of recollection, especially in the form of state-organized descriptions of the past, fitted the frame of prerequisites of neutrality. Whereas Germany and France practised a policy of insulating their "prehistory," Switzerland narrated its history in the light of its neutrality. This excluded an examination of the time before and during World War II – whether and for what ideological and material reasons the legal and political views of unjust regimes were tolerated, or possibly even adopted. The argument of neutrality, having been subsequently used to contain questions about reappraisal and restitution, no longer fits. However, all this does not tell us if neutrality will be restored in the future and in a new definition after the recent demythologization during the past decade of contemporary history.

FRANK STERN

THE "SEMITIC" GAZE FROM THE SCREEN

German and Austrian Cinematic Discourse between Antisemitism and Philosemitism

Today, images of Jewish women, men, and children are basically imprinted in our minds through the moving images of Jewish characters on the screen or on the stage. When mentioning Anne Frank, most people in western countries will immediately recall images from stage or from one of the various cinematic depictions since the 1950s. Throughout the 20th century, and even more so in the first decade of the 21st century with its immense production and distribution of visual products, the visual imagination overshadows the traditional literary imagination. Visual culture, particularly feature films transport cultural signs that are central to our perception of the world, past and present. Films can indicate or illustrate major cultural, intellectual or artistic shifts. Films can represent cultural uneasiness or a whole cosmos of new perceptions of reality. In films the real becomes the virtual, and the virtual reveals the very heart of the real.[1]

Films, however, can also dwell on hidden cultural, political or intellectual agendas of a society that need more time to come to the fore. They may have the character of a subversive cultural discourse that challenges our understanding, one that may even contradict our perception of open and visible cultural issues. This is extremely relevant in the visual representation of issues that mirror conflicting perceptions, attitudes, and lead to antagonistic reactions as is the case with antisemitic or philosemitic images in a democratic society. Films with historical subjects do not only represent history but histories, and they dwell on memories, sometimes even on antagonistic memories. Given the long tradition of chauvinism, xenophobia, nationalistic sentiment, anti-Jewish prejudice and racism in German culture, with their normative reversal after 1945, it is obvious that since the Shoah cinematic dealings with things Jewish became highly problematic in Germany and Austria.[2]

1 See F. Stern, 'Durch Clios Brille: Kino als zeit- und kulturgeschichtliche Herausforderung,' *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften* 1/16 (2005), pp. 59–87, for a recent overview of German film see S. Hacke, *German National Cinema* (London and New York, 2002).

2 On Jewish topics in West and East German film see F. Stern, *Facing the Past. Representations of the Holocaust in German Cinema since 1945*, Joseph and Rebecca Meyerhoff Annual Lecture (Washington, 2000). For a general overview of Holocaust related issues in current film culture, see F. Stern, 'The Holocaust: Representing Lasting Images in Film and Literature,' in *Contemporary Responses to the Holocaust*, ed. K. Kwiet and J. Matthäus (Westport and London, 2004), pp. 193–217. For the first decades see A. Insdorf, *Indelible Shadows: Film and the Holocaust* (Cambridge, 1983, and following editions).

Concerning the debate on racism, antisemitism and philosemitism it would be too easy just to dwell on antisemitic and racist continuities in popular culture since the time of the Holocaust although this can be done easily as the print and TV-media prove in their ongoing dealings with any neo-Nazi provocation or antisemitic statement by mainstream politicians in Germany and Austria.[3] However, as shameful as this is, it is much more helpful for an understanding of Austrian and German discourses on racism, the Nazi-past, historical memory, and on the cultural other to look into those representations that try to overcome or counter traditional forms of anti-Jewish prejudice. The backshadowing of bad conscience may not be sufficient for the foreshadowing of problems the cultural and political heirs of the Nazi Reich have with the images and realities of Europe's current Jewish experience, particularly the growing Jewish population in the German speaking lands.[4]

Numerous visual representations of Jews that refer in one way or another to open or hidden agendas in German and Austrian culture can be found in feature films that were produced since 1945. Dealing with these cinematic images means focusing on visual representations that were seen by millions of spectators, conveying meanings of the most ambiguous kind.[5]

Films that represented Jewish characters or things Jewish after the Holocaust are generally visual and aesthetic reactions to pre-1945 culture and politics. They contribute to and deepen anti-racist discourses, sometimes even with outspoken didactic or educational ambitions. After the antisemitic exclusion of Jews and things Jewish in German culture they aim at a social inclusion into culture and everyday life. Such films are visual representations of anti-racism, and oscillate between a visual rhetoric of normalization and an attempt to trivialize. Usually they construct images of Jews within the tension of the screen-audience relationship with the help of signifiers that refer to bodies, body language, linguistic specifics or imaginary discourses that are projected to an audience that already has some type of perception of these ideas and images.

