

THE MAKING OF A "TERRORIST":
JOHN UPDIKE'S *TERRORIST* AND CHRISTOPH
PETERS'S *EIN ZIMMER IM HAUS DES KRIEGES*¹

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In recent American as in German fiction that deals with the events of 9/11 one can observe a trend which pairs domestic stress with the trauma on the world stage. In these works the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon and their consequences are analogous to the war between the sexes and conflicts between members of different generations. Among American works of fiction that link the terrorist attacks with family crises are Helen Schulman's *A Day at the Beach* (2007), Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* (2007), John Updike's *Terrorist* (2006), Ken Kalfus's *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country* (2006), Claire Massud's *The Emperor's Children* (2006), Jay McInerney's *The Good Life* (2006), and Nick McDonnell's *The Third Brother* (2005). A number of recent German novels and short stories such as Christoph Peters's *Ein Zimmer im Haus des Krieges* (2006) [A Room in the House of War], Pia Frankenberg's *Nora* (2006), Katharina Hacker's *Die Habenichtse* [The Have-Nots]² (2006), and Gregor Hens's "Himmlische Erde" ["Heavenly Earth"] (2003) also represent this trend. While some German and American texts discuss the events from the perspective of the victims' families,³ most use the perspective of the witness from a distance. *Terrorist* and *Ein Zimmer im Haus des Krieges*, the two texts that I discuss in this article are among the few texts that attempt to reconstruct the mind and feelings of protagonists who enlist in Islamist terrorist cells. Choosing to explain a terrorist's motivation poses to the novelist the challenges of avoiding documentary stock taking on the one and getting too close emotionally to the character on the other.

Numerous studies have been published in recent years that seek to explain the origins of terrorism and especially those forms of terrorism that involve suicide. Although some of the earlier studies claim that personality factors play a primary role in socialisation for terrorism, most social psychologists today believe that "what

most characterizes terrorists is their adherence to an ideology which turns them into heroes in their own eyes and those of their companions” and that “a strong motive of attraction is the glory acquired by dedicating one’s own life to the cause of a group that suffers” (Ravenna 57). One reason for this shift in focus is the inadequacy of personality-based models in explaining the complex origins of the “new” terrorism. As Martha Crenshaw explains, “several recent works focus on a ‘new’ terrorism that is motivated by religious belief and is more fanatical, deadly, and pervasive than the older and more instrumental forms of terrorism the world had grown accustomed to” (411). Both *Terrorist* and *Ein Zimmer im Haus des Krieges* offer a combination of explanations for the 18-year-old Ahmad’s willingness to blow up his truck in the middle of Lincoln Tunnel⁴ in Updike’s novel, and for the German Abdallah’s⁵ participation in an attempted bombing of the temple site of Luxor⁶ in Peters’s text. These explanations range from the two protagonists’ narcissistic personality traits and their having been raised by single mothers, to their asceticism and utter rejection of the materialism and secularism of western society. Yet, so I argue, both novels ultimately fail to make the actions of their protagonists plausible. **411**

The two texts use similar narrative structures and themes. In addition to the portrayal of two fatherless young men raised by inadequate mothers who indulge in extra-marital affairs, and the fact that both protagonists are converts to Islam, they put equal narrative weight on the characters of two middle-aged men who take an interest in the younger protagonists and who want to understand their motives: high school guidance counselor Jack Levy and the German ambassador to Egypt, Claus Cismar, respectively. But while the reader comes to dislike the self-delusional and hypocritical Cismar, Levy has the reader’s sympathies because of his belief in and genuine care for his students. More significantly, he ends up being the real hero of *Terrorist* by preventing Ahmad from blowing up his truck in the middle of Lincoln Tunnel. This act might have saved hundreds of lives, although one of the many ironies of the book is that the reader never learns if the detonator was actually connected. I argue that the differences between the two characters are grounded in the cultural as well as the literary context out of which the novels are written. Peters’s text uses the common German trope of the showdown between two generations,⁷ here between the 1968ers and those born twenty years later. While Cismar attempts to understand the “new” terrorism by putting it in the context of the German terrorism of the 1970s, Abdallah denies any similarities between the two. The American text, by contrast, makes racial difference—Ahmad’s absent father is Egyptian—play an important part in Ahmad’s failed Americanisation. Ultimately, *Terrorist* pits an indoctrinated Muslim against a secular Jew.

