Kathryn Sederberg
Kalamazoo College

Reconstructing the Self and the City: Wolfgang Koeppen's Rubble Film *Bei Betty* (1946–1948)

Wolfgang Koeppen is best known for his trilogy of novels including *Tauben im Gras* (1951), *Das Treibhaus* (1953), and *Der Tod in Rom* (1954), which all take up issues of German society in the postwar period, including the Allied Occupation, politics of the early Adenauer era, and the legacies of the Nazi past in postwar society. It is less commonly known that Koeppen had a sustained interest in film, that he made a living during the Second World War writing for the film industry, and that he wrote a screenplay after the war entitled *Bei Betty*. Unlike his postwar modernist novels, which combine stream of consciousness, literary montage, and multiple perspectives, the *Bei Betty* manuscript (ca. 1946–48) represents an experiment with a popular genre and medium—it is a crime story written for the screen.[1] This mystery, set in the ruins of an unnamed city, begins with the murder of Günter Halben, and an extended flashback reveals the story of father and daughter, Günter and Elisabeth Halben, refugees from the East who struggle to come to terms with the defeat of National Socialism and a new postwar order. As a former Nazi Party member Halben cannot find work until he meets Betty and is drawn into the Berlin black market scene with its mix of dubious characters. The end of the film reveals the puzzling fact that Halben's daughter Elisabeth was the culprit. Although *Bei Betty* was never produced as a film, this essay situates the script as a key part of Koeppen's oeuvre and as a crucial artifact of postwar German culture that helps us understand the emerging corpus of *Trümmerfilme* as well as the complexity of denazification. The *Bei Betty* screenplay highlights the ambivalence of the *Wiederaufbau* as both reality and illusion—exposing the theatrical nature of the quick reconstruction of German cities, which generated set-like façades that concealed the underlying rubble. In my analysis, I demonstrate how Koeppen's work from this period links physical reconstruction with acts of self-refashioning in the aftermath of the war, highlighting the political and social stakes of performing a new self in response to the Allied Occupation. Ultimately, Koeppen's screenplay reveals the "front" and "backstage" mentality that shaped private and public life during the postwar interregnum, especially as German citizens were scrutinized by the Allies as part of a larger societal denazification.

In general, Koeppen's film projects have received relatively little attention, although the author's multimediality and his interest in radio, cinema, and television

are well established.[2] *Bei Betty* was largely unknown until the opening of Koeppen's archive after his death in 1996, and the few scholars who do mention *Bei Betty* usually describe the script as a precursor to the postwar novel *Tauben im Gras*, likewise set in occupied Germany. Jörg Döring reads *Bei Betty* as primarily "biographically instructive," as Koeppen's first independent film text, and as a "quarry" for scenes, characters, and motifs that reappear in *Tauben im Gras* ("Stehausschank" 232, 244). Likewise, Iris Denneler briefly mentions *Bei Betty* in discussing how "film and prose were mutually influential" in Koeppen's work (99). Although screenplays are often treated as marginal cultural objects, there is good reason to treat them as developed visual narratives, and for placing *Bei Betty* within the larger context of Koeppen's postwar literary production and for reading it on its own terms. Michael Mota conceptualizes screenplays as "fluid, hybrid text[s] that stand ambivalently but suggestively poised between print and film technologies" ("Derek" 217). Accordingly, screenplays "produce and demand unique ways of seeing and reading," as they "position the reader figuratively behind the camera, situating us as simultaneously reading and viewing subjects" ("Greenaway's" 230; "Derek" 217–18). I read the *Bei Betty* manuscript as both a visual literary text and as a developed narrative deserving of close attention in terms of content and structure.[3] While Koeppen's novels are famous for their extensive use of inner monologue, or the representation of interiority, the screenplay presents a surface visuality that suggests the impenetrability of the "facades" or the performative "fronts" that played a crucial role in postwar life.

In the following, I first situate the *Bei Betty* screenplay within Koeppen's other postwar work, as an unfinished contribution to the growing body of rubble films in production around 1947–48. Second, I provide an overview of the screenplay, summarizing the story while highlighting Koeppen's many settings that show the sense of reality and unreality of the era of reconstruction. Third, I argue that Koeppen's focus on urban facades and newly-constructed lives also exposes the tension between performance and identity and the problem inherent in denazification processes: we only have acts and appearances, and cannot ever know someone's true motivation or sincerity. Last, through a close reading of the story and its characters, I analyze how Koeppen's complex protagonists raise questions about war wounds that are both visible and invisible, on the bodies of those who lived through the war, as well as in the cityscape itself.

From the Dream Factory to Rubble Film

Like Erich Kästner, Ernst von Salomon, and other non-Jewish writers who began their careers in the Weimar Republic, and who were not forced into exile, the film industry provided Koeppen with a means to make a living during the Third Reich. Koeppen's biographer Jörg Döring provides a detailed account of Koeppen's work between 1933 and 1945, which included co-authorship of several screenplays and at least one finished film ("*…ich stellte mich*" 2001). In later in-

terviews, Koeppen usually circumvented the topic, conceding that this employment offered him the ability to "hide" safely and comfortably in Nazi Germany and to escape military service, yet rarely discussing his desire to make films after the war.[4] In one interview, however, Koeppen explicitly mentioned *Bei Betty*: "1946 schrieb ich ein Drehbuch, 'Bei Betty', das ein mit mir befreundeter Schauspieler und Regisseur an einen einflußreichen Hamburger Produzenten weitergab. Das Resultat war der Kommentar: Warum will Ihr Freund Koeppen mich ruinieren?" (qtd. in Treichel 206–07) At the time, "rubble film" was a pejorative, as audiences sought distraction and escape from the hardships of postwar life. In the 1951 novel *Tauben im Gras*, Koeppen gives voice to such critique through the writer Philipp, who laments: "Die Leute hatten die Nase voll; sie hatten genug von der Zeit, genug von den Trümmern; die Leute wollten nicht ihre Sorgen, nicht ihre Furcht, nicht ihren Alltag, sie wollten nicht ihr Elend gespiegelt sehen" (14). Philipp expresses Koeppen's own frustration with postwar moviegoers who believed film should not reflect but deflect from the ruins.

