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CHAPTER TWELVE

THE AUTUMN IN GERMANY: A DIALOGUE ON FASSBINDER AND TERRORISM

MICHAEL GODDARD AND BENJAMIN HALLIGAN

BH: 1968 is a key date in the filmographies of Rainer Werner Fassbinder and Pier Paolo Pasolini, but 1968 seems to exist as a kind of absence in their work, or as in negative correlation to their work.¹ The events of 1968 can't be said to be directly the foundation of Fassbinder's films; what is so striking about his very early work, on the cusp of 1968, is that it already anticipates the coming, post-'68, radical project. We find a sensibility that is not militant in the sense of a rabble-rousing cinema, nor didactic or experimental or avant-garde, but an embrace and implicit critique of commercial tropes from and generic conventions of older, less troubled (even less European: Hollywood) cinemas. In this respect, Fassbinder seems the most idiosyncratic of film-makers. 1968 is at one remove in Pasolini: the consciousness-shifting "happening" of *Teorema* / *Theorem* (1968) occurs mostly in secluded and one-to-one narratives, and even the modish semi-"radicals" (or, more precisely, long-haired youths) of *Porcile* / *Pigsty* (1969) exist in contexts far removed from the haunts of the *soixante-huitards* (the bourgeois family estate, and an ancient, pagan wasteland). For Pasolini, the impact of 1968 occurs slightly later. While *La trilogia della vita*² and *Salò o la 120 giornate di Sodoma* / *Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom* (1975) seem completely divorced from the immediacies and hopes of 1968, they are clearly addressing new forms of power and domination best understood as arising in respect to the failure of 1968. In this light, film-makers such as Jean-Luc Godard, Bernardo Bertolucci, Philippe Garrel and even Michelangelo Antonioni seem to

have been profoundly and immediately effected by 1968: disorientated, arguably; reorientated, decidedly.

To talk about a persistence of 1968, in respect to Fassbinder and Pasolini, is to talk about a sense of the "feeling" of 1968—a diffused 1968: the ambience, the scope of what was suddenly made possible, the experience of 1968 as much as the politics. I contend that 1968 exists rhizomatically in their work. And yet, with Fassbinder in particular, there is the continuation of a radical cinema that had seemed to culminate in 1968, and that now continues, even addressing the same constituencies, as we enter the new decade and new political landscape. This dynamic is our first concern in this dialogue. So I wonder if we can begin with the idea of joy—not in a trivial sense (enjoyment, escapism), but in a radical, let us say "Makavejevian", sense: the "joy on the barricades", the joyousness of the crowd in revolt, the liberation of the breaking of taboos and social norms. Joy, understood in this way, is one such "feeling" of 1968.

Pasolini seems to have been undone by the notion of joy. He chased after a radical *jouissance* to be found in primitive societies, seen as in conflict with the dawnings of modern civilisation, which Pasolini later felt was an oversight or overestimation, if we are to take him at his word (writing in 1975: "... the progressive struggle for democratization of expression and for sexual liberation has been brutally superseded and cancelled out by the decision of consumerist power to grant a tolerance as vast as it is false... what in sexual fantasies was pain and joy has become suicidal disappointment, shapeless torpor" (Pasolini 1987: 49-50). *Salò's* impact and lesson was in its very joylessness, which was relentless and unremitting (and in this sense a kind of rejoinder to *La trilogia*).

Joy in Fassbinder is at best relocated, and often stripped of its "reaction shots". I assume there's a kind of problematic or ironic proletarian joy in the beer and women of *Katzelmacher* (1969), for the male characters, but you wouldn't know it from their demeanours. Fassbinder's work embodies the clichéd notion of a Germanic joylessness and lack of humour. Even at the other end of his filmography, the joylessness of the couplings of *Querelle* (1982) are striking; the lost bet with the bar owner that results in the sodomisation of the protagonist, who can only comment that it's not as painful as he would have thought.

Yet joy remains a structuring presence in Fassbinder, even when absent: the malcontents of Fassbinder's films all strive for joy, via de-alienation or happiness. We find them in the consumer society, but consumption and joy are clearly not interchangeable. This becomes the very theme of the Fassbinder tragedy, in the hopelessness of some of his subproletarian protagonists as they seek material and social privileges (the

fates of Hans and Fox, in *Händler der vier Jahreszeiten* / *The Merchant of the Four Seasons*, 1972, and *Faustrecht der Freiheit* / *Fox and his Friends*, 1975, respectively) or acceptance (*Berlin Alexanderplatz*, 1980). And this striving, or state of striving, is seen in the radical protagonists: in the comical ineptitude of the misfits of *Satanstoebe* / *Satanstoebe* (1976), in the misplaced and confused ideological or utopian assumptions of Fassbinder's terrorists. These protagonists seem overly-serious in their pursuit of happiness. The militants of 1968—too easily distracted by the overabundance of joy, and so given over to hedonism in their pursuit of revolution—suddenly seem like an older generation. It's the transition from Wilhelm Reich to Michel Foucault, from psychedelia to punk, from the austerity of post-war Germany to a "new" consumer Germany that seems to be in operation as we move from the 1968 generation to the post-68 generation.