Among these conflicting images, at least one of the following gaps between differing perceptions can be found: between production aesthetics and the mindset of the spectator, between films in different time periods (for example, pre- and post-1945, pre- and post-unification) – every film decade looks back, thus transforming the referential into the self-referential, and sometimes into the self-critical, between female and male images

3 This essay does not deal with the representation of Israel and issues related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in German language media or feature films although movies and television series mostly fall into the trap of antisemitic or philosemitic discourse.

4 See F. Stern, *Dann bin ich um den Schlaf gebracht... Ein Jahrtausend jüdisch-deutsche Kulturgeschichte* (Berlin, 2002).

5 See *Geschichte des deutschen Films*, ed. W. Jacobsen, A. Kaes and Hans Helmut Prinzler (Stuttgart, 1993); W. Fritz, *Kino in Österreich 1945–1983. Film zwischen Kommerz und Avantgarde* (Wien, 1983).

and perceptions (gender oriented icons of "Semitic" faces), and between biological and cultural attributes which either emphasize or de-emphasize stereotypes. However, more complicated and characteristic for German and Austrian film production is the tension between narrative and image. The narrative of a film can include an anti-antisemitic message, but the imagery used may exclude a clear message by means of the aesthetics (perspective, light, shadow, color, camerawork, and above all casting). The facial characteristics and the actor's gaze may convey a message that can easily be understood but there may also be a hidden or subversive message which, depending on the audience, may not easily be deciphered.

This holds particularly true for the late 1940s and 1950s. The film community, except for a few remigrants and very young members, is still the same as before 1945, and is only very slowly adapting to a new visual language. Some of the films of the 1950s with Jewish topics are less loaded with issues of guilt and repentance but more with a public philosemitic discourse that monumentalizes the remembrance of the Jews in a nostalgic and romantic way: very good, very moral, wise, beautiful, and exceptional people with respectable professions – physicians, lawyers, and the like.

In the visual representations of collective memory, German Jews become icons of bourgeois respectability. The gaze of Anne Frank on stage and in cinema, her dark-eyed, deep, and morally untainted gaze into the audience was only paralleled by the Jewish actor Ernst Deutsch who played Nathan the Wise. The beautiful and the wise belonged, their German was perfect, and their body language refrained from any outspoken Yiddishkeit. Both stage characters helped to integrate the German Jews posthumously into German postwar society. The cultural other, who was recognizable through language or physical feature showed up in some films as a Jew from Eastern Europe.

FROM AMBIGUITY TO THE GENDERED GAZE

The first German postwar film premiered in Berlin in 1946: *Die Mörder sind unter uns* (The Murderers Are Among us), directed by Wolfgang Staudte. One of the male characters is named Mondschein/Moonlight. This sentimental character is an old optician whose son had left Germany in time while he stayed behind. Mondschein is portrayed as a frail, helpful, good-hearted man, full of hope to see his son again. We are not told why the son has left, and we are not told why Mondschein only returned to his little shop to rebuild his past. His exotic sounding name matches the character whom the narrative does not reveal much about, leaving Mondschein as a mystery to be interpreted by the audience. Even so, the initial critical reviews of the film at the time and later analytical works rarely mention Mondschein. Sometimes, it is assumed that he may be a Jewish character – old, wise, understanding, and alone – just like Nathan the Wise from Lessing's famous play, a well known character from literature. Picture book

Jews on the screen with "those" dark, sad, warm, and knowing eyes correspond to the literary stereotype. He looks with an understanding smile, and his eyes remain in the spectator's mind up to the point when Mondschein is dead, in a coffin – and on top we can see a cross. This, however, would be in line with those Germans of Jewish origin whom the Nazis declared not to be fully "Aryan," but who did not have any religious affiliation with Jewish beliefs.

