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The Project of German Bomb Disposal: Temporal Imaginaries and Materiality after WWII

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by

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To my closest friends, you are family in every sense of the word.

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Introduction

> We are like people at a wayside station, waiting between
> trains, or between planes.
> We attend the cinema, consult our watches.
> We sit down and stretch our legs, stare at the skylight.
> We buy a paper and read it without comprehending.
>
> Noticing the whistles blowing, the crowds coming and going,
> We listen for the porter to call sonorously the panel of
> Destinations.
>
> Decorously the clock ticks; we await the roar of the transport.
>
> -Helen Goldbaum, "In the Shadow of Great Times"

Helen Goldbaum wrote "In the Shadow of Great Times" in 1939, in the first year of World War II. The poem builds on anticipation, on waiting; 1939 is a site of liminality. "In the Shadow of Great Times" is awaiting war. Or, perhaps, waiting to escape war. Yet nearly 75 years after the end of the war, Germans remain like people at a wayside station. They await evacuation, or the surprise explosion of an old war munition. Longing to be unburdened from the war, they erect monuments and hold commemorations. But the undetonated bombs that remain in Germany "[threaten] at any moment to make a mockery of a writer's metaphors about an 'explosive past.'"[1] The material vestiges of the war are resolute. In the decades immediately following the 'end' of the Second World War, hundreds of civilians in Germany died as previously undetonated war munitions exploded. In 1990, two explosive experts were killed in Hesse, Germany during the disposal of bomb from WWII.[2] In 1994, three construction workers died when a bomb exploded at their site in Berlin.[3] From the year 2000 until January of 2016, a

[1]Brian Ladd, *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 175.
[2]Shelley Pascual, "Everything you need to know about WWII bomb disposals in Germany," *The Local*, (2017).
[3]Pascual.

total of eleven bomb disposal technicians died in Germany.[4] Walter Benjamin writes that "[h]e who seeks to approach his own buried past must conduct himself like a man digging. Above all, he must not be afraid to return again and again to the same matter." But for the project of bomb disposal in Germany, Benjamin's words become a literal imperative, no longer a figurative expression.

From 1940-1945, over one million tons of bombs were dropped on Germany by US and British air forces.[5] It is the project of bomb disposal that responds to the continuity of threats posed by undetonated bombs from WWII, for an estimated 15% of the bombs dropped on Germany failed to explode.[6] While it is not known how many bombs remain in Germany, 2,000 tons of bombs are disposed each year.[7] Other estimations claim that on average, fifteen munitions (mainly bombs) require defusal each day. Evacuations during bomb disposal are common, deaths far less so. Even so, the bombs remain violent objects, containing within them the potential to cause greater casualties. Countless remain undetected, threatening without warning to be triggered and explode. Yet what is apparent in reports of Germans' attitudes towards the bombs is not a semblance of fear, but something at times sanguine, rather indifferent and nonchalant. As outsiders, we may find this striking. But bomb disposal in Germany constitutes everyday life, and what becomes normalized and routine therein is spatially and culturally specific. Thus, an outside perspective may be better positioned to refute the characterization of bomb disposal as a prosaic phenomenon. For once undetonated munitions are

[4]Adam Higginbotham, "There are still Thousands of Tons of Unexploded Bombs in Germany, Left Over from World War II," *Smithsonian Magazine*, (2016).
[5]Higginbotham, "There are still Thousands of Tons of Unexploded Bombs in Germany, Left Over from World War II."
[6]Erik Kirschbaum, "A 500-pound bomb is detonated in Germany - more than seven decades later," *Los Angeles Times*, (2019).
[7]Higginbotham.

not taken for granted, they capture, anew, the imagination, and inspire readings of bomb disposal that disrupt convention.

As constitutive elements of everyday life in Germany, remaining WWII bombs do not retreat to the recesses of history. For this reason, the project of bomb disposal promises an alternative vantage point to reorient temporality in post-war Germany. Since the end of the war, 'Germany'[8] has often attempted to mediate its past and future vis-a-vis the material world. Official commemorative efforts have memorialized and preserved a 'national past.' Socialist architects of East Germany attempted a utopian future in concrete. But today, the materiality of undetonated war munitions articulates an alternative temporal dimension, one that accurately demonstrates times' heterogeneity. Are the bombs anachronistic? Artifacts that evidence a collectively experienced past? Are they contemporary? Distinctly modern? The answer is that the bombs are at once all of these things. The bombs resist linearity, and are functionally "unthinkable" in the linear-time of the nation-state. Furthermore, in today's post-war Germany, the project of bomb disposal provides a context for rethinking pastness and Germanness. How does the material-discursive[9] practice of bomb disposal engage the continuity of violence from World War II when the war's memorialization is ever-present and ongoing? What would it mean to say that the project of bomb disposal responds not to legacies of WWII, but instead its renewal? Making bomb disposal theoretically intelligible requires liberating the concept of war

[8]To articulate the nationness of Germany in a post-war context must recognize that 'Germany' existed as two independent states until 1989. The East and West have their own histories, and remain culturally distinct after reunification. Furthermore, after the war, the project of bomb disposal existed in both East and West Germany and were subsequently joined when the country was reunified.

[9]Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007). The notion of the "material-discursive" is taken from Barad and will be defined in the following section.

from a linear temporality. Consequently, it offers imaginative possibilities for re-negotiating past, present and future.

Presently, undetonated bombs that remain in Germany occupy a position of liminality between "no longer" and "not yet." They challenge conventional boundaries, notions that linearly order past, present and future. They are no longer an appendage of the allied bombing campaign against the Third Reich, nor do they belong to the wartime environment. The bombs are not yet, but are rather in the process of becoming. In Wim Wenders' film *Wings of Desire*, two angels roam the streets of Berlin, look down upon the world from the top of buildings; unseen, they observe the public and private lives of an array of Berliners. With both its characters in angel form, the film unfolds in black and white. But when one of the angels, Damiel, falls in love with a female trapeze artist by the name of Marion, he re-enters the world of the living and at once the film proceeds in color. Like the ghosts in *Wings of Desire*, undetonated munitions likewise haunt Germany. In their undiscovered latency, the bombs exist in the film's world of black and white. They go unnoticed by the people that surround them.[10] But once detected, the undetonated bombs become seen and animated through the project of bomb disposal. They enter the world of color, becoming of 'the present.' Yet unlike Wim Wenders' Damiel, they are disallowed complete assimilation. In their witnessing, the bombs are marked by their previous life in WWII and imbued with anachronism. They remain ghostly objects. They arise from their unmarked tombs as the living dead, just as they threaten death to the living.

Like ghosts, the bombs belong to both the past and the present. Thus, WWII bombs that remain in Germany are near perfect time-making materials, and are quite productive in

[10]While remaining unseen, in places that were most heavily bombed during the war like the town of Oranienburg, the threat of their violence makes undetonated munitions have an omnipresence. They weigh on the conscious of those in charge of their disposal as well as Oranienburg's inhabitants, who in their daily lives tread upon earth that is riddled with explosives.

constituting our sense of the past and the present. For "spacetime is an enactment of differentness, a way of making/ marking here and now."[11] In the project of bomb disposal, undetonated munitions are unearthed and brought into the present. Here, each bomb "attaches itself with its tentacles into everyday life and folds itself into the ordinary."[12] In effect, they constitute the experience of present-day life in Germany, where evacuations and controlled detonations are a condition of reality. But as artifacts of WWII, these same bombs are vested with anachronism. The bombs force their way into a present-day that, in many ways, they should not belong to. Thus, the bombs are "making time in marking time."[13] For society and politics can only be anchored in the present following an assumption that they are no longer in the past; creating 'here and now' necessarily produces the past as foreign and other. But what happens to our relationship with the past when we render it as such?

When we treat the past as a foreign country[14], it is violently severed from our sense of the present. Whether termed temporal othering or temporal distanciation, as ways of seeing, these enact forgetting; they catalyze an undoing of trauma. For when undetonated munitions are ascribed a quality of anachronism, the experience of aerial bombardment is lost to what Eric Santner termed "narrative fetishism"; the "strategy of undoing, in fantasy, the need for mourning by simulating a condition of intactness, typically by situating the site and origin of loss elsewhere."[15] Thus, the project of bomb disposal can be read as a "strategy of undoing." The site

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[11]Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, 137.
[12]Veena Das, *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 1.
[13]Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin, *New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies*, (Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press, 2012), 66.
[14]See L.P. Hartley, *The Go Between*, (London: H. Hamilton, 1953). Future reference of this book is found in a later section.
[15]Eric L. Santner, "History Beyond the Pleasure Principle: Some Thoughts on the Representation of Trauma," in *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the "Final Solution,"* (Harvard U.P., 1992), 144.

and origin of loss now being materialized in the object of the transtemporal bomb, the team of bomb disposal technicians excavate and remove the 'tumor' so that the 'body' of Germany is once again intact. Theoretical physicist and feminist theorist, Karen Barad, coined the term "intra-action" to explain "interactions through which subject and object emerge."[16] Borrowing from her logic, in the intra-active phenomenon of bomb disposal, new subjects emerge: the bomb disposer as surgeon, as fantasy maker.

* * *

"What does it feel like to live atop hundreds of bombs which could explode at any moment," asks the 2015 documentary film, *The Bomb Hunters*; adding, "such is the daily life of the 43,000 citizens of Oranienburg on the northern outskirts of Berlin."[17] The German town of Oranienburg may be the most dangerous in the entire country. This is claimed, at least, by Horst Reinhardt who served as chief of the Brandenburg state Kampfmittelbeseitigungsdienst (KMBD), the war ordnance disposal service. The town was one of the most heavily bombed in Germany; the most extensive aerial attack on Oranienburg took place on March 15th, 1945. The bombing was strategic, unlike morale bombings which targeted civilian populations, the targets of the March 15th bombing included rail yards, an aircraft plant, and factories. In contrast to other aerial campaigns, most of the bombs dropped on Oranienburg were fitted with time-delay fuses. The experiential dimension of these delay-action bombs inflicts a prolonged reign of terror, and in the context of bomb disposal in Oranienburg today, it continues to inflict a postponed one. *The Bomb Hunters* notes that "over 300 bombs are estimated to be buried

[16]Dolphijn and Tuin, *New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies*, 55.
[17]Rick Minnich, *The Bomb Hunters*, (2015).

beneath Oranienburg. Most have long-delay fuses which are deteriorating. Five have exploded spontaneously since 1990. The rest could go off at any moment."[18]

Delay-action bombs are unpredictable, independent of the will of a subject, they are themselves agents, and other undetonated bombs can likewise be characterized. In the bomb's failure to explode upon impact, the continuity of their threat outside the wartime environment is no longer the expressed desire of the subject who first dropped them, nor the political institution that joined the war, ordered their manufacture, and commanded their deployment. Furthermore, histories and analyses of the aerial bombardment campaigns of the Second World War employ a distinction between "strategic targets" and "morale bombings." While it is not my aim to obliterate this distinction, the town of Oranienburg does problematize the assumption of mutual exclusivity implicit in a binary distinction of "strategic" and "morale." For bombs in Oranienburg do not distinguish factories from homes, combatants from civilians. When a WWII bomb left a crater in the place of the home of longtime Oranienburg resident Paule Dietrich in 2013, Dietrich was not a strategic target. The categories of "strategic" and "morale" enact a fantasy of finitude in the context of war that fail to comprehend war's residual traumas.