MG: This question of generations seems important in Fassbinder and in the 1970s more generally there seems to be a sense of a speeding up of generations in a variety of contexts. One comparative example would be Andrzej Żuławski's *Trzecia część nocy* / *The Third Part of the Night* (1971) whose title is in part a kind of joke along the lines of after the Polish School and the abortive attempts at a Polish New Wave: isn't it time for a third generation of Polish cinema that this film inaugurates? The obvious Fassbinder comparison is *Die dritte Generation* / *The Third Generation* (1979) which can be read as not only about the dynamics of the third generation of urban guerrillas (also a type of accelerated development), but also as about a third generation of new German cinema, from the '60s optimism and experimentalism of the film-makers coming out of the Oberhausen Manifesto, to the next generation of post-68 radical film projects, whether in terms of the new subjectivism of Wim Wenders or Werner Herzog or Fassbinder's own Brechtian aesthetics, or to a new type of independent yet complicit cinema in which postures of the radical outside give way to the complicit appropriation of dominant codes such as Hollywood melodramas. There seems to be a quite abstract structure presented in *Die dritte Generation*, one that could be even more relevant to New German Cinema and its forced complicity with funding bodies and the need to attract audiences and support 'against the odds' than to international urban guerrilla movements. Although conversely the film was produced, in contrast to most contemporaneous New German Cinema, entirely independently, the money coming in the end from Fassbinder himself in part, which adds a further twist to this way of seeing the film. But perhaps we should return to this example, after discussing the

two earlier films in which violent political action is in some way the subject, *Mutter Küsters' Fahrt zum Himmel* / *Mother Küsters' Trip to Heaven* (shot 1975, released 1976) and Fassbinder's segment of the portmanteau film *Deutschland im Herbst* / *Germany in Autumn* (1978). It seems to me that while there is still ambivalence in these earlier films they are at the same time anything but abstract, instead taking place in very precise social milieus: in the first case of the various social forces surrounding a 'typical' proletarian family, and in the second of the forces surrounding Fassbinder himself during the Autumn of 1977, referred to by the film's title. And to bring this back to the earlier discussion of generations, surely this 'Autumn' is also a reference to the Autumn (and perhaps Winter would have been more appropriate) after the 'heat' of the all the hopes and desires provoked by that famous Spring of '68 have started a definitive process of cooling, hardening or even freezing (the equivalent Italian expression being the 'years of lead' indicating the dominance of both the Brigate Rosse and the hard-line state response to them).

BH: Generation, then; firstly in the sense of the generation of those shouldering the guilt of the war years (Mother Küsters remarks, in respect of the placidity and conformity of her late husband, his employment during the war and then employment in the chemical factory; I surmise they were born circa 1915), and those who were too young and so are free of that historical burden (their children, who would have been born in the late 1930s). But generation, secondly, in terms of that freedom, and its fruition: the generation, in the sense of the creation, of a new urban West Germany—technocratic, modern, wealthy even—no longer in the long shadow of post-war scarcity, reparations and pariah status. This younger generation—singers, journalists, photographers, radicals and drop-outs (and film-makers; Fassbinder is, demographically, in with them), with their bottles of Coca-Cola at the Communist Party meeting—have finally come of age. And even the old manual labour we see Mother Küsters performing seems to have slipped into this orbit—the assembly of plugs: the electrification of the new Germany (had Fassbinder Lenin's proclamation in mind: "Communism is Soviet power + electrification"—a sly joke; now it's Willi Brandt's revolution that has occurred?), and the nasty clattering of the plastic components on the kitchen table (the most synthetic of materials; and plugs for what? Televisions, radios, record players...). The straitened *mise-en-scène* of *Katzelmacher* seems long gone, and the hints of an emergent middle class lifestyle, which remained a point of contention in *Warum läuft Herr R. Amok?* / *Why Does Herr R.*

Run Amok? (co-directed from Michael Fengler, 1970), has blossomed into a new strata of wealth, and wealth as a centrifugal, urban force. Mother Küsters, who remains 'typical' of the proletarian family, as you note, can proclaim "[b]ut we're doing alright. People are content with what they've got" to the doctrinaire Communists as they try to recruit her (and, indeed, she soon grows accustomed to the luxury of their house).

However, all is not as it seems (as was always Fassbinder's Sirkian strategy); something is seriously awry. And where the "old mole" of class antagonism inevitably reappears, to use Marx's term, it is—tellingly—clad in a leather jacket. Political tensions and conflicts, and the position of tertiary work in the new economy, are mapped onto older, proletarian appearances. So the photographers and journalists wears battered leather jackets—practical, no doubt, for a job that takes them all over the city but, in relation to their deceitful and malicious roles, suggests camouflage for a kind of mingling with the subjects the publications delight in slandering. The same (complete with jeans, scarf, and John Lennon glasses); the outfit of the proletarian man of action, necessary for long periods "in waiting", presumably outdoors and in the cold. For Karl Tillmann (Karlheinz Böhm), as he addresses the Communist Party meeting, the smart cut of the black leather sports jacket—which, in fact, appears to be Italian—over his black polo-neck absolutely decontextualises him: in public (in contrast to the several domestic scenes Fassbinder gives us) he is neither an intellectual of an upper class milieu nor (jacking shirt and tie) the bureaucrat he soon turns out to be. He dresses like the proletarians assembled in front of him in order to speak to them.

Yet despite these images of older political interactions and affiliations (the dress, and unity, of the proletariat), the politics now at play are defiantly, and pessimistically, modern. The radical potential of—seemingly—a revolutionary or dissident act on the part of the late husband (murdering his manager and then himself, seemingly distraught at the precariousness of his job) is dissipated by the contingencies and opportunistic strategies of the "bourgeois left". The newspaper men are only interested in salacious gloating and gossip arising from the deaths, the news value of which Mother Küsters' daughter tries to harness (along with the photographer) to bolster her career as stripper / singer. Financial recompense is denied to Mother Küsters on the grounds that the husband's action reflects badly on the company, as agreed between the Senior Management and the Union. And the terrorist action that closes the film is PR-calibrated (Mother Küsters as the access to the popular imagination of the readership of the newspaper, where a hostage scenario plays itself out).

