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**The Sleeping Wound: Abjection and Dormancy in
Tykwer's *Winterschläfer***

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In the context of post-*Wende* film, Tom Tykwer's *Winterschläfer* seems to turn away from the socio-political implications of the fall of the Wall and reunification, retreating instead to a more familiar space of originary symbiosis. In this paper, I will show how *Winterschläfer* extends and suspends the sleeping state, holding its characters in a uterine time and space of hibernation. Using Kristeva's notion of the abject which confuses the attempt at defining the clean and proper body, preventing a clear demarcation of self and other, this essay will consider how sleep, as a borderline state, is exploited to defer the traumatic effects of separation from the (m)other. The characters' retreat into cocoon-like interiors anticipates a logic of metamorphosis, making the film's title programmatic. The frozen world outside doubles this suspension, but renders it problematic. The bleached snowscape contrasts with Tykwer's self-conscious use of colour, marking topographically the loss the characters experience: loss of life and memory. The snow at once bears and hides the traces of events, which, following Freud, become distorted in the dream-work, and, most significantly, of fallen bodies, expelled, abjected from the womb-like interiors.

1. Introduction

This essay will look at Tom Tykwer's 1998 film, *Winterschläfer*, which contrasts strongly with the frenetic pace of the director's most popular work *Lola rennt* (also 1998). In the context of post-*Wende* film, *Winterschläfer* seems to retreat from an otherwise predominant concern with the socio-political implications of the fall of the Berlin Wall, turning away from history. It might figure as a sort of non-reaction to historical reality, attempting instead a return to a more primal, prenatal space. I will consider here the implications of this ultimately impossible return following traumatic separation from an other body, from the (m)other in its psychoanalytic sense. This will be done using the motifs of abjection and dormancy as they are found in Julia Kristeva's essay *Powers of Horror* and Freud's dream-work respectively. What will emerge in the course of my analysis is that the film can in fact be read as a kind of displaced response to the fall of the Wall and the impact of the *Wende* as trauma. The twin lens of abjection and

dormancy will bring into focus the film's historically topical concern with the problems of locating the self in what might be defined as home and the desire to suspend the moment of collapse, the point of change. The motifs of abjection and dormancy are recurrently figured in the film through falling and sleeping and configured in the bodily and physical act of falling asleep. This essay will examine the falling body and the sleeping body, linking them through the maternal body.

In *Winterschläfer* seemingly disparate lives collide following an accident in the snow. These encounters result from repeated forms of displacement, when characters find themselves in places they should not be. Since my analysis deals with specific details of the plot, I will now give a brief outline of the film. In the days following Christmas Rebecca, a young translator is reunited with her lover, Marco. René, a cinema projectionist sees Marco's new Alpha Romeo unlocked and takes it for a spin. However, he is involved in an accident with Theo, a local farmer, who is taking his daughter's sick horse to the vet. A short term memory dysfunction means René cannot understand what has happened and he flees the scene, returning home where he attempts to piece together recent events. Shaken, but unhurt, Theo is confronted not only with the lame animal who needs to be shot, but also his daughter who crept into the horse trailer without him seeing. Her injuries are severe and she falls into a coma.

By coincidence, Rebecca's housemate, Laura, meets René one night in "Sleepers" bar and, eventually, they fall for one another. Unaware of her link to the accident, Laura, as nurse, cares for Theo's daughter, who shows no signs of recovery. Theo is determined to find the other driver, but the car is buried in the snow, and there is no evidence that anyone else was involved. Rejecting the suggestion he has made up the story to find someone to blame for his daughter's state, Theo clings to the memory of a scar, a distinctive mark he remembers seeing on the back of the driver's head as he walked away from the scene.

Meanwhile, Marco, a ski instructor, seduces one of his pupils, Nina, at his boss's house while he is away, but scalds himself on the espresso machine. Following his treatment, which Laura takes over, he encounters the body of a young girl, Theo's daughter, who has just died and who Laura must make clean before the arrival of the father. Troubled by

his infidelity, or, perhaps more significantly, by what he has just seen, Marco takes Nina out high on the slopes. She falls and he loses sight of her. Below, the snow is thawing and the buried Alpha Romeo begins to emerge. Theo, drawn to the site of the accident in his desperation, finds the car and the documents inside. These lead him to the wrong man and he confronts Marco on the mountainside. Seeing the scald he thinks he has found the scarred man and sets his dog on him. Marco responds by killing the dog. Rebecca awaits the return of Marco, who, unknown to her, plunges into the snowy abyss of a crevasse, whilst Laura and René await the birth of their first child.