[18]Minnich, *The Bomb Hunters*.

Gunthart ‘Paule’ Dietrich at the site where his home once stood, November 2013, *The Bomb Hunters*

Bomb disposal is a widely acknowledged phenomenon, but its current narration possesses little imagination. This project is grounded on the material and temporal dimensions of German bomb disposal, and the implications catalyzed when they are made meaningful. Undetonated munitions aid in interrogating and deconstructing dominant notions of war and temporality, which are produced in the service of sovereign power. The proceeding sections of this paper show how a focus on the temporal and material dimensions of German bomb disposal imagine, anew, issues like state violence, national identity, and commemoration. First, I will outline the interdisciplinary work that serves to theoretically frame and orient my project. Included here are books, essays, and other scholarship that offer robust understandings of temporality, sovereign power, war and materiality. Next, the second section of this paper addresses Germany’s official remembrance culture, where notions of the past are both contingent and (re)constituted. Here, bomb disposal generates a disturbance of commemorative practices. For undetonated munitions

problematize conventional understandings of pastness, which figure the past and present as isolated locations in the temporal dimension. Following this, the third section centers on the temporal imaginary of the nation-state, where nation-time assumes linearity and constructs dominant notions of war. Here, the temporal dimension of undetonated munitions contests the linear-time of the nation-state, which is also to say that they contest a means central to the maintenance of sovereign power. The final section of this project returns to where the bombs originated, to the moment of the air raid. However, I do not draw sources from state documents or history books. Rather, I employ imaginative recounting and creative reenactments that gesture toward the experiential dimension of aerial bombardment.

Just last month, in April, a 500-pound bomb was detonated in Frankfurt, Germany.[19] In a rather dramatic fashion, the bombs controlled explosion, which occurred behind the Iron Bridge on the Main River, produced a geyser-like blast of water in its wake. According to the Los Angeles Times, "residents reported feeling the ground vibrating."[20] Reminiscent of this sense-experience, after the aerial bombardments of the war, "many Berliners [could] still feel [it] in their bones,"[21] seemingly unable to shake the shock of its experience. Now, over seventy years after the end of World War II, the air raids still permeate everyday life in Germany. But of the Germans that witness bomb disposal today, very few can claim to have experienced the Allied bombing campaigns; and the last witnesses of the bombings will be gone far before the project of bomb disposal is rendered unnecessary. Today, in Germany, undetonated munitions materially

[19]Kirschbaum, "A 500-pound bomb is detonated in Germany - more than seven decades later," *Los Angeles Times*, (2019).
[20]Kirschbaum.
[21] Alexander Kluge, "The Political as Intensity of Everyday Feelings," in *Alexander Kluge: Raw Materials for the Imagination*, 289.

manifest the inescapability of the past. Each undetonated bomb is a reminder that one cannot sever them self from the past, for the past is their inheritance.

An Ensemble Cast:
Matter, Time and Sovereign Power

Undetonated munitions are the material locus of this project. As artifacts of war, transtemporal bombs are distinct from other material remnants of the past. They are violent, requiring excavation and disposal. Their 'afterlife' beyond the war does not result from planned preservation. The bombs are not intentionally kept, held onto, cherished or memorialized. Rather, once perceptible the bombs become disposable. The 'afterlife' of the bomb is, by nature, its death. Its violence no longer serves a purpose.

From 1939 until 1945, bombs were instruments of state-sanctioned violence. During the Allied air raids on Germany, civilian casualties were not 'collateral damage', but often the expressed targets of morale bombings. Bringing death and destruction during the war years, air raids on Germany were re-scripted as "scars across the face of the enemy."[22] As such, they evidence the valorization of violence. For during the war, the bombs served a military 'strategy from above.'[23] This gave their violence meaning and reason. But after failing to fulfill their intended purpose during the war, the undetonated bombs that remain in Germany are without grounds for explosion. Their violence is no longer in service to a state; they have no enemy at which to aim. Today, there is no imaginable justification for casualties claimed by old war munitions. Previously valorized, the bombs have now become a senseless form of violence. Symbolic re-scriptings have been replaced by the technicalities of bomb disposal.

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[22]Franklin D'Olier and Henry C. Alexander, "Summary Report," *The United States Strategic Bombing Survey,* (1945), 1.

[23]See David Roberts, "Alexander Kluge and German History: 'The Air Raid on Halberstadt on 8.4.1945'," in *Alexander Kluge: Raw Materials for the Imagination*, (Amsterdam University Press, 2012).

In the German project of bomb disposal, the (re)emergence of the bomb is prosaic. The frequency with which bombs are found and force evacuation produces bomb disposals' routinization. Undetonated munitions have much to offer the imagination, despite the ordinary quality that has come to encompass them. Once the project of bomb disposal is approached from an alternative orientation, "what has been familiar suddenly seems distant, strange, [and] foreign."[24] In this project, I attempt to imagine, anew, undetonated munitions and the project of bomb disposal. This involves reconceptualizing what is taken for granted, what continues to be assumed. The success of this project is contingent upon the intervention of theoretical work that arouses the imaginative potential of bomb disposal in Germany. Anchoring this project are notions of war, temporality, materiality, sovereign power, trauma and commemoration. These subjects are entangled,[25] each is constituted through their mutual entanglement and interpenetration. They form, if you will, an ensemble cast.

Bomb disposal can be understood as a material-discursive practice, what Karen Barad posits as the "very [practice] through which different distinctions get drawn."[26] For Barad, the hyphen signals the co-constitution of matter and discourse; it implies their jointed-ness. Barad defines discourse as "not what is said; it is that which constrains and enables what can be said."[27] Furthermore, in Barad's account, "discursive practices are specific material (re)configurings of the world through which the determination of boundaries, properties, and meanings is differentially enacted."[28] Barad's work is instrumental in reconceptualizing the project of bomb

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[24]Anton Kaes, "In Search of Germany: Alexander Kluge's The Patriot," in *Alexander Kluge: Raw Materials for the Imagination*, 114.
[25]The notion of entanglement draws from Barad's work.
[26]Karen Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter," *Signs*, (2003), 816.
[27]Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, 146.
[28]Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, 149.

disposal. The excavation and controlled explosion of undetonated munitions in Germany is itself a boundary making practice, one that distinguishes past from present, wartime from peacetime. But this discourse limits our imagination. Barad writes, "[l]anguage matters. Discourse matters. Culture matters. There is an important sense in which the only thing that doesn't seem to matter anymore is matter."[29] One may balk at the claim that in bomb disposal, matter seems not to *matter*; the bomb is, in the most literal sense, what matters. But undetonated munitions are oriented, acted upon and articulated by exterior, human actors. The bombs are ascribed qualities, they do not determine their own. If we are to take seriously Barad's claim that "[m]atter feels, converses, suffers, desires, yearns and remembers,"[30] then it's worth asking these of the bomb.

For readers, and I include myself here, Barad's work is laborious. The terms she has coined, and those from which she borrows - *intra-activity, agential realism, material-discursive, diffraction, performativity, ontoespistemology, spacetimemattering, thingification* - are all in dialogue and often evade complete lucidity. In her phraseology she utters statements like "cut together/apart."[31] She provokes philosophy-physics. She concerns herself not with universality, but with the universe; the universe in its state of becoming[32]. My project will not always coincide with Barad's, but I employ aspects of her work that are pertinent in the context of bomb disposal. Barad's scholarship helps open up and create space for the imagination; for imaging, anew, our responsibility to the past. It achieves this, in no small part, by seeing that "matter plays an active, indeed agential, role in its iterative materialization,"[33] In the context of bomb disposal,

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[29]Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, 132.
[30]Dolphijn and Tuin, *New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies*, 59.
[31]Karen Barad, "Re-membering the Future, Re(con)figuring the Past: Temporality, Materiality, and Justice-to-Come," (2014).
[32]See Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*.
[33]Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter," 826.

privileging language, discourse, and culture above matter reproduces bounded notions of the past and the present. Barad writes that "time and space, like matter and meaning, come into existence."[34] How we come to orient ourselves in time and space is not a given, but contingent upon the maintenance of certain practices. Attending to materiality in the context of bomb disposal expands our temporal imaginary. The material-discursive practice of bomb disposal is constitutive of reality, reifying a sense of place and the present. When the contingent nature of space-time is lost in reification, the temporal quality of undetonated munitions is employed to contest time's naturalization.[35]

Barad writes that "crucial to understanding the workings of power is an understanding of the nature of power in the fullness of its materiality."[36] Barad claims, "[w]hat is needed is a robust account of the materialization of all bodies—'human' and 'nonhuman'—and the material-discursive practices by which their differential constitutions are marked."[37] The practice of bomb disposal materializes 'politics' and 'the political',[38] 'past' and 'present', and 'threat' and 'security', undetonated munitions presenting the threat and bomb disposal providing security. The differential constitutions of these couplings do not emerge in the absence of power, but often materialize in its service. Furthermore, Barad's work regularly employs the term entanglement.

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[34]Barad, "Preface and Acknowledgments," in *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*.

[35]See Hom, "Timing is Everything".

[36]Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter," 810.

[37]Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter," 810.

[38]Today a robust body of academic work draws upon the distinction of 'politics' and 'the political' (see, for example, Jenny Edkins' *Trauma and the Politics of Memory*; Miriam Ticktin's *Casualties of Care*), the former assumed as the status quo and the latter its revolutionary counterpart. 'Politics' involves governmental institutions, elections, policy and the like, processes that produce the maintenance of the status quo, that reify and reproduce the established order of things. 'The political' challenges 'politics'; it is inherently disruptive, generative of revolutionary thought and action. Currently, bomb disposal occupies the space of 'politics.' Bomb disposal is conducted by governmental actors and operates within established policies. This project attempts to reinscribe bomb disposal within the realm of 'the political', for it is believed that within 'the political', bomb disposal becomes meaningful.