It all seems politically hopeless; every grouping wishes to capitalise on the tragedy for their own ends. So it's particularly interesting that Fassbinder shot two endings: a European one, which results in (unseen) death as the forces of state break the occupation, and an American one in which the militants (now more akin to radical students) abandon the occupation, leaving Mother Küsters to keep company with a lonely janitor (who seems, for the first time, someone of her generation and experiences, and who takes delight in anticipating his supper that evening). What is Fassbinder here saying about the potential, and scope, and efficacy of militant action?

But to return to the sense that all is not right and Fassbinder's Sirkian strategies: what really grates in *Mutter Küsters' Fahrt zum Himmel*, even more than the roll call of ne'er-do-wells mentioned above, and Mother Küsters' own exploitation by all the sundry (regardless of their differing ideologies), occurs under the opening credits. Fassbinder assembles a series of anodyne, colour-saturated images of this modern Germany: postcard views, showy new vistas, "historical" curiosities jostling with the sights and sounds of the city in motion. There is a shot of a train speeding away from a station platform: the clichéd aspirant dynamism of the shot is something that places it firmly in the aesthetic realm of the travel brochure. (And a little later on, with the holiday to Finland, much discussed and then reportedly blighted by constant rain, we see that such brochures only ever mislead). It isn't so enough to say that this is a straight-forward ironic use of such advertising imagery on Fassbinder's part, or a variant of the embrace and implicit critique of commercial tropes from older, less troubled cinemas. Fassbinder seems to be presenting these one-dimensional images as typifying historical amnesia: the blocking out and building over and forgetting of the Real (to use Žižek's term). They are evidence of the fundamental, blind belief in the new, free and freed generation: the new bourgeois mores and their environs. The revulsion and struggles against bourgeois mores and milieus (in, say, *Händler der vier Jahreszeiten*, *Faustrecht der Freiheit* and *Effi Briest*, 1974) are erased since new West Germany can only be new West Germany if there is no old Germany. The social and political reorientation is thus presented as a *fait accompli*, the next Year Zero. One would expect Fassbinder to self-consciously heighten the drab and oppressive, so directly critiquing the vistas of urban alienation and equating them with psychological alienation, as with *La dernière femme / The Last Woman* (Marco Ferreri, 1976). But no; he prefers a naïve approach—to present the contemporary reality as it would have itself presented. Maybe it's in reflecting this distortion of the

social field that Fassbinder winds up considering terrorist action, and the subjective states of mind that seem connected to it?

MG: Well certainly with Fassbinder there seems to be a blurring between political violence and terrorism and a more intimate 'terrorising' so that in *Die Sehnsucht der Veronika Voss / Veronika Voss* (1982), for example, terrorist tactics of kidnapping are adopted, in a situation that is otherwise a melodramatic interpersonal one; but this kind of mix goes back to Fassbinder's earliest films. However, never was this implication of intimate and political terror made more explicit than in Fassbinder's contribution to *Deutschland im Herbst*. In this uncharacteristically documentary or rather, to use Jean Rouch's term, ethno-fictional sequence, Fassbinder justifies acknowledged as being the strongest in the entire film, Fassbinder appears to depart from the safety of fiction to stage a series of raw and conflictual intimate encounters, with his mother, his lover, Armin Meier and with himself; the sequence being perhaps fully encapsulated in the scene where Fassbinder slams down the phone and starts banging his head against the wall. This sequence shifts the events of that German Autumn, including both the increasingly desperate actions of the RAF and of the security state culminating in the questionable 'suicides' in Stammheim, from the object of political judgement to an incorporation in intensive affective and above all intimate relations. After all, earlier in the decade Fassbinder had personal contacts with future members of the RAF including Andreas Baader and Holger Meins and was himself the subject of police scrutiny in 1977 but this is a mere background to what is really at play in this sequence, as Fassbinder said in an interview "[h]arrassment's something that takes place inside of you, because you're constantly aware that they know you exist. So you become more cautious, more fearful" (Fassbinder, Tötberg, Lensing 1992: 136). However this fear, while on one level extremely personal was also a political affect gripping the entire country and it is this that gives the sequence its urgency and resonance; if Fassbinder injects the state of paranoia then gripping the FRG, at the same time this paranoid affective conditions then, in his uniquely exhibitionist style, re-projected with both an emotional and temporal immediacy absent from the other sequences of the film.

BH: Can we say, then, that while the other sequences deal, quite logically, with West Germany that Autumn, Fassbinder's concern is the autumnal and melancholic collective state (in the sense you discuss it, above: the cooling of the hopes and desire of '68) now found in the West German radical psyche? Not so much *Germany in Autumn* as the Autumn in

Germany. Thus Bifo sees in the film the new and still current era: "... you can perceive the sudden sadness, the fog, and the clouds descending over people's lives..."; *Deutschland im Herbst* is emblematic of "[w]hen the future began" (Berardi 2009: 16, 14).
 Pasolini also detected the shift in the mid-'70s, which he termed "Neo-Capitalism", and grappled with it in his last and unfinished novel *Petrolio*. Neo-Capitalism, unlike "Late Capitalism", denotes a new phase (that of coming post-nation state market / imperial globalisation) rather than, simply, a more unstable and so degenerate "late" phase of post-industrial capitalism.

MG: Fassbinder pointed out in the same interview I referred to earlier that he was the only contributor to *Deutschland im Herbst* to shoot his sequence straight away and watching the film, this is the only section which is not mediated by the comforting distance provided by meditation on the events or the structures of fiction, with the possible exceptions of the documentary scenes of the Baader, Enslin and Raspe funeral or the interview with Horst Mahler.