Race relations as well as the loss of the American dream are at the centre of Updike’s novel. *Terrorist* shares this preoccupation with an earlier American novel that uses a young protagonist who, at odds with family and society, turns to terrorism: Philip Roth’s Pulitzer Prize winning *American Pastoral* (1997).⁸ In Roth’s novel the Jewish American Seymour Irving Levov, aka the Swede because of his Nordic looks, comes

of age just after WW II. A legendary high school athlete, the inheritor of his father's glove factory, husband of a former Miss New Jersey of Irish Catholic background, and father of a promising daughter, he comes very close to realizing the elusive American Dream. This almost perfect life, however, begins to collapse during the turbulent Sixties and the Vietnam War when his daughter Merry becomes a revolutionary terrorist, killing the local doctor by detonating a bomb in the post office and confessing to being responsible for another three assassinations. Both novels can be read as elegies to the lost American Dream and the melting-pot philosophy according to which everyone is American regardless of class, race, and ethnicity and according to which every American is entitled to a middle-class life. While Updike has been described as too narrow an interpreter of the WASP middle-class environment, in *Terrorist* he leaves this milieu, focusing instead on two high school students of Arab and African American backgrounds, Ahmad and Joryleen—the girl with whom Ahmad is infatuated—, a Jewish American guidance counselor who struggles to make ends meet, as well as the deteriorating city of New Prospect. It is not by coincidence that Updike locates the contemplated terrorist act within the small suburban New Jersey milieu in which many of Roth's novels are set, a New Jersey from which the Jews are disappearing and in which Arab Americans have taken root. Updike and Roth, two of the most prolific contemporary American writers, are both chroniclers of the American way of life, have attracted a wide general readership, have produced a number of best sellers, and have been preoccupied with similar themes in their fiction. Yet one of the differences between them is how their ethnic background has influenced their writing.

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Another divergence even more pertinent to my discussion of *Terrorist* is their position vis-à-vis the representation of 9/11 in fiction. In an interview that Philip Roth gave to *The Independent* in London on 16 October 2002, he claims: "September 11 is not something that I can draw on in an imaginative level. The only story that I can take from it is the kitsch in all its horror—not the horror of what happened, but the great distortion of what happened. It's almost embarrassing, the kitschification of 3,000 people's deaths. Other cities have experienced far worse catastrophes. America itself has inflicted some in its past [...]. [...] What we've been witnessing since September 11 is an orgy of national narcissism and a gratuitous sense of victimisation that is repellent" ("Marxism mailing list archive"). While Roth has written novels about events that fundamentally compromised American society after WW II (the Vietnam War in *American Pastoral*, McCarthyism in *I Married a Communist*, and the "political correctness" of the 1980s and 1990s in *The Human Stain*) in 2002 he obviously did not think of 9/11 as an unprecedented event. Since Updike's *Terrorist* makes extensive reference to *American Pastoral*, I argue that *Terrorist*, set in 2003, is Updike's response to Roth's questioning of the appropriateness of treating 9/11 in fiction as well as of the position that it holds in the American imagination. Updike, who witnessed the attack on the Twin Towers from "not a mile away" wrote a week

after the events: "Determined men who have transposed their own lives to a martyr's afterlife can still inflict an amount of destruction that defies belief" ("The Talk of the Town").