She insists that matter and meaning are co-constituted in their entanglement, and fail to exist if either is absent. Referring to this entanglement, Barad's work is a provocation[39] of dualism. In provoking duality, Barad contributes a notion of *agential realism,* which comes out of the traditions of posthumanism and new materialism. Agential realism avows that everything in the world exists in a state of becoming. According to Barad, it is our responsibility to interrupt this becoming when it is invoked to maintain established hierarchies of power. Responsibility demands that we "move toward what may come to be in ways that are accountable for our part in the world's differential becoming."[40] While a variety of disciplines permeate Barad's work, ethical implications are never absent.

In her work, Barad has coined terminology that helps characterize the threats posed by undetonated munitions, providing a way to orient their violence in relation to WWII. Before now, I have the used term "continuity" to identify the threats of undetonated war munitions that remain in Germany, which is to suggest WWII's contemporaneity through the continuity of its violence. From this point forward, I will instead refer to what Barad has termed "dis/continuity," as "continuity" appears to reify linear-time, which is antithetical to the temporal character of old war munitions. For Barad, "dis/continuity" means "neither fully continuous *with* continuity or even fully continuous with discontinuity, and in any case, surely not one with itself."[41] Like Barad's terminology, WWII bombs remaining in Germany oppose binary thinking. The threat of

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[39]See "Interview with Karen Barad," in *New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies*. Barad is resolute in moving away from critique. Instead, her work provokes through what, borrowing from Haraway, she calls a diffractive practice; "I call a diffractive methodology, a method of diffractively reading insights through one another, building new insights, and attentively and carefully reading for differences that matter in their fine details, together with the recognition that there intrinsic to this analysis is an ethics that is not predicated on externality but rather entanglement. Diffractive readings bring inventive provocations; they are good to think with. They are respectful, detailed, ethical engagements" (50).

[40]Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 353.

[41]Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 244.

undetonated munitions is not a continuity of WWII, insofar as "war is viewed as involving the use of violence between organized groups for ostensibly political purposes."[42] Since May 8th, 1945, undetonated munitions in Germany have served no purpose. Attempts to characterize their violence in relation to the war is met with great difficulty. For when analyzing the project of bomb disposal, one is provided the means of war but no political ends with which to make sense of them. And while the bombs remain in the limbo of dis/continuity, their spatio-temporal incoherence is productive in lending a sense of determinacy to the world that surrounds them. Within each undetonated bomb, past and present permeate. Thus, when encountering the bombs, one is provided a means to orient time and space. For "'[t]his' and 'that,' 'here' and 'now,' don't preexist what happens but come alive with each meeting."[43] In the project of bomb disposal, undetonated munitions reintroduce themselves. When this happens, the feeling of occupying the present, knowing the past, and being in Germany all "come alive."

Before turning attention to other theorists, it is important to mention another important feature of Karen Barad's work. Namely, Barad calls into question that "which separates off matters of fact from matters of concern and matters of care, and shifts them off to be dealt with by… 'separate academic divisions,' whereby the division of labor is such that the natural sciences are assigned matters of fact and the humanities matters of concern."[44] Barad's own academic practice is a testament to her problematizing "separate academic divisions." Her work follows an unmistakably interdisciplinary approach, of which she may actually prefer to term intra-disciplinary.[45] And in line with Barad's practice, this paper proceeds in an intra-disciplinary

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[42]Christopher McIntosh, "War through a Temporal Lens: Foregrounding Temporality in International Relations' Conceptions of War," in *Time, Temporality and Global Politics*, (2016), 117.
[43]Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 396.
[44]Dolphijn and Tuin, *New Materialism*, 50.
[45]Interdisciplinary is a term Barad might resist in preference of intra-disciplinary. Barad coined the term *intra*-actions; "intra-action conceptualizes that it is the action between (and not in-between) that matters." (*New*

fashion. Not simply for reasons of personal preference, but also because the academic major in which this project is situated, "Global and International Studies," self describes as interdisciplinary. From this point, I will proceed to a discussion of critical scholarship on temporality. Barad has her own contributions for thinking temporally, perhaps the most lucid of which is found in the book *New Materialism: Interviews and Cartographies*.

> See, we assume that time is a given externality, just a parameter that marches forward, and that the past already happened and the present, that moment "now" just slipped away into the past, and that the future is yet to come. But if we examine this carefully, again using the insights from feminist theory, from post-structuralist theory, and things that Cultural Studies has been telling us, and so on, and bring them into the physics here, what we can see is that what is going on actually is the making of temporality. There are questions of temporality that are coming to the fore here. What we are seeing here is that time is not given, it is not universally given, but rather that time is articulated and re-synchronized through various material practices. In other words, just like position, momentum, wave and particle, time itself only makes sense in the context of particular phenomena. So what is going on here is that physicists are actually making time in marking time, and that there is a certain way in which what we take to be the "past" and what we take to be the "present" and the "future" are entangled with one another.[46]

Barad posits that rather than being given, time is contingent. Temporality is something that comes into being, sees imagining through the dynamism of material practices. Barad resists what many other theorists fail to, namely a tendency to naturalize time and/or reify that which they ultimately attempt to critique.[47] The following discussion will introduce other scholars who aid in expanding notions of the temporal dimension in regard to why time matters for international-relations theory.

Critical scholar Andrew Hom's work privileges the relationship, indeed the entanglement, between international politics and temporality. Hom is one of many scholars

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Materialism, 14). So, Barad might consider that her drawing on an array of disciplines matters in the actions between disciplines, rather than in-between.

[46]Dolphijn and Truin, *New Materialism*, 66.

[47]Hom's paper "Timing is Everything," points out many instances where this happens.

writing about time in the context of international relations. I draw on Hom's work in particular because it appreciates the temporal dimension as heterogeneous. Only once this is acknowledged, can we attend to the temporal character of undetonated munitions, which demand articulation in terms of their heterogeneity. Hom advocates that we refer to "timing instead of time,"[48] for in reference to time, we both "separate time from politics" and risk reifying the temporal as a "*natural and neutral dimension.*"[49]

> … we should focus on timing: the practical efforts by which social agents establish meaningful relationships between processes of change so that they unfold in ways conducive to orientation, direction, and control…timing processes are common to international politics. If repeated successfully, they may produce symbolic descriptions of a "time" or "temporality" that comes to seem "real" and independent of social existence. Yet, this status stems not from any accurate description of an ontological prior, but rather from those symbols' ability to transmit useful information about orienting ourselves in dynamic environments. References to time, even those deemed "universal" or matters of common sense, thus primarily serve as markers of the underlying timing practices that give international politics its temporal character.[50]

In the context of bomb disposal, undetonated munitions 'transmit information' about the past and the present in ways that inspire the very orientation Hom explicates. Hom's contributions to the study of temporality in international relations are significant. His work distinguishes him from many other scholars by illuminating the ways in which others tend to "manifest deeply embedded habits of speaking and thinking about time— ones that limit our ability to unpack its significance and analyze it rigorously."[51] In addition, he notes that much scholarship lacks placing itself in dialogue with other existing theory. This results, Hom claims, in the production of many disparate temporalities. Furthermore, he locates ways in which critical scholars wind up

[48]Hom, "Timing is Everything," 70.
[49]Hom, "Timing is Everything," 70.
[50]Hom, "Timing is Everything," 70.
[51]Hom, "Timing is Everything," 69.

conceding their analyses to mainstreamed notions of time in a failure to transgress binaries, like that which distinguishes linear from cyclical.[52] Finally, Hom notes that a tendency to invoke master concepts "give the illusion of simply 'nam[ing]' or 'giv[ing] meaning to what is "out there"'… They do not, however, explain 'how time emerges and flows.'"[53] In this project, undetonated munitions and the project of German bomb disposal resist a master narrative. They demonstrate how 'time' comes into being in the context of Germany, how and where it becomes possible to locate time and space.

Taken seriously, the temporal implications of German bomb disposal destabilize linear notions of temporality that tend to dominate, notions that present distinct spheres of past, present and future. Conventional timing practices proliferate a sense of linear-time. Devices like watches and cell phones, which have become like appendages to our bodies, are one commonplace source to attribute the production of linearity. However, "cultural experience and social understandings of time [are] dynamic, multiple and heterogeneous."[54] Interrogating the dominance of linear-time is not to disavow the multiple ways in which temporality is produced and experienced. When linearity is decentered in analyzing undetonated munitions and the project of bomb disposal, what becomes centered is not another unitary, alternative notion of 'time.' Rather, the timing of WWII bombs that remain in Germany and require disposal generate a temporal imaginary that is qualitatively plural. Time in this context is liberated from any singularity. Moreover, linearity is the subject of contestation because it is the time associated with sovereign power and institutionalized commemorative efforts of the state. What are the political implications for

[52]Hom draws on Edkins' *Trauma and the Memory of Politics* for this specific critique. While Hom finds value in Edkins work, he cites her binary thinking as an impediment to her aims.
[53]Hom, "Timing is Everything," 71.
[54]Tim Edensor, "Reconsidering National Temporalities, Institutional Times, Everyday Routines, Serial Spaces and Synchronicities," *European Journal of Social Theory*, (2006), 525.

provoking linearity? In *Trauma and the Politics of Memory,* Jenny Edkins notes that linear-time functions to conceal sovereign powers' production of trauma and certain forms of state violence, which is a central claim of Edkins' book. Reimagining temporality through the project of bomb disposal can aid in rendering visible these violences. Furthermore, in appreciating the entanglement of the past, present, and future, decentering linearity allows us to rescript an ethics of responsibility providing incentives for political action.

Michel-Rolph Trouillot's book *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* is distinct from the work of previous theorists and writers that have been discussed, but Trouillot is similarly concerned by the assumption that the past exists as severed from our sense of the present. Trouillot avows that "the past does not exist independently from the present. Indeed, the past is only past because there is a present, just as I can point to something over there only because I am here."[55] Since, "nothing is inherently over there or here… the past has no content. The past—or, more accurately, pastness—is a position,"[56] and the same is implied for the present. As a position, Trouillot notes, the past is provided content with the production of history. The past is given form through a scripting of events that happens in the positioned 'present', or in what Richard Jenkins calls the "working interaction space of the here and now."[57] The past does not reside outside of everyday life. Instead, here in the present, it is reconstituted. Furthermore, for Trouillot, the production of history - of the past - is simultaneously the production of power. Or, to quote him directly, "history is the fruit of power."[58] In the context of

[55]Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History,* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2015), 15.
[56]Trouillot, *Silencing the Past,* 15.
[57]Richard Jenkins, "In the Present Tense: Time, Identification and Human Nature," *Anthropological Theory,* (2002), 275.
[58]Trouillot, preface to *Silencing the Past*, xxiii.

bomb disposal, "history" is that which gives narration to the Second World War, "power" is that which is possessed by the sovereign.