BH: A lack of distance really determines the sequence, which is physically limited by the claustrophobia of the setting. As with Godard's *La Chinoise* (1967) and Emile de Antonio's *Underground* (1976), a "new" political sensibility is isolated and observed in the laboratory-like conditions of a handful of the rooms (in this case, of Fassbinder's apartment). For Fassbinder, this characteristic difference from the majority of *Deutschland im Herbst* that you outline presumably came as second nature: he was the most domesticated, in the sense of the most "in doors", of the directors of the New German Cinema—even more so, I would say, than Hans-Jürgen Syberberg. Werner Herzog's *oeuvre* is shaped by the undomesticated wilderness, Wenders' by the road and the flight from domestication; even Werner Schroeter in the 1970s was too much a lover of sun and space to create his underground cinema anywhere other than overground. Fassbinder eschews flight as surely as he rejects resorting to that 'comforting distance'. The dynamic allowed by Fassbinder's enclosed setting is one in which Fassbinder, its instigator and *metteur-en-scène*, becomes inextricably entangled.

MG: Absolutely. When Fassbinder is confronting his mother about how despite her liberal views she is essentially in favour of a return to authoritarianism or even Fascism in the current climate or fighting with his lover, there is no attempt to disguise the sense that he is in many respects

behaving like an aggressive despot, nor is their any mediation of the painful effects of these confrontations both on Fassbinder's interlocutors or on himself. Neither is any 'correct' analysis presented of the events that would be embodied a coherent set of views or opinions about the truth of what is taking place. Instead, Fassbinder contests the current atmosphere of paralysis and paranoia precisely by this process of introjection/projection of the crisis of German society, thereby constituting what could be called a politics of affect that goes well beyond any glib equation between the personal and the political: as Thomas Elsaesser has argued, 'Fassbinder enacts ... paranoia's narcissistic/exhibitionist obverse' (Elsaesser 1998: 70).

BH: Here, then, is the flip side of Reich's *Mass Psychology of Fascism*: it is the (befuddled) mass psychology of (the revulsion at) fascism, as perceived—certainly in those unhappy months of Autumn 1978—to have surfaced, or even to be in the ascendant.

MG: In regards to these questions of political affect it is worth reconsidering a little known text the militant psychoanalyst Felix Guattari devoted to the film entitled "Like the Echo of a Collective Melancholia" (Guattari 2009: 181-187). While not as well known as his then collaborator Gilles Deleuze for engagements with cinema, Guattari was very interested in the ways that some films constitute a less elitist equivalent of psychoanalysis, leading Guattari to label cinema as the "Poor Man's Couch". In the case of *Deutschland im Herbst*, Guattari saw an attempt to come to terms with the events of 1977 against the intoxications of the mass media and counter to the "'infernal machine' of guilt inducement" (182). What Guattari most appreciated in the film was the sense of immediacy, or staying on the level of feelings that in relation to such a serious issue, in such a serious context is highly courageous: "The very personal behaviour which in any event defies current political classifications—Fassbinder embracing a friend, a young woman professor starting out with a shovel ...—constitutes so many elements of life ... so many flashes, escapes from the so-called "tragic destiny" of the German people" (182). Rather than constituting an avoidance of the political issues and social repression taking place, the film is, for Guattari, a rigorous and collective examination of the 'collective emotional context' in which political opinions and ideas are formed and it is this aspect of the film that is most effective in countering the everyday Fascism that the film is clearly critiquing in a non-didactic way. To return to the Fassbinder sequence in this light, the apparent acts of intimate terrorising performed

by the director (and however raw and close to documentary reality they may be they are definitely and explicitly performances) can be seen as the attempt to reach this affective, molecular level beyond or rather below fully formed political positions, the site at which politics is formed, traversing affects that are at once personal and impersonal in the sense of being both pre-personal and relational or collective.

BH: They are, explicitly, performances—as you say—and in spite of the sincerity of events played out in this “arena” (and in contrast to other sequences in and the general tenor of the film, as you note), I find a disconcerting falsity, or self-consciously fictional veneer, at work in the setting of Fassbinder’s segment. In a way this wouldn’t matter except that I am in agreement with Guattari’s conclusion and, as you identify, the process of the excavation of a dormant or “really existing” fascism. The “real” of the domestic tensions and the honesty of disorientation that is expressed is set against, or offset by, something evidently studio-like—confined, one-act, framed by the missing fourth wall in the establishing shot compositions; lit, blocked, furnished in a perturbatory way with the routine props. Fassbinder turns his apartment into his studio—a perfect manoeuvre in respect of his project in this film.

To discuss this contrast a little further: it is a sequence imbued with sincerity on a number of counts, firstly in and with the presences of Fassbinder’s mother and his lover, and of course Fassbinder himself (and then hardly showing himself in a favourable light). We could note too that 1978 was the year of Meier’s death; Thomsen records that, devastated by his abandonment by Fassbinder, he finally took his own life, after numerous threats, on the day of Fassbinder’s birthday; (Thomsen, 1997: 19–20). Looking at the marginalised role and yet dependent state of Meier in *Deutschland im Herbst*, it seems no surprise. It was a tragic personal event that prompted the following film, in which Fassbinder projected and probed that ‘harassment... that takes place inside of you’ in the absolute difference of the transgendered protagonist: a sort of walking advertisement for difference, and invitation to martyrdom. The elegiac *In einem Jahr mit 13 Monden* / *In A Year of 13 Moons* (1978) is Fassbinder’s equivalent to Francis Bacon’s paintings of his lover George Dyer, the most famous of which is *Triptych, May-June 1973*, once Dyer had taken his own life in not dissimilar circumstances. And Bacon, like Fassbinder in *Deutschland im Herbst*, frames via the doortrume, with an illuminated circumference—dimly haloed execution chambers. Such compositions suggest Bacon’s direct influence on the film. It is not so much the idea of the door out of the room that orientates our responses—this exit, into the