Jack Levy, whose ambivalence about his Jewishness is modeled after that of a number of Roth's characters, including Nathan Zuckerman who has appeared as narrator in many of his novels and serves as his fictional *alter ego*, and the Swede have several things in common. Disillusioned by his professional life as well as by his long-time marriage to a grotesquely obese German American woman of Lutheran background, whose sister happens to work for Homeland Security, the 63-year old Levy ends up having a brief but passionate affair with Ahmad's forty-something Irish-American mother. But Levy, like Levov, is also disillusioned because of other missed opportunities. The Swede deeply regrets not having been shipped out of the country to help defeat the Japanese in WW II: "He was just finishing up his boot training at Parris Island, South Carolina—where the scuttlebutt was that the marines were to hit the Japanese beaches on March 1, 1946—when the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. As a result, the Swede got to spend the rest of his hitch as a 'recreation specialist' right there on Parris Island" (*American Pastoral* 14). Levy feels bad about the fact that he was "never assigned to leave the United States" during the Vietnam War (*Terrorist* 143). More significantly, one of the most controversial features of Roth's fiction, according to George J. Searles, has been the ambivalence with which many of Roth's characters perceive their Jewishness: "They seem to view themselves as at once both enhanced and diminished by their heritage" (4). Roth portrays Levov as Jew who is determined to downplay his ethnicity: "[...] this Swede who was actually only another of our neighborhood Seymours whose forebears had been Solomons and Sauls and who would themselves beget Stephens who would in turn beget Shawns. Where was the Jew in him? You couldn't find it and yet you knew it was there. Where was the irrationality in him? Where was the crybaby in him? Where were the wayward temptations? No guile. No artifice. No mischief. All that he had eliminated to achieve his perfection" (20). Updike's third-person narrator describes Levy in similar fashion although the latter certainly lacks the Swede's naivety:

He was a Jew. But not a proud Jew, wrapped in the ancient covenant. His grandfather had shed all religion in the New World, putting his faith in a revolutionized society, a world where the powerful could no longer rule through superstition, where food on the table, decent housing and shelter, replaced the untrustworthy promises of an unseen God. [...] Jack Levy took a stiff-necked pleasure in being one of Judaism's stiff-necked naysayers. He had encouraged the world to make "Jack" of "Jacob" and had argued against his son's circumcision. (23-24)

This is not the first time that Updike has used Jewish characters in his fiction. The most conspicuous example is the writer and quintessential outsider Henry Bech of the Bech trilogy. According to Sanford Pinsker, because of his lack of Jewish memory and his ignorance about religion, "the Bech that Updike brings to life on the page is not defined by a covenantal relationship to the Jewish God or by his deep acquaint-

tance with Jewish history and thought, and for Ozick⁹ the result can only be an empty, and unsatisfying, pseudo-Jewish character” (96). In *Terrorist*, Updike not only cites Cynthia Ozick tongue in cheek in his description of Levy, but he also creates a character who is an observing Muslim, and, more significantly, a convert to Islam. This character has certainly no predecessor in American literature. That no radical Muslim protagonist has so far been imagined in American literature makes Ahmad and what he stands for so inconceivable.¹⁰ In addition to representing the fundamentalist Muslim character as the literary flip side of the secular Jew—as he is portrayed in many works of twentieth-century American literature—Updike uses other kinds of role reversals in his novel. The intimate father-daughter constellation of *American Pastoral*, for example, is replaced by the claustrophobic mother-son constellation in *Terrorist*. And when the former novel shows the older generation as being betrayed by the younger, the latter portrays the younger generation as betrayed by their elders. In addition to contributing to the novel’s many ironies, these strategies most of all

414 intend to highlight the fact that American society has profoundly changed demographically and socially.