Nevertheless, Koeppen's interest in film before, during, and after the Second World War is apparent in the many references to the cinema—and the adaptation of cinematic techniques—in his novels. Walter Erhart notes Koeppen's "tendency towards the visual," the mutual influence of Koeppen's filmic and literary production, and his play with mediality: "to mutually probe and combine the two media, even to let them compete with one another" (317, 314). In *Tauben im Gras*, the many text fragments that make up the story contain cinematic transitions: "hard and soft cuts," "panning shots," and "visible splices that create the transition to another sequence" (Brink-Friederici 54). Through such techniques, Koeppen's narration directs the reader's gaze, creating shifts in perspective that feel as if written for the screen. Yet his novels also do something that cinema cannot: especially the dense passages of inner monologue capitalize on the novel's ability to represent the inner lives of characters, to freeze or slow time and to represent the depth of associative thought. In contrast, the *Bei Betty* screenplay represents Koeppen's attempt to create a work of art in the cinematic rather than a literary medium, focusing on surfaces rather than on interiority, and even revealing the potentially deceptive nature of these surfaces.

In published work from these years, there is evidence that Koeppen was thinking about the possibilities for filmmaking in the ruins. Koeppen wrote multiple articles for the *Neue Zeitung* that indicate his position within a broad network of actors, producers, and filmmakers, especially in 1947 as new rubble films were being made. On 25 April 1947, Koeppen published a short piece entitled "Drehbeginn in Geiselgasteig," from the set of *Zwischen gestern und morgen* (Harald Braun, 1947), and a month later he mentions the set again in an article on the "Welt im Film" newsreels.[5] He vividly describes the experience of entering the set and being transported into a dream world, as the filmmakers had reconstructed Munich's opulent Regina Palast Hotel. He comments ironically: "Hier haben wir das klassische Beispiel des Wiederaufbaues, von dem so viel gesprochen wird. Es ist alles

wieder aufgebaut worden, und zwar in ein paar Tagen" ("Drehbeginn"). The hotel set presents itself as "Traum und Wirklichkeit des deutschen Wiederaufbaus," a fiction constructed to nonetheless appear real, preempting the hotel's actual restoration. Koeppen published pieces on Helmut Käutner's *In jenen Tagen* (1947), the first film produced in the British Zone, and, a few months later, on the need for directors who might develop a "new film style" in response to the lack of resources. In a short text found among his papers, Koeppen writes with regret about his failed film project: "ich hätte auch die kamera in die hand genommen aber sie saßen wieder die gleiche runde" ("Im Stehausschank"). Referring to the *Bei Betty* screenplay, Koeppen expresses disappointment that the postwar film industry was controlled by the "ghost of Goebbels," and that he was unable to produce a film that captured "die kunst der erzählung in bildern." Koeppen hoped he would be among the innovative postwar German filmmakers, developing a cinematic mode of storytelling that also engaged with the politics of denazification, and German reconstruction as both "Traum und Wirklichkeit." The *Bei Betty* screenplay read as an artifact of this period of both possibility and disappointment extends the cinematic metaphors of the illusory world of postwar reconstruction, by telling a story of the individuals struggling to make a new life in the *Stunde Null*.

The *Bei Betty* Screenplay and its Cinematic *Kulissen*

Bei Betty is a crime story set in the postwar black market milieu of an unnamed city. The plot revolves around an unsolved murder and the web of individuals connected to the victim, whose wartime pasts come into play in the course of the investigations. The screenplay begins by showing the city in ruins, slowly coming to life again. A voice-over introduces Betty, the energetic owner of a *Stehausschank*, and her husband and stepdaughter, Günter and Elisabeth Halben. The opening sequence ends with the ominous words: "die Familie wäre zu neuem Wohlstand gelangt, wenn Halben nicht an einem Nachmittag in ein Kino gegangen wäre, wo er ermordet wurde."[6] The scene then cuts to the movie theater crime scene, where a doctor and detective have just found papers to identify the murder victim: Dr. Günter Halben, Museum Director. The police have no leads in the case until stolen art—a wooden Madonna statue—surfaces in the United States, authenticated by Dr. Halben. In their investigation, the detectives learn that the deceased and his teenage daughter Elisabeth were involved in the black market through Betty, whom Halben had recently married. A long flashback to 1945, focalized through Elisabeth, reveals their backstory: Halben and his daughter were refugees from the East, where Halben, an art historian and Nazi Party member, directed a state museum. Disillusioned by the catastrophic defeat, Halben wants to put the past behind him, yet he is unable to find legitimate work because of his Nazi past, and ends up clearing rubble, struggling to house and feed his daughter. Elisabeth, in contrast, seems reluctant to accept new postwar realities and resents her father's desire to move on.