darkness (for Bacon), and the unseen world outside (for Fassbinder)—but the expanse of the space in front of the door. This is the space for action, movement, narrative, interaction and dialogue... a space that the artists cannot traverse or master—that confronts them with a series of choices that they can only flunk. As a consequence, they turn against each other—frustration giving rise to distemper, even violence, for Fassbinder. So there is a sense of self-condemnation in this set-up: these are confessional statements—an invitation to witness paralysis, indecision, confusion and, finally, self-interrogation. When Fassbinder declines to stray outside, it is because self-induced agoraphobia delivers the only domain in which these wider, reported events outside the room can be fully processed. Fassbinder seems not to report, but to recreate: the doubling of Fassbinder’s living cell with that of the Stammheim cells.

The idea of a *verfremdungseffekt* doesn’t seem to do justice to this dynamic. On the one hand, in the manner of Ibsen (whose play *A Doll’s House* Fassbinder had filmed in 1973), Fassbinder at times presents the “classic” cross-section of the *mise-en-scène* of naturalism: the domestic space, its comings and goings, buried tensions rising to the surface, in which the political and personal ultimately meld. On the other, in the manner of Sartre (of *Huis Clos*, or—perhaps better—Genet of *Un Chant d’Amour*, 1950), the domestic-space-as-prison-cell is the petri-dish: movement is inhibited, the exit is closed, the subjects are forced to reveal their inner workings. There’s an echo here of the structuralist-film-influenced experiments of *Loi du Vietnam* / *Far from Vietnam* (Godard, Varda, Joris Ivens, Klein, Lelouch, Marker, Resnais, 1967), especially Godard’s segment, *Caméra-œil*. Here Godard speaks straight to camera, explaining that his presence is the result of frustration at the hands of the North Vietnamese who will not allow him to film in their country (nor does he blame them) and, at any rate, as a French national, how could he hope to be able to present ‘truth’ in the kind of film he envisioned? In this way, the diffident nature of this film (point-blank monologue, the absence of narrative and drama) is linked directly to the inability to attain any sense of an objective analysis of the political situation.

So where Guattari identifies this “very personal behaviour which in any event defies current political classifications” he seems to acknowledge the resultant confusions, as expressed on the bodily level, as preventing our abilities to “push through” and read the wider political meanings. And what are the manifestations that defy “current political classifications”? On Fassbinder’s part: spasmodic movement, a sweating visage, irritation (both the screwing up of eyes, the constant wiping or massaging of the face, but also bad temper in general), portents of his own mortality (the

substantial cocaine hit, the vomiting), paranoia, and with gestures either jabbing and hyperactive, or slowed down and listless. Queer poses seem to offer the base line of recognisable emotional gestures (the moments of Fassbinder's "You're serious about that, are you?" and Meier's "Have you gone totally mad?" for example), and here the leather jackets work to transform the characters into Tom of Finland-styled poseurs; like a rough amateur drama, Fassbinder and Meier adopt and hold, for a beat, certain poses at seemingly important moments in the human narrative. This body under duress, which seems sensory-motor in origin, indicates an absolute exhaustion on Fassbinder's part; these bodies are drained of energy—they draw on drugs, alcohol and tobacco so as to remain at the edge of sleeping and waking. Fassbinder's body is reduced to "emergency lighting" only; at one point, while talking on the phone, he seems to begin to masturbate but gives up, or loses interest.

It reminds me of Siegel's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) and the mantra and imperative of not giving in to sleep because, after the briefest moment of letting go of the world outside, you'll wake to find it gone, and yourself changed irreparably: troubles cauterized, personality lobotomised. In terms of the understanding of militant and revolutionary potential of drugs then in the air (see, for example, Bommi Baumann's account of the Roaming Hash Rebels, whose Central Committee could proclaim 'Hashish, opium, heroin, for a black West Berlin'; Baumann, 1979: 49 and ff, 57), this use of stimulants seems quite different: to stave off narcosis rather than deplete the dictates of one's bourgeois superego prior to 'taking to the streets' for urban warfare.

But it's in this state of exhaustion that, as in the optic of *Huis Clos*, the desperate truth emerges. Exhaustion, for Deleuze, de-animates to the point of allowing access to an enlightened state since, as he writes in relation to the work of Samuel Beckett, "...only an exhausted person can exhaust the possible, because he has renounced all need, preference, goal, or signification. Only the exhausted person is sufficiently disinterested, sufficiently scrupulous. Indeed, he is obliged to replace his plans with tables and programs that are devoid of all meaning. For him, what matters is the order in which he does what he has to do..." (Deleuze 1997: 154). Once in this condition, and confined to the apartment, Fassbinder can fully interrogate his mother—seeing and raising her reserve of patience with his reservoir of exhaustion—until, allowing the segment to finally end, she admits to a desire for totalitarianism to overcome the "abuses" of the freedoms of democracy.

Thus the alien system of command is not external, but genetic; encoded within Fassbinder's own DNA, "biologically", so to speak, present at and

before his point of origin. Does Fassbinder's rebarbative and aggressive behaviour (towards his mother, lover, and even the sleeping guest—who looks like the student radical of *Satanstoten*—rudely turfed out), as he presents it to us in this segment, suggest some kind of molecular fascism at work?

