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Mediological Reflections on Public Evidence of the Jihadist-Motivated Terror Attack of 2 November 2020 in Vienna, via Edgar Allan Poe, Matthew Buckingham, and Xaver Bayer; with an Amendment on Lament (Response to 7 October)

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Figure 1. Reproduction of a digital photograph from the scene of the attack in downtown Vienna on 2 November 2020, © Markus Sulzbacher.

1   Terror attacks—targeting the balances of collective everyday routines, visual standards, and memory processes—are complex media events in which the traumatic experiences of those actually affected are usually immediately set aside and replaced by techniques for restoring collective meanings and images.[1] In this light, this contribution attempts to provide an in-depth analysis of how imaginary and remembrance in the context of attacks are commonly shaped, taking the events of 2 November 2020 as the main point of reference, when a 20-year-old jihadist-motivated individual shot four people dead and injured another twenty-three people in downtown Vienna. The focus, though, is not primarily on the events themselves, nor on the fundamentalist indoctrination of the shooter: an analysis of his social background and education, the influences of social media and preachings, Quranic exegeses and Islamist jihadi chants (nasheeds) would require a separate analysis with a different methodological approach. Instead, this article focuses on the general media dispositifs that generate and establish public evidence: from analysing the detective and photographic gaze immersed in big-city crowds, journalistic coverages and social media interactions, to the courtroom scenes where questions of guilt and complicity are officially litigated and ruled.

2   Methodologically, Régis Debray's concept of 'mediology' serves as a kind of benchmark, particularly his reflections on the 'history of the gaze' in *Vie et mort de l'image* (Debray 1992), which provides a coherent view of the genesis of Western imaginative processes and particular medial 'windows on the world', and leads to the conclusive demand to reconsider the codes of the *invisible*. Accordingly, this article takes

works and 'window pane scenarios' by Edgar Allan Poe, American visual artist Matthew Buckingham, and, in particular, Austrian poet Xaver Bayer as anchor points to reflect on visualisation processes and their limits, helping also to gain a 'glocalised' perspective on the November events, i.e. a perspective on the interaction between global and local trends that constitute the collective perception process and memory around them. This is with Walter Benjamin's remark in mind: "In times of terror, when everyone is something of a conspirator, everybody will be in the position of having to play detective." (Benjamin 1938/2006: 21) Finally, the aim is to clarify the task of *true detectives*: confronting mainstream ideas through uncompromisingly defending individual image development rights, they might find their clues in touching upon retractive moments of silence and thus come across the old, 'invisible' traces of religious lament.

**First Mediological Circuit**

A Man of the Crowd in Vienna

3   In 2003, New York based-artist Matthew Buckingham transposed Edgar Allan Poe's short story *The Man of the Crowd* (1840) into a film installation (cf. Buckingham 2003a/b; Franke 2004; McEleheny 2009; Monolescu 2018). Instead of London, Vienna became the setting for a big city that, a good decade after the fall of the Iron Curtain and shortly after Austria's accession to the EU, still radiated a legendary Central European dreariness and backwardness, evoking the Old World's atmosphere of the uncanny, reminiscent of Sigmund Freud and Carol Reed's 1949 film *The Third Man*. The 16mm black-and-white film essentially follows Poe's plot and portrays a young man secretly pursuing an older, enigmatic stranger in a bright suit —for no other reason than, so the story reads, the mysterious mix of evil, triumph, merriment, and utmost despair that the young man perceives emanating from the stranger. In addition to the slight modification of the title to *A Man of the Crowd*, Buckingham also introduces an additional camera as a third character into the story, which acts on the sidelines. Thus, one sees the stranger wandering through the streets and places of the city—Stephansplatz, Naschmarkt, the UNO City, and other locations off the beaten track —from two alternating perspectives, with sudden stops and turns, and at one point, the two men stand directly vis-à-vis and gazing each other as they pass by. In another significant scene, the young man sits in a café and is confronted by the stranger, who first appears outside as a reflection in a window and then in person. And in a similar vein to Poe's highly unspectacular ending, where at dawn the protagonist just lets the stranger disappear into the crowd, leaving all questions unresolved, the film's twenty-four-hour narrative is presented in a loop. The task of the young man and the camera, to decipher the man's misery proves to be an endless quest.

4   Instead of having learned more about the subject's identity, the viewer is left with their curiosity and an awareness about it to continue the search indefinitely. This puts the observation itself, fascination with it, and the determination to wrest a deeper secret from an until then unknown counterpart into the spotlight. Obviously, Buckingham has engaged deeply with the aspect of projection, which is also implemented in the film through reflections in windows and mirrors (also, the director himself is reflected in several instances). Furthermore, the visitors to the film installation at the Museum of Modern Art (Mumok) in Vienna and, a year later, in 2004, at the Murray Gallery in New York were included into Buckingham's play with reflections. The 16mm film was projected through a small opening in a wall into a free-standing two-way mirror made of semi-reflective glass, creating three projections: firstly, the film was screened on the opposite gallery

wall; secondly, it was reflected back as a full-size mirror image onto the wall in front of the projector; and additionally, the visitors found themselves reflected in the mirror glass, insinuated as a 'third man' into the film.

Figure 2. Left: Two Stills of Matthew Buckingham: A Man of the Crowd, 2003, film installation, 16mm black-and-white film with sound, 21:10-minutes loop, in: Matthew Buckingham: A Man of the Crowd. Vienna: Museum moderner Kunst 2003, pp. 7, 9. Right: Installation view, Murray Guy Gallery, New York, in: Parkett 72 (2004), p. 10.
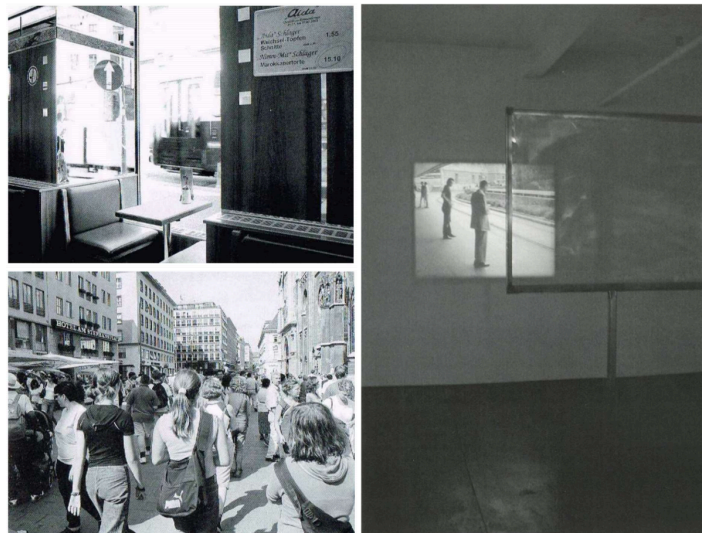
5   With this film installation, Buckingham has followed up on Walter Benjamin's insights of Baudelaire's motifs, especially into the *flâneur*, a bohemian literary type that emerged around 1830 in London and then Paris at the onset of modern metropolitan experience: the initial encounter with crowds, mass-driven movements, and a fetishism of commodities that distributed desires within the city (cf. Fong 2022). However, Benjamin recognised that Baudelaire's interpretation of Poe's *The Man of the Crowd* is not quite accurate, he does not saunter confidently at his own pace with a laissez-faire attitude, provocatively spending his leisure time as part of his work time. Rather, Benjamin argues, the story "has something barbaric about it" (Benjamin 1940/2006: 327), showing a completely new process of physical and mental conditioning, becoming isolated and dependent throughout on mechanised reactions: "Poe's text helps us understand the true connection between wildness and discipline. His pedestrians act as if they had adapted themselves to machines and could express themselves only automatically. Their behaviour is a reaction to shocks." (Ibid.: 329) It is no longer an 'animated' public crowd that the mysterious man could confidently confront, but rather an embodiment of the new nervous and hostile urban environment, dealing blows and shock experiences analogous to industrial processes of labour ("What are the dangers of the forest and the prairie, compared with the daily shocks and conflicts of civilization?", Benjamin 1938/2006: 21). The man becomes *the* man *of* the crowd, and therein lies, according to Benjamin, the deep mystery and barbaric cruelty of which the narrator witnesses.

6   Nor should it be forgotten, that Poe placed the short story under the sign of crime, even more: "the essence of all crime", from the very beginning, " It was well said of a certain German book that *"er lasst sich nicht lesen"* [*sic*]—it does not permit itself to be read. There are some secrets which do not permit themselves to be told. Men die nightly in their beds, wringing the hands of ghostly confessors, and looking them piteously

in the eyes−die with despair of heart and convulsion of throat, on account of the hideousness of mysteries which will not *suffer themselves* to be revealed. Now and then, alas, the conscience of man takes up a burden so heavy in horror that it can be thrown down only into the grave. And thus the essence of all crime is undivulged." (Poe 1840/1996: 388)

7   This is an aspect, which was also picked up and emphasised by Benjamin: in his description and interpretation, the crowd and the *flâneur* must be considered alongside with conspiracy and detective work. With Charles Baudelaire as a main representative, the bohemian is brought in the vicinity of a "political type", moving in the same circles and milieus as the new proletarian "professional conspirators" (Benjamin 1938/2006: 3−4). *The Man of the Crowd* takes particular account of this ambiguity: "Poe purposely blurs the difference between the asocial person and the flâneur. The harder a man is to find, the more suspicious he becomes." (Ibid.: 27) And it is the task of the detective to follow the trail of suspicion: "The original social content of the detective story focused on the obliteration of the individual's traces in the big-city crowd." (Ibid.: 23) The detective follows the zigzag course of the suspect into the urban underworld, into the world of conspirators, pubs, gambling, alcohol, hashish intoxication and, not least, prostitution (with the prostitute's body as the embodiment of the city's disseminated desires par excellence). Yet, these experiences do not ultimately find their quasi 'domestic' environment on the street, not within its " *intérieur*" (ibid.: 31), but rather−tracing the disseminated desires back to their primary deterritorialising impulses, to the 'spontaneous order of the market'−in the department store as "the last promenade for the flaneur" (ibid.). Only here, the unsteady minds and eyes find relief as the displayed goods offer a corresponding direction of movement and gaze: similar to Poe's story, where the "wild and vacant stare" (Poe 1840/1996: 394) of the suspicious man merges with the objects in a large and bustling bazaar.

8   In *The Man of the Crowd*, thus, we find all genre features of detective stories already represented. Indeed, it constitutes "something like an X-ray of a detective story" (Benjamin 1938/2006: 27): preformed in its basic structure before Poe's Dupin stories, a structural prototype that was to make its career from here on (cf. Borges 1985; Merivale 1999; Nicol 2012). The laid-out concept of a crime story is all the more fascinating as its centre still remains completely vacant: the presumed crime is not solved and constitutes a gap and emptiness, thus leading to the idea of criminal "essence" which "does not permit itself to be read" ("and perhaps it is but one of the great mercies of God", Poe 1840/1996: 396). It therefore becomes apparent, that the focus shifts from the concealed object to the dynamics and structured glances around it, created by the opposing desires of concealment and revelation, and the *evidential paradigm* (Ginzburg 1989) in scientific methodology comes into play. With Poe, notoriously, and paradigmatically in his *The Man of the Crowd*, the genesis of the modern criminal *and* detective mind is exhibited, both bound to lost objects, whose absence evoke fascination and an irresistible suction, metaphorically comparable to the powers of a maelstrom−incessantly pushing against all kinds of lenses and screens since then, keeping the observers at a safe "spectacular distance" (Sweeney 2003) from their indescribable fierce objects.

Investigative Visual Arts

9   In Poe's first sketch of a detective story, Benjamin recognises a "Dialectic of *flânerie*: on one side, the man who feels himself viewed by all and sundry as a true suspect and, on the other side, the man who is utterly undiscoverable, the hidden man." (Cit. Benjamin in Lamm 2003: 69) In this respect, it is important to emphasise the distinction between the object of observation (the older mysterious man as the criminal suspect) and the narrator and observer (the younger man, the camera, the reader, or the museum visitor

as the detectives in *spectacular distance*). For Poe's piece turns out to be a story of transference: one recognises the end of the figuration of the *flâneur* and the beginning of the career of the detective as a *pseudo flâneur* (cf. Brand 1991):

> If the flaneur is thus turned into an unwilling detective, it does him a lot of good socially, for it legitimates his idleness. His indolence is only apparent, for behind this indolence there is the watchfulness of an observer who does not take his eyes off a miscreant. Thus, the detective sees rather wide areas opening up to his self-esteem. He develops reactions that are in keeping with the tempo of a big city. He catches things in flight; this enables him to dream that he is like an artist.
> (Benjamin 1938/2006: 21–2)

10 The self-assurance of detective work results from the transference of a–fundamentally *male*-connoted– artistic bohemian gaze onto the pursuer. "Baudelaire wrote: 'An observer is a *prince* who is everywhere in possession of his incognito.'" (Ibid.: 22) However, when the incognito of the *flâneur* is lifted, this noble or even heroic privilege is transferred to the pursuer. It is now he who follows the subject unnoticed, but with "forensic knowledge" (ibid.). In this way, Poe's story "does not yet glorify the criminal, though it does glorify his adversaries and, above all, the hunting grounds where they pursue him." (Ibid.)