Ahmad equates Levy’s and his other teachers’ secularism with America’s materialism, addiction to sex, pursuit of happiness, and general emptiness. These qualities Ahmad has come to despise in Levy as well as in the other adults in his life, including his mother. Ahmad, according to Levy “a smart, clean-cut kid, with a lot of inner-directness,” (83) has been receiving private lessons in Islam since he was 11 years old. As the narrator puts it, Ahmad “thought he might find in this religion a trace of the handsome father who had receded at the moment his memories were beginning” (99). His mother’s attempt to make Ahmad despise his biological father thus backfires. The dubious imam, who has become his surrogate father, in the end encourages Ahmad to learn how to drive a truck and puts him in touch with the terrorist cell. While Levy, his wife, her sister, and Ahmad’s mother come to stand for “white” America, if still ethnically distinguishable as Jewish, German, and Irish, Updike presents a more nuanced and varied picture of Arab Americans. The book makes it clear that despite his utter devotion to Islam, for which he is even willing to sacrifice his own and the life of others, Ahmad is thoroughly American. And so is Charlie, the son of an immigrant furniture store owner from Lebanon, for whom Ahmad begins to work as a truck driver. Charlie who is killed by the fundamentalist group as the reader learns toward the end of the novel, was employed by the CIA as an undercover agent to counter terrorist activity and used Ahmad “to flush out the others” (292). Charlie’s father is a fervent believer in the American way of life whereas Charlie’s uncle gives the terrorists financial support. Updike adds to this portrayal of Arab American diversity the city neighborhood of first and second-generation Arab Americans who, as Ahmad sees it, “are enrolled in Islam as a lazy matter of ethnic identity” (177). Certainly the devout young man does not identify with this group: “To Ahmad these blocks feel like an underworld he is timidly visiting, an outsider among outsiders” (244). Although the novel mentions that Ahmad became a victim

of anti-Arab racism in the days and weeks immediately following September 11, the novel attributes his current isolation from his high school peers to his personality rather than to racial difference.

The major question then is: what drives this American adolescent, born and raised in the US by an Irish American mother, into the arms of both fundamentalist Islam and the members of a terrorist cell? The novel blames personality traits as well as familial and societal circumstances, i.e., Ahmad's submissiveness and willingness to be led, the fact that he grew up without a father and did not have a group of peers with whom he could identify—the reader is told that because of this void Ahmad is "fascinated by brotherhood" (195)—as well as anti-Arab sentiments within mainstream America. The other question is how Jack Levy during their joint ride into Lincoln tunnel manages to change Ahmad's mind. Ironically, when Levy, almost reconciled to the idea of being blown up any moment confesses to Ahmad that he is tired of life because Ahmad's mother ended their affair, Ahmad thinks that Levy "taunts [him] to do the deed for him" (306). This disturbing thought leads to a completely different one: that God does not want to destroy, but that he "wills life" (306). Levy's relieved and self-congratulatory babble at the end of the novel contrasts sharply with the novel's final words: "These devils, Ahmad thinks, have taken away my God" (310), echoing the novel's opening words. I agree with Don Anderson that here the reader may feel that Ahmad has Updike's sympathy. By contrast, Roth portrays terrorism as disease (Doßmann 174) and attempts to explain Merry's involvement with the Weathermen as an act of revenge on both her parents. But her main target is her non-Jewish mother who discouraged her from identifying with her Jewish side.

While the portrayal of the 18-year-old Ahmad remains schematic—he is a boy who is manipulated by a self-serving mentor, but who deserves admiration for his courage—the 30-year-old Abdallah is a man with a past and a complex personality. Although the reader learns that his biological father was an officer in the US Air Force who is unaware of his son's existence, and that his unhappy and drastically overweight mother,¹¹ not unlike Ahmad's, seeks solace in short-lived love affairs, the book does not blame an unhappy childhood for his involvement with terrorism. The reader learns about Abdallah's past through his conversations with the German ambassador who visits him over the period of several weeks in prison where he was taken after the foiled attack on the temple site. Conversion to Islam helped Abdallah abandon his life as a drug addict and dealer. He tells Cismar that it was both the TV images of the *mudshahedin* as well as the chance encounter with a person who shared the same clarity—the novel leaves it open if this person is the German Egyptian Arua with whom Abdallah falls in love—that motivated him to read the Qur-ān and to attend a mosque in Frankfurt. The reader also learns that Abdallah was drawn to Buddhism and first nations spirituality earlier in life as an attempt to fill the emptiness left behind by a small-town Catholic upbringing and his fellow students' materialism.