MG: The many unanswerable political and affective questions posed by this short sequence that you raise and especially its extreme ambiguity and tension are miles away from Fassbinder's treatment of the same issues in *Die dritte Generation*. If in *Deutschland im Herbst* there seemed to exist some kind of radical continuum that would link the projects of the RAF and radical forms of cinema, if only as products of the same socio-historical milieu, or different tendencies chosen through aleatory moments and choices that could have been otherwise,³ all of this has evaporated, or to use your terms become exhausted, by the time of *Die dritte Generation*. In the latter film, terrorism is not presented in continuity with radical counter-culture so much as contemporary capitalism, a point underscored by the revelation that the terrorist ring is funded by a multinational corporation wanting to sell computers to the security state apparatus and manipulating the now politically meaningless terrorist acts as a mere marketing ploy.

BH: And to underline this rupture, the radical counter-culture comes in for something of a pasting in the doomed figure of Ilse Hoffman (Y Sa Lo), oblivious to the world beyond her drug and music paraphernalia.

MG: Strangely, this "mere marketing ploy" reading was an aspect of the whole RAF saga emphasised in its otherwise spectacular and depoliticised treatment in the recent film *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex / The Baader Meinhof Complex* (Uli Edel, 2008), based on Stefan Aust's already pot-boiler-like and highly partial treatment of the whole affair.⁴ The one innovation of the film is to emphasise the formation of a computerised and centralised security apparatus as a direct response to the terrorist actions and threat of the RAF and similar groups. Both the police at the time and this film treat "Baader Meinhof" as a criminal gang like any other, hence the film's frequent allusions to *Bonnie and Clyde* (Arthur Penn, 1967), a perspective that Fassbinder's 1979 film was already well in advance of. The more radical proposition of Fassbinder's film is that the complicity between terrorism, the state and capital is absolute and follows a neoliberal logic of aggressive marketing. One of the most interesting aspects of the film being that it is no longer about a radical contestation of

the state by terrorism but rather about the terrorist violence of the market, in which emergent forms of governance are fully complicit. As such it would have to rate alongside Foucault's seminars conducted around the same time and recently published under the title "The Birth of Biopolitics" but which really concern the (re)birth of neoliberalism, as one of the most prescient engagements with the emerging regime of global neoliberalism. Both Fassin and Foucault in different ways were sensing the emergence of this new regime that would become increasingly imposed on a global scale throughout the 1980s, before it had actually taken place.

BH: The notion of state surveillance is looped back into the marketing play too: computers need to be bought for what, exactly? Presumably the siting of the fields of data that are to be reaped and collated for state / market security. The opening credits, with the "live" computer graphic titles imposed across images of the cityscape illustrate the coming together of the two, to an electronic music score. Questions of surveillance were raised in the wake of the Watergate scandal and associated revelations of a few years before; even *Wolffen* (Michael Wadleigh, 1981), from roughly the same time, incorporates such scenes into its genre of supernatural horror—now with the hippies or drop-outs Wadleigh filmed a decade before for *Woodstock* (1970) recast as Weathermen or other militant dissidents, and so undergoing secret computer scanning and analysis.

The "sensing" of the emergence of this new regime that you mention is an aesthetic concern with Fassin. He pushes his *mise-en-scène*, slightly, into science fiction—but of existential (rather than fantasy) kind, and a sci-fi that seeks to find the future in the present—or the coming "present" of 1980. Godard's *Alphaaville: Une étrange aventure de Lemmy Caution* (1965) is a precursor, and Eddie Constantine's casting here brings this film to mind, but also the earth-set sequences of Andrei Tarkovsky's *Coenapuc / Solaris* (1972), to which Berlin is actually likened by one of the characters early on in the film. Fassin's previous sci-fi, the 1973 television film *Welt am Draht / World on Wires* is much more straightforward in its use of the genre as fantastical.

MG: In Fassin's case, *Die dritte Generation* shows a world in which the messy realities of 1970s political conflicts have been substituted by a smooth space in which the roles of the terrorist, police officer or entrepreneur are fully interlinked and interchangeable, a smoothness emphasised by the 1980s bland architectural décor, although this was still 1979.

BH: The blandness is itself deeply unsettling—as with the early films where, as I say, the anodyne, travel brochure images seem to seek to reflect and evidence the look and feel of the new Germany. But blandness here goes further; characters who, despite their outrageous and at times hysterical behaviour, merely and stupidly act in the manner of their class, and maintain class allegiances. Fassin terms it 'parlour games' in an opening caption and his satire comes from this combination: a terrorist grouping who spend their time with food and music, play Monopoly, exist as an extended network of like-minded professional friends, where donning disguise is likened to the dressing-up and make-up of an amateur dramatics society. Here the leather jacket—Hilde Krieger's (Bulle Ogier) a leather trench coat—is reduced to a straight fashion itself. So, suddenly, the paralysis and immobilisation I found to be in operation in Fassin's segment of *Deutschland im Herbst* is gone: constant activity occurs in the Berlin apartment spaces of *Die dritte Generation*. They are full of movement and bold decisions since they are emptied out of thought, deliberation and reasoning. Two sentences are repeated a number of times in the course of the film: the password of "the world as will and representation" and the announcement "I am a prisoner here in the name of the people and for the good of the people". Both sentences contain an obvious lacuna: will and representation (ignoring the Schopenhauer allusion) skirt around the "real" of the found world and interaction with it, and the actual people, unseen here, are disenfranchised: neither represented in the kidnapping nor the beneficiaries of it. Thus an interaction with concrete, material reality is circumnavigated, and this political action is without mandate, and so gestural and tokenistic. To borrow Yeats' words of *A Prayer for my Daughter* (concerning the purity of the soul; that is, man unswayed by interaction with the outside world), it is "self-delighting, self-appealing, self-affrighting". It's an emptied out, postmodern terrorism, or a portrayal of a postmodern assimilation and reorientation of terrorism.