11 In these urban 'hunting grounds', which spread out before the new observers like a puzzling artwork, the latest technology of surveillance and securing evidence, namely photography, arrived just in the right time. Cameras create the illusion of recapturing 'auratic' phenomena that are at the brink of dispersing. Moreover, they played a decisive role in the general "decline of the aura" itself (Benjamin 1940/2006: 338; see further, esp. on the 'optical unconscious', Benjamin 1931/1999), by implementing the logic of technical reproduction onto personal representation and recording "our likeness without returning our gaze" (Benjamin 1940/2006: 338). Obviously, the forensic gaze has no sense of vitality or aesthetics at all, it is rather 'cold' and focused on capturing all those elements that comply with the 'asocial persons' and try to act incognito.

> The invention of photography was a turning point in the history of this process [of identification]. It was no less significant for criminology than the invention of the printing press for literature. Photography made it possible for the first time to preserve permanent and unmistakable traces of a human being. The detective story came into being when this most decisive of all conquests of a person's incognito had been accomplished. Since that time, there has been no end to the efforts to capture [*dingfest machen*] a man in his speech and actions.
> (Benjamin 1938/2006: 27)

12 Photographic innovation seems to be the conclusive aspect to comprehensively conceive the dispositif of modern crime perception: a constellation of urban and consumer-orientated environments; of restless movements and fixed gazes; of hide-and-seek; of noble and artistic like yearnings to recapture everything that has been dispersed and withdrawn; of new visual observation techniques; and, at its centre, the suspicion of evil and, at the same time, the attraction that alludes to lost objects and adventurous crime plots.

13 A connection between lost objects that trigger desires and structure glances and thoughts, and Jacques Lacan's famous interpretation of Poe's *The Purloined Letter* (1844), on the economy of human affects, its symbolic bindings and imaginary charges, can easily be suggested. In his study *Lacan at the Scene*, Henry Bond encapsulates a structuralist-linguistic psychoanalytic perspective on crime by focusing on

crime scene images, reflecting on the visual field of the detective and the observer, and on how the gaze of forensic knowledge is generally structured. Once again, Poe's Dupin stories serve as early examples to delineate the onset of crime fascination through media estrangement, as its prose demonstrates to be "if not directly dependent on photographs, then at least photographically informed" (Bond 2009: 16). The representation of crimes thus inherently relies on distancing factors that offer the possibility to reconstruct an event. Thereby an event is constituted as an entity and fixed object, which would otherwise be too shocking to be perceived and confronted with—it becomes an object of *remembrance* rather than of *experience* (cf. Benjamin 1940/2006: 316–8).

14   In his foreword to Bond's book, Slavoj Žižek emphasises the preponderance of visual activity in the context of witnessing crimes, pointing out the circumstances under which the mind is shaped by mechanisms of reproduction and automation. This correlates with the mental adherence to a 'transcendental network', which forms a constellation of seeing and thinking as a vital process of generating meaning and establishing social positions. Žižek recalls that 'the essence of all crime' concerns, in strict contrast, the invisible.

> Imagine someone being forced to witness a terrifying torture: in a way, the monstrosity of what he sees would make this an experience of the noumenal impossible-real that would shatter the coordinates of our common reality. (The same holds for witnessing an intense sexual activity.) In this sense, if we were to discover films shot in a concentration camp among the *Musulmannen*, showing scenes from their daily life, how they are systematically mistreated and deprived of all dignity, we would have seen too much, the prohibited, we would have entered a forbidden territory of what should have remained unseen. (One can well understand Claude Lanzmann who said that, if he were to stumble upon such a film, he would destroy it immediately.) This is also what makes it so unbearable to witness the last moments of people who know they are shortly going to die and are in this sense already living dead —again, imagine that we had discovered, among the ruins of the Twin Towers, a video camera which magically survived the crash intact and is full of shots of what went on among the passengers on the plane in the minutes before it crashed into one of the Towers. In all these cases, it is that, effectively, we would have seen things as they are in themselves, outside human coordinates, outside our human reality—we would have seen the world with inhuman eyes. [...] This, then, is the background of what Bond describes: although the shots of the crime scene do not directly present the noumenal scene of a crime too intensive for our eyes, they evoke it—what makes them so unsettling is that they record traces of something we cannot really accept as an actual event, or grasp how it could have happened. (Žižek 2009: xv)

15   Every crime thus inevitably requires a *human* act of translation; rather, it *is* an act of translation, where the event of shock and terror itself must remain 'illegible', it gets "doubly inscribed" (ibid.: 29). Touching the same ground as Susan Sontag's (1977) and Roland Barthes' (1981) famous reflections on the 'horror' of the photograph, this involves the assessment that the image always establishes a personal connection to the viewer, as they reflect themselves in the objects and make them a part to their "fantasmatic coordinates of meaning" (Žižek 2009: xiii). In cases of deprivation of this network, "once the fantasy object is subtracted from reality, it is not only the observed reality which changes, but also the observing subject himself: he is reduced to a gaze observing how things look in his own absence." (Ibid.) However, this does not primarily mean that the object itself becomes visible per se (it remains a matter of reconstruction), but one's own deprivation over losing domination over sight.

16 With this in mind, one might arrive at an understanding of the 'task' of visual arts and, as their *cliché*, symbolistic poetry. After modern lyricism has lost its potential of the former 'minstrel' and has become a literary niche genre by getting into contact with a "greater coolness of the public" (Benjamin 1940/2006: 313–4), it seems to refer to those very moments of the decay of aura that are brought about by "being jostled by the crowd as the decisive, unmistakable experience" (ibid.: 342). Charles Baudelaire's last lyrical "success on a mass scale" (ibid.: 313) appears to have been the impetus for all future arts dedicated to the task of dismantling the processes of distancing and withdrawal, in order to place "the artistic device of allegory" (Benjamin 1939/2006: 173) into the commodity economy and its operations. This appears as an artistic approach to reactivate a sense of lost communality. Bond seems to suggest this when referring to his occupation with the nature of photographic representation:

> Each [visual] artist creates their own pulverized signs. We struggle to convey intimacy in language: it is already pulverized. We can only get to the *real* feeling through the artificial. The realm of language inherently produces distance [cit. Darian Leader]. This factor, that we are doomed to get to the real feeling [only] through the artificial, is precisely what the rephotograph highlights: rephotography may be conceptualized/recognized as a useful means with which to emphasize the fundamentally mediated quality of subjectivity itself.
> (Bond 2009: 18)

17 These perspectives on the role of criminalistic observation, on the actual invisibility of crime itself, can now be directly linked back to Matthew Buckingham's film installation. When in *A Man in the Crowd* "the seemingly sovereign observer becomes displaced and multiplied" (Buckingham 2003a: 59), this essentially refers to all elements highlighted as constitutive of the classical structure of the detective story; it shows how the *perception* of the criminal mind is in general constituted.

> One could situate Matthew Buckingham's work in the tradition of investigative art, the practice that turns artists into detectives who search for clues to specific contexts, histories, or events. They become interrogators of reality or fiction, or collectors of the material evidence of a story that has been lost in the past, or that has yet to be written. The romantic Edgar Allan Poe was among the first authors to develop in his novels the figure of the private detective. This figure introduced a radical, rational consciousness characterized by a universal suspicion, and the methodological tools needed to mount an investigation. […] But Buckingham's use of investigative narratives does not refer to a crime, whether it be real, imagined, or immanent to all media–the crime, in other words, of hiding what one presents. […] He arranges narratives and images according to their resonance, and their presence or absence in time–their potency to *create* and to *frame* what, only later, becomes referred to as reality. In trying to find a term that would provide an accurate framework for these qualities, I came across the concept of the imaginative horizon, a term coined by Vincent Crapanzano, which describes the boundaries of the imagination that separate the here and now from what lies beyond, in time and space. This is what Buckingham's works really are: journeys along the imaginative horizon, where edges and demarcations constitute reality as the presence of the past *in* the present.
> (Franke 2004: 9–10)

18 With their potential to exhibit the media structure itself, thus revealing the dependence of the perception of the past on present constellations, visual artists–and lyrical poets as their 'ancestors'–become the 'true detectives' *of* (again, as with Poe, more than *in*) the era of high capitalism. Unlike the typical *flâneurs*, who were soon overwhelmed by the nervousness of the world of commodities; unlike the adversaries who have

succumbed to the forensic gaze of surveillance; even unlike the investigative journalists who are committed to the "linguistic habitus of newspapers" that "paralyzes the imagination of their readers" (Benjamin 1940/2006: 316, in reference to Austrian journalist and dramatist Karl Kraus): the visual artists–and the philosophers and theorists who followed/pursued them (cf. Groys 2012)–have remained the ones who never lost track of the trail of suspicious media constellations and the general phenomenological aspects of 'all' crime.

Locked Room Poetry

19 To illustrate the poetic core of detective work, or conversely, the detective core of poetic work: by entering into a literary genre, lyricists became the pioneers or the *cliché* of visual artists, who, like Paul Valéry, are "interested in the special functioning of psychic mechanisms under present day-conditions" (Benjamin 1940/2006: 318). They endeavour to endow even the most mundane objects and significations "with the ability to look back at us" (ibid.: 338; again referring to Kraus ibid. 354, ann. 77: "The closer you look at a word, the greater the distance from which it looks back"). This is still evident in contemporary poetry, as for example seen in the work of German poet, essayist and recipient of the Georg Büchner Prize in 2017, Jan Wagner, known for its astounding poetisation of simple everyday objects. In his poetological essay *The Locked Room* (*Der verschlossene Raum*, 2017), Wagner too refers to Poe, particularly to his well-known reflections on *The Philosophy of Composition*, pointing out the general preference of many poets for crime fiction (W. H. Auden, Pablo Neruda, Bertolt Brecht, Gottfried Benn, …), before concluding:

> The poem is a room constructed from the most ephemeral materials, that is of mere sounds, and yet it appears stable and capable of enduring […]. It is a room of minimal size, a sort of intricate linguistic chamber, wherein remarkably, everything can still find its place without it becoming too cramped. The most disparate things enter into a seemingly natural connection; things widely separated in time and space come together in nothing more than a stanza, indeed in a single line. […] It is [the reader], no one else, who follows the clues presented, who is invited to discover–for that is nothing other than the meaning of the Latin verb detegere, from which detective derives.
> (Wagner 2017: 41–3)[2]

20 Wagner's considerations once again emphasise the same dispositif underlying the techniques of decoding poetry and crime, highlighting how readers and detectives essentially share common artistic grounds, and how the hermetic room created by poetry indeed becomes a 'hunting ground'–provided it is not, as is constantly the case with Poe, projected back onto the reader, reflecting suppressed feelings onto them.

21 This is precisely what the reader encounters in *The Man of the Crowd* and the early experience of criminal investigation. Initially, the protagonist's unstable gaze circles within the confined space of a café: "With a cigar in my mouth and a newspaper in my lap, I had been amusing myself […] now in poring over advertisements, now in observing the promiscuous company in the room, and now in peering through the smoky panes into the street." (Poe 1840/1996: 388) This space gradually fades as it contrasts more with the external urban atmosphere created by innovative gas lighting (cf. Benjamin 1938/2006: 28): "I gave up, at length, all care of things within the hotel, and became absorbed in contemplation of the scene without." (Poe 1840/2003: 389) The streets of the city become an illuminated backdrop, a visionary scenario is crafted that largely anticipates the camera eye and the cinematic gaze (cf. Paech 1997: 54–6). It is as if the observer becomes entirely eye and lens, disregarding the conditions of the interior space, virtually examining the entities of the exterior space: "With my brow to the glass, I was thus occupied in scrutinising

the mob [...]." (Id: 392) It appears as if it is only the narrowing of the inner space that, in a sudden, causes the projection outwards. For it is precisely now that the man of the crowd emerges, seemingly embodying all that is sinister and evil, or in other words: onto whom the observer projects all that seems dark and mysterious to themselves. It is as if the camera's gaze allows to project and, psychoanalytically speaking, transfer innermost imaginings onto the figure of the man as a phantasm. Thus, as emphasised in the description of Buckingham's installation, the man of the crowd becomes a mirror figure of the observer and all of his repressed feelings that otherwise would remain *invisible*. It is indeed the observer who cannot 'read' *themselves* and transfers this mystery onto a new, incredibly strange and intriguing subject on the street.