In this film, then, Tykwer goes beyond a dream-space, extending and suspending the sleeping state. Although held within a uterine time and space of dormancy and hibernation, *Winterschläfer* always already bears the mark of the original trauma, of separation or expulsion from the maternal body. It is the problematic demarcation of the boundaries between self and other which characterizes Kristeva's idea of the abject, of "immemorial violence with which a body becomes separated from another body in order to be" (1982: 10). In *Powers of Horror* Kristeva describes the attempt made to cast out that which threatens the subject from within in order to define the sort of carefully demarcated body demanded by the regulating force of the symbolic order. Horror is felt at the remainder and reminder of these elements which escape in bodily excretions: "The clean and proper (in the sense of incorporated and incorporable) becomes filthy, the sought-after turns into the banished, fascination into shame" (1982: 8). Inside the body these fluids indicate the regenerative potential of the self, but outside they become waste, pollution.

The abject, then, figures as the indirect confrontation with the effects of the unrepresentable, of the traumatic coming into being brought about through separation from the (m)other. The crisis in re-presenting the absent or lost object is central to the idea of trauma, where a violent impact experienced too late is inscribed on the body as a wound. Even a scar, an ostensibly healed wound, marks difference, a point on the body which threatens to reopen, questioning categories of clean and dirty, proper and foreign. If Freud uses the idea of a *Fremdkörper*, of an invasion of the subject by a foreign body,

to describe traumatic experience,¹ it will perhaps be useful to consider the ways in which *Winterschläfer* troubles the borders between self and other, interior and exterior through the threat or reality of infection, of substances seeping through, bleeding into the body constructed and defined by society, the symbolic order.

Whilst traumatic impact is inscribed on the body in the form of a wound or scar, the event itself escapes representation and memory fragments, resisting re-membrance. These pieces which refuse coherent narrative are, instead, subject to repetition, often in the dreams and nightmares of the traumatized victim. The repetition, condensation and displacement which characterize Freud's dream-work are the primary processes which attribute meaning retrospectively, but which necessarily subject meaning to distortion, marked in and by narrative discontinuities. Freud identifies *Entstellung*, *Verdichtung* and *Verschiebung* as the key ways in which the desire which seeks expression in dreams finds indirect representation.

If cinema can be described as a "dream-machine" it is possible to trace a trajectory from the dream-sequence cinema of Buñuel's *Un Chien Andalou* (1929) and later Hitchcock's *Spellbound* (1945). Both films made use of the sleeping state to release the normally unrepresentable through the infliction of an inaugural cut. In the notorious opening scene of *Un Chien Andalou*, an eye is spliced, a gesture cited in the opening dream-sequence of *Spellbound*, where eyes painted on a theatre curtain are cut with giant scissors. *Winterschläfer* also opens with a wound, an unexplained drop of blood on Rebecca's thumb. The film goes on to make René's scar pivotal to the narrative. Tykwer's use of a scar as a central motif shows the dream-work in the very form which characterizes trauma: René's scar becomes distorted by Theo's compulsive attempts to re-member and re-trace the fatal accident. It is condensed in the domestic materials where Theo catches glimpses of it (in the family meal, in the pail as he milks his cows, in the slushy snow as he cuts firewood). And, crucially for the narrative, the scar is displaced when Theo assumes that Marco's scald is the wound he has been searching for.

Chapter Seven of Freud's *Traumdeutung* demonstrates how the dream renders sleep

¹ Together with Joseph Breuer, Freud located traumatic experience at the heart of hysteria: "Wir müssen vielmehr behaupten, daß das psychische Trauma, respektive die Erinnerung an dasselbe, nach Art eines Fremdkörpers wirkt" (Freud 1961-1968 vol. 1: 85).

ambiguous. Here, Freud describes how a father prolongs sleep in order to suspend the moment of interaction with his already dead son. However, in falling asleep the old man, who is holding vigil over his son's body lying in the next room, neglects his duty and a candle falls over setting the body alight. Whilst the voice of the son in the father's dream pleads with him to see the horror of the burning body, it is the flames which wake the father. This shows how sleep is subject to disruption and can be violently cut into by the glare of reality, of what lies without. In Freud's narrative the flames of the overturned candle produce in the father the need to wake up and in *Winterschläfer* the brightness of external light has a decisive role to play: daylight cuts into the hospital room waking the girl from her coma and in the opening sequence Marco shields his eyes from the glare of the early morning sun which ruptures sleep.