The history of World War II is scripted according to a standard notion of wartime. As international-relations scholar Tarak Barkawi explains, the mutually exclusive categories of "wartime" and "peacetime" produce and are reconstituted in the periodization of war.[59] WWII has been periodized in the years 1939-1945. Here, "wartime" comes alive. Yet, undetonated munitions and the project of bomb disposal supply alternative ways of imagining the temporal dimension of war. In contesting the convention of wartime, emergent war-*times* are rendered imaginable, for the heterogeneous nature of time likewise characterizes the temporal dimension of war. Furthermore, the temporal character of World War II extends in each direction beyond 1939 and 1945. In the work of German filmmaker and theorist Alexander Kluge, WWII is materialized prior to 1939 in the temporal relation of what Kluge refers to as a "strategy from above" and a "strategy from below,"[60] which is expanded upon in the final section and conclusion of this paper. Rendered in the present, undetonated munitions reveal the relationship between "above," the strategy of the military (and by extension, the state) and "below," the strategy of civilians.[61] This hierarchical relationship may be obvious in "wartime," but in the absence of war, it is normally concealed. Furthermore, Trouillot's avowal that "history is the fruit of power," is followed by his claim that "the ultimate mark of power may be its invisibility; the ultimate challenge, the exposition of its roots."[62] An analysis of undetonated munitions and the project of bomb disposal welcomes this challenge, for when bomb disposal technicians

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[59] See Barkawi, "Decolonising War".
[60] See *Alexander Kluge: Raw Materials for the Imagination*, 127, 134-145, 189.
[61] See *Alexander Kluge: Raw Materials for the Imagination*.
[62] Trouillot, preface to *Silencing the Past*, xxiii.

excavate old war munitions, they expose the very roots of sovereign power. The work of Alexander Kluge, and of the authors who analyze him, allow for this reading of the project of bomb disposal.

Beyond the "Zero Hour"

> As if in shock German history seems to belong to the past, and it is very difficult in fact for the two German states to produce a sense of identity and at the same time even consider the history of the 1930s and 1940s. Both states introduced a zero hour on which they tried to construct a new history for each Germany.
>
> -Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt, *Geschichte und Eigensinn*

In the German lexicon, *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* captures the project of coming to terms with the past, specifically the trauma inflicted by the Third Reich and the Holocaust. In Germany, memorializing has been posited as essential to the recovery of the nation, a notion granted even greater urgency with the fall of the Berlin wall and the impending process of reunification. Germanness, like national identity elsewhere, relies upon the construction of a past, of a national history. But the singularity implied in 'national history' or 'national identity' does not account for the fact that post-World War II, there existed not one Germany, but two. The reunification of Germany, the scripting of a singular history and collective identity, thus demonstrates "how a state works to reconstitute its sense of self and of time after a shocking experience."[63] More aptly put, in Germany, we find not one "shocking experience" but a variety of traumas: Nazism and The Shoah, WWII, the division of West and East Germany. So, in coming to terms with the past, commemoration does not merely respond to the question of German guilt. It engages a sense of collective memory to reconstitute and recover the nation after division. Within commemoration we find 'Germany' in the process of becoming.

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[63]Andrew Hom, "Timing, Identity and Emotion in International Relations," in *Time, Temporality and Global Politics,* 31.

It is worth pausing for a moment to appreciate the productive nature of the term *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. Translated as "coming to terms with the past" or "mastering the past," the term has a generative quality. *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* is both forward-facing and backward-facing. "Coming to terms" and "mastering" require the production of process, and it is toward a future that commemorative processes aspire. For the term contains the implication that, in the future, one could remark on having come to terms with the past, or having had mastered it. Despite this implication, some German politicians have clarified that coming to terms with the past is open-ended, *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* requiring maintenance from each new generation of Germans.[64] Nonetheless, it is worth revealing suggestions that arise from this terminology. For under another German government, notions of "mastering the past" could be mobilize in service of a different, and perhaps dangerous, political project.

Vergangenheitsbewältigung presupposes the very pastness of the past, that there exists a boundary severing it from the present and the future. The referent past in *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, becomes a static, fixed and objectively perceptible thing, which, by extension, can be 'mastered.' The existence of a stable and knowable past is taken for granted; the term assumes that Germans, having collectively experienced or inherited this past, can approach it with absolute certainty. But in *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*, Edkins writes that, "memory - and hence, the past - cannot exist other than as a historically and geographically situated practice."[65] Furthermore, in reference to Halbwachs, Edkins notes, "'we should

[64]See "Remembrance Serve in the German Bundestag (Federal Parliament)," *The Federal Chancellor*: "The process of Germany coming to terms with its own history is not complete, 'and it also never will be.' Every generation will struggle to reach an understanding of such a contradictory history as that of the Germans. However, the responsibility towards one's own country always includes the willingness to 'face up to the whole history of the country. This applies to all Germans, and to all those who have decided to – or will decide to – become Germans,' emphasized Winkler. 'One cannot draw a line underneath such a history.'"

[65]Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*, 34.

renounce the idea that the past is itself preserved within individual memories.'"[66] *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* avows that the past is constituted by an assemblage of uncontested events. However, memorialization is often enacted "to fulfill the particular needs of one group or another to maintain power, identity, or legitimation."[67] Edkins work is useful in recognizing that commemoration is not an apolitical project. Pasts can be concealed, and others manufactured. I draw on Edkins' book in the context of commemoration in Germany, for she illuminates the ways in which remembrance efforts often fail to do justice to traumatic pasts.

In Germany, the project of coming to terms with the past, encounters a past that is qualitatively traumatic. It is the trauma of Nazism and the Holocaust that is the subject of Germany's official remembrance culture. However, Edkins notes that "[w]e cannot try to address the trauma directly without risking its gentrification. We cannot remember it as something that took place in time, because this would neutralize it."[68] Edkins defines trauma in the following terms; "[w]hat we call trauma takes place when the very powers that we are convinced will protect us and give us security become our tormentors: when the community of which we considered ourselves members turns against us."[69] For Edkins, the site trauma is antithetical to practices that commemorate it, for trauma and commemoration constitute incompatible temporal dimensions. This is because "trauma and traumatic memory alter the linearity of historical, narrativized time, time which has beginnings and ends."[70] In assigning dates for commemoration, placing traumatic events as designated moments in the linear narration of history, we make trauma incoherent. Furthermore, according to Edkins, "[t]rauma time is

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[66]Edkins, 34.
[67]Karen Remmler, "'On the Natural History of Destruction' and Cultural Memory: W.G. Sebald," *German Politics & Society*, (2005), 46.
[68]Edkins, 15.
[69]Edkins, 4.
[70]Edkins, 40.

inherent in and destabilises any production of linearity. Trauma has to be excluded for linearity to be convincing, but it cannot be successfully put to one side: it always intrudes, it cannot be completely forgotten." While commemorative efforts largely and rightfully center Nazism and the Holocaust, the experience of air raids as a site of trauma has been largely marginalized. Yet undetonated munitions can become like metaphors for trauma-time, even when buried or sidelined, trauma intrudes.

Founded on the project of coming to terms with the past, the social and political practices of commemoration provided a unifying a sense of Germanness post 1989, whereby the past became a touchstone for (re)imagining the nation.

> [The two Germanys] are determined to settle their crimes into "history." They want to resolve a duty to remember and a longing to forget, as if duty and desire were the thesis and antithesis of a dialectic of destiny. They have a stubborn, almost innocent German faith that their past is like their prime rate or their G.N.P.—something that with a good plan and a lot of attention can be adjusted, refreshed, pressed into the service of the new German nation. After fifty years, they have lost patience with the painful plain truths of recapitulation. They prefer the symbolic simplicities of objectification—the monuments, memorials, and "commemorative sites" that take memory and deposit it, so to speak, in the landscape, where it can be visited at appropriative ceremonial moments, but where it does not interfere unduly with the business of life at hand.[71]

In Germany, the past is presented through commemoration and memorials, where history secretes itself from the material world and the built environment. The unpredictable quality of traumatic memory is replaced instead with the predictability and determinacy of commemorative sites and dates that designate fixed times and spaces where one encounters or is forced to confront the past. Furthermore, in maneuvering among and between "sites of memory"[72] in Germany, one can also feel the tenuous link between contemporary life and the nation's past.

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[71]Jane Kramer, *The Politics of Memory: Looking for Germany in the New Germany*, (New York: Random House, 1996), 258.

[72]See Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations,* (1989).

The topography of memory, which characterizes the experience of being in German cities, does not always force perception precisely because it does not disrupt the normal proceedings of daily life.[73] Where, in contrast, undetonated munitions and bomb disposal force evacuations.

In Dresden, the coexistence of past and present in the built environment is so visible that the friction between them is made palpable. In the area most frequented by tourists, the grandeur of baroque architecture finds a neighbor in an obtrusive shopping mall and a communist mural. While at first glance distinguishing old from new may seem an easy task, reconstruction efforts produce a kind of blurring between the past and the present in Dresden,[74] a city where notions of victimhood and German suffering have had lasting salience. WWII bombs that force evacuations and defusal efforts present their own unique implications in Dresden. Here, bombs produce a disruption in the fantasy and forgetting enacted through processes of reconstruction after the war. One reconstruction effort, specifically that of the Frauenkirche (Church of Our Lady) in Dresden, is saturated with memory and symbolism. Viewed with pride as an architectural marvel, the destruction of the Frauenkirche by Allied bombing during the second world war captured the imaginary in a way that transcended its singular ruination. The church became a significant node on the memory-map of Germany; "[i]f Dresden's destruction became for many a powerful touchstone for the memory of German losses in World War II and a symbol for the incredible destructiveness of modern warfare, the remains of the Frauenkirche has served as the central symbol of Dresden's devastation."[75] Proposed reconstruction of the church was highly contested,

[73]These impressions are based on my own experience of being in Germany during the summer of 2018. In the month and a half that I was there, the majority of my stay was had in Berlin. However, I also spent time in Dresden and Bremen, the former of which I will briefly draw upon for my discussion of the bombing of Dresden and the reconstruction efforts that followed.

[74]Baroque buildings that were destroyed were rebuilt, again, in the same fashion; the care with which they were rendered to look exactly as they did prior make them seem indistinguishable from the buildings that were destroyed.

[75]Jason James, "Undoing Trauma: Reconstructing the Church of Our Land in Dresden," *Ethos,* (2006), 246.

for it demonstrated a "longing for a normal Germanness"[76] and at the same time it promised erasure.