22   Following Buckingham's film back to the setting of Vienna, we find this media constellation in a fascinating way anchored in the writings of the Austrian poet Xaver Bayer. Early on and up to the most recent press releases, Bayer is portrayed within the long tradition of *flâneurs*, observing the urban environment with keen eyes and sketching his stories with pen and paper in remote pubs and cafés ("All of this flickers instringently and snappily through your mind as you gaze out of the large window of the café at the square", Bayer 2019: 5);[3] additionally, he is an avowed reader of the detective stories by the former Dadaist Walter Serner (see Bayer 2015). His current photo on the publishing website shows him with (make-uped) surreal oversized, blue eyes, and in a video interview as part of the Austrian focus at the Leipzig Book Fair 2023, it says:

> As a child, he frequently visited the Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art with his parents. Even then, he felt a kinship with this little figure: This figure, standing a bit apart in a moving vehicle, the person, the figure, who is, in a way, on the road and looking out of the window, that ... I can quite well identify with that.
>
> (ORF Topos 2022)[4]

Figure 3. Left: Film-still from ORF-Topos (2022): Archive des Schreibens, 6: 'Nüchterner Blick in Abgründe', at: topos.orf.at/archive-des-schreibens-bayer100 (September 5th 2022, last accessed September 1st 2023). Right: Xaver Bayer, press photo of publisher Jung & Jung @ Florian Benzer, at: jungundjung.at/verfasser/bayer-xaver/ (last accessed March 28th 2024).
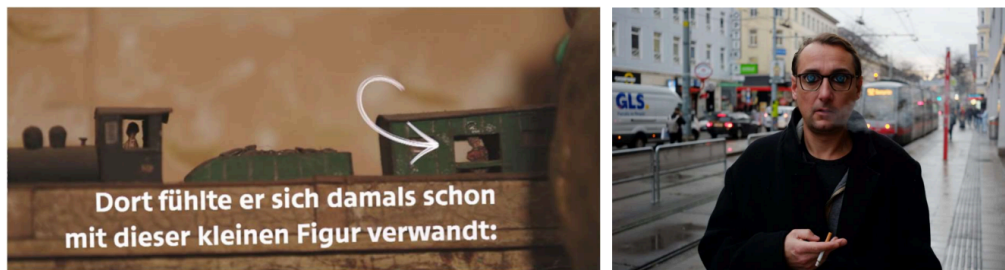
23   Bayer's writing can thus be connected to what is referred to in cultural theory as the "ethnographic gaze" or perspective from the margins of society. Since his first two novels, characterised as a variant of German 'pop literature' and (re)published in the same year as Buckingham performed his project in Vienna, he has successively refined this perspective. Already in *Today Could Be a Happy Day* (*Heute könnte ein glücklicher Tag sein*, 2001/2003) and *Alaska Highway* (*Die Alaskastraße*, 2003/2005), the then mid-twenty Bayer depicted his protagonists captivated by their *ennui*, their endeavours to break out from their everyday

routines in the most absurd ways, and their perception disorders that abruptly create new causalities. He particularly describes how they become perpetrators or victims of violent outbursts, often striking back emphatically at the reader through an open end to the story.

24   This would become all the more apparent the more Bayer later turned to the literary form of miniatures, short pieces of unexpected scenarios with a distinctly surreal and humorous note that often provoke reflection on the medial conditions of perception. Thus, Bayer's work, which early on was also associated with Jean Baudrillard's concept of the 'simulacrum' (Camion 2007), was aptly termed 'perceptual prose' (Preljvić 2019). A representative question in this regard is: "Where did the images in my head come from?" (Bayer 2003: 61),[5] and a particularly telling miniature from the story collection *Wild Park* (*Wildpark*, 2019) points to a fitting answer:

> The windows through which you look from inside out: every day you move away from them a little, just as the sun beams in the morning have moved a few finger-broadly further than the day before. Thus, at some point you will be so far away from the window that you will be only able to see–as if through a reversed pair of binoculars–a tiny bright rectangle, and you can only guess at the passers-by, the cars, life behind it.
>
> (Bayer 2019: 9)[6]

25   This completely focused and reduced view–as the observatory gaze per se–becomes a tunnel vision, where in the end only a white dot remains at the very edge of the visual range, until the reflection is topped: one could imagine an entire system of tunnels, an unimaginably large number of labyrinthine corridors, in which one is stuck in complete darkness and isolation. Yet, each of these infinitely long passages leads to the outside world, which changes into a vision of an external perspective of all the tunnel exits, each of which becomes illuminated:

> […] and at one point you will have taken such a tremendous distance that you have a clear view of the entire structure, of the billions and billions of dots that form into constellations, and eventually their brilliance will be so radiant that they will outshine everything and erase all shadows, and suddenly you will find yourself, with a mark, on the street, outside the window through which you glimpsed inside passing by. Inside it is empty, you reflect a little in the window pane. You will keep going, the mark will remain.
>
> (Ibid.: 9–10)[7]

26   Here, representative of the space in which Bayer's 'perceptual prose' unfolds, the reader encounters nothing less than the scene of the window gaze described in Poe's *The Man of The Crowd*: albeit in a *retracted* manner. It is precisely the movement "With my brow to the glass …" (Poe 1840/2003: 392) that is *withdrawn*, serving as a synonym for Bayer's successive efforts to turn towards an interior space that lies *before* any photographic representation, before the gaze of the camera, and before any projection onto an external, always unattainable object (of desire). He sketches an inherently *invisible* space, from which billions of perceptions, or rather, negatives develop from isolated darkrooms, as highly affect-laden 'locked rooms'. Only in passing might the observer get a sense of all the possible efforts towards a world-view that occur within the interior behind the pane, with his or her own gaze from the outside also slightly reflected.

The Creator's Gaze

27 Another miniature entitled *White* (*Weiß*) from the same collection demonstrates the significance of this retraction of the observing gaze. After the protagonist has reflected on his loneliness and how he has been drawn into daily routines like a marionette, he decides to conduct a "ladies' choice" and asks a random female passer-by to take a picture of him. However, whether accidently or not, she has taken a photo of herself. After impulsively deleting the picture, the man attempts to recover it and comes across all the deleted images from the past: "The former lover presents you with her seductive pout, dead friends cheekily grin into your camera, and your niece, who is now in middle school, lies sleeping in the pram." (Bayer 2019: 63)[8] Yet, the impressions of the past, the re-encounter with all the journeys, parties, and landscapes, quickly become overwhelming. In order to destroy the flood of memories, the man flushes the memory card down the toilet and smashes the smartphone with a hammer.

> So, the first step would be done, you think. For a while, you sit there as if petrified, then you fetch a sheet of paper and a pen, lay the sheet in front of you on the table, und try to draw the woman who photographed you on the street from your memory. To do this, you close your eyes, and your hand seems to draw lines on its own. When you feel you're finished, you open your eyes and astonishingly realise that from the blankness of the paper, a perfect self-portrait is looking back on you.
> (Ibid.)[9]

28 Putting photography aside, the protagonist turns to painting and thus to a 're-auratisation' ("to the gaze that will never get its fill of a painting, photography is rather like food for the hungry or drink for the thirsty", Benjamin 1940/2006: 338). However, Bayer's precise description of the dimensions of visual and virtual space, of the auratic "ability to look back" (ibid.), and of its connection to the *mémoire involontaire*, do lead to a process of pictorial *self*-identification. He thus clearly stands in the tradition of modern visual arts; like Matthew Buckingham, he also encounters a temporal aspect, "the boundaries of the imagination that separate the here and now from what lies beyond, in time and space." (Franke 2004) This seems to be reflected in Bayer's work even in the smallest details, as excerpts from his second novel already demonstrate:

> [I just wanted to be alone], also because I was afraid of becoming inhuman with my strange obsession to let everything expand within me that actually offered itself for compression.
> (Bayer 2003: 18)

> [I] often stood for a long time in front of the large mirror inside the house, gazing through it towards the door. In fact, once, after staring at this inverted world for a very long time, I actually tried to see if I could reach through the glass and get to the other side, just like in the movies.
> (Ibid.: 70–1)

> It seemed that I was reflected by everything in my surroundings, and at the same time that I turned everything that spoke to me into my own language in the blink of an eye, to transpose all impressions into my expressions. However, this compulsion also seemed as if it had been learned and was inevitably the clock in a cruel sequence of affects.
> (Ibid.: 109)

The yawning gap as the origin of symmetry is the predetermined breaking point, the approach to tearing it apart: symmetry destroys its origin: it thus destroys itself: the mirror has brought us to the idea of tearing apart: before, it was a delusion, an ingrained one, then only, through the mirror, it became an idea, a reflection, and thus came the shattering of the mirror: and since every person can see their reflection in another person, it led to murder: and the crack, the crack in the mirror is again nothing other than the gap from which symmetry emerges: and the navel is death.

(Ibid.: 148–9)[10]

29   These passages illustrate Bayer's attempt to capture the divergence of verbal and visual identification strategies, like a sealed darkroom that opens up between them, before all illumination and 'screening', before one's own identity is 'compressed' by external influences. From the novel form to miniatures and to the most recent poems (concisely entitled *Poetry/Poesie*, 2023), plots and reflections always unfold detached from visual convention. Language and images do not overlap into a single perspective and are not stimulated by fixed external objects, they rather prove to be highly solipsistically constituted: "On the street, I once again had the feeling, craftingly, of being constitutive just by looking. Everything seemed to be made for such a kind of creator's gaze." (Bayer 2003: 26)[11] This 'creator's gaze' cannot be captured in mirrors and moments of self-identification but seeks their destruction to demonstrate the release of creative energies towards an open ending—as abstractly depicted in the tunnel universe with its billions of individual exits from darkness and solitude (fittingly, Will Oldhams' *I See a Darkness* serves as a subsequent motto in *Alaska Highway*). In the absence of a visual *intercepting screen* or 'protective screen', in the absence of any narrative distance and thus in stark contrast to any form of authorial narration (i.e. without the 'god trick', cf. Haraway 1988), there is a constant exploration of the narrator's or lyrical subject's own affects towards objects that are no longer arranged in a regular environment but in new, unexpected relations within 'no-man's-land rooms' ('Niemandslandräume') or 'nonetheless rooms' ('Nichtsdestotrotzräume', ORF-Topos 2022). Psychoanalytically speaking, these are completely separate spaces of desire that are no longer constituted by the attraction of concrete partial objects; hence the constant disruption of the reflections of an ego identity revelling in its irritation, where longing becomes generalised. This is poetically summarised in the novel *When the Children Throw Stones into the Water* (*Wenn die Kinder Steine ins Wasser werfen*, 2011), which consists entirely of a single sentence:

[…] a few of the children stopped in front of the pond, bent down, picked up small stones, and threw them in, and as my eyes, by watching the water rings forming with each impact of a pebble, became increasingly glazed over, I knew, that was it und that is it and this will be it, that is what I wanted and what I want and what I will want, and I just forgot it, the surface of the pond and that eternal moment when children throw stones into the water, and the ripples spreading and overlapping, as they were playing together, and fading away, drying up on the shore, and in the water, the reflection of the sky, moving swaying […].

(Bayer 2011: 117)[12]

30   Throughout Bayer's stories and reflections, there is a *Mysterious Crackling from the Realm of Enchantment* (*Geheimnisvolles Knistern aus dem Zauberreich*, 2014), and as is typical for fairy tales as for magical realism, violence is never far away (cf. Osmanović 2021). Since it is not bound to representation, it does not appear psychologised: brutality emerges as a natural constant that regulates interactions beneath the surface, and as a normal, recurring certainty within an alternative, inverted reality.

31 As it always concerns the very personal stories and reflections of the first-person narrator or the lyrical subject, notions of violence are often an integral part of them. Yet, by constantly mitigating all effects, treating them as normal and self-evident, their voices appear to function as constant observers and pursuers, i.e. as detectives, of themselves: "For a while I toyed with the idea [...] of shooting those whom I held responsible for triggering my rage and despair. But even in this mental game, I felt like someone in the wrong role. I felt like a double agent, pretending I could keep it hidden from myself." (Bayer 2003: 68)[13] And even the phase of escalation is precisely observed: "[...] my eyes met in the mirror above the sink, and I was hypnotised by the cruelty I saw in them." (Ibid.: 85)[14] These early examples once again illustrate the self-reflective 'ethnographic' aspects in Bayer's work, which offer a unique perspective on the dialectical process of observation. Virtually, it is as one is observing animalistic affects vehemently rebelling against any form of (visual) domestication and attempting to break free, endowed with a 'creator's gaze' that cannot settle for any conventional, soothing surface; it is as if one is directly observing the 'asocial person' at work in frantic search of its primal 'hunting ground'. Or, in the later works, it is rather the fictional portrayal of the ingenious cultivation of primitive impulses in a wild urban environment.

32 Obviously, the reader encounters a distinctly male-connoted gaze that is constantly reflected upon; often, female opponents serve as sparring partners, particularly pronounced in Bayer's latest collection *Stories with Marianne* (*Geschichten mit Marianne*, 2020). However, at this point, not the gender aspect in Bayer's work should be highlighted here (it will be addressed towards the end of this contribution). Rather, a specific circumstance or coincidence regarding the significance of Bayer's work in relation to factual crimes and acts of violence should be emphasised. On 9 November 2020, *Stories with Marianne* was awarded the Austrian Book Prize, with the jury extolling that the author "illuminates the 'spaces of fear' of our times [...] with malicious, often melancholic humour" (Austrian Book Prize 2020).[15] Indeed, over the course of two decades of his writing, Bayer has searched for traces of those urban areas that lead from seemingly fixed concepts *back* into complete uncertainty, that "plunge his hero into chaos and leave him only his own imagination as a place of salvation" (ibid.). This is realised, for example, in the scene of a man who takes a seat in front of a large cathedral like a street musician, placing a deceptively authentic machine gun across his knees and holding a sign that reads 'THIS MAN WILL NOT SHOOT!' to fathom the reaction of the police (see Bayer 2019: 53–5); or in the first of the stories with *Marianne*, set in an apartment in the city centre during the surreal scene of a terror attack that leads to a state of war and eventually prompts the two protagonists, after a luxurious dinner, to take up arms themselves (against the police), ending fatally (see Bayer 2020a: 5–12).

33 In Bayer's texts, the potential of (terrorist) violence is latently simmering, and is depicted particularly in these latter miniatures. That they were awarded the Austrian Book Prize in 2020 is all the more remarkable, considering that the announcement took place exactly one week after the first jihadist-motivated terrorist attack in Vienna, which left four dead and twenty-three injured. The coincidence goes so far that it occurred on All Soul's Day, the very day that Bayer–who also happened to have lived near the site of the attack for decades–decided to bring Marianne to her death at the Vienna Central Cemetery in a subsequently published final story (Bayer 2020b).