Such borderline states between sleeping and waking imply a logic of metamorphosis, a violation or conversion of the subject upon separation from the maternal body. The characters in *Winterschläfer* retreat into the dark, warm, cocoon-like spaces of Laura's house, the cinema and "Sleepers" bar. Laura describes her great aunt, from whom she inherited the house, as a "große Sammlerin" and the abundance, even excess of objects underlines the way in which this house functions as a container, holding all those possessions which have come to represent the idea of home, fetishized objects of domesticity and belonging. The retreat of the characters into these uterine spaces seems to anticipate change, making the film's title programmatic. Hibernation anticipates topographical change: animals sleep and wait, as Rebecca does, for the external environment to become inhabitable once more. Emblematic for the idea of metamorphosis upon a passive body are the butterflies preserved in a case which is suspended above Laura's bed, itself the site for retreat when Laura and Rebecca fall asleep side by side.

The subject's premature entrance into the world means it is still located in what Kristeva calls the semiotic realm, the space of a bodily, rhythmical relationship with the mother before the father, represented by the symbolic order, intrudes, separating the subject from her forever. With the abject Kristeva privileges non-narrative aspects and this corresponds with the visual, chromatic and rhythmical predominance in *Winterschläfer*. It is precisely such elements which refuse coherence and linearity. These points of

resistance are located on the borders of self and other, life and death, sleeping and waking. In *Winterschläfer* the sleeping body is held within the spaces symbolising the maternal body, but also anticipates the traumatic moment of separation, of abjection from that body.

With reference to the ideas set out in this introduction, I shall go on to consider notions of disturbed sleep and bodily rhythms, blurred boundaries or borderlines, the impossible return to the maternal body, and trauma as missed or displaced encounter. I will show how *Winterschläfer* thematizes the problem of return in at once producing a sense of compulsive attraction to and traumatic expulsion from a familiar, originary space. In turn, I shall consider to what extent these ideas support the proposed understanding of the film as a suspended reaction or non-reaction to the fall of the Wall, a turning away as response to the *Wende*.

2. Sleeping, retreating, waiting: anticipating trauma

I shall look first at how the sleep featured in the film is disturbed, induced suddenly or unexpectedly when the body falls unconscious or into a coma, or else is interrupted, troubled.² It is the tension between troubled sleep and the desire to prolong or return to a state of dormancy which drives the events of the film and which produces the coincidence and chance encounters so peculiar to Tykwer's work.³ Marco does not wake from his post-coital slumber in time to stop his car being stolen. René stumbles across the Alfa Romeo as he fights off sleep, trying to induce some degree of sobriety following a heavy night's drinking. Theo, meanwhile, worried about his daughter's lame horse, cannot sleep and rises early. All these instances of sleep or sleeplessness produce the

² Wolfgang Becker's 2003 film *Good Bye, Lenin!* also makes use of the suspended state of coma. The mother's prolonged sleep works at once to protect and deceive, concealing from her the violent truth of her son's revolt and the fall of the Wall. The film attempts a return to a previous state, a return to the mother, but ultimately exposes the delusion of such an attempt. *Winterschläfer*, rather than making this futility the final revelation, actually derives its structure from the conflict between the desire for the mother and the impossibility of fulfilling that wish, the suspension between death and animation.

³ For a detailed examination of this aspect of Tykwer's cinema see David Clarke's contribution to this volume.

circumstances in which these characters collide and in which the accident, the axis of the narrative, happens. The film's ending is also the result of disturbed sleep since Marco is woken by the early sunlight refracted through the window and decides to make what will be his final journey out onto the slopes.