Peters's description of Abdallah's conversion is reminiscent of that of other disillusioned young men like Nizar Trabelsi who made headlines in Europe after 9/11. As Walter Laqueur writes, Trabelsi was

a North African who emigrated to Belgium and had a disappointing career as a footballer in Germany. He drank heavily, was later arrested for drug dealing, served a prison term in Germany, and then drifted into the Al-Qaida orbit. For him, as for others, radical religion seems to have been a way out of a dead-end existence. (89)

Although Abdallah's motivation for becoming a Muslim is thus made plausible, the self-absorbed Cismar fails to ask him how and why he joined the *jihād*. The reader never learns because Cismar leaves his post, and Abdallah is sentenced to death and hanged a few months after his arrest.

416 Abdallah is right when he claims that the "new" or transnational terrorism like Al-Qaida has little in common with the Red Army Faction.¹² Since the main objective of the RAF was to change German society and its government, most of the violent acts for which the group accepted responsibility were committed on home ground and directed at representatives of the German state in powerful positions. Collaboration with other terrorist groups such as with El Fatah mainly served logistical purposes: training, transfer of weapons, financial support, and shelter. The members of "new" terrorist groups, such as Al-Qaida, are still citizens of a particular state, but citizenship and nationality become quite irrelevant other than for strategic purposes. Potentially any country in the world could become a target. More important, training is not limited to combat skills, but includes religious and ideological instruction as well. The reader learns that some of the members of Abdallah's group, which includes a British citizen and an Egyptian who spent the last fifteen years in Germany, were trained in Afghanistan. The group's immediate goal is to scare tourists away from Egypt in the hope that the ensuing economic crisis will bring about an uprising against the current government, which they accuse of corruption and profanity.¹³ As mentioned above, Abdallah converted to Islam to give his life meaning. During his conversations with Cismar it becomes obvious that he blames the latter's generation for having created a spiritless society interested only in the pursuit of material values. What Abdallah is not concerned about is his grandparent's generation and the German collective guilt for the Holocaust. The RAF terrorism, however, was "a tortured form of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*" (Varon 15). The German student movement, as well as the German terrorism of the 1970s, was driven by the urge to settle accounts with Nazism and, on a more personal level, with their bystander and perpetrator parents. This novel also presents a showdown between the generation of 1968 and those born twenty years later. Abdallah maintains that "the 1968 movement has nothing in common with us. Their views were just as materialistic as those of the government. Although they asked the right questions, their answers were stupid and wrong. All they were concerned about was a redistribution of power and wealth" (139).¹⁴ Cismar's assessment of Abdallah, and the younger generation by proxy, is just

as fraught with prejudice: "Until the point at which you converted to Islam, you were a relatively typical representative of your generation. [...] A generation quite different from my own: confused, without any interest in politics, selfish, and only concerned with itself" (198).