34 The question now arises as to what extent *investigative arts*, with their long tradition of tracing clues, reflecting on media practises, and anticipating states of shock and violence through engagement with 'spaces of fear', can contribute to the processes of reappraising outstanding events, actual terror events in particular. How can they counter the fundamentalist agendas that most viciously seek to disrupt the

balances of collective everyday routines, visual standards, and memory processes by targeting a large number of random people in an urban environment? What can principles of 'rephotography' contribute to uncover "the real feeling through the artificial" (Bond 2009: 18)?

35 In order to better identify this, as well as the potential and value of a media-critical philological approach, it first seems necessary to recapitulate the details of collective media experiences during the events of 2 November 2020.

## Second Mediological Circuit

Targeting the Viennese Crowd

36 Vienna became, at a comparatively late date, part of the scene of so-called *global terrorism*, which has shaped the general perception of attacks since 9/11, radically changed the understanding of public security, and established a new discourse on terrorism research, which can now hardly be overlooked. According to the logic of a new *asymmetrical warfare*, the crowd has become the target as the subject of a 'soft' and 'post-heroic' society, with the intention of creating victims arbitrarily, not only sending out via media broad shock waves, but also motivating potential future perpetrators (cf. Münkler 2006: 196–248). Thus, a kind of new international "semiosphere" (Lotman 2005) emerged, a spatial context of understanding that implies a specific form of knowing and seeing, with the latency of witnessing unimaginable violence via television and, increasingly, via the World Wide Web. Viewers and users are prompted more than ever to follow all the media traces they can get hold of and to form a collective picture, and a collective memory, of the most gruesome events.

37 Matthew Buckingham's project from 2003 can certainly also be read against this background. The engagement with Poe, as well as implicitly with Freud, Lacan, and Benjamin, reflects current media phenomena with a focus on the individual viewer and their involvement in the process of *taking a picture.* At the same time, it also mirrors the tenor of critical media reflection, which has become the standard in academic discourse in recent decades. To illustrate the genesis of the associated 'semiosphere' in a differentiated way, other receptions of Poe in Austria can also be juxtaposed: the expressionistic and fantastical readings and graphic adaptations in the first decades of the 20th century; the declamation of texts by Poe and also Baudelaire by Austrian avant-gardists of the 'Vienna Group', in 1953 as part of a procession through the city centre; or Peter Rosei's experimental novel *Who Was Edgar Allan?* (*Wer war Edgar Allan?*, 1977, some years later filmed by Academy Award-winning director Michael Haneke; incidentally, Austria's contribution to the European Song Contest 2023 would then also be entitled: *Who the Hell Is Edgar?*). In this respect, Buckingham's reception of Poe in Vienna can be regarded within a specific context, evaluating what particular type of vision, phantasm, and violence are being negotiated– in this case, the violence of 'global terrorism' and the fundamental questions of sovereignty, identity, and territory that it triggers. This is the reason why the November 2020 attack can be encountered with a practice of mediological reflection on the conditions of seeing that has already undergone two decades of intensive scientific, philosophical, and artistic elaboration, with Buckingham's film installation as a particularly significant early example.

38　This was, however, the first direct experience of being affected by 'asymmetrical warfare' for official Austria and its citizens, and the contexts and reactions should therefore be read all the more through a nationally specific lense. In any case, the attack was the first one after a long time and took place in a completely different context (cf. Schliefsteiner/Hartleb 2023: 49). Many factors suggest placing it in the context of recent events in France (cf. Stockhammer 2023: 59–63): On September 2, the trial started against the alleged accomplices of the terrorist attack on the editorial department of the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in 2015, in which 12 people were killed. On this occasion, the editorial team once again published a Muhammad cartoon, which caused outrage among Islamist groups, as it had in 2006. In October, in addition to a fatal knife attack on a homosexual couple in Dresden, Germany, a history teacher was beheaded on the streets of Paris; later in the same month, a knife attack took place in a church in Nice that left three people dead. Moreover, the fifth anniversary of the attacks reclaimed by the jihadist organisation 'Islamic State' in November 2015, including the massacre at the Bataclan theatre, with 130 victims, was imminent. It is likely that the shooter in Vienna acted against this background, especially as on the evening of the attack, he seems to have headed for a French restaurant in the Vienna city centre, which, however, was closed that day. As it was the last day before the second lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic in Austria, there were more people in the popular nightlife district in downtown Vienna.

39　The attack itself lasted for approximately nine minutes, after the perpetrator had, presumably, set off on foot from the twenty-second district, as shown by surveillance camera footage, and had strolled around the area of Schwedenplatz for some time (cf. ibid.: 119–51). Before being shot and killed by special task units, police forces already engaged him in gunfire three minutes after the first shots were fired, thus successfully preventing a higher casualty count. Additionally, on his very erratic and unstructured path through the streets—striving for a vast number of random casualties according to the hit-and-run-pattern first deployed in the Mumbai attack 2008 (cf. ibid.: 128)—, the presumably skilled perpetrator had prepared his weapon in an amateur manner. Nevertheless, he was capable of killing four people and injuring more than twenty. After having already shared an intimating picture on Instagram before the attack, the 'Islamic State' terror group uploaded a confession video on its social-media channels the following evening and claimed responsibility for the attack on 'gatherings of Crusaders'.

40　This short summary, however, does not correspond at all to the highly confusing and complex situation at hand. It took until the following day, when public life was largely shut down, before it could be confirmed that there were no further accomplices. Emergency call centre lines were overloaded up until midnight with reports and misleading information. On a platform established by the Ministry of the Interior, approximately 24,000 clues from the public were submitted within the next two days, including more than a dozen videos that were uploaded multiple times. Particularly apparent was the fact that a private television station perpetuated the hazardous situation by not only propagating the theory of multiple perpetrators but also, despite the police urgently having asked the public not to distribute any images of the crime, by starting to show explicit video clips of the incident about one hour after the gunman already had been neutralised (cf. Press Council 2021). Due to the large number of incoming reports, there were also numerous parallel police operations in which another attacker or hostage situation was suspected—for example, a hostage-taking in a restaurant in another part of the city was reported after about an hour and a half (cf. Vienna@ORF 2020). However, even after having secured the high-risk situation with about 1,000 officers, the involvement of other fugitive attackers could not be definitively ruled out in the following days, and in particular questions concerning the preparations for the attack remained a matter of discussions over the coming days and weeks. In total, the intensive investigations that followed would span a year and resulted

in 40 international requests for legal assistance, over 1,000 concrete tips from the public, 32 arrests, 46 house searches, 150 telephone surveillances, 25 optical or auditory surveillances, 340 witness interviews, 67 call data recoveries, 400 surveillance cameras analysed, and 90 bank accounts opened (cf. Stockhammer 2023: 155).

41 It is no surprise, that discussion and negotiation of the attack was particularly vividly on social media platforms (cf. Tambuscio/Tschiggerl 2023). Text messages, images, and videos were uploaded as the events were happening and would significantly influence and shape the discussions, not just on the evening itself, but also in the following weeks, contributing greatly to how the event entered national collective memory (among it the decision, not to mention the perpetrator's name). On former Twitter, now X, the hashtag "#schleichdiduoaschloch" (Viennese dialect for "Get lost, you asshole"), allegedly shouted by a resident at the perpetrator from an open window, became a locally-coloured counterpart to "#jesuischarlie". The 'ordinary' phrase, typical of the dialectal *parole* in Vienna, eventually served as a suitable means to express shock and grief as well as to reaffirm the connection to the local identity, gaining attention in both national and international mainstream media. Given the popularity of the use of the hashtag, Austrian novelist Michael Köhlmeier recognised in this exclamation a witty and consoling descendant of Kant's imperative: "Have the courage to use your own reason." (Köhlmeier 2020).

Figure 4. Geographical distribution of geolocated tweets: A world map to show that there was a global discussion and a focused map on Europe which also highlights language-related clusters, in: Tambuscio, Marcella/Tschiggerl, Martin (2023): "#schleichdiduoaschloch" Terror, Collective Memory, and Social Media, in: Social Media + Society 9 (3). DOI: 10.1177/20563051231186365.
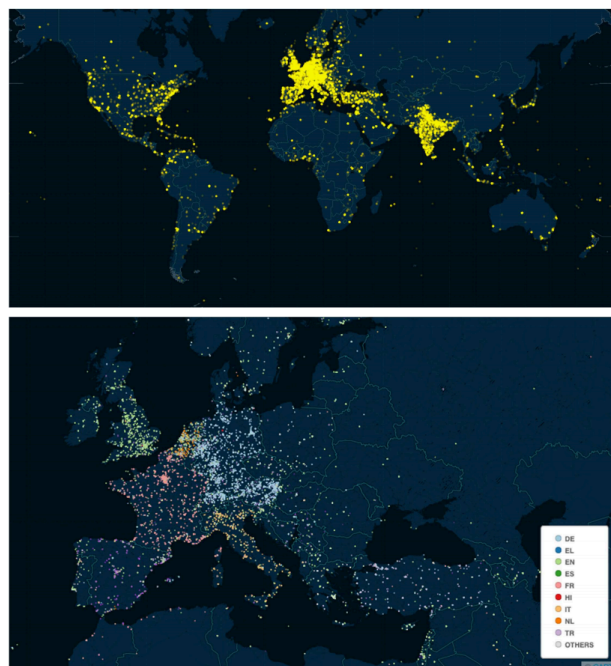
42 In addition to retracing the formation of a specific national collective memory that was significantly shaped by social media interactions, it is also instructive to juxtapose this development to the international responses (cf. Tambuscio/Tschiggerl 2023). As a global phenomenon, the attack was integrated into already existing narratives about global Jihad, which became especially evident in those places that had their own memories of recent terrorist attacks: Berlin, Nice, London, Paris, Brussels, Barcelona, and Mumbai. It is

interesting to note that the attack itself, rather unusually for the discourse in Austria, led to comparatively few national tweets with Islamophobic and anti-Muslim sentiment, thus establishing a collective memory that did not rely on anti-Islamic narratives. On the contrary, 'hate' content could be traced back in particular to English-language tweets, and were attributed to international networks, and in most cases to anonymous profiles (cf. Lindenmayr et al. 2021).

43   What successively came into focus, however, were official shortcomings made in the run-up of the attack, seeming to become—one could say, typical of the Austrian bureaucratic and somewhat nepotistic tradition —the actual black box of concern surrounding the events. On the one hand, the rapid deployment of the special task forces was traced back to the fact that raids among Austrian Islamist scene had been planned for the very same night, leading to the assumption of an early warning of the attacker (who, all the more, had received an automatically generated text message from the police that same afternoon about a self-submitted report). Nevertheless, the raid was carried out a week later to great media effect ('operation Luxor'), which was retrospectively evaluated as a sham operation with questionable results, and was even rated by a criminal sociologist as a "textbook example of governing with crime and fear" (Kreissl 2023). To a certain extent, one could draw the conclusion that the absence of anti-Islamic sentiment in the negotiation of collective memory in the social media was subsequently adjusted by official sources to fit the typical nationalist narrative.

44   Taking a further step into the depths of Austrian domestic politics, which has been rocked by a multitude of scandals in recent years, one could not help but suspect that this demonstration of state power through 'operation Luxor' was also an attempt to distract from other shortcomings. The Austrian intelligence service (former BVT) had itself been the subject of a raid led by the Ministry of the Interior in 2018 and was considered to be largely incapable of operating properly and, from an international perspective, unreliable since, with some its agents being under the suspicion of having close connections to the Russian secret service (which is still a matter of investigation within the scope of the 'Wirecard scandal'; cf. further Riegler 2022). The restructuring of the Austrian intelligence service in 2021 was, not least, a reaction to the suspected failures surrounding the attack (cf. Zerbes 2021; Der Standard/Hashtag 2021; Stockhammer 2023: 167–87). In this regard, three aspects came into focus in particular. Firstly, it soon became more than obvious that a lack of cooperation between the intelligence agency and probationary services had taken place beforehand. The attacker had already been convicted for attempting to travel to Syria and joining the 'Islamic State', and was released early from prison on the condition that he participate in a deradicalisation program, during which his lack of progress should have become apparent. Secondly, it appears that a network meeting with him and radical Islamists from Germany, assessed by the German Federal Bureau of Investigation, was inadequately monitored. Thirdly, and mostly discussed, Austrian police had been informed by Czech authorities that he had attempted to purchase ammunition for an assault weapon in Bratislava, Slovakia; this information was not reported promptly to the judiciary and neglected. According to the final report of the investigation commission on the terror attack (Zerbes 2021), all pieces of information could not be consolidated together in the scope of an 'operative case analysis' due to the lack of an appropriate database, of professionalism and of adequate financial resources.

45   Given these specific circumstances, many questions about the events surrounding 2 November 2020 remained unanswered. In this regard, the trial of the six men accused of involvement in the attack, which took place about two years later, was highly anticipated in order to clarify the key aspects of the terrorist crime—but would eventually not comply with the *suspense* built up around it in the run-up.