Reconstruction of the Frauenkirche began in 1994 and the notions animated in its re-building present interesting implications for a German national identity that is backward-looking and sees constitution through claiming a collective past. The church's "destruction and resurrection implies that an intact, unadulterated national tradition once existed, was lost, and can now be recovered—as if Germanness were an artifact or thing."[77] This implication also presupposes the reality of Germanness itself, as if it were possible to present a coherent and singular articulation of national identity. Despite the implication, there exists no 'real' or 'true' German identity, rather, particular notions of Germanness are privileged above others.[78]

> ...the core fantasy of the project is simply that the Frauenkirche has returned—that loss can be undone. The reconstruction embodies, in other words, a melancholic fantasy of reversing loss. The fantasy does not require one to forget loss or pretend it never occurred—only to believe that it can be reversed. Indeed, the acknowledgment of loss allows for it to be embraced as trauma and converted into a claim of victimhood. The Frauenkirche's fantasy of resurrection thus displaces the task of coming to terms with loss...It avoids the work of mourning by insisting, in effect, that mourning need not occur.[79]

Furthermore, the reconstruction of the church "not only fetishizes the nation, it also asserts the centrality of a particular national, cultural inheritance at a time when immigration and diversity render a singularly established ethnocultural notion of Germanness untenable."[80] In making visible the discourses that are produced in the materiality of ruination and reconstruction, seeing undetonated war munitions in relation to the Frauenkirche lends itself to posing new questions.

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[76]James, "Undoing Trauma," 245.

[77]James, "Undoing Trauma," 248.

[78]National identities undergo change and transformation; the notion of Germanness that dominates at one given time can always shift under different circumstances.

[79]James, "Undoing Trauma," 248-249.

[80]James, "Undoing Trauma," 267.

In the context of bomb disposal, are old war munitions ultimately reifying of "a particular national, cultural inheritance"? Does the bombs disruptive nature evidence the inherently contested and constructed character of the nation and national identity? Are the bombs demonstrative of historical continuity that resists "narrative fetishism"? Despite the completion of Frauenkirche's reconstruction, I would argue that the continuity of bomb disposals in Dresden[81], and elsewhere throughout Germany, disallows restoration projects like that of Frauenkirche to fully fantasize the reversal of loss and undo the traumas inflicted by the bombing of Nazi Germany.

In the context of commemoration, how can we make sense of undetonated munitions? Can we view these bombs as unintentional World War II memorials? Like official remembrance efforts, munitions can be read as evidencing a past. Trouillot writes that "[y]ears, months, and dates present history as part of the natural cycles of the world. By packaging events within temporal sequences, commemorations adorn the past with certainty: the proof of the happening is in the cyclical inevitability of its celebration."[82] So while the bombs challenge dominant notions of temporality and the periodization of war, if they are appreciated as anachronistic objects then they are also, at once, reifying the end of the war. The logic follows that if the bombs are objects of the past, so, too, is the war. However, if the object of the bomb enacts the past, then the bombs are paradoxical in their implication. For deaths from bomb disposal and undetonated munitions problematize any notion that the violence of World War II ended in 1945, its materials claiming casualties far beyond that year. To borrow from Trouillot, the bombs "adorn the past with certainty," and at the same time, their dis/continuity of WWII violence makes certain the war lies

[81] Just in May of this year, a fire that was sparked during a bomb disposal in Dresden led to the evacuation of nearly 9,000 people. The bomb was found by a construction team on a Tuesday and the evacuees were not allowed back home until Thursday. (The Local, 24 May 2018).
[82]Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 116.

unconvincingly in the finitude of the past. Whether or not we can imagine undetonated munitions as memorials, their inability to perform a successful commemoration of the war reflects something rather fundamental about the nature of memorials. Namely, memorials do not preexist; they exist as "things-in-phenomena."[83]

In addition to Edkins' contributions, questioning whether undetonated munitions can be considered as unintentional memorials helps establish the practice of memorial-making as political. For the bombs' paradoxical implications relay their failure to perform a successful commemoration of the war. These undetonated munitions from WWII do not exist as real memorials. Memorials become what they are only because they are both memorializ*ed* and memorializ*ing*. Memorials are matter, and "[m]atter is produced and productive, generated and generative."[84] Memorials require visitation, active commemoration and ceremony. Furthermore, the thing or event, which is the object of their commemoration, has to have ended. Pastness and commemoration are co-constituted. Commemoration is a performance; it is an enactment of the past. For the intention of remembrance efforts is to inspire remembering, this much is assumed; but they also effect a re-membering, marking particular events as constitutive elements of the complex structure of history. Memorials become political objects, for in marking the end of violence, commemoration decries the ever-perpetuating condition of state violence. Thus, memorials reify the war/peace binary, which implies that violence occurs in times of war and that peace prevails once war is over.[85] In doing so, they render invisible 'peacetime' suffering, concealing and disavowing the production of structural violence, which is central to the maintenance of the state. For "[p]ublic education and memorialization of war establishes and

[83]Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway* 140.
[84]Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway* 137.
[85]See Barkawi, "Decolonising War".

reinforces official dates and places for wars, as memorials for the World Wars make clear throughout the Western world. There is wartime and peacetime."[86] Undetonated munitions that remain in Germany testify against the reinforcement of designated dates and sites that erect an imagined boundary between war and peace.

[86]Barkawi, "Decolonising War," 201.

Temporal Norms and Time Deviants

"The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there." The oft-repeated opening line of Hartley's novel, *The Go-Between*, evidences a tendency to ascribe otherness to the past. However, it also reveals how discourse reproduces the past, and more generally *time itself*, as an externality. The line refers to the past, and subsequently to time, as if it were something capable of being gestured or pointed to, as if there were a there, "there." Instead, to do justice to the plurality of time, to "heterotemporality,"[87] we must refrain from naturalizing notions of time that "reify time as a static thing apart from social life."[88] In turn, even in reference to the word *time*, we risk reproducing a unitary conception of temporality. Thus, any employment of the term 'time' here is in reference to a "totality-in-multiplicity."[89] For I write not of a characteristically singular temporal dimension, but instead aim to touch upon its plurality. Furthermore, in this way, undetonated munitions from the Second World War are exceptional objects around which we can orient a discussion of temporality that resonates multiplicity. For in the project of bomb disposal, undetonated munitions at once belong to both the past and present. In being both, and in latency no longer and not yet either, they defy the conventional boundaries that delineate past from present. Moreover, "'[i]f what is Germany could perish in 1945, then this Germany did not exist before that time.'"[90] Like the first line of *The Go-Between*, undetonated munitions belong to a foreign country. It is the bombs' heterotemporal quality that makes it possible for the former sentiment to be true, as well as its antithesis.

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[87]Hom, "Timing is Everything," 74.
[88]Hom, "Timing is Everything," 69.
[89]Hom, "Timing is Everything," 75.
[90]Kaes, "In Search of Germany: Alexander Kluge's The Patriot," 117. This is a quote from Alexander Kluge when he was invited to speak in a lecture series entitled "Speaking about Our Country: Germany" at the Munich Kammerspiel Theatre. The series began in 1983 and Kluge was one of the first lecturers.

The 1988 film *The Land Before Time* was the first installation of what became a popular movie franchise. It may seem odd to invoke an animated film that follows a cast of talking dinosaurs as they embark on various adventures in a prehistoric landscape. However, if we consider the series title and its subjects, we find the film gestures towards something that is, in fact, rather fundamental to the study of time. For nowhere else can there exist a 'land before time' but in a world absent of human subjects. This is not to suggest that temporality is a human invention, nor to convey that the temporal dimension is a mere construction or simply imaginary. But 'time' "as a stand-alone object detached from social relations and processes"[91] cannot exist in a world populated by dinosaurs any more than it can in a world occupied by people. 'Time', in this sense, is not a natural phenomenon. Rather, it appears in existence when time is treated "as an obviously quantified feature of the wider world, rather than a concept developed to understand that world." Time itself does not pre-exist. Instead, "timing practices"[92] orient social and political life. Animated dinosaurs become a rather useful, if not absurd, anecdote to remind us of this. For rarely in the popular imaginary do we find representations of the temporal dimension, which reveal that linear-time did not always exist. 'The land before time' has been established as the 'prehistoric', circumscribed within the linear narration of history even as prehistory, it is periodized and carbon dated. Today, we are unable to articulate a 'time' before time existed, for timing practices proliferate a sense of linearity to the point of naturalization.

In Germany, undetonated war munitions and the project of bomb disposal are rather like timing practices. WWII bombs position a past and an ephemeral present, delineating what happened 'then' from what is transpiring 'now.' Old war munitions animate and give rise to a

[91]Hom, "Timing is Everything," 69.
[92]Hom, "Timing is Everything," 70.

sense of time by marking Germany's passage from the war. Where timing practices avow 'time' as a real and external entity despite its intangibility, likewise, WWII bombs exist in the imaginary while remaining invisible, buried beneath the ground. Like timing practices (re)produce time, in a sense, the practice of bomb disposal reproduces old munitions though excavation. However, upon closer inspection, the heterotemporal nature of undetonated munitions demonstrate that linear-time is contingent upon the maintenance of timing practices. For "time matters only inasmuch as it serves conventional modes of explanation enabling generalization and prediction."[93] Paradoxically, bombs from WWII both reproduce the binary of 'wartime' and 'peacetime',[94] *and* generate its disruption with their violence. Undetonated munitions enable prediction insofar as those tasked with their disposal stay employed and are provided access to Allied maps that help to indicate where bombs were dropped. Yet no one can say when a bomb will be triggered, when its delay-action fuse will deteriorate to the point that it spontaneously explodes. In this way, undetonated munitions are fundamentally unpredictable.

The unpredictable character of undetonated World War II bombs provides a sharp contrast to the predictability with which the war's commemoration unfolds. Each year, May 8th is commemorated as Victory in Europe Day,[95] the day that in 1945 the Allied forces formally accepted Nazi Germany's unconditional surrender. Germany is amongst the nations that celebrate its defeat, for the surrender of Nazi Germany symbolizes the defeat of a different Germany. The "zero hour" is slated as the death of the Third Reich, rather than the death of 'Germany' as a nation. For Germans, commemorating 'Victory in Europe' has become a celebration of liberation. On the occasion of VE Days' 40th anniversary, a speech by the West

[93]Hom, "Timing is Everything," 70.
[94]See Barkawi
[95]Commonly referred to as VE Day (in the UK) or V-E Day (in the US).

German president Richard von Weizsäcker marked the first time May 8th was characterized as "a day of liberation" in Germany.[96] Where on the 70th anniversary, Bundestag President Norbert Lammert emphasized that "it was not a day of German self-liberation."[97] Commemorations and anniversaries function as timing practices, lending predictability to the social and political life of a community. However, as celebrations of May 8th in Germany help reveal, commemorations are political practices, and the material-discursive practices that surround them are subject to change.