Cismar's assessment of the younger generation shows that the novel is not about Abdallah. It is really about Cismar, a man in his fifties and a self-declared "sceptic with Protestant roots" (104) who, unlike Abdallah, is confused about his identity and what he wants from life. The stress caused by the uncertain political situation in Egypt with its numerous terrorist attacks, Cismar's unhappy marriage, a clandestine love affair with a French journalist, and the arrest of Abdallah eventually lead to his nervous breakdown. His obsession with Abdallah causes him to neglect his diplomatic duties and to break various rules. The arrest of his younger compatriot "opens a wound that had almost healed" (93) as Cismar puts it. This wound is the feeling of loss associated with the failed utopia of the student movement of the early 1970s as well as his personal guilt for having betrayed its ideals. Conformism, opportunism, but above all, cowardice set him on a path laid out by a father whom he still fears (111). His hatred for his father, a former member of the Nazi party, was the main reason for his youthful rebellion and identification with the objectives of the student movement. However, the law student carefully avoided situations in which he might get arrested or be put on record. The fact that he won his first law suit against a group of peaceful squatters on the very same day that Jean Paul Sartre visited Andreas Baader¹⁵ in prison still seems to haunt Cismar. Sartre, who spoke out against keeping the imprisoned RAF members in isolation, played an important role for the German left as well as the RAF. In his preface to Frantz Fanon's *Damnés de la terre* (1961), which was one of the major texts from which leftist organizations during that time drew their inspiration, Sartre wrote: "il faut rester terrifié ou devenir terrible" [one (we) must be terrified, or become terrible (terrifying)]. In the German translation of Fanon's book, this sentence was mistranslated as "either one remains terrorized, or one becomes a terrorist oneself" (Berendse 29). According to Gerrit-Jan Berendse, this translation contributed to the reinforcement of thinking in binary patterns such as friend or foe, pig or human, etc. (29). Cismar remembers that when he heard about Benno Ohnesorg's¹⁶ death, he remained sitting motionless on his bed. His anger did not result in rebellion, but in indifference. He told himself at the time that the individual is unable to do anything, but that those who do not act also end up doing the wrong thing (157). In his desperate attempt to understand Abdallah, Cismar romanticizes his conversion experience and turns it into a tragic love story. In his mind, Arua must have played a major part in both Abdallah's conversion and subsequent decision to join the *jihād*. Shortly before his physical and mental breakdown Cismar reaches a stage where he begins to identify with Abdallah and what he represents. His last words before he collapses at the occasion of giving a welcome speech at the embassy's Christmas party are: "Mr. President," referring to the Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak, "you are an asshole" (289). While Cismar is convinced that

he is doing everything in his power to facilitate Abdallah's extradition to Germany, Cismar's successor indicates in his official report to the German government that Abdallah's execution might have been avoided if Cismar had handled the case more diplomatically.

The novel begs to be read within the context of what Paul Michael Lützeler refers to as "Literatur des postkolonialen Blicks" [literature with a postcolonial perspective], a segment of recent German literature for which the portrayal of conflicts between German/western and African, Asian, as well as Middle Eastern culture is central. In some of these novels, German characters, particularly those of the 1968 generation, are portrayed as seeking out these parts of the world to escape the psychological and emotional consequences of the German guilt for the Holocaust. In their confrontation with the other culture they often fail to liberate themselves from attitudes associated with having been raised in western and especially in German society. They are also often represented as having to face a political crisis in the respective country or a violent situation that triggers memories, albeit usually second hand memories, of the Nazi regime and the Holocaust.¹⁷ Cismar, who has been in Cairo for one and a half years after having served in Morocco, Japan, and Columbia, has fallen in love with Egypt. For the first time he can imagine spending the rest of his life in a country where he was posted. Walking through the busy streets of Cairo with his French lover at night, he desires to pass as a local: "They both have brown eyes. Françoise's blond hair is covered. His own hair, wiry and grayish black, could be that of an Arab, and so could be his moustache. An Egyptian couple on its way to a social event" (165). Moreover, Cismar in his rumination about how his German wife's dislike of Egypt and her constant fear of violence contribute to their alienation from each other, concludes that all foreign countries are potentially dangerous. Furthermore, in Cismar's view, ambassadors from western nations are hardly ever welcome in the so-called Third World. According to Cismar, Germans are most welcome when the German government has agreed to pay generous economic aid, or if the country's president supports the ideology of the Third Reich: "The Islamists hate Germany the least of all western nations. Hitler is a hero in these countries. Every bookseller in the street has a copy of *Mein Kampf* for sale. The people believe that, if Hitler had won the war, Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories would not exist" (109). Although he prides himself on being almost fluent in Arabic and of knowing Egyptian society quite well, the blunders that he makes in his interactions with the local embassy staff show that his cultural expertise is limited.

