experience, of the ability to be an agent in and the author of one's own life'. The 'traumatic' mode of reception thus corresponds to 'a perceptual and somatic environment so saturated with media-experience that its modes of reception, response and action require various kinds of uncoupling and unstitching of the motor-sensory apparatus in order to cope'.⁵⁸

The *Erlebnis* is the point of convergence between historicism and trauma, especially its visual representation in a cinematography of excess, insofar as neither mode is capable of

conveying or containing a historical experience. Walter Benjamin distinguishes historicism from his own concept of historical materialism in that only the latter is capable of transmitting a historical 'Erfahrung' as historicism's procedure of empathy with the historical event aligns it with 'Erlebnis': 'Der Historismus stellt das "ewige" Bild der Vergangenheit, der historische Materialist eine Erfahrung mit ihr, die einzig dasteht.'⁵⁹ Sabine Hake argues in her chapter on the historicist agenda of *Der Untergang* that the film aims at an 'Erlebnis-based understanding of the Third Reich'.⁶⁰ Following Elsaesser's and Hake's arguments, if the purpose of *UMUV* is to communicate a historical *Erfahrung* to its target audience about the traumatising of their parents, its visual form of immersive event cinema is at odds with that purpose. However, the purpose of *UMUV* is not the transmission of *Erfahrung*, but rather the manufacturing of empathy with 'our' traumatised mothers and fathers in a story of collective traumatising for the purposes of identity and ownership. The mode of *UMUV* can thus be described as 'immersive historicism'. Immersive historicism presents the historical event both as closed off in historical/political terms and as open to emotional investment from the present.

In his controversial exploration of the Allied bombing campaign, *Der Brand*, Jörg Friedrich refers to the traumatic experience of the German collective in the Luftkrieg as 'nichtangeeignete Geschichte'.⁶¹ With this in mind, we may refer to the approach documented in current engagements with the past as *Vergangenheitsaneignung*.

¹ Bill Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past*, London 2002, p. 2.

² See for example Bill Niven (ed.), *Germans as Victims*, Houndmills, Basingstoke 2006; Helmut Schmitz (ed.), *A Nation of Victims? Representations of German Wartime Suffering from 1945 to the Present*, Amsterdam 2007; Laurel Cohen-Pfister and Dagmar Wienroeder-Skinner (eds.), *Victims and Perpetrators 1939-1945. (Re)Presenting the Past in Post-Unification Culture*. Berlin/New York 2007; Helmut Schmitz and Annette Seidel-Arpaç (eds.), *Narratives of Trauma. Discourses of German Wartime Suffering in National and International Perspective*, Amsterdam 2011.

³ Aleida Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit. Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik*, Munich 2006, p. 194.

⁴ Norbert Frei, 'Gefühlte Geschichte,' *DIE ZEIT*, 21 October 2004. See Johannes von Moltke, 'Sympathy for the Devil: Cinema, History, and the Politics of Emotion', *New German Critique*, No. 102, (Fall 2007), 17-43 (p. 18).

⁵ Paul Cooke, 'Dresden (2006), TeamWorx and Titanic (1997): German Wartime Suffering as Hollywood Disaster Movie', *GLL*, 61:2 (April 2008), 279-94 (283).

⁶ Hartmann insists that the production stuck 'geradezu sklavisch' to the sources. Historian Hermann Graml said of *Der Untergang*, 'Ich kenne keinen Film, der die Vergangenheit so eindringlich und derart quälend lebendig werden lässt.' See 'Historiker zu *Der Untergang*: Faktisch genau, dramaturgisch lau', *DER SPIEGEL*, 16 September 2004, <http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/kino/historiker-zu-der-untergang-faktisch-genau-dramaturgisch-lau-a-318336.html> (accessed 22 March 2015). On German historians' reception of *Der Untergang* see further Sabine Hake, *Screen Nazis. Cinema, History and Democracy*. Madison, WI and London 2012, p. 249, footnote 47.

⁷ In the 'Making of' documentary that accompanies the DVD of *Dresden*.