Secondary characters complicate the plotline, turning it into a veritable web of wartime and postwar identities that link Halben's past and the postwar present, including Schallmaier, a former propaganda chief who knew Halben, and Neck, a journalist who was denounced and spent time in a concentration camp. We learn about Halben's difficulties finding work after the war and how he ends up meeting, working with, and eventually marrying Betty, much to the disappointment of his daughter. Elisabeth is isolated and becomes witness to her father's participation in acts of deceit in black market trading and even murder. The story ends with a surprising twist as we discover that Elisabeth is the murderer responsible for her father's death. Koeppen's screenplay does not provide any direct explanation for the murder, but rather leaves us to question her motive and her presumed innocence.

Like other rubble films written in the period from 1946 to 1949, *Bei Betty* depicts postwar challenges such as rehabilitation, reintegration, and physical and societal reconstruction.[7] Robert Shandley defines rubble films by their common "*mise-en-scène* of destroyed Germany," a background which also serves as a "metaphor of the destruction of Germans' own sense of themselves" (2). With its period settings, complex characters, and flashback to 1945, *Bei Betty* links the physical rebuilding to the acts of self-reconstruction. The destroyed city is not just a background, but the screenplay engages with the identity crisis experienced by many contemporaries. Amanda Randall proposes an "expanded concept of *Trümmerfilm*," suggesting that "*Trümmerfilme* might refer to a broader film semiotics of postwar, postfascist cultural crisis, where a film corpus finds its narrative structure through addressing a moment of traumatic cultural shift, its victims and what must be required of them as a way forward in a new geopolitical context" (586). As an artifact of the rubble period, *Bei Betty* addresses this cultural shift and provides a metadiscourse on the failures of denazification.

Starting with the crime scene in a movie theater, *Bei Betty* is staged in a series of settings typical for the postwar urban milieu, most of which are revealed to be set-like or provisional structures: the bar (*Stehausschank*), Betty's apartment (the site of black market dealings), a ruined museum, and the bunker where Halben and Elisabeth are first lodged upon their arrival in the city. As Jennifer Evans points out, spaces such as the bunker, the street, and bars were active agents in postwar life: "Far from passive or neutral backdrops to social and cultural transformation, city spaces, even broken ones, play a constitutive part in shaping social identity and the operation of power" (19). In *Bei Betty*, such spaces bring together a mélange of characters with very different pasts, and the broken and impromptu settings reflect the quickly-changing postwar world as spaces are repurposed or rebuilt. The office distributing ration cards was once a school classroom, and the bunker where the two refugees are initially given shelter is scheduled for destruction. Thus, even the most monumental structure, the bunker, is revealed to be a *Kulisse,* a set or backdrop, taken down for a change in location, suggesting an analogy to the *Wiederaufbau* as both cinematic illusion and real space with polit-

ical and social effects. These various changes in setting further disrupt the characters, who seek security and a new order to their lives.

The *Kulisse* as theme appears throughout Koeppen's writings from the postwar period. In the short story "Vor dem Film" (ca. 1948), the protagonist goes out to buy movie tickets at the request of his girlfriend, and in the process he becomes a flâneur in the ruins: "Die Läden waren nach der Art von Kulissen vor die Ruinen der Häuser gestellt, die früher da gestanden hatten, und die Straße ähnelte einer Ladenstraße in einem Filmatelier. Vor der Kulisse, die einem Buchhändler gehörte, verweilte ich" (*Auf dem Phantasieross* 367). The story presents the postwar rubble landscape as a film backdrop and reveals the tension between the surface, or what is seen, and a deeper, more complex reality shaped by personal memory and experience. Koeppen's postwar novels play with similar motifs, often linking the rubble and reconstruction with the ways individuals reshape their lives in the war's aftermath. The protagonist of *Das Treibhaus*, Bundestag representative Felix Keetenheuve, observes the acts of building all around him and realizes he is living through a "neue Gründerzeit": "Es war eine untergründige, eine hintergründige, eine begründet grundlose Zeit *auf flüchtigem Sande habt ihr gebaut*" (119). Keetenheuve sees cinematic performances all around him: politicians as "Statisten der politischen Bühne" (53), parliament as a film premiere, the Chancellor as director, and the actual filming of political debates to the point at which reality and performance become blurred completely. He mocks one man as "der große Memoirist," who thinks about "ein neues Kapitel seiner lukrativen Memoiren" (116). In the postwar world, Germans are carefully constructing their appearance (and their biographies) in response to policies of denazification. The novel's incisive critique continually unmasks former Nazis and "Mitläufer," at the same time that it also features the broken individuals who seem unable to "play along."

Although *Bei Betty* does not directly thematize postwar politics, the screenplay's rubble settings contribute to the story's mystery and further develop the motif of cinematic performance as it relates to reconstruction. The title "Bei Betty" refers to both Betty's apartment and her bar—both quintessential postwar spaces she controls with authority and that interiorize street life. In one scene, Betty pulls back a curtain and takes the detective to a small room behind the bar decorated with photographs of film stars, not only "lifting the curtain," but revealing a mise-en-scène that references the illusory world of cinema. Koeppen's rich description of the space includes auditory details ("Man hört hier das Radio und die Stimmen der Schankgäste") and visual details of the "windowless" room and its furnishings. Like the bar, Betty's apartment serves as a "backstage" space, crowded with people coming and going, jazz music playing, and a place full of scattered objects and period characters including American soldiers and German "Fräuleins." In the apartment, the daughter Elisabeth is always shown on a *Hängeboden*, a lofted space overlooking the bathroom. She literally has no ground under her feet, living and sleeping on a structure that provides a gallery view to the drama unfolding below, making her a witness to violence and conspiracy.