Peters's text also asks to be read within the context of the recent surge in the numbers of novels and films dealing with the German student movement in general and the Red Army Faction in particular.¹⁸ While *Terrorist* portrays a country divided by race—unlike the RAF, the Weathermen turned to violence largely in opposition to both the Vietnam War and institutional racism—the German text shows that Germany has not yet come to terms with the homegrown terrorism of the 1970s. The political struggle of the RAF was more diffuse but also more deadly¹⁹ than that

of its American counterpart. The fact that the two suicide hijackers flying into the towers of the World Trade Centre and one of the hijackers who crashed the plane over Pennsylvania were long-term German residents, rubs salt into a festering wound. Also, as Gerrit-Jan Berendse points out, in the late 1990s German literature of the younger generation²⁰ was preoccupied with violence and apocalyptic visions. Creating the myth of the RAF was part of this trend. What has made fictional and filmic revisions of the RAF so popular, according to Berendse, is the combination of violence and eroticism in these re-inventions as well as the younger generation's need for radical answers to complex questions (203). Like Peters's novel, most of these texts and films are concerned with the terrorists themselves rather than with their victims.

As Ann Kaplan observes,

the experience of 9/11 also demonstrates the difficulties of generalizing about trauma and its impact, for, as Freud pointed out long ago, how once reacts to a traumatic event depends on one's individual psychic history, on memories inevitably mixed with fantasies of prior catastrophes, and on the particular cultural and political context within which a catastrophe takes place, especially how it is "managed" by institutional forces.

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The fact that in *Terrorist*, society is represented by an educator while in *Ein Zimmer im Haus des Krieges* it is represented by an official of the state may also be read as a measure of cultural differences between the two countries, how they view terrorism and deal with it, and how acts of terrorism are portrayed in their fiction. Significantly, Peters, who sets his novel of 2006 in late 1993, does not mention the first bombing of the World Trade Centre on 26 February of the same year. Also, as Cismar finds out, the Federal Criminal Agency (BKA) lost track of Abdallah in the early 1990s and was unaware of his leaving Germany for Egypt. Cismar believes that the reason for the German government's lack of interest in the "new" terrorism can be explained by its deep concern with the murders of Alfred Herrhausen²¹ on 30 November 1989 and of Detlev Karsten Rohwedder²² on 1 April 1991, allegedly committed by members of the RAF. The fact that the two crimes were never solved spawned new debates over this terrorist group. It has even been argued that its so-called Third Generation, which had been held responsible for several murders committed since 1984, never even existed.²³

As I have shown, *Terrorist* also links the "new" terrorism with 1968. Not only is Levy a representative of the 1968 generation—he points out that he and his wife were married in 1968—, but he also nostalgically holds on to the spirit of the Sixties, if only by watching the "subversive" European and American films of the time (25). The link is made even stronger through the novel's close intertextual relationship with *American Pastoral*. But the 1960s hold a different place in the American and the German national imagination respectively as well as in the literatures of these two countries. The same is true, as I have tried to demonstrate, of the events of 11 September 2001 and their portrayal in literature. Although, as mentioned above,

many American as well as German 9/11 novels juxtapose the trauma on the world stage and domestic stress, the way in which these family crises are resolved or remain unresolved differs because of both the two countries' different historical and political baggage, their different cultures and demography, as well as different literary trends and ways of dealing with politics in literature. Yet in their common attempt at understanding the motivations of those willing to die in the name of *jihad* Updike's and Peters's novels offer no new insights. Instead they both emphasize society's response to terrorism and individual terrorists without suggesting how to solve profound conflicts of ideology.