⁸ See my 'Historicism, Sentimentality and the Problem of Empathy: Uwe Timm's *Am Beispiel meines Bruders* in the Context of Recent Representations of German Suffering', in *A Nation of Victims?*, pp. 197-222.

⁹ Hake, *Screen Nazis*, p. 239.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 230. Historicism and the desire for a historicising approach expressed, for example, by Ernst Nolte, have several aspects in common, such as its representation of the historical event as closed off to the present, a narrative approach based on empathy with the depicted event. See my 'The Birth of the Collective from the Spirit of Empathy. From the Historians' Debate to German Suffering', in *Germans As Victims: Remembering The Past In Contemporary Germany*, ed. Bill Niven., Basingstoke 2006, pp. 93-108

¹¹ Hake, *Screen Nazis*, p. 239 and p. 244. See also von Moltke, 'Sympathy for the Devil', p. 40.

¹² See Eric Rentschler, 'From New German Cinema to the Post-Wall Cinema of Consensus', in *Cinema and Nation*, eds. Mette Hjots and Scott McKenzie, London 2000, pp. 260-77.

¹³ Daniel Fulda, 'Abschied von der Zentralperspektive. Der nicht nur literarische Geschichtsdiskurs im Nachwendedeutschland als Dispositiv für Jörg Friedrichs *Der Brand*,' in *Bombs Away! Representing the Air War over Europe and Japan*, eds. Wilfried Wilms and William Rasch, Amsterdam 2006, pp. 45-64 (p. 49).

¹⁴ Hake, *Screen Nazis*, p. 224.

¹⁵ On PTSD see Susanne See Vees-Gulani, *Trauma and Guilt. Literature of Wartime Bombing in Germany*, Berlin and New York 2003, pp. 30-37.

¹⁶ See Hanns-Georg Rodek, 'Meine Mutter hat Jahre gebraucht, um zu begreifen, dass es Hitler nicht mehr gab', *Die Welt*, 4 November 2006. Quoted in Cooke, 'Dresden (2006), TeamWorx and Titanic (1997)', 282. Heike Hempel, responsible for feature length productions at ZDF cites *Band of Brothers* as 'Vorbild' for *UMUV*. See: 'Weltkrieg "noch einmal, ganz anders"', *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 21 March 2013, <http://www.fr-online.de/medien/-unsere-vaeter--unsere-muetter--zdf-weltkrieg--noch-einmal--ganz-anders-,1473342,22172132.html> (accessed 15 July 2015).

¹⁷ See for example "'Unsere Mütter, unsere Väter" gewinnt Emmy', <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/medien/auszeichnung-fuer-deutschen-mehrteiler-unsere-muetter-unsere-vaeter-gewinnt-emmy-1.2236761>, and Yong Yang, "'Unsere Mütter, unsere Väter" – Chinas Zuschauer diskutieren über ZDF-Kriegsfilm', <http://www.stimmen-aus-china.de/2013/12/03/unsere-muetter-unsere-vaeter-chinas-zuschauer-diskutieren-ueber-zdf-kriegsfilm/> (accessed 15 July 2015).

¹⁸ See Elisabeth Bronfen, Birgit R. Erdle, Sigrid Weigel (eds.), *Trauma. Zwischen Psychoanalyse & kulturellem Deutungsmuster*, Cologne, Weimar, Vienna 1999.

¹⁹ See Michael Heinlein, 'Das Trauma der deutschen Kriegskinder zwischen nationaler und europäischer Erinnerung: kritische Anmerkungen zum gegenwärtigen Wandel der deutschen Erinnerungskultur', in *Narratives of Trauma*, pp. 111-28 (114)

²⁰ Axel Bangert, *The Nazi Past in Contemporary German Film. Viewing Experiences of Intimacy and Immersion*, Rochester, New York 2014, p. 103.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

²² Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience. Trauma, Narrative, and History*, Baltimore and London 1996, p. 4.

²³ Hake, *Screen Nazis*, pp. 225-233.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 226 and p. 229.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 233.