Verdict

46 About two years after the attack, a public trial started at the Criminal Court of Vienna against six people, who were suspected of having supported the shooter of November 2 in the pre-run and thus of being involved in the quadruple murder, as well as–this accusation weighs much lighter–of having been members in a terrorist organisation and having spread terrorist propaganda beforehand (cf. Hoisl 2022–2023; Krammer 2022–2023; Marchart/Möseneder 2022–2023; Punz 2022–2023; Seiser/Strohmayer 2022–2023; Stockhammer 2023: 158–165; Wallner 2023). Investigations for potential accomplices in Germany and Switzerland, however, had yielded no results. The eagerly anticipated trial lasted for fifteen days of hearings, scheduled over several months, and took place under heightened security precautions. It was continuously covered by the press, although the initial high media interest diminished over time, until it resurged on the day when the jurors, after having deliberated long into the night, read out the verdicts. Four defendants were convicted to almost maximum sentences for their involvement in the murder–life imprisonment for the two men aged over 21 years at the time of the attack: the first for the man who had lived in the perpetrator's flat shortly before the attack, and was alleged to have prepared the weapons, ammunition, and other utensils, and the other for the dealer of the rifle, who, however, appeared to have acted out of self-interest and not with any terrorist intention. Another man, who had procured the weapon with the knowledge of possible terrorist consequences was sentenced to 19 years, while the close acquaintance of the perpetrator, who was alleged to have encouraged him to carry out the attack and to have prepared his escape by obtaining forged documents, was sentenced to 20 years. The two other defendants were convicted with lower sentences, for the dissemination of terrorism propaganda. Except for minor adjustments to the sentences related to the terrorism paragraph, the verdicts were imposed by the Austrian Supreme Court.

47 As camera recordings were not permitted during the trial and due to the significant public interest, a courtroom artist was commissioned to capture the atmosphere, who concentrated on facial expressions (ensuring that the depicted person remained unrecognisable), small details, and imposing appearances, using the breaks of the trial to colourise the sketches (cf. Wien@ORF 2022).

Figure 5. Reproduction of a court drawing from the trial of six men accused of involvement in the attack, October 2022–January 2023, © Gerald Hartwich, zeichenstrich.de.

48 From a mediological perspective, the trial was literarily 'staged' according to the theatrical dispositif of jurisprudence, as examined by Cornelia Vismann, which demands a re-enactment and a process of verbalisation of the course of events (cf. Vismann 2011: 31–7). Usually, being removed from the actual crime scene and transferred to a different temporal level, a trial does not adhere to the rules of faithful representation:

> The courtroom is an indispensable part of the re-enactment if it is to fulfil its function and smooth the gap between deed and word. The play performed on the stage of the court, therefore, does not adhere to the rules of faithful representation. It is subject—starting from the architecturally predetermined lines of sight to the fixed order of speech in courts—to the requirements of the symbolic order of representability.
>
> (Ibid.: 32–3)[16]

49 In this constellation, the crime becomes an event of *language* rather than an event of the *image* (cf. ibid.: 33). The *oral* character of the trial reaches its climax in the verdict of the judge or the jury, while it finds its ultimate completion in *written* form in the official transcripts and resolutions. The oral nature of the trial goes back to an idea of publicity that emerged in the 19th century: then, writing was still too closely associated with arcane state affairs and a closed justice system, which was then to be democratically overcome by the principle of orality (cf. ibid.: 130–1). Since then, the court has obtained theatrical characteristics, while addressing a completely uninvolved audience—and it becomes the task of the mass media to create a resonance space for the many voices within society (cf. ibid.: 139–42; also here, Karl Kraus is mentioned on account of his 'juridicary writing'; on photographs in the courtroom cf. ibid.: 184–90, on television reports 292–317).

50 Starting from the different entrances to the court—via security gates and separate access areas for judges, jurors, imprisoned defendants, and the others—to the external communication through the press to serve justice and satisfy a mass-media public outside the court, everything is precisely defined in the modern court system. Evidently, this also includes the assignment of roles in the process of verbalisation: judge, panel of judges, jurors, public prosecutor, representatives of the private parties, defendants, defence attorneys, witnesses, experts, interpreters and spectators, as well as the recording clerk. Therefore, it is not surprising that not only the explicit permission of the defendants to lie (i.e., to speak without being sworn in), but also to remain silent, has always been endowed with a certain meaning. In a way, this is the focal point around which everything revolves: persuading the defendants to confess in public; even if it is just to get the evidence, witnesses, and experts to speak for them in order to reach a verdict.

51 In fact, only one scene at criminal court actually remains secret: the deliberations of the jury (cf. ibid.: 144–5). This is the only place of discussion without any supervision, that is not open to the public and which is not recorded via transcript. Interestingly enough, in this terror trial, it was precisely this process of reaching a verdict that would eventually irritate experienced court observers. Although the press had diligently followed the trial and no significant new perspectives or arguments on the circumstantial evidences had emerged during the public hearings, the reasons for reaching the verdict, as concluded by the jurors in the black box of the separate jury chamber, remained largely opaque. This became even more puzzling due to the highly unusual case of the jurors seeking the judge's assistance for their deliberations, in order to be advised through the extensive and complex amount of court documents.

52 From a mediological perspective, the trial offered interesting insights into other areas as well. In connection with the violation of anti-terrorism laws, there were repeated discussions about the dissemination of text and video messages via SMS or in chat groups. This involved details such as the interpretation of the religious meaning, the intentions behind their transmission, and the number of recipients. The disposal and resetting of phones and secondary phones were also recurring topics. Of particular interest was the eventually futile attempt to track the defendants' locations and movement profiles on the day of the attack through their logins to specific cell towers. In addition, ticking almost all aspects of the theatrical dispositif analysed by Vismann, the poor acoustics in the large jury courtroom were also repeatedly addressed and complained about: contradicting the ideal of democratic assemblies and of architecturally including everyone within earshot in the process of oral trial (cf. ibid.: 136–9). Finally, a video link to foreign witnesses was also established (cf.: ibid. 333), which took on somewhat comical features: initially, it proved impractical and against the rules (due to unrecognisable facial expressions) to ensure the anonymity of the witnesses by means of face masks and exaggerated voice distortion. It was only by minimising the voice distortion and facial concealment, along with the exclusion of the defendants and the public from the witness examination, that it could finally be conducted.

53 The most theatrical performance, however, may have been provided by the expert who examined the DNA traces on the weapons, clothing, and other items in the forensic laboratory of the Medical University of Vienna. Of the nearly 600 DNA-relevant traces, only 38 percent proved to be usable; the rest was either contaminated or consisted of overlapping 'mixed profiles'. Among these, naturally, the DNA traces of the perpetrator were evident, along with other traces, with particularly pronounced ones left by the defendant who had resided in the perpetrator's apartment. (Furthermore, even DNA traces of the daughter of the foreign arms dealer were found; the dealer was later sentenced to a minor charge due to a miscarriage of justice beforehand.)

Figure 6. Pyramid showing the levels in the hierarchy of propositions and the components requiring consideration when evaluating observations given propositions at those levels.
Duncan Taylor, Bas Kokshoorn (2023): Forensic DNA Trace Evidence Interpretation: Activity Level Propositions and Likelihood Ratios. Boca Raton: CRC Press, p. 27.
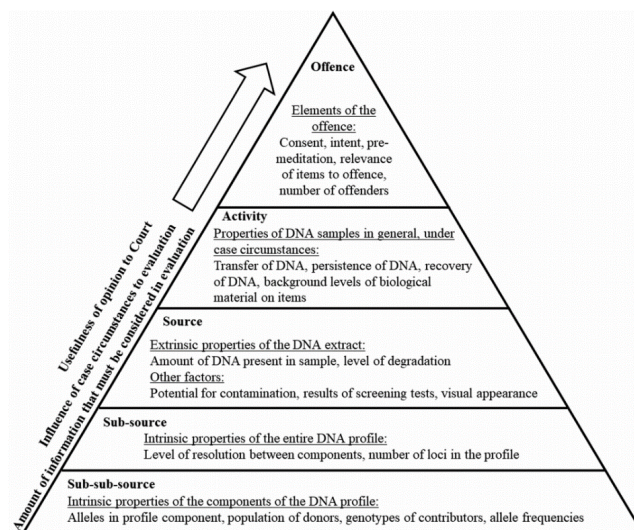
54   The conclusion of the proceedings was marked by the attempt to establish control over the interpretation of the DNA traces. The defence counsel sought to demonstrate, by including an external expert, that so-called 'secondary transfers' could have led to the numerousness of traces. Reference was made to new guidelines in forensic medicine, which recommend to consider multiple hierarchies in the interpretation of DNA traces (cf. Gill et al. 2020; Vennemann et al. 2021; Rothöhler 2021; Taylor/Kokshoorn 2023). Essentially, this concerns a specific background DNA analysis which takes into account several possibilities under which DNA transfer could take place, and what components require consideration when evaluating observations.

55   Thus, towards the end of the proceedings, the trial reached a topic that will probably continue to spark debates and refinements in the evaluation of DNA traces and the tracing of complex trace scenarios in the future, due to the continuing methodological improvements. Rather than discussing an individual's DNA as the potential source of a DNA trace, questions will probably focus on activities leading to the deposition of a potentially innocent persons biological material.

56   Ultimately, this was not considered relevant to the Vienna trial itself. However, it vividly demonstrated the direction in which those instruments and analysis tools will evolve, which draw on a tradition of the *Magnifying Glass* (Sweeney 2003), enhancing the human eye's capabilities, and further contributing to the virtualisation of evidence, and, thus, of crime.

Third Mediological Circuit

On True Detectives

57   The second 'mediological circuit' of this contribution has illustrated how the terrorist crime in Vienna, beyond the procedures of securisation by executive forces, was from its outset a public object of *reconstruction*: through police reports, journalistic coverage, interactions on social media, and later through forensics and judicial procedures, officially culminating in the trial against six men suspected of having been involved in the planning and preparation of the attack. Thus, the constitutional and conventional techniques for establishing the facts and determining the formal perspective on the events of 2 November 2020, "the representation of a process of decision-making based on norms" (cit. Niklas Luhman in Vismann 2011: 22), were concluded—even though crucial details about the course of the attack remained opaque and official shortcomings, presumably made beforehand, still await transparent revision.

58   The third and final 'mediological circuit' now aims to connect to the observations of the first section —regarding the media dispositif that generally constitutes the 'criminal mind', and the concept of the 'locked room' where the dissolution of both crime and poetry has since occurred according to similar aspirations of discovering ('detegere', being a detective)—and to demonstrate the extent to which these insights can provide an additional meaningful perspective alongside the investigative techniques of the executive, the judiciary, and the media, as fourth power. This power differs from the other three in that it does not attempt to follow the traces of terrorist crimes to the final level of official representation, to bring them to a conclusion 'based on norms', but rather to media-historically reflect on these processes themselves. It allows the dismantling of the narrative and imaginary techniques of creating and framing what would become the object of collective remembrance through a diverse field of media experience and iconic identification, which itself becomes referred to as reality (Franke 2004: 10). At first glance, this

reflexive approach, drawing from counter-cultural traits developed from literary, artistic and theoretical perspectives from the periphery, may seem unscientific and even provocative. However, it may be the only approach that, through a peculiar dialectic or aporia that inverts the collective horizon of witnessing and opinion-forming, can address spaces of silence and the invisible that must be reserved without restriction for the *victims* of terrorist violence.

59   In compliance with the current state of cultural theoretical research on terrorism, it would probably be expected to continue with a general reflection on the genesis of the modern institutionalisation process of violence according to positive law, its relationship to natural law, and its overcoming: with Benjamin's *Critique of Violence* and his remarks on the vanishing point of 'sovereign violence' (1921/2004a; cf. Newman 2004; Weigel 2006; Erlenbusch 2010); and also with Jacques Derrida's illuminating deconstructivist reading of the *Force of Law* (1990; cf. Borradori 2003; Hoffmann/Vismann 2005; Legrand 2016), pointing to a certain, future- instead of past-orientated, *democracy to come* (*la démocratie à venir*). This would indeed complete the theoretical panorama regarding the "aura of terror" (Lindroos 2008) and connect to current critical methods in terrorism research (cf. Jackson 2016; Dixit/Stump 2016; Finden et al. 2024). This would also complement the presentation of the international philosophical-theoretical "semiosphere" (Lotman 1984/2005), which has been decisive for the (self-)understanding and debates in the humanities in recent decades, and has shaped the visibility and knowledge about the phenomenon of terrorism and the role of investigative arts in this regard (cf. Hyvärinen/Muszynski 2008; Harris 2021).

60   Against the backdrop of 7 October 2023 though, the significance of these comprehensive theoretical approaches has clearly reached its limits and is confronted with an obvious loss of its former sharp reflective and connective potential: evoked by the fact that a terrorist attack of unprecedented scale seemingly no longer elicited a specific moment of unanimous consternation, concern, and–consciously using a religiously connoted term here–*disbelief*; that to highly significant extent, there was an immediate juxtaposition of terrorist and state violence, and incomparable brutality, especially against women, was levelled as one geostrategic 'hunting ground' among others; that one had to witness the fact that the time of investigation, of intricate procedures in search of a deeper truth, had evidently come to an end–and with it, the time of trying to uncover the "hideousness of mysteries which will not *suffer themselves* to be revealed" (Poe 1840/1996: 388). The investigation of 'criminal minds' and their peculiarities ends when everything is attributed to higher political powers and *explicit* contexts, when every differentiation between victim and perpetrator gets dissolved, and, this is important to emphasise in this context, the *male* imprint of "the essence of all crime" will henceforth remain "undivulged" (ibid.: 396). Yet, it is precisely then that one of the sharpest 'Western' methods of (self-)reflection and, indeed, *enlightening* gets abandoned. This is all the more disturbing as the blurring of specific traces in the wake of October 7 was particularly carried out by representatives of critical theory, who have achieved their high academic status and reputation through the rigorous defence of 'locked room' principles, precisely by constantly invoking insights from the 'evidence paradigm' in the humanities, by protecting the realms of ambiguity and liminality from all glaring lights of representative identification.