In 1946, postwar ambivalence, political uncertainties and reeducation pressures dictated against clear-cut depictions. First of all, the racist Nazi images of Jews were still fresh in the public mind and had to be overcome. The challenge was how to depict Jews, despite the Nazi antisemitism and despite the notions of Jews after the Holocaust. What could be points of visual reference for actors, directors, scriptwriters, cameramen, and staff of all sorts? Even more pertinent: Was it politically correct to present images of Jews in a period of reeducation and denazification to an audience that was longing to forget, an audience that wanted to see pictures of harmony, and not of distress. The major film studios in Berlin, Munich, Hamburg, and Vienna faced the same problems.

In the following year, 1947, the Jewish gaze from the screen was slowly established with postwar icons of what seemed to be Jewish, and what, in fact, represented the blurred view of the Jewish past in Germany and Austria. The Jewish gaze from the screen became a short cut of German-Jewish and Austrian-Jewish encounters on the screen and in the movie theaters. The virtual representation that rejected the anti-Jewish meaning seemed to help overcome the less pleasant past and helped establish Jewish characters who demanded to be identified as Jews. The cinematic realities moved like in a camera obscura around the anti- and philosemitic mindset of millions of Germans.

The 1947 film *In jenen Tagen* (In Those Days), directed by Helmut Käutner, portrayed in one episode a Jewish woman and her non-Jewish husband. It is November 1938, the night of the Pogrom, and as a result of the events the couple commits suicide with gas. The woman is played by the Jewish actress, Ida Ehre, who had survived inside Germany. The work of the camera, the use of light and shadow, stress the "Jewish" features of her face. A number of close-ups establish her face, her dark eyes as the first Jewish gaze in German postwar cinema. What are the characteristics of this gaze? It is first of all, the decision of the director, producer, and those who were responsible for the casting to choose a Jewish actress. In her case, the camera-work and the lighting could continue to represent those features that were expected of a female Jewish character: great dark eyes, expressions of love, understanding, affection, knowledge, and sacrifice. The "Jewish gaze" reflected the spectator's expectations, and it was in line with the film tradition of the beautiful, exotic woman who – in the past – did not belong, but now could be integrated into the politically correct postwar vision of German Jews. In the 1947 film *Zwischen Gestern und Morgen* (Between Yesterday and Today), directed by Harald Braun, the actress

Sybille Schmitz played a Jewish women. Throughout the years 1933 to 1945 she had been disliked by Goebbels for being too exotic to represent the new German female.

In short, the postwar Jewish gaze was gendered in a way that implied a strictly female gaze as opposed to the antisemitic depictions of Jews with the male gaze at the center as the infamous Nazi feature film *Jud Süss* (directed by Veit Harlan) had clearly shown. Most films with Jewish issues or characters had a Jewish female protagonist. Antisemitism could be rejected or hidden through a gendered, philosemitic image.[6] The dialogue always had to establish the good nature of the depicted Jewish characters with at least one good anti-Nazi at her or his side. The literary *topos* of the noble Jew or the beautiful Jewess was transferred into the philosemitic postwar pattern of representing Jews as metaphors for a bad conscience or for reeducation purposes. The philosemitic depiction created the abstract cinematic Jew – *judeus ex machina*.

An exception to the ongoing female roles was the 1948 film *Affaire Blum* (The Blum Affair – directed by Erich Engel). The film told the story of an antisemitic scandal in Weimar Germany. A Jewish industrialist is persecuted for a murder he did not commit, but is luckily saved by an upright police officer. At the end of the film a close-up on his face combined with background music foreshadows the rise of the Nazis. The spectator leaves the movie theater with the gaze of the Jewish man still imprinted on his mind. The eyes of the Jewish man in the long closing shot, together with the dramatic and ominous music, symbolize the fear of an era to come, of history, of catastrophe. The eyes and the music, in fact, represent the audience more than the characters of the film because it is the audience's knowledge about what happened in the 1930s and 1940s that lends meaning to this shot. The question is: Where does the Jewish gaze take place? On the screen, or in the mind of the German and Austrian spectator? The narrative is not concluded on the screen but in the mind of the spectator, the foreboding gaze reminds the audience of the Jewish gaze through the barbed wire on the photos of the liberated concentration camps.