May 8, 1945 is the "zero hour" of Germany. Following this moment, "the nation is conceived as realizing itself once more, reborn after following the example of a prior 'Golden Age', reviving and renewing itself after a period of decline."[98] In Germany, it is not a Golden Age that is harkened back to, but a renewal that is only realized after the fall of the Berlin Wall, once the country is reunified. For death and rebirth, like defeat and renewal, are entangled notions. Moreover, commemorative practices that celebrate the end of the Second World War do not simply inform its singular periodization. Rather, the temporal scripting of WWII, namely that it began in 1939 and ended on May 8th in 1945, has come to inform dominant notions of war in its entirety.[99] Despite recent scholarship that cites war in the twenty-first-century as evidence for problematizing the conceptualization of 'wartime'[100], a war/peace binary continues to hold salience. But perhaps in anchoring a critique of the periodization of war in the context upon which it was founded, we can start by asking whether the violence inflicted in war was ever simply a finitude capable of circumscription within specific dates.

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[96]See "Remembrance Service in the German Bundestag".
[97]See "Remembrance Service in the German Bundestag".
[98]Edensor, 527.
[99]Barkawi, 201.
[100]See, for instance, Mary L. Dudziak, *War Time: An Idea, Its History, Its Consequences*

If World War II ended in 1945, then in what capacity has it lingered in Germany after the war front was abandoned? To walk around towns like Oranienburg is to tread atop bombs. While less threatening than land mines, the bombs render the town in a state of precarity. Germans cannot escape the war, not in its entirety. May 8th may be celebrated internationally, but it has no meaning for the munitions that the war has left behind. For the declaratory statement "the war has ended" falls upon the deaf ears of its material remnants. Having been declared over, some material appendages of the war machine can be made to comply; tanks can be driven away or repurposed, bomber jets flown back to their point of origin. But the bombs remain, and what is to be done with them falls upon the project of bomb disposal. While people no longer hide within bomb shelters, threats posed by undetonated munitions abide, even if to a far lesser degree. Furthermore, commemorative practices do not nullify this threat; they cannot undo the casualties that occurred from bombs after May 8th, 1945. The estimate that 600,000[101] German civilians died from air raids does not account for deaths caused by the bombs after the end of the war. Traditions of commemoration and periodization that come to inform dominant ways of thinking about war cannot account for deaths from undetonated munitions after 1945. For in practice, both of these traditions mark the end of violence. Thus, both articulate an empty promise. A promise, it seems, that has been planted in the imaginary, and cultivated by commemorations and periodization. By marking the end of violence in 1945, future victims of the bombs are denied a site to locate accountability.

When the project of bomb disposal generates questions that disturb conventional wisdom, this questioning does more than implicate the Second World War. For war studies looks at the archetype of WWII and other major European wars for understanding all warfare, enabling and

[101]W.G. Sebald, *On the Natural History of Destruction*, (New York: Random House, 2003), 1.

constraining the imagination of war across contexts. In response to Eurocentric definitions of war, Tarak Barkawi advocates the decolonization of war. For Barkawi, "[t]o decolonise… is to consider critically how Eurocentrism has informed the basic categories and vocabularies of social and political inquiry, across a range of disciplines."[102] Eurocentric war studies places wartime and peacetime as mutually exclusive categories, where "the distinction between war and peace works as a basic organizing binary."[103] In order to understand war, Eurocentric approaches begin with the assumption that war and peace are easily distinguished. This assumption is evidenced "in dominant historical periodisations of major wars as interruptions of the peace," where "[e]nclosing the First and Second World Wars between 1914–18 and 1939–45 is the most obvious and significant example."[104] But in Germany, bomb disposal resists periodization. In application, the dates 1939-1945 are unable to capture violence from the war that extends beyond their temporal borders. Furthermore, beyond warfare, a war/peace binary is complicit in obscuring all other forms of political violence. This includes, but is not limited to, domestic structural violence and denying asylum to refugees. In catalyzing disruptions of the historical periodization of WWII through the project of bomb disposal, there is much at stake that extends beyond Germany. For the purposes of this project, however, we remain fixated here.

In "Decolonising War," Barkawi explains that "[t]he contrast with peace relies on an implicit image of war: large-scale, organized, and reciprocal violence compressed in time and space. At a minimum, peace is the absence of such violence.[105] Peace and war figure in a Eurocentric imaginary as antitheses, lacking any nuance. But this image of war can no more

[102]Barkawi, 200.
[103]Barkawi, 201.
[104]Barkawi, 201.
[105]Barkawi, 201.

accurately attest to the experience of political violence outside of Europe than it can within the region. For Barkawi notes that the war/peace binary is discordant with the experience of war in the Western world; war remains present beyond the scope of its periodization. If war as a concept is given its dominant definition in terms of the major World Wars, then the project of bomb disposal necessarily demonstrates the inherent contradiction within a war/peace binary that is founded on their periodization. In unsettling this binary, it becomes much easier to render visible the violences that happen in 'times of peace.' In addition to Barkawi's insights, McIntosh notes that "[t]emporal commitments regarding the understanding of war as an event with a definite beginning and end, duration and conclusion, contribute to the privileging of instantiations of violence like war and armed conflict over more diffuse, ongoing, structural forms of violence."[106] Reading the project of bomb disposal to disrupt the distinction between war and peace means that peacetime no longer implies an absence of violence. Thus, it becomes easier to foreground violence in the realm of the everyday, and to resist it becoming sanitized and routine.

In the context of everyday violence, undetonated munitions that remain in Germany carry the potential to "help reveal [the] state of permanent war in political life more generally: domestic, international, and otherwise."[107] But the dis/continuity of violence from WWII that manifests in undetonated munitions lies outside of Barkawi's distinction "between battle and repression,"[108] which he offers as an alternative to conceptions of war and peace. Barkawi asks, "is the violence in question warfare, with organized, reciprocal fighting, or is it the everyday

[106]McIntosh, "War Through a Temporal Lense: Foregrounding Temporality in International Relations' Conceptions of War," 126.
[107]Barkawi, 205.
[108]Barkawi, 205.

operations of the security apparatus in surveilling and enforcing order?"[109] The undetonated bombs in Germany confound this question. In doing so, they present a puzzle for anyone attempting to situate their threat. Their violent potential is not easily characterized in the schema of battle/repression, no more than it is within war or peace. Undetonated munitions likely evade categorization because of the many paradoxes they present. For the bombs fundamentally oppose any binary; they are simultaneously and at once a composition of contradictory elements that escape singular characterization. Instead, they articulate plurality. Furthermore, "absent Eurocentric periodisations, war becomes something that carries on into the 'peace', long after the last big battle. Questions like who fights war, why they fight, and for whom, no longer have stable, Eurocentric answers provided by the model of the sovereign nation-state."[110] In demonstrating the inherent contradictions in the West's periodization of war through the project of German bomb disposal, we can advocate a turn away from the Eurocentric histories that dominate international-relations theory and political thought.

The periodization of war, like commemorative practices, assumes and reproduces a notion of linear-time. The temporal dimension of politics takes for granted that real, physical time exists. To contest this, Hom insists that unitary time is imagined and its reification is contingent upon the maintenance of timing practices. To evoke Barad, neither 'time' nor timing practices can exist if the other is absent; both come into being in their mutual entanglement. Politics is similarly entangled with time, specifically linear-time, "which is the time associated with the continuance of the nation-state."[111] Furthermore, linearity makes and maintains order and the status quo; and in practice, discourse, elections and policy making reproduce a notion of

[109]Barkawi, 205.
[110]Barkawi, 211.
[111]Edkins, preface to *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*, xiv.

linear-time. For example, in the United States, we know that presidential elections take place every four years, and are told what year policies will be implemented. The temporal dimension becomes something we experience as a predictable phenomenon. We are not fortune tellers, but we can predict on what dates we will celebrate, vote, commemorate, and vacation. Thus, it becomes possible to appreciate how time has come to be taken for granted. But just as we are privy to and reproduce timing practices that reify linearity, if we take undetonated munitions in Germany, for instance, we can orient around material-discursive practices that instead imagine time as heterogeneous. For the bombs serve as evidence for the heterogeneous nature of 'time', while "hegemonic, unitary variants like clock time mark *deviations* from the norm."[112] Sovereign power, in its production of linearity, is the temporal deviant, and undetonated munitions constitute the norm of heterotemporality.

[112]Hom, "Timing is Everything," 75.

"The Radicalization of All Temporal Relations"

The previous sections of this paper approached temporality in the context of undetonated munitions and German bomb disposal. The temporal implications of bomb disposal provide the impetus for rethinking the hegemony of linearity. The material-discursive practice of bomb disposal is "making time in marking time,"[113] while the temporal positions of WWII bombs remaining in Germany expand this imaginary. This section, however, turns attention to the temporal dimension of the air raid itself. What does this have to do with undetonated munitions? In short, everything. The project of bomb disposal does not exist without aerial bombardment. Or, alternatively, the air raid does not exist without bomb disposal. For to say that bombing can exist without disposal is to give credence to the notion that its violence is finite. In turn, and befitting my deconstruction of past-ness and linearity, the bombing of Germany does not precede the subjects addressed in previous sections. Rather, it impresses upon readers the importance of retrieving the experiential dimension of events that remain buried in 'the past'; it stresses the present-ness of our obligation to respond. This section draws from the work of Alexander Kluge, "a key figure in the German cultural landscape, having worked prolifically – over some fifty years – as a film-maker, writer and television producer."[114] Kluge's work provides "raw materials for the imagination," a mosaic of moving images and texts that aid in the expansion of our temporal imaginary. His work renegotiates responsibility as it relates to Germany's inheritance of a traumatic past. Alexander Kluge also provides this project a voice from within Germany, one that is well acquainted with the war for Kluge, himself, experienced it.

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[113]Dolphijn and Tuin, 66.

[114]Forrest, *Alexander Kluge: Raw Materials for the Imagination*, 13.

Before approaching his work, we must approach Alexander Kluge, for his experience of World War II is fundamental to his practice. As one author represented in *Alexander Kluge: Raw Materials for the Imagination*, "the first English-language sourcebook devoted to Kluge's work,"[115] David Roberts helps orient Kluge and his contemporaries. "Their defining experience is the Third Reich and the war," writes Roberts, "'[c]oming to terms with the past' and 'the work of mourning' are the key terms for the historical consciousness of this generation, which was both close and distant enough from the Third Reich to be able to confront the whole question of German guilt."[116] Kluge would resist any claim that this question was settled. Both coming to terms with the past and the work of mourning require maintenance and active participation. Furthermore, Kluge's insistence on recovery "against the loss of experience and reality"[117] is also a testament to his personal experience of the war.