²⁶ Götz Aly in discussion with Nico Hofmann, See 'Unsere Mütter, unsere Väter: Vereiste Vergangenheit', *DIE ZEIT*, 14 March 2013, <http://www.zeit.de/2013/12/Unsere-Muetter-unsere-Vaeter-ZDF-Hofmann-Aly/komplettansicht>, accessed 4 December 2014.

²⁷ See "Sind wir tatsächlich so anders?" Was Autor Stefan Kolditz zu diesem Film motiviert hat', <http://www.zdf.de/unsere-muetter-unsere-vaeter/sind-wir-tatsaechlich-so-anders-26301484.html> (accessed 15 July 2015) and 'Filmproduzent Nico Hofmann im Gespräch: Es ist nie vorbei', http://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/medien/unsere-muetter-unsere-vaeter/filmproduzent-nico-hofmann-im-gespraech-es-ist-nie-vorbei-12118295.html?printPagedArticle=true#pageIndex_2 (accessed 15 July 2015).

²⁸ For a reading of *UMUV* in relation to German family memory see Aleida Assmann, *Das neue Unbehagen an der Erinnerungskultur*, Munich 2013, pp. 33-58.

²⁹ von Moltke, 'Sympathy for the Devil', p. 35

³⁰ "'Unsere Mütter, unsere Väter': Vereiste Vergangenheit', *DIE ZEIT*, 14 March 2013, <http://www.zeit.de/2013/12/Unsere-Muetter-unsere-Vaeter-ZDF-Hofmann-Aly/komplettansicht> (accessed 15 July 2015). Heike Hempel likewise uses the term 'didactic' to distance TeamWorx approach in general and *UMUV* in particular from previous visual approaches to the past. 'Weltkrieg "noch einmal, ganz anders"'.

³¹ To be mindful of the Nazi distinction between 'German' *Volksgeossen* and the status of 'non-German' others conferred upon German Jews by the Nuremberg racial laws, a distinction that is overwritten by *UMUV*'s title, further references to *UMUV*'s non-Jewish German characters 'German-ness' will appear in inverted commas.

³² See Bill Niven, 'Introduction. German Victimhood at the Turn of the Millenium', in Niven *Germans as Victims*, pp. 1-25 (pp. 16-17).

³³ Carl Plantinga, 'The Scene of Empathy and the Human Face on Film', in Carl Plantinga and Greg M. Smith, eds., *Passionate Views: Film, Cognition, and Emotion*, Baltimore, MD 1999, p. 239.

³⁴ Thomas Elsaesser, 'Between *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*: Cinema Experience with Benjamin', *Paragraph*, 32:3 (2009): 292-312, (306).

³⁵ 'Films do not "make" people feel. A better way to think of filmic emotions is that films extend an invitation to feel in particular ways. Individuals can accept or reject the invitation.' Greg M. Smith, *Film Structure and the Emotion System*, Cambridge 2003, p. 12.

³⁶ Carl R. Plantinga, *Moving Viewers: American Film and the Spectator's Experience*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London 2009, p. 125.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

³⁸ Ulrich Herbert, 'Nazis sind immer die anderen', *die tageszeitung*, 21 March 2013, <http://www.taz.de/!113239/> (accessed 15 July 2015).

³⁹ von Moltke, 'Sympathy for the Devil', p. 41.

⁴⁰ On *UMUV*'s reception in Poland, as well as on its German reception see Laurel Cohen-Pfister, 'Claiming the Second World War and Its Lost Generation: *Unsere Mütter, unsere Väter* and the Politics of Emotion', *Seminar*, 50:1 (February 2014), 104-23, esp. pp. 113-17.