In 1948, the Austrian theater director and actor Rudolf Steinboeck realized an ambitious project with his film *Das andere Leben* (The Other Life). Around the officer's plot against Hitler in 1944, he constructs the story of a Viennese woman, belonging to the resistance, who changes identity with her Jewish girlfriend to save her life. When the Jewess, her true identity hidden with false papers, does not survive surgery in a hospital, the German woman is lost in her new Jewish identity. The Jewish character is beautiful, has those big dark eyes, but although the Austrian resistance helps, she has no chance against her fate. This early Austrian postwar film establishes for the first time the postwar discourse of Austrian-Jewish identity in the

6 For a historical analysis of this cultural phenomenon see F. Stern, *The Whitewashing of the Yellow Badge: Antisemitism and Philosemitism in Postwar Germany* (Oxford, 1992).

context of individual responsibility, but also in the context of resisting Nazism. The Jewish gaze as an element of resisting Nazism is rather specific for Austrian film in comparison to German film at the time. This was stressed in 1948, when the actress Paula Wessely, just being formally denazified, played a Viennese Jewish lady who stares at a bunch of SA men in 1938 and states that she will not put up the Nazi flag because her father was Jewish (*Der Engel mit der Posaune* – The Angel with the Trombone – directed by Karl Hartl). Here, the screen narrative is unimportant because the only thing that counts is Wessely's shift to the side of the victims. A few years earlier she had played in one of the most infamous racist and antisemitic films *Heimkehr* (Return) that led to her forced retirement for a few years when the allied powers in Germany thought her to be rather tainted. In a more serious way, the film *Duell mit dem Tod* (Duel with Death), directed by Paul May and assisted by G. W. Papst, had long shots of a Prague Jewish lady who helps the Austrian resistance looking at the spectator.

The Jewish gaze in all these films craves for identification. In the late 1940s, there were almost no Jews visible in Austria and Germany except for the Jewish displaced persons. Most of them, though, did not belong to the traditional German-Jewish and Austrian-Jewish cultures. The Jewish women in these films were either victimized, as in the German productions, or gendered connotations of a better Austria that resisted Nazism because it sided with the Jews. None of these films were set in the grey zone of extermination camps or other concentration camps (some references are given in *Lang ist der Weg*, 1948, directed by Herbert B. Fredersdorf and Marek Goldstein, and the 1947 *Ehe im Schatten* [Marriage in the Shadows], by Kurt Maetzig). None of them referred to Jewish characters that did not speak German or belong to German and Austrian culture. These films tried to include Jewish life after the Holocaust on an abstract level, and to combine the Jewish topic with the crucial cultural and ethical issues at the time: bad conscience, individual responsibility, overcoming antisemitism, establishing a German or Austrian identity. The Viennese Jewish women were the bearer of a better Austria; hence the image was romanticized and created a gap between these abstract, imagined Jewesses and the few real Jewish women in postwar society. The philosemitic imagery established a virtual Jewish presence that contradicted the real and conflict-ridden Jewish life in postwar Germany and Austria.

There are a number of other films produced in the late 1940s that follow this pattern. The aesthetics of the exotic and the beautiful, of closeness and distance are combined with visual metaphors of knowledge that transformed the private fate into a public sphere. Most of these films were seen by millions.

In the mid-1950s, at the high tide of the Cold War, many German films reestablished images of the decent German soldier. The most noteworthy of these films dealt with the military resistance against Hitler and was called *Der 20. Juli – Das Atttentat auf Hitler* (The 20th of July – 1955, directed by Falk Harnack). In this film the legitimacy and morality of those

who wanted to kill Hitler is also derived from their attitude towards the persecution of the Jews. In a central scene the audience, together with the acting characters, watches the deportation of a Jewish doctor who is depicted as particularly human and socially minded. Again, his last gaze is directed at the audience as he loses his eyeglasses. The type-casting works as in the above examples. The loss of sight presages the loss of his life. The eyeglasses on the ground leave the audience with a feeling of helplessness, bringing to mind the piles of eyeglasses that were shown on photos from Auschwitz. The gaze has no more life. However, more than in the late 1940s, this Jewish character has to be represented with positive social attitudes. The contents of philosemitism have to be explained verbally, since merely showing a Jewish character is not enough any more.