61   Thus, it has become challenging to convey what critical theory can still contribute to recent debates. The assumption of this chapter is that it still has the potential to provide key points of orientation for public reflection in the contexts of mass media, especially regarding the implementation of spaces of freedom *from* speech and opinion. However, to this end the role of critical theory must be reconsidered fundamentally. The approach via the figure of the *flâneur* offers a unique opportunity for this endeavour,

what might become more tangible by looking back again into its history and genesis, its initial attribution to the realm of the unstable and unconventional, and thus of conspiracy and suspicion: "Flânerie gives the individual the best prospects of doing so [playing detective]." (Benjamin 1938/2006: 21)

62   Original *flâneurs*–as 'true detectives'–are anything but representatives. They cannot be associated neither with the 'official' and its institutions nor with mass communication and social media activities. Rather, they know how to move among all the subjects of everyday life, how to profile others in their urban environment, how to 'streetwisely' operate below the official sphere and representation, against which the attackers (and the authorities behind them) do indeed turn: targeting the balances of collective everyday routines, visual standards, and memory processes. They have experienced and witnessed the developments of capitalist urban society, and of the violent potential of the crowd, from their beginnings; they are embedded in the cultural history of the metropolis and have been interested from the outset "in the special functioning of psychic mechanisms under present day-conditions" (Benjamin 1940/2006: 318). Thus, the 'crowd-poets', as predecessors of subsequent visual artists, were the very first to be aware of the effects of terrorism–after all, they were the first to provide insights into the "vigor and energy" underlying the "terrorist pipe-dream" which they sought to realize "in terrifying books", in order "to turn the whole human race against" them (ibid.: 5): to disrupt common perceptions in a 'terrorist' way and provoke all public habits of identifying, soothing, and tabooing. Although many compromises have been made with capitalist standards and their fascination with the representation of 'criminal minds', and different kinds of mimicries of the *flâneur* have developed since, one can still discern the counter-cultural trace that leads back to times when poets and conspirators operated on the same level: equipped with the special 'allegorical' potential to establish radically new, vibrant perspectives on objects and to imbue them, at least for a short time, with an aura.[17]

63   Interestingly, this is also the point at which poetic and scientific methodology would converge, at least temporarily: both point to autonomous procedures through which entirely new, unexpected discoveries and unconscious modes of thought emerge. Without this perspective, referring to a remnant of earlier sensual-orientated forms of knowledge and sagacity, of struggle, defeat and resilience, not only poetry but also, more broadly, the sciences would have remained stuck within the traditional realms of hierarchical structured dependencies. It is exactly this perspective that could offer a strategy to counteract terrorist acts–whose perpetrators are unfamiliar with these intrinsic methods of overcoming authoritarian structures from which they derive their justification–and to deal with religiously legitimised furore, by transcending it with the power of reflection and also, probably foremost, reticence.

64   An approximate starting point could be the following train of thought. Imagine a *flâneur*-like character sitting inside a café on a mild November late afternoon in the 22nd district of Vienna, with a newspaper in their lap, "poring over advertisements, now in observing the promiscuous company in the room, and now in peering through the smoky panes into the street" (Poe 1840/1996: 388), according to their daily routine ... and suddenly noticing a young black-bearded man with a black cap and a bag passing by, who for inexplicable reasons catches their attention. Suddenly wide awake, they leave the café quickly and begin to pursue the man: across the Kagraner Brücke, along the Wagramer Straße, past the UNO City, over the Reichsbrücke, through the second district towards the city centre, to the area around Schwedenplatz and for quite a time through alleys nearby, at one point witnessing the man pulling out his mobile phone and dumping it into a bin, until he stops in the entrance of a closed hotel, where the pursuer witnesses *just in time* , at the very right moment, how ... Or perhaps a few months earlier: in the summer of 2020 in the Prater and its surroundings, the wide avenue and the meadows, where a group of young, serious-looking

men, draw attention as they stroll aimlessly yet very calmly along paths and alleys, and even stop in front of Prater attractions from time to time, and how one almost bumps into them and overhears them discussing the tradition of the Islamic religious Shariah (law) …

65 This is by no means the idea of a round-the-clock alert and suspicious vigilante, nor of an undercover agent, quite the opposite: it is the vision of the *flâneur* having far more *potential* than any other to uncover crime—for they have in fact the ultimate potential to prevent it, as an everyday person without any preconceptions or obligations. Even if they fail to do so, or rather are not present at all, they nonetheless remain *the* right person who can be consulted *afterwards*, as the 'true detective': intrinsically knowing how it could have happened, what would not have had to happen should they have been there on the spot, in the right place, behind the window in the café, or on the street, fully perceptive *in advance* to the significance of such a scene, to the predispositions of an epic tale with absolutely negative portents, a detective story for which no crime has yet been committed and is still waiting to be written, which is on the brink of unfolding.

66 The figure of the 'true detective' not only opens up a room for revision of personal experiences that are shielded from any fixed, unified signification and identification, but also enters the field of psychoanalytical trauma management.

From Darkroom to Sanctuary by means of Photomontage Practice

67 In order to explain the significance of this position—which is, while difficult to convey, deeply rooted in enlightened societies and their knowledge of how to deal with experiences of shock and violence—we follow Buckingham's footsteps once again and return to Vienna and Xaver Bayer's solipsistic 'perception prose'. More precisely, we enter places, cafés, that seem to have fallen out of time (Marschall 2020), where observations and reflections could still unfold and develop off the mainstream—and where one might still find hints of the high potential of critical humanities and how to integrate the tension of artistic sources in their high local significance.

68 This is against the backdrop of two considerations: firstly, Walter Benjamin's remark that poetry has lost its potential for broad international reception because of modern mass effects and has retained its significance only in a "ore or less limited linguistic area" (Benjamin 1940/2006: 341). Since a similar effect can now also be observed in academic discourse—a similar devaluation of significance on an international scale, the drifting of axioms of a former common ground—it seems fruitful to return to the value of a specific local strand of poetic and theoretical reflection and its still active mediating power. With this approach, the intent is not about deriving the specific from a general and systematised symbolic or abstract (*discursively*), but rather, about arriving at a symbolical and abstract value via the specific (*pragmatically*). Secondly, reference is therefore made once more to the *male* figure of the *flâneur*—and not, as introduced by the American-born Austrian poet Ann Cotten, to a female 'flâneuse' or an 'anti-flâneur' (Cotten 2017: 7)—this is due to the fact that in Poe and the visual artists following him, especially in *The Man of the Crowd*, there is a decidedly male gaze almost throughout, which is resolutely pushed to its limits (Lamm 2003).

69 After all, it is precisely this constellation that should be emphasised in conclusion. Once again, we encounter Bayer's reflective style, as also realised on the book covers of his two last publications: displaying the shattered head of an antique statue for *Stories with Marianne*, and the reflection of a street view in a window pane, obscured by indoor plants, yet allowing a glance at a light flooded glass door at the back—a visualisation of the paradox according to which nature, like violence, can no longer be the object of an

outdoor experience or a 'natural hunting ground', but is only accessible through mediation and traversing a 'locked room'. This highly reflective photograph also alludes to Bayer's idea of a tunnel complex, which stands in stark contrast to all forms of light emanating from screens into dark rooms. Instead, it suggests a multitude of possible paths, of solipsistic worldviews that can be imagined as lowly developing while proceeding towards exits that are far away. Ultimately, these exits can be imagined of becoming illuminated, together forming a kind of inverted starlit sky (an utterly reversion of the 'god trick', cf. Haraway 1988).

Figure 7. Cover pages of Xaver Bayer's *Stories with Marianne* (2020) and *Poetry* (2023).

70 In one of the stories with Marianne, the narrator plans a visit to the World Museum (one might remember the character of Bayer's 'ethnographic' view or 'creator's gaze'). However, it turns out that the exhibition mainly contains digitised *interieur*, prompting the protagonist to exclaim "So that was once the world!", [18] and tempting him to smash one of the displayed African spears onto the screens—a kind of parodic flash of an "image of the hero here [that] includes the apache" and a "poetry of apachedom" (Benjamin 1938/2006: 47). The desperation about the 'world' as a digital museum leads the couple to use one of the emergency exits, through which they eventually come to a storage room with cleaning supplies. Away from all external impressions, they sit down on its floor, and the place becomes a refuge.

> We feel as if we have lost touch with the world. And how quiet it is … As if we were at home, back from all the journeys that have taken us to the most foreign lands and times. I close my eyes. Here, in the storage room, we have finally found a place to live. Here, I want to stay, build a family with Marianne, live, laugh, cry, celebrate, and when the time comes, I want to peacefully die here, nothing more and nothing less. […] It always takes a little while for the silence to emerge from its hiding place. It approaches only hesitantly, as if to scout out first whether there is really no danger. But then, once it has gained trust, it settles on you like a hounded animal finally finding safety, it descends over the space and fills both of us with its desire for nothing.
>
> (Bayer 2020a: 102–3)[19]

71   This is the impression that arises in the pitch-black, '*interieur*-free' storage room in the World Museum. And starting from this silence that has ensued, Marianne suddenly begins to talk about her experience of abuse that she suffered in her youth. It occurred in Italy, near Naples. There she embarked on a tour of the South after having had an abortion and falling in love with a philosophy student, who, however, soon began to beat her.

> The beatings got worse and worse. I constantly had bruises everywhere. Meanwhile, he kept taking photos of me. As I said, it got worse and worse. Then one day, I started taking photos of him with my father's reflex camera. He couldn't handle that, he completely lost it. I fought him with his own weapon. That evening, he hit me really hard. The next day, I ran away, first back to Rome, then further home by train. I locked myself in my apartment for several weeks and didn't contact anyone. But I started taking photos of my body, which was tattooed with bruises. […] I have realised that I was somehow trying to abstract the injuries inflicted on me. The photos were not born out of narcissism, rather it was more of a process of self-interrogation, an experiment. With this work, with taking photographs and developing and making prints in my bathroom tuned into a darkroom, I unconsciously attempted to bring about a state that would allow me to transform into a being without relationships or society, to withdraw from any relationship with people, to ask and answer myself the question: What is happening to me? It felt good to fixate on that instead of just being fixated: Aren't you ashamed? I stuck the still damp photo prints of my disfigured body on the tiles in the bathroom. They stuck there all by themselves. Exhibiting them neutralised the shame. Over time, the medium itself became a wall. It wasn't a cure, but a barrier, not restitution, but a partition.
>
> (Ibid.: 104–6)[20]

72   The process of dealing with the experience of violence can obviously only take place retrospectively in this darkroom atmosphere. The victim, Marianne, can only make herself visible through her own photographic practices. Only here, it seems to the narrator "for the first time that I can approximately perceive who Marianne is" (ibid.: 106).

73   But, as "was to be expected", the reversal of this order of things according to the most private pictorial standards follows immediately: "suddenly we are expelled from paradise" (ibid.).[21] What follows happens according to the typical repertoire of re-entry into everyday life from curative exile. There is, in fact, only one rational explanation for the couple's presence in the dark storeroom: they only get away without charges by credibly claiming to have used the room for a quick sexual encounter. The wink of the security guard–an act that is completely oppositional to that of a 'true detective', who knows how to approach and interpret acts of silence and invisibility, how to establish a refuge from all external influences–speaks volumes: it testifies to the sexual latency with which each space of surveillance and criminal investigation is endowed; that the surveying gaze is linked to the desire to search for hidden (sexual) objects and forbidden (sexual) practices; and that each encounter with unfamiliar ground is automatically anticipated and developed within these dominant parameters.

74   Two general conclusions, or rather clarifications, can be drawn from this. Firstly, it is important to stress the quality of 'locked rooms' and their necessity within society, together with the function language has in this respect related to (prefabricated) pictures, dogmas, and *doxa*. Paradoxically, the more intensive the public desire for evidence has become–presently, with directly witnessing atrocities of warfare–, the more the possibilities of a 'true' encounter with massive acts of violence, especially conducted against women, seem

to have been abandoned (as if, with Bayer, they are levelled as a part of a digital world museum). Secondly, the impossibility of investigating the 'essence of all crime' can also be read as a lesson and introduction to the main concepts of monotheistic religions: their powerful 'hidden' centres, or sanctuaries, often imposed with an interdiction of images; their traditional functions in mediating between the most private and public concerns; and, not least, the primal civilisational event of being 'expelled from paradise'.

75 These fundamental implications in regard to violence must be remembered, especially in the context of terror crime and the demand to do justice to the respective perspectives of its victims: namely to concede them an autonomous space shielded from all (image) influences, where all external illuminations are blocked, and where one has all the time needed to literally develop images: i. e. the space historically, in the context of secularisation, opened up by symbolistic poetry and then, dialogically, through psychoanalysis. It is the darkroom where the 'true detectives' or 'true profilers' work, paying attention to the peculiarities of perception in connection with affects, how "tension becomes bodily": with the noble claim to operate with an "one hundred percent image space" (*Bildraum*, Benjamin 1929/2005: 217) that allows to carry out the process of generating negatives by means of highly individualised imaging procedures and surrealistic tools. This includes acknowledging the fact that 'reality', which is always a belated act of translation into *human* parameters, is constituted by "the presence of the past *in* the present" (Franke 2004: 10), and can therefore at any time change direction, through a myriad of individual paths 'out of the dark', towards an "unimproved humanity".