The screenplay's settings such as the crowded apartment and bar reflect the impact of the air war on German cities: private and public had been turned inside out. As Dagmar Barnouw notes, "what had been visible had now become invisible, and what had been invisible was now visible; what had been public was now private; what had been private was now public" (46). Koeppen's staging highlights such postwar inversions and exposures, captured in photographs of the period that depict apartment blocks that look like dollhouses, or film sets, allowing viewers to see inside (see figure 1). The set of *Zwischen gestern und morgen*, for example, which Koeppen visited in 1947, used the half-destroyed Regina Palast Hotel with its grand staircase a ready-made set, split open on one side (see figure 2). In *Bei Betty*, Elisabeth is positioned in a similar space, able to watch the drama unfolding in the apartment below at the same time that we are invited to watch her, albeit at times she is concealed behind tinted glass (*Milchglasscheibe*). Whereas Koeppen's novels continually expose the interiority of the characters, with extended passages of interior monologue, the film focuses on surfaces, eschewing our ability to read the thoughts or motivations of the characters.

Figure 1. Apartment building in Berlin. Photo by Hildegard Dreyer 1947. Copyright Bildarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz.

Figure 2. Ruins of Regina Palast Hotel. Still from 9 May 1947 "Welt im Film" sequence on "Filmstart in Geiselgasteig."

These theatrical settings are foreshadowed in *Bei Betty*'s establishing shot, in which a voiceover is paired with images moving from the destroyed city to Betty's bar, and ultimately to the crime scene in the cinema:

> Nach der Währungsreform wurde auch in unserer Stadt der Schutt von den Strassen geräumt, und es begann eine rege Bautätigkeit. Es wurden zwar keine Wohnungen gebaut, aber immerhin errichtete man Läden, Restaurants, Spielsäle und Vergnügungsstätten aller Art. So fanden Viele eine neue Existenz, und auch Betty kam nach stürmischen Jahren zur Ruhe. (Vorspann 1)

Referring deictically to activities "auch in unserer Stadt," Koeppen sets the film in an unnamed ruined city. The voiceover draws attention to the way that the rubble was cleared, making way for new constructions—sites of distraction and escape. Inhabitants of occupied Germany often complained that restaurants, cinemas, and shops were able to find the building materials needed (often on the black market) while housing projects suffered (Diefendorf 34). Koeppen's 1956 preface to *Tauben im Gras* recycles this description of the postwar milieu, albeit here granting cinema a prominent place in describing the novel's setting: "als das deutsche Wirtschaftswunder im Westen aufging, als die ersten neuen Kinos, die ersten neuen Versicherungspaläste die Trümmer und die Behelfsläden überragten" (9). In both texts Koeppen

thematizes an ambivalence about this mania to rebuild, suggesting that such constructions merely conceal the underlying brokenness—anticipating Alexander and Margarethe Mitscherlich's famous admonition about the *Wirtschaftswunder* and the Germans' energetic "restoration of what had been destroyed" (9). This restoration, they argue, entailed an erasure of the past: "Hard work and success soon covered up the open wounds left by the past. Where reconstruction and expansion took place, it was carried out almost literally on the same foundations as before—but never in any considered connection with tradition" (13). Decades later, Sebald revived this discussion by writing of the "stream of psychic energy" invested in reconstruction, and the "well-kept secret of the corpses built into the foundations of our state" (13). Koeppen's work preempts such critique, through deictic gestures pointing to the work of reconstruction, both in the city and in the lives of its inhabitants.

"Eine neue Existenz": Self-Fashioning in Postwar Germany

In the ruins of German cities, a world of unstable and shifting settings, many individuals revised their biography, seeking to make a life for themselves in the *Stunde Null* under new political circumstances of Allied Occupation.[8] In interviews in the 1950s and 1960s, Koeppen repeatedly described the unbelievable turn of events at the war's end, when former Nazis quickly changed their political views: "Ich war erstaunt, daß ich unter lauter Anti-Nazis gelebt hatte" (qtd. in Treichel 102). Koeppen was also critical of the Allied program of "denazification," which he found "falsch und lächerlich," as he saw many former Nazis resume positions of power under Allied Occupation (qtd. in Treichel 106). *Bei Betty* problematizes the injustices of denazification, as the story's characters demonstrate a range of responses to the "zero hour" as an opportunity to remake themselves.[9] By contrasting the former Party members Schallmaier and Halben, Koeppen juxtaposes earnest and feigned acts of denazification. In the postwar years, the term "Säuberung" was more commonly used for the Allied process of *Entnazifizierung*, as Germans sought a so-called "Persilschein," or documentation that would mark them as "clean."[10] In the *Bei Betty* script, water is frequently mentioned as a visual and auditory motif; the screenplay describes "Rauschen von Wasser in Röhren, tropfendes Wasser," washing, and rain. Water, symbolizing rebirth, or purification is repeatedly invoked in connection with Elisabeth and Halben—characters who must but cannot shed their past. However, in Koeppen's screenplay, denazification is not accomplished through "Säuberung," but through performance, or what sociologist Erving Goffman famously described as the "front" presented in everyday life (22). The film's plot revolves around the tension between the need to reorient oneself in order to make a living in the postwar order, or at least to successfully perform a "denazified" self, and the confusion and anger about such biographical ruptures. These performances and the "unmasking" of several characters beg the question: What would successful denazification "look" like?