As the body falls unconscious this seems momentarily to break the tension between the sleeping and waking state. In narrative terms, fainting or falling into a coma ruptures the flow of events, leaving lacunae, moments which cannot be accounted for. Laura experiences two black-outs, both on the threshold, both marked in the soundtrack by a dampened cymbal roll. She faints upon her return to her cocoon-like home and again on leaving "Sleepers" bar. Exhausted, she has come back from a stressful family Christmas, faints on the doorstep and is seen later in bed, watched over by Rebecca. Laura describes the time away as "sauber" and privileging its literal over its idiomatic sense suggests how the family functions as a structured and structuring societal element, fundamental to the symbolic order. Laura finds these constraints draining and craves this other space of dormancy, which is comfortingly full of bric-a-brac and buried in the depths of winter. If Christmas forms a ritualized return to the home it seems significant that at the film's opening we are introduced to its characters in the dysfunction of their respective domestic settings: Laura is entangled in an equally ritualized family brawl. René is heard parting from his mother; there is ostensibly no father. Marco's act of infidelity marks him as a foreign body in another's home. Rebecca, meanwhile, remains in the surrogate home she has made with Laura. In fact, the characters' displacement to this sleepy "Kuhdorf" (the number plate on Marco's car indicates he is from Hamburg, for example) points towards a desire for excessive slumber, an indulgent suspension between reality and a dream world.

Whilst Laura's pregnancy at the end of the film revives the possibility of a family unit, Theo's experience of his own child slipping away means the narrative lingers over its absence or non-viability. Laura could be said to embody the ambiguous mother figure, oscillating between roles of nurture and indifference. At night she plays the anorexic Blanche in an amateur production of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, but during the day swaps her costume for her nurse's uniform. She is described as "appetitlos" by René and craves only her "Kaffee ohne alles, wie immer" to warm her. Yet, concerned about the anxious

father, she offers Theo vitamin tablets while he waits in the hospital for news of his daughter's condition. In contrast, Laura reacts to her pregnancy with almost angry disbelief. This is accompanied by the violent attempt at expulsion when she vomits at the "Sleepers" party. However, this gesture of abjection responds primarily to the death of Theo's daughter; being sick represents a final attempt to separate the living from the dead. It is Laura who breaks the suspension of the borderline state of coma by opening the curtains. She goes against the wish of the father who wants to hold his daughter in darkness.

In her essay *Giotto's Joy*, Kristeva describes how blinding light marks the limit of representation, but its refraction into colours opens up meaning and surface (1980: 222f.). Her consideration of colour as light refracted, that is, filling and demarcating space, relates to the way the film troubles borders and the idea of containment. The snow-covered landscape in *Winterschläfer* seems to bleach out colour through loss. The effects of traumatic separation thus render space boundless, and the contrast with the intensity of colour, in particular Rebecca's red, heightens the tension between presence and radical absence. A shot of Marco in Rebecca's red dressing gown, standing in the snow and registering the loss of his beloved car, cuts to the Red Cross paramedics rushing the girl under white sheets through the hospital. Here, boundaries are blurred, roles reversed when the colours and clothes which are so consistently identified with characters are swapped. Something slips away. An object is lost forever.

3. Permeable boundaries and the return of the repressed

Theo's family moves away from the site of loss and pain to a new home, but they are haunted by the return of the repressed. Nina, Marco's pupil and latest affair, goes out on the slopes with her lover but is injured when she falls over a precipice. As she staggers towards Theo's house in search of help, the mother experiences a moment of (mis)recognition, that is, the impossible return of her dead daughter. Kristeva describes the abject as "a massive and sudden emergence of uncanniness" (1982: 3). Here, Kristeva links her ideas about the unrepresentable to the Freudian notion of *das Unheimliche*. In

his 1919 essay Freud describes how an object's original familiarity might be rendered horribly strange, whilst nevertheless retaining a sense of having once been part of, or having belonged to the subject (Freud 1961-1968 vol. 12: 229-268). In the false homecoming scene in *Winterschläfer* what Theo's wife cannot have seen, but what for the viewer constitutes a strange moment of recognition, is Nina's fallen body lying in the snow, an uncanny double of the daughter's following the car accident.

The mother is fetching firewood as Nina approaches and wood returns as a motif in the film, one which links the discourses of trauma, dormancy and the maternal. Constituting the narrative substance of Freud's definition of trauma, wood blurs the boundaries between living and dead, it bears knots and scars like the wounded human body. In his definition Freud uses Tasso's Clorinda legend, where blood flows from a tree, something that lives, but as plant not animal, immobile, dormant (Freud 1961-1968 vol. 13: 21). As the child tries to follow her father early in the film, she stands by the pile of firewood which acts as a second wall, or protective layer around the house. Theo is found cutting wood as he remembers the scar, and again, as he attempts a return to the rhythm of rural life following his daughter's death. The shadows of branches and a crucifix, that is, Christ's body nailed to a tree, worry him in his sleeplessness. It is the tree's branches which break Nina's fall, then drop her into the snow, enacting the maternal ambiguity of nurture and abjection.