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ENDNOTES

- 1 I am placing the word terrorist in quotation marks to reflect the way it is often polemically and rhetorically used in public discourse as synonymous with criminal or fanatic according to the pervasive perception that terrorists are abnormal. As Martha Crenshaw points out "the problem of defining terrorism has hindered analysis since the inception of studies of terrorism in the early 1970s" (406).
- 2 The English translation *The Have-Nots* by Helen Atkins appeared in February 2008.
- 3 Among these texts are Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005), Pia Franzenberg's *Nora* (2006), and Joyce Maynard's *The Usual Rules* (2003).
- 4 The 2.4 km long Lincoln Tunnel under the Hudson River connects New York City and New Jersey.
- 5 Abdallah's given name is Jochen.
- 6 The novel refers here to the massacre of foreign tourists in Luxor in November 1997 although the novel is set in 1993.
- 7 See, for example, Heinz Bude's *Generation Berlin* and Sigrid Weigel's "'Generation' as a Symbolic Form: On the Genealogical Discourse of Memory since 1945" for a discussion of the significance of differences between generations in German history, culture, and literature.
- 8 Roth wrote the first part of the novel as early as 1972, but abandoned the project for quite some time because he lacked the necessary distance (Doßmann).
- 9 Pinsker refers here to Cynthia Ozick's article "Bech, Passing" in *Art & Ardor*. She writes: "Simply: to be a Jew is to be covenanted; or, if not committed so far, to be at least aware of the possibility of

becoming covenanted; or, at the very minimum, to be aware of the Covenant itself. It is no trick, it is nothing at all, to do a genial novel about an uncovenanted barely nostalgic secular/neuter Bech: Bech himself, in all his multiple avatars [...], writes novels about Bech every day” (123).

- 10 The more recent novel *Falling Man* gives the reader glimpses of the life of one of the highjackers.
- 11 Both novels explain the gross obesity of Levy’s wife Beth and Abdallah’s mother psychologically. They are portrayed as lonely women who have been disappointed by life.
- 12 The Red Army Faction itself never referred to itself as a terrorist group. The members preferred to call themselves the avant-garde or urban guerillas.
- 13 The novel also points to the importance of the media for the “new” terrorism. Abdallah, for example, draws attention to the fact that TV images and not the number of victims will be decisive for the success of this war (47).
- 14 All translations from German into English are my own.
- 422 15 This visit took place on 4 December 1974. Andreas Baader was one of the founding members of the RAF aka Baader-Meinhof Group. In 1968, together with Gudrun Ensslin, he was convicted for an arson attack on a department store in Frankfurt am Main, but was freed by force in 1970 by, amongst others, Ulrike Meinhof. He was rearrested in 1972 and convicted of murder, bank robbery and other crimes in 1977.
- 16 Benno Ohnesorg was a German university student who was shot in 1967 by a police officer at a demonstration in Berlin against the visit of the Shah of Iran to Germany.
- 17 A prime example is Hans Christoph Buch’s *Kain und Abel in Afrika* (2001). This book juxtaposes the genocides in Rwanda and Burundi with the Holocaust.
- 18 Feature films dealing with the RAF that come to mind are *The Legend of Rita* (2001), directed by Volker Schlöndorff, *The State I Am In* (2001), directed by Christian Petzold, and *Baader* (2002), directed by Christopher Roth. Among recently published novels are Leander Scholz’s *Rosenfest* (2001), Sophie Dannenberg’s *Das bleiche Herz der Revolution* (2004), Peter O. Chotjewitz’s *Die Herren des Morgengrauens* (2007), and Wolfgang Brenner’s *Die Exekution* (2000).
- 19 Roth’s portrayal of Merry as having killed at least four people as a member of the Weathermen does not reflect reality.
- 20 Peters, who was born in 1966, is at least an honorary member of this generation.
- 21 Herrhausen was Chairman of the Deutsche Bank. He had been scheduled to give a speech in New York in which he meant to lay out his vision of the new organization of East-West relations in the wake of the fall of the Berlin Wall. He also proposed structural changes to alleviate the debt crisis of developing nations.
- 22 Rohwedder, as Head of the Treuhand, was in charge of the transformation of publicly owned businesses in eastern Germany. He had come to the conclusion that radical privatization would have unacceptable social consequences.
- 23 See, for example, Gerhard Wisniewski’s *Das RAF-Phantom: Wozu Politik und Wirtschaft Terroristen brauchen*.