It's as if, thinking back across the fragmented and disorientating narrative of *Die dritte Generation* and trying to engage in cognitive mapping to make sense of it all, there are two missing sequences. Firstly: where some kind of discussion concerning political violence occurs. We're never sure why the group engages in (I can't say "is pushed towards") it. Secondly, and more jarringly, a satisfactory final sequence... we're left with the kidnap victim smirking (hinting at his further complicity?) as he makes his statement for the ransom video / political broadcast; where does the group go from here? Where does the film go from here? It is as if the group haven't thought ahead in the former

respect, and Fassbinder (having raised these questions) has declined to comment or move on in the latter respect. (There is, however, a near-subliminal image before the end credit; a television "test card"—suggesting that the film itself, categorised as an entertainment regardless of its content, is to be assimilated into the new military-industrial-media complex nonetheless?) Like Mercutio, Fassbinder casts a plague on both houses!

MG: Yet despite the apparent cynicism of this film, it was clearly a project that it was very important for Fassbinder to make, a fact borne out by the fact that almost no-one wanted to see this film produced, resulting in a difficult funding scenario (it was partly self-funded), and an even more rushed production schedule than usual.

BH: In fact, the Fassbinder artefact it is most like, the 1974 play *Garbage, the City and Death* with its equally "unacceptable" thesis of urban renewal, had garnered the kind of reaction that would have discouraged most others from another excursion into this territory: that play's premiere was cancelled, its published version withdrawn, and it was only produced some years after Fassbinder's death.

MG: This poses the question as to why it was so important for Fassbinder to make this film, a film that was quite alienating for even some of his most loyal fans? Is there some political truth beyond its apparently cynical equation of terrorism and business, or was it more a final exorcism of the spectre of political violence, if not the political itself, paving the way for a return to more interpersonal and melodramatic forms of violence and psychic disintegration as expressed in films like *Veronika Voss* and *Lola* (1981), coupled with a retreat from the present into recent German history as in *Berlin Alexanderplatz* or *Lili Marleen* (1981)? The latter film, coming straight after *Die dritte Generation* certainly seems to show a kind of continuity with the political disillusionment (in a literal sense) of the preceding film, in its treatment of the Nazi era as a form of banal show business, infecting even the Jewish underground and therefore a type of prequel to *Die dritte Generation*: Fassbinder seems to be implying that if the supposed contestation of contemporary terrorism turns out to be only a manipulated performance, might this not apply retrospectively to German history even in its most tragic periods; in other words if the escalation and repetition enacted by the third generation of terrorism renders it a farce rather than a tragedy, to follow Marx's famous comment, might this not be applicable even to the Nazi era at least as seen from a contemporary

perspective? After all this reduction of Nazi history to a 'song and dance' film *Cabaret* (Bob Fosse, 1972), so why not go further by making a film about a single song in a setting that is pure artifice and in which the political has been entirely volatilised as a form of vague off-stage menace. My argument would be that in the era where even the holocaust had become the source of a melodramatic television series, Fassbinder was responding to rather than inventing this exhaustion of the political and evaporation of history into retro style and spectacle, their postmodernisation in other words, and his exaggeration and foregrounding of these tendencies was paradoxically highly political, an impression confirmed immediately by the difference between watching the elliptical and labyrinthine *Die dritte Generation* or the obsessively repetitive *Lili Marleen* and the unapologetic, reactionary and spectacularised treatments of the same histories in recent films like *Der Untergang* / *Downfall* (Oliver Hirschbiegel, 2004) or *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex*. Might one not see here the famous difference between the politicisation of aesthetics and the aestheticisation of the political expressed by Walter Benjamin, with the added twist that for Fassbinder, the only way to politicise aesthetics was to aestheticise politics even more, passing through the banality of the postmodern spectacle and emerging on the other side of the pure artifice that would be most perfectly realised in *Querelle*?

BH: And, in this supplementary twist of the screw, finding an unencumbered, "depoliticised" space in which a new utopian ideal could be freely articulated and explored. I mentioned before the disheartening hopelessness of *Die dritte Generation* but maybe there is an underground of radical sensibility and action that deserves fuller consideration than the film itself affords it. The trajectory of these three generations (student radicals of 1968, Baader-Meinhof groupings, and middle class radicals) had moved ever further from a politics of liberation. Meanwhile, the real communiques from the invisible outsiders, or denizens of a hidden subculture, which are used to introduce each of *Die dritte Generation*'s six parts as incongruous interludes, are the examples of queer (and, in one instance, racist) graffiti, apparently sourced from public toilets. *Querelle*, which also presents graffiti as an expression of unmediated desire, enters into the world of, or the fantasies of or about (it makes little difference) such communiques. And, as such, the film represents a message from this far side: an expansion of the known parameters of an existence outside the bourgeois sphere that dominates, suffocates and co-opts the malcontents of we've been discussing. From this position of the aestheticisation of

politics, Fassbinder catalyses a "return of the repressed": *Querelle's* imagining of radical difference is not just a revelry (although, in the ship's voyeuristic captain, revelry and fantasy are incorporated into the flows of desire on display). The film—confrontational, unapologetic, and certainly entirely alien to the majority of its original viewers—seems like an "action", in the sense of Otto Mühl's films. It posits a radical difference that overwhelms the norms of bourgeois society in a way more convincing than the terrorist actions with which Fassbinder had been concerned. In this respect, the film could be read as a terrorist action on Fassbinder's part: a consciousness-shifting event, geared towards taking down a high profile target (a demographic reached via an English language film, a Warhol association, and which even features a Hollywood actor).