Laura's characteristic green symbolizes these trees and contrasts with the carnal red worn by Rebecca. The abject relates to the way in which the unrepresentable might seep through, or bleed into what have been constructed through the symbolic order as distinct categories and the film illustrates this best, perhaps, during the operation which Theo's daughter undergoes. Here, the green surgical cloth becomes soaked in blood and the surgeon asks Laura for suction in order to staunch the flow. The point where these boundaries touch and threaten contamination is found in Freud's case history of the Wolf Man: the patient remembers cutting into a tree and almost severing his finger. His horror at the separation of a body part from the whole means he cannot bear to look at the wound. In a footnote Freud records the patient's slip: he had cut into the tree, not his finger and blood had flowed from the tree (Freud 1961-1968 vol. 12: 117-118.). The traumatic confrontation with the cut forces its displacement. In the dyadic relationship

between Rebecca and Laura, the crossing of borders is enacted in the touching of outstretched bodies skating together. The tension between them as Rebecca calls out for Laura's support, "Warte!", echoes Rebecca's earlier waiting. This tension suggests dependence and anticipates the imminent separation of mother and child. If Laura figures as the ambiguous mother there is certainly a case for seeing Rebecca as infantilized, not least in her childish outbursts and when she urinates on her way to her grandmother's funeral. Moreover, these roles are adopted explicitly when, after skating with Laura, Rebecca sticks her tongue out at her and retorts "OK, Mutti!".

Whilst René's name signifies rebirth, he seems to demonstrate the impossibility of a return to the maternal body. His memory dysfunction means he has to use retrospective representations to try to piece together the fragments of the past. René is constantly trying to find an always already lost object. His act of bathing suggests an attempted submersion in amniotic fluids, as if a retreat to a uterine space might relieve his frustration at being able to remember nothing of what he senses to be significant events. The suspension of time and the explosions of New Year fireworks outside produce a sort of double temporality. For Kristeva "the time of abjection is double: a time of oblivion and thunder, of veiled infinity and the moment when revelation bursts forth" (1982: 9). The conflicting sense of René's exclusion and enclosure in the bathroom sequence is underlined by the smallness of the window and the emptiness of the room which contrasts with the excess of Laura's house. The fact that René forgets the New Year's Eve celebrations creates a sense of his having missed an encounter with an historic event and/or its ritualised commemoration.⁴

René's amnesia forces him to record his daily life with a camera and dictaphone. He seems fascinated by the process of recollection and carefully catalogues the data he gathers. René photographs himself in the bath and this forms one of a series of images made without seeing, that is, taken without looking through the viewfinder; pictures of himself, necessarily (René can only point the camera at himself, he cannot look through it), of Laura, unconscious in his car, taken presumably whilst driving, and, as they skate,

⁴ In *Good Bye, Lenin!* fireworks figure at once as the celebration of the fall of the Wall (for Daniel's mother) and to mark the first anniversary of the same event, that is, as an impossible conflation of two points in time.

taken from behind. Viewing takes place after the event, after the images have been developed. In this sense René's memory is literally photographic. He even develops the images himself, exposing the way in which recollection comes belatedly. The delay and retrospective, central to René's memory disturbance, are paradigmatic for the way in which trauma can only be recalled after the event, never as a direct viewing.

Questions of seeing and knowing carry an ethical load in terms of the veracity and verification of any testimony to the traumatic event. If knowledge and vision are dysfunctional, agency, responsibility and accountability become slippery quantities. The film seems to point towards redemption and rebirth for René as a consequence of his inability to recall the accident. The picture taken of Laura in his car after she faints shows a third fallen body, a replication of the injured child in the snow, while Nina's body completes the series later in the film. Each repetition demonstrates a move away from, and consequently a sort of diminishing intensity of the original accident. Asked why he took Laura home after her black-out, he replies: "Ich wollte mein schlechtes Gewissen beruhigen". However, we hear this, not as it happens (the scene is shown too late to capture this and we only see Laura in René's car after she has accepted the ride home), but on hearing the dictaphone recording René has made. He cannot recall the original fall. Buried in the snow he did not see it. Reassembling his fragmentary past is always subject to temporal displacement, distorting meaning and, problematically, agency.