A different perspective, although not entirely free of the "Jewish" gaze, can be found in Konrad Wolf's 1959 film *Sterne* (Stars), produced in East Germany and Bulgaria.[7] The film tells the story of the deportation of Greek Jews and their encounter with "normal" German soldiers in a transit camp in Bulgaria. The film is different insofar as it shows a whole Jewish population and not just one or two individuals. Hence the Jews look like everybody else. The female protagonist, however, is once more a dark-eyed and dark-haired beauty whose gaze through the window of the deportation train cannot be easily forgotten. This gaze is clearly a cry for help, but it is not met by a German resistance fighter. The male protagonist, a German soldier, wants to help, but comes too late. The death-train has left for its destination – Auschwitz

Another film, produced in 1959 in West Germany, concentrated in one scene on a Jewish female character and her father. The movie *Nacht fiel über Gotenhafen* (Darkness Fell on Gotenhafen), directed by Frank Wisbar, tells the story of German naval officers and the flight of Germans over the Baltic Sea at the end of the war. The two Jewish victims serve as pillars of morality compared to the lack of morality on the side of the German officers who do nothing when the two are arrested by the SS. The visual representation focuses on their body language, facial expressions, and eyes. The audience, however, can understand that the victimized suffer but that the victimizers were only a few and that – as the saying went – one could not do anything in the face of the Gestapo and SS. The angry look that the Jewish woman casts at these officers is clearly an accusation. The audience, however, can identify with the German Wehrmacht and naval officers because, as passive bystanders in this scene, they seem to have a bad conscience. Thus, an identity is created that leaves the audience on the side of the bystanders while feeling compassion for the victims. This obviously was a necessary modification of identity aesthetics in the early 1960s, distinguishing it from the immediate postwar years. Here, film history illustrates the history of mentalities and the shifts in the politics of remembrance.

7 On Konrad Wolf see W. Jacobsen and R. Aurich, *Der Sonnensucher Konrad Wolf. Biographie* (Berlin, 2005).

THE HISTORIC RIDDLE: HOW TO DEPICT JEWS?

The "Jewish" gaze could have an impact beyond creating identification and awareness on the part of the spectator. It could create indifference by repeating visual connotations of the cultural other that, according to the cultural and social consensus until 1945, did not belong. The narrative inclusion in the postwar films could result in a visual exclusion of the Jewish protagonists. Their gaze had the potential – so to say – to backfire. The filmmaker's quest for empathy and identification could result in the very opposite, simply because the spectator still had other images in his mind, or attributed another stereotype to the Jewish character, a stereotype that reversed the absolute negative into the absolute positive. However, even such a philosemitic stereotype remained a stereotype and did not contribute to a normal, realistic, and critical perception of the German-Jewish experience.

The Jewish "gaze" and the perception of this gaze by a mostly non-Jewish audience were by no means static or ahistorical like a romanticizing painting of the beautiful Jewess or Gypsy. The "Semitic" gaze is imbued with history; it reflects the individual or collective experience and the acceptance or rejection of this experience by an Austrian or German audience. In this sense, the narrative and visual images of the postwar period from 1945 until the early 1960s had a formative character for future visualizations of things Jewish.

Of course, there were exceptions to the philosemitic movie-discourse. The books, scripts and films by the German-Jewish writer Jurek Becker, in fact, represent a rejection of philosemitic imagery.[8] A good example is the 1974 film *Jakob der Lügner* (Jacob the Liar, directed by Frank Beyer), produced in East Germany. The film was based on a novel by Jurek Becker, who also wrote the script for the film. The film shows the Jewish inmates of a ghetto and work camp prior to their deportation. The majority of the actors are well known East German artists, and any kind of stereotyping is avoided. This film must be mentioned as an example of films produced in Germany and Austria whose directors were conscious of the inherent problems that accompany the depiction of Jewish characters. Now, more and more male Jewish characters can be seen on the screen, corresponding to the appearance in the media of more and more public figures, writers, intellectuals, representatives of Jewish postwar life in Germany and Austria.