76 Finally, and it is vital to keep this in mind, even if the conclusion might appear somewhat complex: if the public loses track of this fundamental right to autonomous, highly affect-laden private 'image spaces' in the midst of complex geopolitical and media constellations, even in times of (asymmetrical) warfare, it also loses access to a deeper understanding of the 'essence of all crime'. This not only leads back along each individual character deeply related to it—but also to the lesson about the essence of all *sexualised* crime against femininity (which can also be found inherent to the concept of 'man' itself; in the context of war, cf. Lamb 2020).

On Lament

77 Until recently, it would have been instructive to refer to the playful, as well as humorous, character of detachment from a fixed object and representative image standard by citing an anecdote by Slavoj Žižek, in connection with his remarks on crime scene images:

> Recall the common expression to cast an eye over something, with its literal implication of picking the eye out of its socket and throwing it around. Martin, the legendary idiot from French fairy tales, does exactly this when his mother, worried that he will never find a wife, tells him to go to church and cast an eye over the girls there. What he does is go to the butcher first, purchase a pig eye, and then, in the church, throw this eye around over the girls at prayer—no wonder he later reports to his mother that the girls were not too impressed by his behavior. This, precisely, is what revolutionary cinema should be doing: using the camera as a partial object, as an eye torn from the subject and freely thrown around [...].
> (Žižek 2009: xiv)

78   The focus shifts here from the perception of fixed entities and representative image standards towards the negotiation of autonomous use of media: a different encounter with objects through a process of image creation and a "regular montage practice" (ibid.), which, like in poetry, manages to connect "the most ephemeral materials" and "most disparate things" (Wagner 2017: 41).

79   Meanwhile, however, some aspects of this anecdote must appear in a different, highly ambiguous light. It is not that the former practises of revolutionary cinema have lost their appeal, but rather that the media constellation and the nature of perception seem to have drastically changed in recent years. Firstly, the most blatant development, the autonomous use of the camera eye has increasingly been adapted by perpetrators themselves to generate live film footage and internet content of their atrocities committed. The instrument of imaginary distraction has become an agent of the 'horror' of the 'real', of what must remain unseen, utmost cynically demonstrating how things look in absence of humanity, how the world looks like "with inhuman eyes" (Žižek 2009: xv). Secondly, one cannot help but notice that the legend of Martin, who casts an eye around to find a wife because he does not dare to address women directly, follows a vision of a revolutionary cinema still driven by male-connoted desire. Finally, the defiant gaze meets girls in a church while praying. And less in light of terrorist atrocities than of recent distortions in public debates, it seems to be this very last aspect that is the least tangible to date and largely missing in public as well as academic discourse: the touching of areas of silence and insignificance that traditionally have been sublated (to use a Hegelian term consciously here) in religious contexts and sanctuaries to guarantee a space of 'untouchability', of unmediated epiphany, and potential for transition: the antithesis, therefore, of any hiatus provoked by indiscriminate terrorist violence.

80   This concept of a refuge where silence 'dares to show up' was presented in the literary example above. It is where, through a withdrawal of language (*langue*), by using one's own way of speaking (*parole*), images of the past can unfold, rise up "out of the depths of time" and portray an "image of the primeval world" (Benjamin 1940/2006: 338). It is the *secular* perspective on religious knowledge, its *profane* translation, which began its inception from Poe's gaze in the café, and obviously has lost none of its attraction to this day.

> Sitting in the empty café,
> the voice from the radio
> reads out in the background
> the news of the day−
> an attack,
> further arm deliveries,
> as well as new cases of an animal epidemic−
> backwards,
> and thus makes everything undone.
> Following the news, a familiar song,
> also backwards,
> as if a storm
> were turning all voices and all tones and sounds inside out and blowing them in the opposite direction.
> Through this backflow, the thoughts squeeze themselves.
> Willingly, one loses track and lets the gaze wander,
> as if the circumstances were favourable for it right now.
> And indeed−

behind a window pane in the house across the street, carnival garlands,
and inside the café, a photo pinned to the cork-board behind the counter,
showing an old, black-clad woman sitting at a table and staring into the void.
So one sets off again,
shouldering the luggage, the backpack full of salt.
(Bayer 2023: 94)[22]

81 Once again, the constellation of the photographic gaze is withdrawn. Caught in a general reflux, the news coverage is presented backwards, and with it, all serious incidents are made undone—"an attack,/further arm deliveries,/as well as new cases of an animal epidemic": indicating the approaching of a pre-November 2, pre-Ukraine-war, pre-Covid time, as it had actually existed years before (even though back then, entirely different bad news, fears, and worries had also prevailed). Through the reversal, the track of fixed external objects also dissipates (only carnival garlands are visible in the house across the street in sight), and the gaze turns back to the *interieur* of the café: noticing a photo pinned to a cork-board, showing an old woman dressed in black sitting at a table and staring into the void. Thus, with all the external light and pull factors and distractions withdrawn, the least representative feeling comes back into view: mourning.

82 Given the ongoing *religious* implications of assassination attempts as well as of current geostrategic conflicts, and with regard to recent developments in *secular* debates—exhibiting irreconcilable polarisations—it appears essential to revisit one of the central aspects of Abrahamic faith, probably one of the oldest, and perhaps most appropriate forms of response to states of terror. The attempt to bring this aspect back into consciousness, into language (*langue*), is possibly related to following the task of translation (cf. Benjamin 1921/2004b). This is all the more difficult and essentially unfeasible, as it touches upon a realm that, like no other, eludes every consideration and meditation ('it does not permit itself to be seen'). Therefore, it can only be achieved through a fundamental abolition of representation, and identification, and reconstructed through backward-directed processes to create a space that attracts what lies hidden and dormant in the past, waiting for expression in the present—not for one's own sake, one's own language (*parole*), but for that of *another*.

83 In view of the great difficulty of expressing these aspects in a suitable language, without pathos, and in light of the major distortions in recent debates against the backdrop of incomprehensible atrocities, Gershom Scholem's remarks on lament, as the language situated on the border, should conclusively be added to this. Substantially, they should stand for themselves:

> Its entire existence is based on a revolution of silence [*Schweigen*]. It is not symbolic, but only points toward the symbol; it is not concrete [*gegenständlich*], but annihilates the object. This language is lament. [...]

> Language in the state of lament annihilates itself, and the language of lament is itself, for that very reason, the language of annihilation [*Vernichtung*]. Everything is at its mercy. It repeatedly attempts to become symbol, but this must always fail, because it is border. In this way, the infinity of lament is directed completely [*restlos*] toward the symbol: the transition from symbol to lament is different than that from lament to content. In human language, the latter transition is not at all feasible, although it can possibly be (and is probably) accomplished in other languages.
> (Scholem 1917–1918/2014: 313–4)

84   Remarkable at this point is the reference to the limit of human language, which corresponds to the limit of the human gaze already mentioned. However, it is possible to imagine a language and a gaze in which the contents that elude human perception are sublated: in a sense, the vanishing point of transcendence.

> The magic of mourning is thus entirely immanent and seems to be withdrawn from any connection with other orders. As such, the most powerful revolution of mourning's innermost center [*Mittelpunktes*] is necessary [...] in order to induce mourning's self-overturning, which, as a result of its own reversal, allows for the course toward language to emerge as *expression*. [...] What appears here is the truest anarchy, which emerges most clearly in the *im*pression made by lament, in the utter inability of other things to answer lament in their language. There is no answer to lament, which is to say, there is only one: falling mute [*das Verstummen*]. [...]

> The teaching that is not expressed, nor alluded to in lament, but that is kept silent, is silence itself. And therefore lament can usurp any language: it is always the not empty, but extinguished expression, in which its death wish and its inability to die join together. The expression of innermost expressionlessness, the language of silence is lament. [...]

> What unheard-of [*unerhörte*] revolutions must a people undergo to make its lament transmissible: that an entire people speaks in the language of silence can only be surmised [*geahnt werden*]. The most eminent example of this kind is perhaps the destruction of the Temple, the lament for which has been passed down to our day. [...]

> *Every* lament can be expressed as poetry, since its particular liminality between the linguistic realms, its tragic paradox, makes it so. [...]

> So long as the inviolability of silence is not threatened, men and things will continue to lament, and precisely this constitutes the grounds of our hope for the restitution of language, of reconciliation: for, indeed, it was language that suffered the fall into sin, not silence.
> (Ibid.: 316–9)

85   Could it not have been one of the greatest failings of theoretical discourses in recent decades to tie crime so tightly to the evidential paradigm so that only the (overall invisible, yet tremendously pulling) offences and their perpetrators (and their *parole*) become visible? That thereby crime was fundamentally associated with (primary male) affects and thus remained sexualised? That the politicisation of this fact is just another act of repression of the space that would actually be granted to the (primary female) victims: the space of silence and lament that should be laid out before the investigator, but in fact has remained invisible behind the fascination of all crime scenarios? And finally, returning to the beginning of *The Man of the Crowd*:

> For some months I had been ill in health, but was now convalescent, and, with returning strength, found myself in one of those happy moods which are so precisely the converse of *ennui*–moods of the keenest appetency, when the film from the mental vision departs–αχλυς ος πριν επηεν [corr.: ἀχλὺς ἡ πρὶν ἐπῆεν: 'Darkness which before was upon [them]' (Iliad, V, 127)]–and the intellect, electrified, surpasses as greatly its every-day condition, as does the vivid yet candid reason of Leibnitz, the mad and flimsy rhetoric of Gorgias.
> (Poe 1840/1996: 388)

Is it not true, as Poe suggests, that one only gains real clarity, 'precisely the converse of *ennui*', when awakening from a long nervous suffering, when one has passed through a personal identity crisis, that only then a new worthwhile, anticipatory view becomes clear on what crimes could await us in the future, and how to prevent them?

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Notes

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2   "Das Gedicht ist ein Raum, der aus flüchtigsten Materialien erbaut ist, aus bloßen Lauten nämlich, und der doch stabil wirkt und zu überdauern vermag [...]. Es ist ein Raum, dessen Umfang zwar minimal ist, ein ausgeklügeltes Sprachkämmerchen gewissermaßen, in dem verblüffenderweise aber trotzdem alles seinen Platz finden kann, ohne dass es zu eng würde. Disparateste Dinge gehen eine wie selbstverständlich wirkende Verbindung ein, in Zeit und Raum weit Auseinanderliegendes findet zusammen in nichts als einer Strophe, ja in einer einzigen Zeile. [...] [Der Leser] ist es, kein anderer, der den dargebotenen Hinweisen folgt, der eingeladen ist, zu ‚entdecken' – denn nichts anderes bedeutet das lateinische Verb ‚detegere', von dem der ‚Detektiv' sich herleitet." (Wagner 2017: 41–3)

3   "Das alles flackert instringent und schnippisch durch deinen Kopf, während du aus dem großen Fenster des Kaffeehauses am Platz hinausblickst [...]." (Bayer 2019: 5)

4   "Als Kind hat er mit seinen Eltern häufig das Volkskundemuseum besucht. Dort fühlte er sich damals schon mit dieser kleinen Figur verwandt: „Diese Figur, die da ein bisschen abseits steht in einem Gefährt, das sich bewegt, die Person, die Figur, die sozusagen unterwegs ist und die aus dem Fenster schaut, das ... damit kann ich mich ganz gut gleichsetzen." (ORF Topos 2022)

5   "Woher kamen die Bilder, die ich im Kopf hatte?" (Bayer 2003: 61)

6   "Die Fenster, durch die du von innen nach außen blickst: Täglich rückst du ein wenig von ihnen ab, so wie auch die Sonnenstrahlen am Morgen ein paar Fingerbreit weiter gewandert sind als am Vormittag. Folglich wirst du irgendwann so weit vom Fenster entfernt sein, dass du – wie durch einen umgedrehten Feldstecher – nur noch ein winziges helles Rechteck siehst und dahinter die Passanten, die Autos, das Leben bloß erahnen kannst." (Bayer 2019: 9)

7   "[...] und einmal wirst du einen dermaßen gewaltigen Abstand eingenommen haben, dass du freier Sicht auf das gesamte Gebilde hast, auf die Abermilliarden Pünktchen, die sich zu Konstellationen formieren, und irgendwann wird ihr Glanz so strahlend sein, dass sie alles überstrahlen und sämtliche Schatten auslöschen, und du wirst dich mit einem Mal auf der Straße wiederfinden, außerhalb vom Fenster, durch das du vorübergehend einen Blick ins Innere wirfst. Drinnen ist es leer, du spiegelst dich ein bisschen im Scheibenglas. Du wirst weitergehen, das Mal wird bleiben." (Ibid.: 9–10)

8   "Die ehemalige Geliebte präsentiert dir ihren verführerischen Kussmund, tote Freunde grinsen unverschämt in die Kamera, und deine Nichte, die mittlerweile in die Mittelschule geht, liegt schlafend im Kinderwagen." (Ibid.: 63)

9   "Der erste Schritt wäre also getan, denkst du. Eine Weile sitzt du wie versteinert da, dann holst du dir ein Blatt Papier und einen Stift, legst das Blatt vor dir auf den Tisch und versuchst, die Frau, die dich auf der Straße fotografiert hat, aus deinem Gedächtnis zu zeichnen. Dazu schließt du deine Augen, und deine Hand scheint wie von selbst Linien zu ziehen. Als du das Gefühl hast, fertig zu sein, öffnest du die Augen und stellst mit Erstaunen fest, dass dir aus dem Weiß des Papiers ein perfektes Selbstporträt entgegenblickt." (Ibid.)