4. Passing by: (mis)recognition and the missed encounter

The problems of representability, of seeing and knowing, are brought together in the idea of the missed encounter. As the snow starts to melt Rebecca unknowingly drives past Marco's car which is slowly becoming visible in the thaw. Characters pass by one another, unaware of the intricate web that binds them. These missed encounters are characteristic of Tykwer's films and symptomatic of the belatedness of trauma, that is, of not having seen in time. Disturbances of rhythm and vision distort narrative coherence and the interconnection of over-layered actions becomes apparent too late. The doctor tells Theo and his wife that their daughter cannot be given the scan she needs: "bei dem

Wetter kriegen wir keinen Hubschrauber mehr". The opening scenes move through the snowy landscape using aerial perspectives and a motion and soundtrack which indicate a specific vehicle for the cinematic eye. We might say the helicopter was there, but it was present before it was needed, or the accident happened too late.⁵ Either way the temporal shift means a missed encounter. The child falls into a coma. Moreover, the fact of seeing too late is underlined by the belated discovery of the girl's body: she should never have been in the trailer and so Theo does not think to look for her. It is only as he turns away from the act of violence he must inflict on the horse, that he catches sight of another obscene image, the lifeless body of his daughter.

For Marco the horror of corporeal limits is expressed or suppressed in bravado. Whilst clearing the kitchen with Laura, Marco catches the glass she hands to him. Gloating about the speed and alertness of his reflexes, he throws and promptly drops the glass. In this sense, then, delay and suspension can only defer an inevitable outcome. This would seem to prefigure Marco's implication at a remove in the original accident and the way he knowingly causes another body to fall when he takes Nina out onto the slopes. This is motivated ultimately by his encounter with death, that is, with the body of Theo's daughter. The falling and the dead body epitomise the abject for Kristeva, hovering above the space between life and death: "Such wastes drop so that I might live, until, from loss to loss, nothing remains in me and my entire body falls beyond the limit – *cadere*, *cadaver*" (1982: 3). In trying to define the "clean and proper" body, society imposes taboos and religious rituals, which, in death, centre on purification. The body must be cleaned before it can be seen. This removes any trace of the fluids and substances which marked it as once living.

Concomitant with the girl's final operation is the cleaning of Marco's infected wound. If infection is the invasion of a foreign body, this injury is itself uncanny, marking the return of violence inflicted in the home, but a home where Marco is, once again, an impostor. Whilst staying in the boss's house he scalds himself using an espresso machine,

⁵ Aerial perspectives have been used in Wim Wenders's 1987 film, *Der Himmel über Berlin* and, more recently, in *Lola rennt*. In both films they provide an all-encompassing view, the omniscient perspective of the Kino-eye, but in *Winterschläfer* the pervasive covering of the snowscape precludes any mapping of the topography which is otherwise visualized in the cityscapes of the other two films.

which seems ironic since coffee is otherwise the one thing which warms and comforts the characters. As Laura treats Marco she tells him “Neben an stirbt ein Kind”, marking a physical separation of the living and the dying. However, this is soon collapsed as Laura cleans the girl’s body. Marco is confronted with death as he watches this, his own wound now clean, covered and sealed with white gauze. If death cannot be represented, its manifestation in the corpse must be purified in preparation for its final encounter with the living, for those who survive. That this is an aestheticized, not a true representation of death is exposed in Marco’s comment: “Es sieht irgendwie unecht aus”. Similarly there is a distinction between the inauthentically smooth, unblemished skin of Rebecca, Marco and the Hollywood iconography which pervades their bedroom, and the pitted, scarred skin of Laura and René. However, what Marco witnesses is the process of making the body clean. He intrudes on what he should not have seen, rendering the physical and ethical barriers between the living and the dead meaningless. Marco must leave “bevor der Vater kommt” since he must not be caught in this illicit viewing. Laura must also finish her task so that Theo will not see any traces of death marking the body of his daughter.