> Kluge and Negt[118] undertake an analysis of German history from the 'abaric point' of the caesura of 1945. The 'zero hour' of the Third Reich is that of Kluge himself. In the final days of the war his home town was destroyed by an air raid. The familiar world of home and small-town life was suddenly catastrophically cut off. The shock of this violent separation was for Kluge the direct experience of the abstract force of history in its most acute form as war.[119]

For Kluge and Negt, the abstract and the acute are the enactments of "a military 'strategy from above.'"[120] What is 'above' looks down upon that which lies below through a strategic gaze; it is a way of seeing that renders invisible experience. What Kluge bears witness to on that day in 1945 cannot be captured from above. For whether 'above' or 'below', each is the antithesis of

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[115]Forrest, *Alexander Kluge: Raw Materials for the Imagination*, 13.
[116]David Roberts, "Alexander Kluge and German History: 'The Air Raid on Halberstadt on 8.4.1945'," in *Alexander Kluge: Raw Materials for the Imagination*, 127.
[117]Roberts, 127.
[118]Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt, a sociologist, together published the 1,300-page long theoretical study titled *Geschichte und Eigensinn* (History and Obstinacy).
[119]Roberts, 127.
[120]Roberts, 127.

the other. At the same time, they are mutually articulated, as something can only be 'above' with reference to a 'below.'

We are prone to think of the relationship between bomber and bombed in terms of space; the bomber in the air, their target on the ground. What is termed modern warfare is characterized by the infliction of violence from afar. We see humanities' technological overreach crystallize in an air raid. In aerial bombardment, distance is a spatial construction. From the position of a bomber or a military strategist, the traumatic, experiential dimension of an attack bears the "abstraction of diagrams and maps."[121] What is inflicted during an aerial bombardment remains distanced and unseen through the strategic gaze. In the event of a bombing, above and below could denote positions occupied in a spatial relation. The radical annihilation of space that is actualized in an air raid is understood, by Kluge, "as a revolutionary event"; "a building was standing and a moment later has become a landscape of ruins."[122] But it remains Kluge's conviction that the phenomenon of aerial bombardment must be appreciated temporally. In Kluge's work, it is time, rather than space, that matters. For "above and below do not refer spatially to places but temporally to the place occupied in a historical relation."[123] This is the premise of Kluge's contributions for rethinking temporality in the context of war. But by 'the context of war', I mean not its limited, periodized production. Instead, it is precisely the work of Kluge that presents a reorientation, and in turn an expansion, of what can be considered 'context' for the Second World War.

On the occasion of being awarded the Fontane Prize for literature, Kluge recited a since translated speech. In it, he said, "[t]he fact that we in our country are always shocked at the

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[121]Roberts, 131.
[122]Roberts, 148.
[123]Roberts, 142.

wrong moments and are not shocked at the right ones… is a consequence of our considering politics as a specialised area which others look after for us and not as a degree of the intensity of our own feelings."[124] Kluge's notion, this idea of response happening in the wrong moment, is not derivative. Elaborated, it provides the impetus for reconceptualizing political action and activism. For Kluge claims that in the event of the air raid, what those 'below' have to contend with is "*the radicalisation of all temporal relations*."[125] Once bombing has begun, any action from below is rendered impossible.

> …Clausewitz wrote a certain amount about strategy from above, which is the strategy the bomber command has, and the bomber command has got the means for it as well. Strategy from below would be what a woman with two children down in a cellar could do to oppose the bombing. We must make it clear to ourselves that, if this relationship of person/bomb in the emergency is the model of how our modern world intends to deal with people and if we don't want to deceive ourselves in times of peace or apparent peace about the fact that this is precisely the point of the emergency, then we must ask ourselves whether there are any reasons which make us satisfied with the meagre means of a strategy from below in the emergency. The problem is that the woman in the bomb-cellar in 1944, for example, has no means at all to defend herself at that moment. She might perhaps have had means in 1928 if she had organized with others before the development which then moves towards Papen, Schleicher, and Hitler. So the question of organization is located in 1928, and the requisite consciousness is located in 1944…one doesn't even get out of the cellar - that thought basically stops one from sheltering oneself either in an idyll or in a utopia.[126]

If we accept the implication of Kluge's work, then the stimulus for organizing, and the responsibility to do so, is always already happening in the ephemeral present, the time of 'here and now.' Furthermore, Kluge's reference of Clausewitz is apropos. For when Clausewitz states that "war is simply a continuation of political intercourse, with the addition of other means,"[127] one understands that the strategy from above is already in place. The binarized categorization of

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[124]Alexander Kluge, "The Political as Intensity of Everyday Feelings," in *Alexander Kluge: Raw Materials for the Imagination*, 288-289.
[125]Kluge, 289.
[126]Kluge, 289-290.
[127]Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 605.

peacetime and wartime is a false assumption. Thus, we are able to situate the catalyst for war not in some extra-ordinary context like an assassination or terror attack, which are uncertain and unimaginable to us until they occur, but rather in the realm of the everyday. Organizing need not, indeed should not and cannot, be in reaction to some future event that in the present moment evades "requisite consciousness." Instead, the responsibility already exists for organizing against future catastrophes. If we fail to do so, we have no agency in the event of a catastrophe, and are left only with shock and guilt.

Kluge's temporal notions have a strong resonance with Barad's work, who conceptualizes agency in the following terms; "agency is about response-ability, about the possibilities of mutual response, which is not to deny, but attend to power imbalances."[128] The hegemony of state power, in the event of an air raid, denies Kluge's "woman in the bomb-cellar"[129] the ability to respond. Therefore, both her responsibility and her *response-ability* are located prior to the event, and not in 1944. For "in 1919, at the latest in 1928, the struggle against the coming war needed to be organized."[130] Furthermore, the possibility of social action, whether in 1919 or 1928, would require making political the everyday realm of politics. There is no strategy from below in an aerial bombardment; its potential exists only outside the convention of 'wartime'. Barad arrives at a strikingly similar conclusion to that of Kluge, writing, "[p]articular possibilities for acting exist at every moment, and these changing possibilities entail a responsibility to intervene in the world's becoming, to contest and rework what matters and what is excluded from mattering."[131] Once in the bomb cellar, one has no means to exercise agency.

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[128]New Materialism 55.
[129]The woman in the bomb-cellar references the character Gerda Baethe from Kluge's film *Die Patriotin* (1979).
[130]Roberts, 142.
[131]Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity," 827.

For if the war's becoming is located in 1919 or 1928, so too, is the possibility and responsibility for intervention.

Kluge's work is often likened to a construction site. Kluge, himself, has been prone to characterize it as such, "with its continuous digging, building, raising and reassembling."[132] The resort to metaphor is a common refrain when confronting the project of retrieving the past, of rescuing history from anachronism. Most notably, perhaps, is Walter Benjamin's archeologist-as-rememberer in "Excavation and Memory."[133] The trope of the archeologist is often invoked in the context of Germany, and it features greatly in Kluge's films. Central, here, is the notion that the German past needs recovering, or rather, that it necessitates an *un*covering through excavation. It is worth mentioning, if not already obvious, that this imagined recovery does not advocate commemoration; and in a way, 'digging' for a buried past is the antithesis of erecting memorials, which so prominently feature in Germany's official remembrance culture.

> The destruction of Halberstadt - or Hamburg, Würzburg, Dresden, Nuremburg - remains as a repressed, covered trauma in the German present. Kluge insists on the presence of the past, on the *now-time* (*Jetztzeit*) of his reconstruction. The air raid on Halberstadt is an 'openly readable cipher', in which the historical relation between above and below, between dead and living labour, between the principles of abstraction and production is expressed, made public.[134]

In the project of bomb disposal, excavation is no longer an imaginary conceit. Unlike Benjamin's archeologist, bomb disposal technicians excavate only in the most literal sense. But the object of their excavation, each WWII bomb, can be constituted as an 'openly readable cipher'. And once unearthed, undetonated munitions are animated as such. In their controlled detonation, the bombs testify to "the historical relation between above and below." They are both the very productions

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[132]Kaes, 107.
[133]Walter Benjamin, "Excavation and Memory," in *Selected writings, 1927–1930*, 576.
[134]Roberts, 128.

of this relation, as well as their witness. In its public expressions (of above and below, dead labor and living labor, abstraction and production), bomb disposal resists a proclivity for making "human-made atrocity into metaphors and myths of natural disaster."[135] Thus, my intention in referring to metaphor, is not to harp on the symbolic potential of bomb disposal. Instead, here bomb disposal takes the imaginary character of metaphor and firmly plants it materiality, in 'reality'. The material-discursive practice of bomb disposal is, after all, constitutive of a 'German' reality.

Kluge's point of departure is World War II, and specifically, the air raid on his hometown of Halberstadt. But Kluge's work implicates political violence beyond that which is constituted by war. Kluge avows that the strategy from above maintained in 'peacetime' is omnipresent, even if rendered invisible in the absence of war. Thus, it is not only the air raid that is of concern, but the often more insidious productions of everyday and structural violence.

> The conceptual fragment 'I want to survive' about the occupants of a cellar during an air raid and the conceptual fragment 'Wiping out the town, doing the job properly' along with highly unequal forces form a single situation, a single content of experience. This situation is at the same time the making public, the publicly readable cipher for the normally concealed relation of a whole society to human beings in everyday life or in so-called peace time.[136]

Here, we can appreciate the central ethical implication of reconceptualizing bomb disposal and undetonated munitions from WWII. As 'openly readable ciphers', the bombs that remain in Germany make visible what sovereign power works to conceal. Namely, that the strategy from above is continuous and persistent, and furthermore, that its maintenance produces violence in wartime, but also in the absence of 'war.' Coupled together, commemoration and the periodization of war enables the state to privilege some forms of violence while rendering others

[135]Remmler, "'On the Natural History of Destruction' and Cultural Memory: W.G. Sebald," 51.
[136]Roberts, 147.

invisible. Thus, in the realm of the everyday the "highly unequal forces" of above and below are often absent from our imaginary. For "'[e]lementary catastrophes occur but what led to them escapes our senses'… What crystallises in the air raid is the history of the rulers, the history of strategy from above."[137] When open to the imaginative possibilities of bomb disposal, the same history that crystallises in the air raid is translated in the encounter, via disposal, of the material remains of aerial bombardments.