Betty's *Stehausschank*, as a symbolic provisional structure of the postwar years, embodies postwar acts of reconstruction. The bar brings together a microcosm of

postwar society, and it is here that Halben encounters two men he knew from the Nazi era: former propaganda chief Schallmaier, and the journalist Neck. Schallmaier (whose name invokes illusory *Schall und Rauch*) represents the Nazis who were able to toss their wartime identity aside and put on a new mask, as stated in the exposé: "Er hat schon eine erstaunliche Routine und eine noch erstaunlichere Vorurteilslosigkeit entwickelt" ("Eine von den Werwölfen" 4). Schallmaier recalls the character of Ferdinand Brückner from the first postwar German film *Die Mörder sind unter uns* (Wolfgang Staudte, 1946), a formerly ruthless Wehrmacht officer who capitalizes on the transition from war to postwar life, turning helmets into cooking pots. Brückner serves as a foil to Hans Mertens, who is plagued by traumatic wartime experiences and guilt. In *Bei Betty*, there is a similar juxtaposition of characters who respond differently to the past. As his name suggests, Halben is caught "halfway" between worlds, in limbo as his status as a former *Parteigenosse* (Pg., party member) prevents him from seeking honest employment.

Halben's future is also uncertain because he is an art historian, a profession that ties him to the past and to a cultural tradition now uncertain. Seeking to resume his art historical work, Halben visits Bögemann, the director of the local city museum. Through this encounter, which takes place in the ruins of the partially destroyed museum, Koeppen stages a dialogue about rehabilitation and reconstruction in yet another symbolically charged setting:

> Bögemann ist über Halbens Besuch, der ihn fragt, ob er am Wiederaufbau des Museums mitarbeiten könne, nicht erfreut. Er sagt unwillig und bitter, er könne ihm fegen helfen. Und er deutet an, dass ja Halben mit schuld daran sei, wenn man hier zunächst einmal fegen müsse, statt sich mit Kunst zu beschäftigen.
> Halben gibt zu, sich getäuscht zu haben. Er habe an den Führer geglaubt. (Und dafür ein hochsubventioniertes Museum bekommen, sagt Bögemann). Aber er habe den Krieg und alles, was mit dem Krieg gekommen sei, nicht gewollt. Er sei jetzt ehrlich bereit, an einer neuen Zukunft mitzuarbeiten.
> "Wenn man Sie lassen wird" sagt Bögemann. "Bei uns sind alle Pg.s [sic] rausgeflogen". (Bild 27)[11]

Bögemann voices the position that former Nazis should be doing the rubble-clearing, even mentioning the fact that individuals and institutions profited during the war. The melancholic undertones and his stated remorse create sympathy for Halben, at the same time that Bögemann's character voices the unpopular truth that the National Socialists bear responsibility for the destruction. Halben also visits an Allied Collecting Point, where he meets an officer who would like him to help find and catalog lost artworks—but here, also, his Party membership is an insurmountable obstacle and the Allies cannot hire him. Hungry, desperate, and unable to find work, Halben ends up clearing rubble to get a better ration card. It is here, working as a "rubble man," that Halben meets Betty, who notices how he struggles with the physical labor. "Was sind Sie eigentlich von Beruf?" she asks. He answers, "Kunsthistoriker. Damit ist nicht viel anzufangen." Halben is stuck, unable to start a new life in a future-oriented postwar order.

By showing rubble in this way—not romanticized, but as an ambivalent sign of both the burden of the past, the hardship of the present, and the possibility for remaking the future—*Bei Betty* reminds us that the mythologization of the "Stunde Null" came later. The way that rubble (and the clearing of rubble) became resignified as part of the narrative of West German recovery and progress was one possible narrative among others. As Elizabeth Heineman has argued, the collective memory of a stereotypically female experience of the war's end was universalized in the development of a West German identity that emphasized German suffering and victimhood (355). Many other rubble films and their redemptive narratives contributed to the mythologization of the *Trümmerfrau*, the *Wiederaufbau*, and the *Wirtschaftswunder*. A prime example is the film *Und über uns der Himmel* (Josef von Báky, 1947), which shows rubble-clearing as an altruistic and self-sacrificing act, a symbol for Germans' eagerness to rebuild and survive the hardship of the postwar period. In one scene, a view of the half-ruined Kaiser Wilhelm Gedächtniskirche cuts to a panning shot of ruins, images of smiling *Trümmerfrauen*, and men jackhammering and building. Hans Albers, a star in the Third Reich, plays the protagonist Hans Richter, who walks by these industrious Germans to an optimistic tune about reconstruction. The film rehabilitates Hans Albers/Hans Richter at the same time that the filmic language provides a positive message about the future of Germany, eliciting pity for German suffering. *Die Mörder sind unter uns,* which begins with the psychologically broken Hans Mertens, also contains a redemptive narrative and an industrious *Trümmerfrau*, who clears the domestic space of its rubble and helps to "cure" Mertens.