⁴¹ Ralf Wiegand, 'Als sei alles gestern passiert', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 16 March 2013, <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/medien/unsere-muetter-unsere-vaeter-im-zdf-als-sei-alles->

gestern-passiert-1.1626004. Klaudia Wick, 'Auf Augenhöhe im Schützengraben', *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 16 March 2013, <http://www.fr-online.de/medien/-unsere-muetter--unsere-vaeter--im-zdf-auf-augenhoehe-im-schuetzengraben,1473342,22124954.html>. Frank Schirmmacher, 'Die Geschichte deutscher Albträume', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 15 March 2013, <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/medien/unsere-muetter-unsere-vaeter/unsere-muetter-unsere-vaeter-im-zdf-die-geschichte-deutscher-albtraeume-12115192.html>. Christian Buß, 'Glaube, Liebe Hitler', *Der Spiegel* 13 March 2013, <http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/tv/zdf-weltkriegs-epos-unsere-vaeter-unsere-muetter-a-886932.html> (all accessed 15 July 2015).

⁴² Director Philipp Kadelbach argues that ten years earlier the German public might not have been willing to accept the film's perspective, giving the public reactions to the *Wehrmachtsausstellung* as indicator: 'Eigentlich kommen wir zu spät. Aber wenn man sieht, welche Reaktionen die Wehrmachtsausstellung noch vor knapp zehn Jahren hervorgerufen hat, vielleicht auch nicht. Man hätte den Film auch schon damals drehen können. Aber vielleicht sind wir es jetzt bereit dazu.' "'Darf ich zu diesen Figuren Nähe aufbauen?'" Philipp Kadelbach im Gespräch', FAZ, 16 March 2013, http://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/medien/unsere-muetter-unsere-vaeter/Philipp-kadelbach-im-gespraech-darf-ich-zu-diesen-figuren-naehe-aufbauen-12114730.html?printPagedArticle=true#pageIndex_2 (accessed 15 July 2015). On Wellershoff and Walser see the relevant chapters in my *On Their Own Terms*, Birmingham 2004, pp. 181-215 and pp. 223-39.

⁴³ Dieter Wellershoff, *Der Ernstfall. Innenansichten des Krieges*, Cologne 1997, p. 271.

⁴⁴ Assmann, *Das neue Unbehagen an der Erinnerungskultur*, p. 34.

⁴⁵ See Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience. Trauma, Narrative, and History*, Baltimore and London 1996, pp. 8-10.

⁴⁶ Schirmmacher, 'Die Geschichte deutscher Albträume'. See also Kia Vahland: 'Vom Fragestellen und Zuhören', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 20 March 2013, <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/unsere-muetter-unsere-vaeter-im-zdf-vom-fragenstellen-und-zuhoeren-1.1628706> (accessed 15 July 2015).

⁴⁷ Schirmmacher, 'Die Geschichte deutscher Albträume'.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Gillian Rose, 'Beginnings of the day: Fascism and Representation', in Rose, *Mourning Becomes the Law*, Cambridge 1996, pp 41-62 (p. 50).

⁵⁰ Elsaesser, 'Between *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*', p. 293.

⁵¹ The end credits of *UMUV* mention a whole team of historical researchers as advisors: Dieter Müller of the Militärhistorisches Forschungsamt Potsdam, Julius Schoeps from the Moses Mendelssohn Zentrum, Matthias Rogg from the Militärhistorisches Museum Dresden, Jens Wilhelm from the Militärhistorisches Museum der Bundeswehr and Sönke Neitzel from the LSE, Dept of International History.

⁵² See Cooke, 'Dresden (2006), TeamWorx and *Titanic* (1997)', p. 268.

⁵³ See Bangert, *The Nazi Past in Contemporary German Film*, p. 111.

⁵⁴ Elsaesser, 'Between *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*', p. 293.

⁵⁵ On Benjamin's distinction see Thomas Weber's article on 'Erfahrung' in Martin Opitz, Erdmund Wizisla (eds.), *Benjamins Begriffe*, Frankfurt am Main, vol. I, pp. 230-59.

⁵⁶ Elsaesser, 'Between *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*', p. 304 and p. 307.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 307.

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 308-09.

⁵⁹ See Benjamin, 'Über den Begriff der Geschichte', in Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser, 5 vols, Frankfurt am Main 1974, I/2, p. 702

⁶⁰ Hake, *Screen Nazis*, p. 251.

⁶¹ Jörg Friedrich, *Der Brand*, Munich 2002, quoted from the paperback edition, Berlin 2004, p. 218.