The "Jewish" gaze can be avoided, yet it is clear that this is an exception, as seen in the 1970s and 1980s in some of the films of Rainer Werner Fassbinder. In his 1981 film *Veronika Voss* he shows the postwar life of a once famous actress in Germany who is ruined by a female physician by the name Dr. Katz. The actress in the film, whose biography is based on the life

8 See S. Gilman, *How I became a German: Jurek Becker's Life in Five Worlds* (Washington, 1999).

of the actress Sybille Schmitz, is depicted as blonde and blue eyed, while Dr. Katz, who exploits and destroys her, is dark-haired and has dark "piercing" eyes staring at her victim. The conscientious connotations in German postwar culture of who is victim and who is victimizer become blurred, but one has to mention that nothing is said about someone in this film being Jewish. The ambiguity of interpretations depends on the mind of the spectator. This ambiguity of visually depicting characters that can be seen as Jewish is sometimes a reference to the "Jewish" face or eyes, or pronunciation, and is sometimes suggested by background elements of Jewish origin or even linguistic hints of Yiddish elements within the spoken dialogue.

This tendency in German filmmaking is forcefully questioned by Jurek Becker in his novel and script for the 1990 film *Bronsteins Kinder* (Bronstein's Children), directed by Jerzy Kawalerowicz. In a central scene of the film set in East Berlin in the 1970's, the two young Jewish heroes of the movie meet on a film set where she plays the role of a deported Jewish girl. In this film scene within the film her make-up transforms her into something "typically Jewish." Her hair is black; her eyes become big, dark, and suffering. When leaving the set he tells her that she only should have accepted playing a Jewess if the SS men would have been played by real SS men. The whole dilemma of depicting Jews in German and Austrian cinema is given its visual and verbal denouement. She is cast as a dark-eyed and dark-haired beauty. When wig and make-up are removed we see a blonde, bright-eyed girl who has been "deconstructed." The imagined abstract Jew has become a real Jew, simply a beautiful woman. The casting of Jews as identification figures for philosemitic attitudes has virtually come to an end with this movie produced at the time of German unification.

Films, however, are aesthetic representations that largely depend on the filmmaker's craft. Part of the younger generation of German filmmakers did not feel challenged by such films as *Bronsteins Kinder*. In fact, the problem of casting for Jewish characters is not yet solved in German film. Beginning with Fassbinder's films one can even observe a return to traditional stereotypes, particularly in television miniseries.

It has to be stressed that many German films – and somewhat fewer Austrian films – deal with Jewish topics, show Jewish characters as leading persons or as extras. In Wim Wenders 1987 *Himmel über Berlin* (Wings of Desire), for example, a Hebrew phrase is uttered by an extra and thus added as an additional signifier. It is amazing to realize to what extent German film production deals with the German past, Nazi Germany, antisemitism, racism, and things Jewish. The visual aesthetics, form, structure, and narrative of these films, and to a great extent the individual input of actors and technical staff reminds us that memory lives in images that reflect a plurality of past experiences and constant endeavors to understand and to convey messages to younger generations.

It is obvious that almost all these films follow the cinematic quest to overcome the cultural and visual antisemitism that was central in German and Austrian culture until 1945. They intend visually and through film narrative

to represent guilt, repentance, shame, and relief, and target the spectator who is emotionally motivated to identify such humanistic pity and side with the victims or the "innocent" bystanders. The aesthetic representations, however, are marked by ambivalence. The narrative dwells on the depiction of the Jewish protagonists as the individual who is culturally different, yet who belongs to, or at least can be seen as, the true partner of a virtual dialogue. The visualization of this message through the representation of the body or specific facial features like nose, eyes, hair, profile and the technical use of certain perspectives or shadows can lead to distancing perceptions that continue culturally anti-Jewish norms of Nazi Germany.

IMAGINED NORMALIZATION

The cinematographic images since the 1960s are imbued with more realistic contradictions. Younger filmmakers rejected the philosemitic discourse of the older generation. Jewish characters remain as icons, but they represent a general view of the individual who is culturally different, figures that were meant to help understand discrimination against marginal social or ethnic groups – homosexuals, blacks, or the other sex. They symbolize, in a general way, outsiders of society, are inspired by the French New Wave, and, as can be seen in their aesthetics of social criticism, by the writings of Adorno and Horkheimer. Alexander Kluge's 1965 *Abschied von Gestern* (Yesterday Girl) is an outstanding example for this cinematic mood.[9] The problem is that in such films Jewish characters are given the burden of morality, and tend to become abstract impersonations of good will. Jewish characters tend to illustrate the filmmaker's criticism of German society, its conservatism, religious hypocrisy, and consumerism.