Rubble clearing was *not* primarily the work of well-intentioned, selfless women, as Leonie Treber demonstrates in *Mythos Trümmerfrauen*. In fact, rubble clearing was often punitive labor (*Strafarbeit*); it was often done by men; it was used to shame former Party members, and it was quickly professionalized and mechanized (198). In contrast to the rubble film narratives that invoke sympathy for Germany, the scene with Bögemann and Halben in the ruined museum directly links the rubble to National Socialism and also to the retaliatory or penal nature of rubble work. Halben is presented as genuinely well-intentioned ("Er sei jetzt ehrlich bereit, an einer neuen Zukunft mitzuarbeiten") and makes great efforts to seek legal employment. Schallmeier, in contrast, reveals some of the challenges of the Allied denazification policies concerning individuals eager to "play the part." Halben's conversation with Bögemann about reconstruction stages a complicated moral dilemma about what to do with individuals who may want to help rebuild but who are unable to do so.

The stolen Madonna statue is another detail in the film that further complicates the characters' identities and their relation to the past, and several plot twists center on the statue, which alternately represents guilt and absolution. Halben and Elisabeth rescued the wooden Madonna statue from the burning museum at the war's end and brought it with them as they fled westward. As a stolen and yet valuable object, the Madonna statue poses both an opportunity and a threat

to Halben and Elisabeth, and they discuss what to do with it, and to whom the statue belongs:

> Elisabeth streitet, sie habe die Madonna aus den Flammen des brennenden Museums nach dem Luftangriff gerettet und es sei nun ihre Madonna. Halben sagt, die Plastik gehöre dem Staat. Elisabeth fragt: Welchem Staat?
> Halben, Natürlich unserem Staat, dem Deutschen.
> Elisabeth: Den gibt es ja gar nicht mehr.
> Halben meint schliesslich etwas hilflos: Wie dem auch sei, die Madonna sei eines der kostbarsten Werke von Veit Stoss und man könne sie unmöglich hier in diesem Bunkerloch aufstellen. (Bild 25)

In this exchange, it is clear that the Madonna is stolen property, but the statue also seems stateless in the aftermath of the war—like the homeless refugees Elisabeth and Günter Halben themselves. On another level, this dialogue raises questions about cultural property and cultural heritage, as well as the place of art and religion in the world of ruins. As Halben notes, leaving the Madonna in the bunker is "unmöglich." Ultimately, Halben makes a pact with Betty, and decides to sell the statue after the currency reform in order to start a business—the titular *Stehausschank*. This object represents what the Mitscherlichs would later identify in *The Inability to Mourn* as the "[substantial] economic gain from this ability to forget, this alienation from one's own past, this erection of a collective taboo" (20). To cover up the "open wounds left by the past," Germans transferred their energies into postwar reconstruction and the "economic miracle" (13). In Koeppen's story, the illegal sale of the statue is what enables Halben's new life, and the purchase of the bar represents a move from the past into the future.

The statue not only allows Halben and Betty to buy the bar, but it later becomes the key piece of evidence in the murder case. The police detectives have no leads until a lucky turn of events: American officers have begun to ask around for a Dr. Halben, who had "offered his expertise" in the sale of stolen art. A 40-centimenter Madonna statue by Veit Stoss surfaced in the United States and was confiscated.[12] Koeppen's choice of this artist, a late Gothic sculptor popular during the Nazi era, adds another fraught reference to the National Socialists' obsession with a racialized Germanic heritage and the politics of art restitution after the war. The Veit Stoss Madonna statue is yet another trace of the Nazi past that haunts Halben and his daughter, reemerging unexpectedly. As a displaced and stolen work, the statue hints at the guilt and shame that they carry with them, another piece of the past that they cannot easily discard.

A Rubble Man and a Nazi Girl: Characterology of Post-Fascism

The mysterious murder that shapes the screenplay's storyline is an act of patricide that not only upsets traditional gendering of the father-son conflict, but also challenges the conventional figure of the overly zealous Hitler Youth. According to the 5-page exposé, the film's working subtitle was "Eine von den Werwölfen," in

reference to the ultra-committed Nazi resistance fighters trained in guerilla tactics—an ineffective last-ditch effort to sabotage Allied progress at the war's end. Immediately, however, the feminine article "eine" challenges our expectations of young, ideologically committed "Werwolf" fighters. Rubble films were full of rebellious young boys, such as 12-year-old Edmund in Roberto Rossellini's *Germania Anno Zero* (1947), who ends up murdering his father, in part due to the influence of a former Nazi teacher; Gustav from *Irgendwo in Berlin* (Gerhard Lamprecht, 1946), part of a band of unruly children with absent fathers who have only known war, "shooting and breaking things," or Hellmuth Behnke from Wolfgang Staudte's *Rotation* (1949) who denounces his father. In the postwar period, concern about "politically radicalized" or "lost" youth became a "symbol of greater societal breakdown," as Benjamin Möckel writes, standing in for a range of anxieties about national and social rehabilitation after National Socialism (191). Koeppen's creation of a young female character who embodies these same anxieties is an important variation on the typical theme, reflecting a wider societal malaise about postwar youth.