If death resists representation, its retribution is also subject to displacement and distortion. René is effectively exonerated from responsibility for the death of Theo’s daughter because his memory dysfunction prevents him from seeing, and therefore knowing, in time. Marco, meanwhile, sees the dead body in its liminal state between clean body and body marked by death and is denied any sort of redemption. As Theo searches for the culprit meaning becomes distorted and signs come to signify something other. In his delirious state, Theo sees the scar which identifies René as the driver of the car. He makes desperate and obsessive use of this shape or sign to find the person responsible for his daughter’s death,⁶ reproducing his reductive rendering of the scar many times as part of his search for the driver of the car. Repetition in the form of the photocopied posters gestures towards the way desire, for Freud, is distorted through the compulsion to repeat. Moreover, the conflation of the scar and the documents Theo finds

⁶ The form of the scar arguably traces the Berlin Wall viewed from an aerial perspective, the same perspective that is, with which the film opens. In this sense the film could be suggesting that the Wall, although fallen, will remain inscribed in socio-cultural discourse.

in the car lead him to identify Marco, not René, as the driver. Fragments of knowledge and vision are re-membered in a sort of identikit picture which ultimately finds the wrong man. The presence of a wound serves as his confirmation when he encounters Marco on the mountainside. The wound is, however, both covered and displaced, emphasising how the violence of death escapes direct representation.

Theo's dog attacks Marco and in his panic Marco kills it. The dog's murder displaces the desire for death and retribution onto an other body. For Kristeva, it is the "fragile states where man strays on the territories of *animal*" (1982: 12) which characterize the blurred boundaries of the abject. The displacement of the violent act when its representation fails might be found where the shooting of the horse coincides with the belated discovery of the child's body: at the scene of the car accident Theo turns away from the lame horse as he pulls the trigger, he cannot bear to look, but in doing so he is confronted with his daughter's lifeless body in the snow. This in turn produces an interesting resonance of the displacement of the gaze from sites of violence onto a suspended or inert representation, as when the Wolf Man cannot look at his mutilated finger and retrospectively shifts the memory onto the bark of a tree. René can only view what he captures photographically, retrospectively.

5. Wounds, scars and navels: inscribing trauma onto the body

Whilst René's memory dysfunction seemingly directs the film's events, it results from an act of violence inflicted outside the narrative framework. Injured by an exploding grenade when he was in the army, René still bears a mental and physical scar. Freud's *Traumdeutung* uses the example from the *Nibelungenlied* of the embroidered cross on Siegfried's cloak in order to illustrate "die schwachen Stellen der Traumverkleidung", and we might say that the scars and wounds in *Winterschläfer* serve as similar weak points in the narrative (Freud 1961-1968 vol. 2: 519). Here, the violence inflicted on the human subject, the horror at death and separation, escape representation, or become subsumed in bodily inscriptions. Narrative tradition, paradigmatically Homer's *Odyssey*, uses scars as a means of identification, a way of accessing otherwise unavailable

knowledge, but, as with Freud's example, the logic of suture and healing is subverted. The cross on the cloak is not a point where rupture is rejoined or resolved, rather it marks a point of vulnerability. A scar does not, then, necessarily show healing, but different skin covering over a place where violence was once inflicted. This inscription of difference marks the threat of re-opening, the vulnerability of the subject's integrity.

René's scar is a point of fascination. Both Laura and Rebecca touch it, Rebecca asking "tut die weh?". The scar could be seen as abject since it marks a point of separation, of difference. Moreover, for René it marks the loss of memory, and in this sense provides a link between loss and the abject, since, for Kristeva "the abject is the violence of mourning for an 'object' that has always already been lost" (1982: 15). As bearer of his child, as mother, René finds in Laura a part or substitute for what he has lost. Significantly, until Laura's pregnancy he has difficulty recognizing her. As he sits in the bar waiting for her, she must wake him from his daydream by tapping on the glass before he realizes who she is. This echoes the scene following the accident where the passer-by taps on the window to try and rouse Theo from his shocked state, the same state in which he half-consciously registers René's scar as he walks away. The scene in the bar enacts a failure of recognition with Laura walking towards René, and this is effectively a reversal of René's move away from the scene of the crash with Theo watching but unable to identify him.

In these parallel shots glass at once separates and can be seen through, and as such acts as a sort of fragile cinema screen. The car windscreen has been shattered, and as Theo stares through the glass, he sees René's scar through and over-layered with the crack in the glass – a very literal sort of condensation in Freud's sense, then. René's accident has scarred his memory and Theo's accident has scarred his vision which will now always be subject to uncanny repetitions of the scar's shape in the most domestic of substances. As the parallel shot in "Sleepers" moves towards René, the reflection from the glass of a hanging picture shows a reclining, ostensibly sleeping or dead figure. This specular image is impossible inasmuch as the figure would have to be suspended in mid-air, but the return of the repressed, of the falling body has been held still within the moving image. Its position behind René, that is, outside of his field of vision, once again underlines how he finds redemption in his lack of memory. René's memories are re-

constructed, retrospectively, using the images he makes (often without looking, as mentioned above) and, as with the car accident, he cannot or does not respond to events as they unfold. The figure, like Theo's daughter, sleeps on, but Laura walks towards René, liberated by her new appearance, ready to embark on a new phase in her life with him.