In the 1970s, images of Jews become part of the cultural discourses on foreigners and xenophobia, thus trivializing the impact of the Holocaust on German and Austrian society. In East Germany, Jurek Becker's already mentioned *Jakob der Lügner* establishes a more sensitive perspective on Jewish characters that avoids focusing on the Jewish body or gaze, which is also case in films by Konrad Wolf, probably the most important and influential East German director.

At the same time, to understand cinematic representations of Jewish characters, it is not sufficient to look exclusively at the screen because traditional cinematic discourse is enforced by the impact of facial and body features in popular culture. The singers Esther Ofarim and later on Ofra Haza, both Israelis that look Oriental to a German public, became very popular in Germany. Both represented Israeli dark-skinned types with big eyes and black hair. They were seen as the contemporary "Semitic"

9 F. Stern, 'Film in the 1950s: Passing Images of Guilt and Responsibility,' in *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany, 1949–1968*, ed. H. Schissler (Princeton, 2001), pp. 266–80.

incarnation of the lost German-Jewish women. The new Israelis had to take their place. The erotic and sexual connotations implied a return to the traditional depiction of the "beautiful Jewess." The "semitic gaze," more than ever before, was female, and was a return to a traditional orientalist pattern that soon was succeeded by the exotic Turkish women, hence the new and much more real "oriental" challenge produced by the Turkish migration to Germany and Austria.

One exception has to be mentioned. Since there were not many German-Jewish or Austrian-Jewish actors on the screen – and most refrained from being cast as Jewish women or men – a New York Jewish success story conquered the hearts of many Germans: the sad eyes of Woody Allen. With him, more than with any other actor or actress, the Jewish gaze could become male again – but at the price of a basically feminine representation of manhood that reminded those who knew German and Austrian films of the actors Reinhold Schünzel and Peter Lorre in their roles in the early 1930s.

With the 1980s one can point to the beginning of a deconstruction of many stereotypes about Jews. This process, which still is underway, has three directions. First, it seems that many taboos which restricted the narrative and visual representation of Jews are fading away. This can be seen in some films by Schlöndorff or Verhoeven which return to the representation of facial and bodily features that were characteristic for cultural discourses relating to the "Jewish body." Second, some of the best films with Jewish topics avoid any form of stereotypical depiction. Sometimes these films even refer to stereotypical casting and force the audience to face related problems, such as was done in *The Passenger – Welcome to Germany* (1987), *Die Schauspielerin* (*The Actress* – 1988), *Bronsteins Kinder* (1990), *Meschugge* (1998), *Gebürtig* (2002), *All on Zucker* (2004), *Das Apfelbaumhaus* (2004). The common denominator of these films is that they deal with postwar and more recent problems in the Austrian-Jewish and German-Jewish context. Third, films like *Aimee and Jaguar* (1999) are successful because they try to tell a seemingly true story which, as in this case, is based on both a Jewish and a lesbian experience. This is true as well for popular television miniseries that include major Jewish characters for crime and suspense stories.

The semantic connotation of the word "Jewish" or the visual connotation of a Jewish character in these films always refers to the historical consciousness of the audience. All in all, it seems that the virtual has become more self-critical, and refers to the real world of the German-Jewish encounter. The "Semitic" gaze is revealed as what it always was – the aesthetic representation of a cultural illusion.

To conclude, visual representations are not only short-cuts of a given cultural mindset. They are ambivalent and often ambiguous reflections of various social discourses of identification. The German fixation on the cultural other as Jewish, so it seems, is also some kind of visual therapy. The images are meant to reconstruct a lost reality but are not at all free of the problematic aspects of this past reality. The Jewish woman in such representations is

merely a reincarnation of the blue flower of German romanticism. However, this is romanticism after deportations. Looking at the screen as a cultural mirror, at film as the mind's eye, and at the Jewish gaze, one cannot avoid the uncanny feeling that these images gaze back at us – enforcing exclusion and at the same time craving for salvation.[10]

10 For a more comprehensive study of Jewish characters and things Jewish in Austrian and German film throughout the 20th century see the author's forthcoming book.

II. CONFERENCE: "JEWS AND THE LEGACIES OF EMPIRE" (MAY 29–31, 2005)