Although the title suggests that Betty is the central character, it is the father-daughter relationship that structures the story. The enigmatic young Elisabeth is portrayed as a smart but confused girl—the age 15 (in 1948, age 12 during the flashback) locates her between child and woman, in a liminal space of both innocence and maturity. Her age also makes her a direct product of the Third Reich, born in 1933. Elisabeth's ambiguous status as girl/woman contributes to the suspense, as the police (and presumably the audience as well) are unable to see her as a murderer. The police detectives speak in a "fatherly" tone to her, they refer to her as "kleines Fräulein," and behind closed doors they murmur, "Schade um das Kind." As Jaimey Fisher argues in *Disciplining Germany,* the "unavoidable ambivalence toward youth guilt is exactly the remarkable point. It was precisely this complexity, this ambivalence, this muddledness that postwar authors, intellectuals, and filmmakers would instrumentalize in approaching questions of German guilt and the past in general" (14–15). Koeppen leverages this "muddledness" to present a complicated dilemma about young and adult Germans with a Nazi past. In her first appearance, Elisabeth clutches a newspaper article about Hitler's visit to her father's museum, establishing her reluctance to let go of the past. The character of a young girl who remains ideologically committed to National Socialism, even going so far as to murder her own father, sends a clear message about the need for reeducation at the same time that the violent storyline reflects pessimism about the future.

Furthermore, Elisabeth is also repeatedly aligned with the Madonna figure. Erica Carter describes how the Madonna figure appears prominently in postwar visual culture and early postwar films—usually signifying universal suffering and loss (104–05). Madonna imagery contributed to a "foundational mythology" of selective remembering and forgetting that privileged German victimhood (Denman 199). In *Bei Betty*, however, Koeppen contests this imagery head-on by associating the former BDM girl with the Madonna. In one scene in Betty's

apartment, one of the German women sarcastically calls Elisabeth "unsere Heilige." Later, when Elisabeth is interviewed by the police, their question about the Madonna ("Was weißt du von der Madonna?") triggers her flashback to 1945, providing their backstory. Much of the film is thus framed through the figure of Elisabeth, who remains a mystery, signifying both innocence and lost youth, as well as complicity in the Nazi past. This character also represents "pure" performance—we as viewers cannot gain access to her thoughts and motivations.

Although Elisabeth and Betty are linked through their names, Elisabeth is also bound in several ways to the character of Neck, a victim of the Nazis who was interned in a concentration camp, possibly due to a denunciation by Halben. He is physically and psychologically damaged from the war, with a paralyzed arm and clear symptoms of wartime trauma. Neck has become an alcoholic, frequenting Betty's bar in search of escape. Elisabeth and Neck both seem figuratively paralyzed, unable to come to terms with postwar life. In one scene after Halben's death, they are both alone at the bar in the morning. Elisabeth is shown washing glasses when Neck arrives, looking for a drink.

> Elisabeth: Warum trinken Sie soviel? Warum kommen Sie hierher?
> Neck: Irgendwo muss man ja hingehen
> Elisabeth: Aber Sie sind doch nicht schlecht, Herr Neck
> Neck: Du bist doch auch nicht schlecht und bist hier
> Elisabeth: Doch, ich bin schlecht (Bild 18)

These characters cannot escape the past and seem to have no future. Neck is in search of refuge, "irgendwo muss man ja hingehen," recalling Elisabeth's earlier conversation with her father about the German state, "den gibt es ja gar nicht mehr." Both characters have a hidden wound; they are lost in the postwar world and do not or cannot contribute to reconstruction.

The curious use of the term "schlecht," which signifies guilt or moral judgment, resurfaces more explicitly at the film's end, in a dramatic final sequence that juxtaposes Elisabeth's and Neck's guilt and innocence. Neck and Elisabeth, headed to the police and the church respectively, are each about to give a confession—one criminal and one religious; one dishonest and one honest. Seemingly inexplicably, Neck goes to the police and confesses to the murder of Günter Halben. Yet Neck, whose right arm is paralyzed, could not have produced the right-handed stab wound, and he is ultimately released. Then, the plot twists and Elisabeth goes from the church to the police, and Neck goes from the police to the bar. In a series of six quickly interchanging shots, Koeppen juxtaposes the two characters. First, Elisabeth is shown on the main square between the church and police headquarters. Next, Neck leaves the detectives and walks down a "long, sad hallway." Elisabeth then enters the same building and walks towards the camera down a similarly "long, sad hallway." After we see Neck go down a set of stairs, we see Elisabeth going up. Neck is then shown heading towards the church, after which Elisabeth enters the interrogation room and puts a knife on the table.

The final scene of the screenplay describes Neck walking past the church, across the square, to Betty's bar, nestled in the ruins. What is described as a high angle creates a triangular movement between the church, police headquarters, and the bar. The cross-cutting between the church and the police, institutions representing religion and the state, suggests a nexus of religious guilt and political guilt, and the possibilities for absolution or forgiveness—as opposed to the state's search for justice. The *Stehausschank*, as an impermanent fixture in the postwar landscape, represents both a place of forgetting and moving on.

After Elisabeth gives the murder weapon to the police, turning herself in as her father's murderer, the audience is left puzzling over her motivations and the significance of this act. In the film exposé, Koeppen offers one interpretation: "Elisabeth hat ihren Vater aus Abscheu, Verachtung, Enttäuschung getötet. Es war vielleicht weniger das Enttäuschtsein von Menschen, als das Enttäuschtsein von einer Weltanschauung, einer Erziehung, einem jugendlichen Idol" (5). The act of patricide is the symbolic divorce from the past, the National Socialist *Weltanschauung*, and the "father figure" of Hitler. However, in the screenplay there is no voice-over; none of these rationales is offered directly. In contrast to Koeppen's novels, which explore the expansive and associative nature of human consciousness, the screenplay eschews this depth.