10   "[Ich wollte nur noch allein sein], auch weil ich fürchtete, unmenschlich zu werden in meiner seltsamen Besessenheit, alles sich in mir ausbreiten zu lassen, was sich eigentlich zum Komprimieren anbot." (Bayer 2003: 18)

"[Ich stand] oft lange vor dem großen Spiegel im Hausinneren und blickte durch ihn zur Tür hinaus. Ich versuchte tatsächlich, als ich einmal sehr lange diese verkehrte Welt angeschaut hatte, ob ich wie in den Filmen durch das Glas greifen und auf die andere Seite kommen könnte." (Ibid.: 70–1)

"Von allem, was mich umgab, schien ich abzuspiegeln und zugleich alles, was auf mich einredete, im Handumdrehen zu meiner Sprache zu machen, alle Eindrücke in meine Ausdrücke zu transponieren. Dieser Zwang mutete aber auch an, als wäre er angelernt und notgedrungen der Taktgeber in einer grausamen Affektfolge." (Ibid.: 109)

"Das Klaffende als Ursprung der Symmetrie ist die Sollbruchstelle, der Ansatz zum Entzweireißen: Die Symmetrie vernichtet ihren Ursprung: Sie vernichtet sich damit selbst: Der Spiegel hat uns auf die Idee des Zerreißens gebracht: Vorher war es ein Wahn, ein eingefleischter, dann erst, durch den Spiegel, wurde es eine Idee, ein Abbild, und so kam

es zum Zerschlagen des Spiegels: Und da jeder Mensch sein Abbild in einem anderen Menschen sehen kann, kam es zum Mord: Und der Riß, der Sprung im Spiegel ist wieder nichts anderes als der Spalt, aus dem die Symmetrie entwächst: Und der Nabel ist der Tod." (Ibid.: 148–9)

11 "Auf der Straße hatte ich dann wieder einmal das Gefühl, schon im Schauen handwerklich, mitkonstruierend zu sein. Alles schien nur für so eine Art von Schöpferblick gemacht." (Bayer 2003: 26)

12 "[...] ein paar der Kinder blieben vor dem Teich stehen, bückten sich, hoben kleine Steine auf und warfen sie hinein, und als mir im Ansichtig werden der Wasserringe, die bei jedem Einschlag eines Kieselsteins entstanden, mehr und mehr die Augen übergingen, da wusste ich, das war es und das ist es und das wird es sein, das wollte ich und das will ich und das werde ich wollen, und ich habe es nur vergessen, die Oberfläche des Teichs und dieser ewige Augenblick, wenn die Kinder Steine ins Wasser werfen, und die Wellenkreise, die auseinander streben und sich überlappen, als würden sie miteinander spielen, und die am Ufer verebben, versiegen, und im Wasser das Spiegelbild des Himmels, das sich schaukelnd bewegt [...]" (Bayer 2011: 117).

13 "Eine Zeitlang spielte ich mit dem Gedanken, [...] diejenigen zu erschießen, die ich als Auslöser meiner Wut und Mutlosigkeit für verantwortlich hielt. Aber schon in diesem Gedankenspiel kam ich mir vor wie einer, der in der verkehrten Rolle ist. Ich fühlte mich wie ein Doppelagent und tat dabei so, als könnte ich es vor mir selber geheimhalten." (Bayer 2003: 68)

14 "[...] dabei trafen sich meine Augen im Spiegel über dem Waschbecken, und ich war fasziniert von der Grausamkeit, die ich in ihnen sah." (Ibid.: 85)

15 "Ganz alltäglich und entspannt beginnen alle diese ‚Geschichten mit Marianne', sie beginnen beim Abwaschen oder mit einem langweiligen Nachmittag, an dem Marianne den Erzähler zu einem Ausflug einlädt. Je harmloser der Anfang, desto grausamer und grotesker der weitere Verlauf. Jede Geschichte setzt neu an und lässt eine Gewissheit des Alltags ins Bodenlose kippen, und sei es der Gang in den Keller. Der Erzähler irrt durch den schlammigen Untergrund einer Riesenstadt, tastet sich im Dunkeln durch ein ominöses Schloss oder beobachtet mit Marianne ein Massaker vom Wohnzimmer aus, nachdem er ihr beim Abwasch geholfen hat. Die literarische Moderne wird in diesen Geschichten aufgerufen und souverän in unterschiedlichen Genres eingesetzt – von der Horrorgeschichte bis zur Fantasy-Szenerie. Mit bösem, oft melancholischem Witz leuchtet Xaver Bayer die Angst-Räume unserer Zeit aus, denn immer wieder versinkt sein Held im Chaos, das in leuchtenden Details erzählt wird – letztlich bleibt ihm nur die eigene Fantasie als rettender Ort. Ein brillantes, facettenreiches Nachdenken über unsere Zeit." (Austrian Book Prize 2020)

16 "Der Gerichtssaal ist unabdingbarer Bestandteil des Nachspielens, wenn es seine Funktion erfüllen und der Riss von Tat und Wort geglättet werden soll. Das Stück, das auf der Bühne des Gerichts gegeben wird, gehorcht daher nicht den Regeln der getreuen Abbildung. Es unterliegt – angefangen von den architektonisch vorgegebenen Blickachsen bis hin zur festgelegten Redeordnung vor Gericht – den Anforderungen der symbolischen Ordnung an Darstellbarkeit." (Vismann 2011: 32–3).

17 A remark by Leonard Cohen about his song *First we take Manhattan* (1986)—with New York and Berlin as the two targeted metropolises—shows how much this position could still be advocated in the field of poetry even in recent times: "I think it means exactly what it says. It is a terrorist song. I think it's a response to terrorism. There's something about terrorism that I've always admired. The fact that there are no alibis or no compromises. That position is always very attractive. I don't like it when it's manifested on the physical plane—I don't really enjoy the terrorist activities—but Psychic Terrorism. I remember there was a great poem by Irving Layton that I once read, I'll give you a paraphrase of it. It was 'well, you guys blow up an occasional airline and kill a few children here and there,' he says. 'But our terrorists, Jesus, Freud, Marx, Einstein. The whole world is still quaking ...'" (Cohen 1988)

18 "Das also war einmal die Welt!" (Bayer 2020a: 101)

19 "Wir fühlen uns, als wären wir der Welt abhandengekommen. Und wie still es ist … Als wären wir zuhause, zurück von allen Reisen, die uns in die fremdesten Länder und Zeiten geführt haben. Ich schließe die Augen. Hier, in der Abstellkammer, haben wir endlich einen Lebensraum gefunden. Hier will ich bleiben, mit Marianne eine Familie gründen, leben, lachen, weinen, Feste feiern, und wenn die Stunde gekommen ist, will ich hier in Ruhe sterben, nicht mehr und nicht weniger. [...] Es dauert zuerst immer eine kleine Weile, bis sich die Stille aus ihrem Versteck hervortraut. Nur zögerlich nähert sie sich, wie um auszukundschaften, ob ihr denn wirklich keine Gefahr droht. Dann aber, sobald sie Vertrauen gefasst hat, lässt sie sich auf einem nieder, wie ein gehetztes Tier, das sich endlich in Sicherheit befindet, senkt sich über den Raum und erfüllt uns beide mit ihrem Nichtswollen." (Ibid.: 102–3)

20 "Das mit den Schlägen wurde immer schlimmer. Ich habe dauernd überall Blessuren gehabt. Dabei hat er fortwährend Fotos von mir gemacht. Wie gesagt, es wurde immer ärger. Dann eines Tages, habe ich angefangen, mit der Spiegelreflexkamera meines Vaters Fotos von ihm zu schießen. Das hat er nicht ausgehalten, er ist völlig ausgerastet. Ich habe ihn mit seiner eigenen Waffe bekämpft. An dem Abend hat er richtig fest zugeschlagen. Am nächsten Tag bin ich abgehaut, zuerst zurück nach Rom, dann weiter mit dem Zug nachhause. Ich habe mich für einige Wochen

in meiner Wohnung eingesperrt und mich bei niemandem gemeldet. Aber ich habe angefangen, Fotos von meinem Körper zu machen, der mit blauen Flecken wie tätowiert war. [...] Mir ist klar geworden, dass ich gewissermaßen versucht habe, die mir zugefügten Verletzungen zu abstrahieren. Die Fotos entstanden nicht aus Narzissmus, es war eher ein Prozess der Selbstbefragung, ein Experiment. Ich habe mit dieser Arbeit, mit dem Fotografieren und dem Entwickeln und Verfertigen von Abzügen in meinem zur Dunkelkammer gewordenen Badezimmer, unbewusst den Versuch unternommen, einen Zustand herbeizuführen, der es mir erlaubt, mich in ein beziehungs- und gesellschaftsloses Wesen zu verwandeln, mich aus jeder Beziehung zu Menschen herauszuziehen, mir die Frage zu stellen und zugleich zu beantworten: Wie geschieht mir? Es hat gut getan, das zu fixieren, anstatt einfach nur fixiert zu sein: Schämst du dich nicht? Ich klebte die noch feuchten Fotoabzüge von meinem verunstalteten Körper auf die Fliesen im Badezimmer. Sie sind da ganz von selber haften geblieben. Das Ausstellen neutralisierte die Scham. Mit der Zeit wurde das Medium selber zur Mauer. Es war keine Heilung, aber eine Barriere, keine Wiedergutmachung, aber eine Zwischenwand." (Ibid.: 104–6).

21 "Ich höre wieder nur ihren Atem und spüre, wie sich ihr Brustkorb hebt und senkt, und zum ersten Mal, so scheint mir, kann ich annähernd fühlen, wer Marianne ist, und … – was soll's; es war ja zu erwarten – schlagartig werden wir aus dem Paradies vertrieben." (Ibid.: 106)

22 "Im leeren Kaffeehaus sitzend,
verliest im Hintergrund
die Stimme aus dem Radio
die Nachrichten des Tages –
ein Anschlag,
weitere Waffenlieferungen
sowie neue Fälle einer Tierseuche –
rückwärts
und macht damit alles ungeschehen.
Im Anschluss an die Nachrichten ein vertrautes Lied,
ebenfalls rückwärts,
als würde ein Sturm
alle Stimmen und alle Töne und Klänge umstülpen und in die Gegenrichtung blasen.
Durch diesen Rückstrom zwängen sich die Gedanken.
Bereitwillig verliert man den Faden und lässt den Blick schweifen,
als wären die Umstände gerade jetzt günstig dafür.
Und wirklich –
hinter einem Fenster im Haus auf der anderen Straßenseite Faschingsgirlanden
und drinnen im Kaffeehaus ein an die Korkwand hinter der Theke gepinntes Foto,
das eine alte, schwarz gewandete Frau zeigt, die an einem Tisch sitzt und ins Leere schaut.
Also macht man sich wieder auf den Weg,
schultert das Gepäck, den Rucksack voll Salz." (Bayer 2023: 94)

Abstract

Focusing on the terror attack on 2 November 2020 in Vienna, the article reflects on the media dispositifs that generate public evidence in connection with terrorist crimes. To this end, investigative visual arts—works and 'window pane scenarios' by Edgar Allan Poe, the New York artist Matthew Buckingham and the Austrian writer Xaver Bayer—will first be used to reflect on the general prerequisites for the detective and photographic gaze, which developed from early experiences of the big city crowd. Subsequently, the Vienna attack is analysed as a media event by looking in detail at the journalistic reporting and interaction in the social media as well as the court proceedings that were conducted two years later against the six men who were accused of involvement in the attack. The concluding section aims to show the extent to which a media-critical philological investigation can add an important complementary perspective to the public processes of reviewing and negotiating events of terror. It can succeed in addressing spaces of silence that must be reserved without restriction for the victims of violence beyond a collective horizon of witnessing and opinion-forming—to be expected a common sense that was fatally suspended in many respects on and after 7 October 2023.

Zusammenfassung

Der Beitrag reflektiert am Beispiel des Anschlags vom 2. November 2020 in Wien die medialen Dispositive, die im Zusammenhang mit terroristischen Verbrechen öffentliche Evidenz erzeugen. Hierfür werden zunächst über investigative visual arts – Werke und ‚Fensterscheiben-Szenarien' von Edgar Allan Poe, des New Yorker bildenden Künstlers Matthew Buckingham sowie des österreichischen Schriftstellers Xaver Bayer – die generellen Voraussetzungen für den detektivischen und fotografischen Blick reflektiert, wie er sich aus den frühen Großstadterfahrungen heraus entwickelt hat. Im Anschluss daran wird der Anschlag in Wien als mediales Ereignis vorgestellt, indem detailliert auf die journalistische Berichterstattung und die Interaktionen in den sozialen Medien sowie auf die Gerichtsverfahren eingegangen wird, die zwei Jahre später über sechs Mitverdächtige geführt wurden. Im abschließenden Teil wird gezeigt, inwiefern eine medienkritische philologische Untersuchung den öffentlichen Aufarbeitungs- und Aushandlungsprozessen von Terrorereignissen eine bedeutende ergänzende Perspektive hinzufügen kann. Sie kann es schaffen, Räume der Stille zu adressieren, welche den Opfern der Gewalt abseits eines kollektiven Horizonts der Zeugenschaft und Meinungsbildung uneingeschränkt vorbehalten bleiben müssen – an sich ein *common sense*, der am und nach dem 7. Oktober 2023 in vielen Bereichen fatalerweise aussetzte.

Schlagwörter: Terrorismus, Verbrechen, bildende Künste, Lyrik, Klage, Wien, Xaver Bayer, Matthew Buckingham, Edgar Allan Poe, Der Mann der Menge, 7 October

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