The ostensible reason for René's lack of recognition in the bar scene is Laura's haircut, one which almost makes her head an unmarked version of his own. Following the accident, René's disorientation and inability to recall what has happened is signalled by the rotating camera shot which encircles him. This movement is repeated as René and Laura quite literally fall for one another. The shot binds them, she as the double who will not fill in the blanks, but will cover over the gaps and offer him new life, not death. Any weak spots, or nodal points, those impenetrable parts of human experience, are veiled, symbolized by René's hand covering Laura's pregnant belly.⁷ The rotating shot returns at the end of the film as Marco plummets into the navel traced in the rocks below. There is, then, no redemption for Marco, and Rebecca returns to her original preoccupation of waiting. Her position at the window, where her cigarette smoke merges with the gauzy curtain, is an uncanny citation from the prologue of Buñuel's *Un Chien Andalou*. As such it anticipates an inaugural act of violence, a repetition of that which produced the drop of blood on Rebecca's thumb, the film's opening but unexplained wound. Buñuel changes the smoke to vapour when the man and woman stand at the window breathing heavily in anticipation of and with desire for the accident which will happen on the street below. Rebecca's waiting, then, resonates with this idea of an accident waiting to happen, or waiting for an accident to happen, as the film comes full-circle.⁸

⁷ Lutz Koepnick ascribes the same role to the photographs which René takes and supplements with his annotations. These albums can never *be* the memories he failed to internalize, but work to cover over what cannot be re-collected: "it [memory] materialises as a flash from the ruptured spaces in-between words and images, fleeting impressions and random inscriptions". Thus, the photographs resist the "uncanny dominance of the past over the present, of death over life" (2004: 111f.).

⁸ Andrew Webber discusses how Tykwer's use of the rotating camera shot signifies a sort of post-traumatic disorder, a spinning out of control in the case of *Lola rennt* (2003: 15). In *Winterschläfer*, it might be said to work more as a sort of implosion, where the narrative falls in on itself.

Through the filmic medium and quotation from a classic corpus Tykwer works in a retrospective mode. In *Winterschläfer* he enacts a turn away from history before injecting post-*Wende* film with the adrenaline of his fiery heroine and her frantic race through Berlin in *Lola rennt*. As Andrew Webber points out in his article on this film, Tykwer explicitly juxtaposes the pace of the two films, making *Winterschläfer* a “counter-model”. (Webber 2003: 7). However, whilst *Lola* captures the moments of collision, subjecting the viewer to repeated impact, it still returns to the suspension of these moments in the dormancy of Lola and Manni’s post-coital pillow talk; for Webber, “the scenes in the bed are as if bathed in the stop-light” (2003: 8). Moreover, the opening tracking shots of *Winterschläfer* anticipate the shots of Lola as she desperately races against time, trying to stop an accident from happening. This kind of overlap between the two films serves to underline the temporal distortion inherent in trauma, of waking too soon and knowing too late. These films are subject to stalling and repetition where the flow of time is suspended or interrupted. In *Winterschläfer* the bright light of reality ruptures the little girl’s sleep and she falls outside of the narrative and in *Lola rennt* Manni’s call comes too late, each time. Both films offer a complex and ambivalent response to the cultural and political changes in Germany’s recent history, but perhaps *Lola* was only possible after breaking the slumber of the winter sleepers, after waiting for the environment to adapt to and adopt the changes made upon it. Using the motifs of abjection and dormancy, I hope to have shown how the response to historical and political trauma made in *Winterschläfer* works by rejecting, or abjecting that which threatens from without the integrity and coherence of established categories. Boundaries are troubled where political borders are being dismantled, but the sorts of displacements made in *Winterschläfer* suggest a retreat from the locus of immanent change. With *Lola Rennt* Tykwer can move into the metropolis where his protagonist is free to traverse its newly demarcated spaces.

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