Such a queer utopian vision was, as we now know, the new dawn that faded. This radical project would flounder, decimated by AIDS and the Puritanism of the ascendant New Right—catastrophes that Fassbinder would not live to see—and denied the chance for "misappropriating" financial support (via the rolling back of the welfare state, in the name of austerity) to this end, only to be finally atomised and domesticated, and so assimilated into the bourgeois sphere. But to place the liberation of *Querelle* in context, recall Hocquenghem, writing (for Guattari) in 1973.⁵ He expresses this emergent queer-radical strain as still in the sway of a nexus of capitalism and state control and the radical leftist mindset synonymous with being an outsider (and, I might add, the '68 *praxis* of enjoyment, of joy—to return to my opening comments). Hocquenghem dares to suggest the potential for the obliteration of such a nexus, and the liberation of desire, while bemoaning the condition of queerness for those marginalised:

I enter the dark, humid hovel where we wade in puddles of water and urine: the toilets of the Beaux-Arts. Half a dozen bodies, anonymous in the dim light, are enlaced there in what complex circuitries one cannot immediately decipher... The boy at my side murmurs in my ear "What? Are you ashamed?" He might just as well have said: "Are you ashamed, comrade?"... It is as if homosexual desire could only be inscribed where repression has inscribed it... It depresses me that those who have decided to come out of hiding continue to project their excitement in the miserable places that the system condescends to allow them and where the police provoke them. Toilet spasms are like banking transactions: a flow of cum running in the shadows, as disincarnate as money, checks of cum behind the grate of a bank teller window. (Hocquenghem, 2010: 8)

With *Querelle* Fassbinder dissolves the boundaries around or ghettoisation of these "miserable places" so as to reinscribe desire, as Pasolini had tried

References

- to do with *La trilogia*, but now touching on new outsider groupings—the invisible commune of a multitude (to use Hardt and Negri's term) of an uncontained, polymorphous sexuality. This suggests a new paradigm of liberation, after (for better or worse) the West German historical "moment" of urban warfare. How does or would this new vista engender movement and action and narrative in these previously contested spaces, and further excavate and dissipate molecular fascism? But these questions are, of course, matters for another discussion...
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Notes

¹ As a biographical aside, Fassbinder was apparently present in Paris at the time of the riotous protests; Pasolini, as is well known, was initially sceptical of the revolutionary intentions and good faith of the rioting students, and only subsequently made his peace with them.

² A trilogy of films comprised of *Il Decamerone*, *I Racconti di Canterbury* / *The Canterbury Tales* and *Il fiore delle Mille e una notte* / *The Arabian Nights* (1971, 1972, 1974).

³ As in the apocryphal story that Fassbinder might have participated in the pre-RAF bombing of the department store conducted by Baader, Enslin and others, or conversely the hypothesis that Meinhof and Meins might have made substantial contributions to New German Cinema had events unfolded differently.

⁴ In both the book and film, Aust is presented as playing a key role in rescuing Meinhof's twin children from being sent to a Palestinian children's camp, which would have as a consequence never seeing either of their parents again. In fact the children were subject to a custody battle at the time and one quite likely outcome is that they would have been looked after by Meinhof's sister. At least one historian, Jutta Dittfurth, believes that Aust (who was a friend of Klaus Röhl, Meinhof's ex-husband and father of the children, who was the editor of the magazine *Konkret* that both Aust and Meinhof wrote for), simply fabricated the story to justify the effective kidnapping of Meinhof and Röhl's children by their father. Nevertheless, one of the children involved, Bettina Röhl, stands by Aust's account, even while being critical of the film based on it for glamorising the RAF. See Smith and Moncourt (557-558).

⁵ Hocquenghem's essay was originally published in *Recherches* of March 1972 ("The Billion Pervers: An Encyclopedia of Homo-sexualities"); the issue was impounded by the French police and Guattari, as publications director, was fined.

EPILOGUE

FOR CHILDREN:

A VIDEO INSTALLATION

ANTHEA KENNEDY AND IAN WIBLIN

For Children, a two screen video installation which draws upon the work of both Pier Paolo Pasolini and Rainer Werner Fassbinder, was created specifically for the conference *P.P. Pasolini and R.W. Fassbinder: the European Legacy between Nihilism and Utopia*. The place of children within family and state is a theme that rises to the surface within both filmmakers' works. In devising our installation in the context of this theme, we have freely interpreted Pasolini's and Fassbinder's images and ideas. We have aimed to produce a work that functions autonomously, when cut adrift from its sources and influences.

The two screens, one referencing Pasolini, the other Fassbinder, are positioned opposite each other at either end of the installation space. The viewer is intended to encounter the installation positioned between the two screens, with one image in front of him/her and the other behind.

Screen one (fig. 1) reworks a section of Pasolini's film *Porcile* (1969). This film interweaves two seemingly disparate tales, that of a young man (Pierre Clémenti) who enters a life of cannibalism in a dreamlike medieval wasteland, and that of Julian (Jean-Pierre Léaud), the enigmatic son of an ex-Nazi industrialist in West Germany. The section of *Porcile* we chose to rework in our installation depicts Pierre Clémenti wandering through the black barren landscape of Mount Etna, the location of the wasteland referred to above, eating snakes and butterflies. Subsequently, he kills and devours human beings. No words are spoken in this narrative until near the end when the Clémenti character is captured and declares four times: "I killed my father, I ate human flesh and I quiver with joy." (*Porcile* 1969) He is staked out on the ground by representatives of 'civilised' society and is left to be eaten by wolves.

Our reworking of this sequence is set in the present day. The black landscape of a Welsh open cast coal mine replaces the volcanic slopes of