Bomb disposal becomes "an openly readable cipher," for recognizing what is typically obscured by the state in an effort to lend legitimacy to its claim of providing security. Both the act of concealment and that which is concealed become constituent elements for the maintenance of sovereign power. For, as Edkins notes, "trauma is fundamental to the production of a political community."[138] Even when engaging official remembrance efforts, when commemorating past traumas, "political communities - notably the democratic state - are also the source of trauma. They send people to war; they perpetrate genocide; they condone or produce famine."[139] The routinization of bomb disposal and undetonated munitions in Germany reinscribes war in the realm of the everyday. In effect, the project of bomb disposal blurs "the everpresent gap between the lived, present-day experience of political violence and its dominant representation as 'war'(...)."[140] In doing so, the "highly unequal forces" that characterize the relationship between 'above' (the military/state) and 'below' (civilians), which are obvious during war, become apparent in the 'peacetime' of the present. While the realm of the everyday may appear or be claimed as peaceful it is, in fact, always marked by hierarchy and the political violences that

[137]Roberts, 145.
[138]Edkins, 42.
[139]Edkins, 42.
[140]McIntosh, "War Through a Temporal Lense: Foregrounding Temporality in International Relations' Conceptions of War," 115.

hierarchical organization produces.[141] In the event of the air raid, this hierarchy materializes in its most extreme form, where a "strategy of below" has no agency, lacking the ability to respond or organize resistance against a "strategy of above."

W.G. Sebald's *On the Natural History of Destruction* is similarly concerned with the aerial bombardments of the Second World War. Like Kluge, Sebald notes that the Allied air raids remain buried in the German imaginary, writing that the that aerial bombardment "seems to have left scarcely a trace of pain behind in the collective consciousness."[142] The traumatic experience of the air raid is characterized as a site of repression. But any absence of traces left on the German consciousness are easily located in the material remnants of the air raid, in the undetonated munitions that remain. If one cannot find traces of pain, they need only consult Paule Dietrich in Oranienburg, who in many ways has fared much better than other victims of old war munitions: Dietrich is still alive. But despite this, there remains a sense that the experience of war has been irredeemably lost. To this point, Roberts' is critical of Kluge, unconvinced of the existence of an 'openly readable cipher'. Roberts remains doubtful that the experience of the air raid can be unearthed or recovered.

> Stalingrad and Halberstadt remain non-experiences, negative myths in postwar German consciousness, a 'public sphere' that has come into being through its flight from the trauma of the past. Germany has cut itself off from its history since 1945. Against this separation, which blocks identity, integration and recognition of experience, Kluge sets the 'openly readable cipher' of his text. But to make this cipher public, it must be taken back to its roots, it presupposes the most thorough knowledge of history…Only if the relation between dead and living labour is translated into experience… can one speak of a subject of history, a subject who speaks instead of retreating into mute protest. Under the overwhelming power of a strategic, collective war machine, however, it seems that the possibility of a subject-centered literature has been destroyed by bombs.[143]

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[141]Where and for whom 'peacetime' appears peaceful is another issue. It is not of separate concern, but simply outside the scope of this project.

[142]W.G. Sebald, *On the Natural History of Destruction*, 1.

[143]Roberts, 150

Germany cannot divorce itself from its past any more than it can ignore its artifacts and inheritance. The undetonated bombs that remain in Germany require action, intervention and attention; any flight from Germany's traumatic past is forced, again, to return to it. Attempts by Germany to "cut itself off from its history" are disrupted by the violent nature of undetonated munitions that force the "recognition of experience." Undetonated munitions are an 'openly readable cipher for the historical relation of above and below', which enters the public sphere in the project of bomb disposal. In the project of bomb disposal, we find not mute protest, but the deafening sound of explosion. Kluge's cipher is within grasp, we need only to recognize where it offers itself for decipherment.

Conclusion

World War II is placed in time, bookended by 1939 and 1945. But it does not lay here in repose. Rather restless, the war is prone to outbursts. It interrupts, and in the project of bomb disposal it erupts. Undetonated munitions that remain in Germany forgo commemoration. In the project of bomb disposal, the past surfaces in unpredictable and often violent ways, mimicking traumatic memory. We cannot write a history of bomb disposal, insofar as history relinquishes its objects to a past that is severed from our sense of the present. For in the "culturally imposed border zone between past and present",[144] undetonated munitions elude designation. They are material vestiges of the fog of war, inspiring uncertainty onto bounded notions of past, present and future. Thus, leftover bombs and the project of bomb disposal are best understood as "raw materials for the imagination." They gift us the materials for re-imagining, in fact, their very being already requires that we do so. For undetonated munitions and the project of bomb disposal are the precipitants for renegotiating where we place responsibility in the relation of past, present and future. Pastness and futurity orient the very presentness of our reality.

In 2014, Karen Barad gave the keynote address at a feminist theory workshop hosted by Duke's Gender, Sexuality and Feminist Studies program. The keynote was titled "Re-membering the Future, Re(con)figuring the Past: Temporality, Materiality, and Justice-to-Come." In her lecture, Barad noted that "the past is not closed. It never was. But erasure of all traces is not what is at issue. Even attempts to erase traces leave traces."[145] Commemorative efforts are false in their assumption that the past is closed and that, at appropriate and preassigned times, we must commit ourselves to revisiting it. As Barad suggests, it is not the erasure of the past that should

[144]Eike Friedrich Wenzel, "Construction Site Film" in *Alexander Kluge: Raw Materials for the Imagination*, 185.
[145]Barad, "Re-membering the Future, Re(con)figuring the Past: Temporality, Materiality, and Justice-to-Come".

concern us, but rather how open we are to receiving the many ways in which the past makes itself present. If we read bomb disposal as an attempt to erase traces of the past, we need only consult the image of Paule Dietrich overlooking what had once been his home to testify that "even attempts to erase traces leave traces."

On more than one occasion, in conversations about this project, I've misspoken when referencing the 2015 film that follows Dietrich amongst others as they navigate bomb disposal in Oranienburg. Instead of correctly identifying the film *The Bomb Hunters* I've mistakenly replaced the word "bomb" with "ghost." But there is something rather telling about this slip of the tongue, for if Germany is a nation haunted by its past, old war munitions take on a symbolic function as ghosts. In fact, the bomb hunters are rather like ghost hunters. Or perhaps the project of bomb disposal can be likened to a séance; for Barad tells us that "to address the past" is "to speak with ghosts."[146] Bomb disposal is rich with metaphoric potential. But gestures to symbolic imagery, and to the imaginary, must also involve questions of ethics and responsibility. For "only by facing the ghosts in their materiality and acknowledging injustice without the empty promise of complete repair, of making amends finally, can we begin to move towards justice." Again, I want to return to Paule Dietrich, to the image of him atop a craterous hole in the earth. Unknowingly, for decades, Dietrich had been living in the company of a ghost. In its wake, the WWII bomb left Dietrich with a wreckage of broken utilities, and a scattering of building fragments and furniture. Dietrich's story is one of many that serve as a reminder that there can be no reversal of loss, no fantasy of complete repair.

Commemorative efforts approach the German past and suggest an imaginary future where past injustices will have been come to terms with. But even the project of bomb disposal

[146]Barad, "Re-membering the Future, Re(con)figuring the Past".

cannot enact the fantasy of erasure. When something inevitably goes unplanned, damaging property, causing injury or fatality, we see how generations that followed the war continue to inherit its trauma. Importantly, "there is no inheritance without a call to responsibility. The being of what we are, is, first of all, inheritance. Entanglements are not intertwinings of separate entities but rather irreducible relations of responsibility."[147] Undetonated munitions and the project of bomb disposal in Germany are just one phenomenon around which to orient inheritance and responsibility, and to insist upon the presence of the past. Bombs that remain in Germany inspire a new responsibility to the past, one that is distinct from commemorative efforts. For in the project of bomb disposal, although inheritance materializes in the form of bombs, it requires more of a response than excavation and detonation. Responsibility lies first in acknowledging the injustice in the relation of 'above' and 'below'. It then requires response in the form of political organization, the kind of which was possible but absent in 1919 and 1928. Only shock and guilt arise in the absence of action, and they do nothing to serve the victims of injustice.

This semester I enrolled in *Nuclear Proliferation*, a Political Science course taught by Bard professor Michelle Murray. On the Monday, April 22nd meeting of our class we discussed reaching a Global Zero. When Professor Murray asked the class whether we thought it possible to reach a Global Zero, the abolition of all nuclear weapons, responses aired on the side of pessimism. When one student suggested that Global Zero may only be realized in the fallout of a nuclear accident, nuclear strike[148] or even nuclear war, the class was receptive and appeared largely in consensus. Initially, I too nodded my head in agreement. That was, until I was

[147]Barad, "Re-membering the Future, Re(con)figuring the Past".

[148]The class seemed to agree that this attack would have to be from a state actor and not from a terrorist organization. Furthermore, it was implied that this state actor would not be a 'rogue state.'

reminded of Alexander Kluge's distressed observation that Germans "are always shocked at the wrong moments."[149] If we were to wait until a nuclear catastrophe before we can think Global Zero possible, then we too would be shocked at the wrong moment. For in the event that a nuclear strike or accident were to take place, both our responsibility to organize and our ability to do so (our response-ability) would be located in some previous time, entirely out of reach in the moment of the catastrophe. Bomb disposal exists as an openly readable cipher, and if appreciated as such, it reminds us how the radicalization of all temporal relations nullifies a strategy from below. Thus, our responsibility to the past requires that we organize a strategy from below while it remains a possibility. For in all likelihood, if we fail to do so, the only thing at our disposal will be the useless currency of shock. At which point, we too would find ourselves like Kluge's woman in the bomb-cellar: utterly defenseless to the strategy from above.

In the last lines of the 1959 essay "The Meaning of Working Through The Past," Adorno writes, "The past will have been worked through only when the causes of what happened then have been eliminated. Only because the causes continue to exist does the captivating spell of the past remain to this day unbroken."[150] Now sixty years later, Germany is still captivated by the past. But perhaps, the spell of the past does more than attract national interest. Rather, it seems, Germany is also *held captive* by the past. For if Germany's culture of commemoration reflects captivation, undetonated munitions that require disposal hold the country in captivity. For it is not desire, guilt, or *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, that feeds the project of bomb disposal. It is entirely out of necessity that Germany responds to the threat of undetonated munitions; the country remains at the will of the war. For the very past that Germany "would like to evade is

[149]Kluge, 289.
[150]Theodor W. Adorno, "The Meaning of Working Through the Past," in *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 103.

still very much alive,"[151] and it threatens, at any moment, to explode. But if Germany were to rid itself of every undetonated bomb, would the country then be released from captivation and captivity, liberated from the war's embrace? If we follow Adorno's conclusions, the answer to this question is certainly no. Only if the causes of what happen were eliminated could Germany be said to have worked through its past. Adorno addresses the German past of National Socialism, Nazism and The Shoah. But it is possible to apply his same conclusions to the war and the experience of air raids, the cause of which Kluge tells us is the strategy from above. Thus, only after mending the inequality between 'above' and 'below' could Germany be said to have worked through the past of the Second World War. As German politicians render *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* in perpetuity, this conclusion seems rather fitting.

[151] Adorno, 89.

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