Furthermore, the last image is not of Elisabeth, but of Neck, walking towards Betty's bar. By pairing Neck and Elisabeth in this climactic sequence, Koeppen ends with a disturbing image of a man who has been broken by the war and is now alone at home in the rubble. Interestingly, this parallels the opening scene of Staudte's *Die Mörder sind unter uns,* in which Hans Mertens staggers through the ruins to a bar. It is an undoing of the neat, redemptive narrative, exposing the complexity of guilt in postwar Germany and leaving open questions of motive.

Conclusion

By the time Koeppen published the novel *Tauben im Gras* in 1951, he had a much more cynical stance towards the postwar film industry—perhaps disillusioned with the failure of his own film project. Using a collage style reminiscent of Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, Koeppen inserts newspaper headlines into the narrative, many of which refer to film consumption: "Schlagzeilen der Filmblätter: Alexander spielt den Erzherzog, der deutsche Superfilm, der Erzherzog und die Fischerin," "Bessere Filme im neuen Deutschland, liegt es am Drehbuch, Dichter an die Filmfront… Neorealismus nicht mehr gefragt" (*Tauben* 13, 183). Koeppen weaves contemporary discourse about the cinematic medium and genre into the novel, reflecting on possibilities of representation in the postwar present. He uses the wartime rhetoric of "Filmfront" to demonstrate the continuities between wartime and postwar filmmaking, a theme he returns to in *Das Treibhaus* as well, as he juxtaposes Nazi slogans with images from the postwar newsreels (123). His novels' characters go to the movies at the

same time that they voice criticisms of cinema as escape, and the increasing sense of unreality as one moves out of the cinema into the "real" world.

In *Bei Betty,* as in his postwar novels, Koeppen challenges viewers to see postwar Germany and the *Wiederaufbau* through the lens of the cinema, exposing the blurred lines between cinematic illusion and outward "reality," and calling attention to the performances of everyday life. The first character introduced in *Tauben im Gras* is the film star Alexander, who is being dressed to play an archduke in a costume drama. Alexander himself finds no satisfaction in such roles, and feels unsure of his postwar identity: "Man verwechselte Alexander mit seinem Schatten. Es machte ihn schwindlig. Wer war er? Ein draufgängerisch-treu-sentimental-kühner-Helden-Potenter? Er hatte es satt. Er war müde. Er war ausgeheldet" (*Tauben* 148). This character, the actor, is unsure of the roles he is playing and his true identity. In *Das Treibhaus*, Representative Keetenheuve can likewise no longer distinguish between performance and reality, especially as an observer of "Statisten der politischen Bühne" (53–116). Watching a scene in the Bundestag play out as it is being filmed for the Wochenschau, he feels that the politicians look like actors playing politicians: "das Jahrhundert artete seinen Filmschauspielern nach, und selbst ein Bergarbeiter sah schon wie ein Kumpel aus, der dargestellt wird" (*Treibhaus* 168). In *Bei Betty*, there are no actors, but subtle hints that call attention to the way both spaces and individuals are being rebuilt and remade for the postwar world. The filmic narrative features characters who thematize issues of guilt and innocence, as well as the conflict between those unable to leave their (National Socialist) past behind and former Nazis who seek rehabilitation and a new future.

Unlike other early rubble films, that helped shape the West German origin story of the *Wirtschaftswunder*, Koeppen shows the personal histories behind acts of reconstruction. Betty's bar, which gives the film its name, is built with money from a stolen work of art. This new beginning for a small family builds on a traumatic foundation, with a story of displacement, loss of identity, and insecurity about the future. The story leaves many questions unanswered, a dark counterpoint to postwar redemption narratives that highlights the biographical ruptures often hidden in the rubble. With the ending left open, it is unclear whether Neck and Elisabeth will be successful at refashioning themselves for a new, postwar order. Unlike Hans Mertens, Hans Richter, or other typical characters of rubble films, these characters are not "saved" in the end. Instead, Koeppen seems to suggest the political and moral confession as a viable alternative for remaking oneself, and beginning a longer, more difficult process of self-healing.

Notes

[1] The extant manuscripts mention the West German currency reform (20 June 1948). Koeppen may have written and reworked the script before this date. See Döring, "Stehauschank vor Trümmerkulisse."

[2] Suhrkamp Verlag plans to publish Koeppen's *Drehbücher* as volume 15 in a new edition of Koeppen's *Werke* (Hans-Ulrich Treichel, ed.). On Koeppen's multimediality see Erhart and Prümm.

[3] The *Bei Betty* film project exists in two forms in undated manuscripts: as a 5-page film exposé, and as a more detailed 89-page film script. The latter, composed of an intro and 77 scenes (*Bilder*), plus 3 pages entitled "Vorspann" 1–3, is a full story with descriptions of setting, character, plot, and dialogue. This article focuses on the longer manuscript.

[4] There was a long-running narrative that the film industry was a "refuge" for "dissidents and nonconformists." See Rentschler 12.

[5] At least four articles from this time dealing with the film industry can be attributed to Koeppen published January to June 1947 in *Die Neue Zeitung*: "In jenen Tagen. Der erste Spielfilm in der britischen Zone fertiggestellt," 24 January 1947; "Drehbeginn in Geiselgasteig," 25 April 1947; "Zwei Jahre 'Welt im Film,'" 26 May 1947; "Die Suche nach dem Regisseur. Zur Filmlage in der britischen Zone," 17 June 1947.

[6] All citations from the screenplay are from the manuscript in the Wolfgang Koeppen Archive, Signatur 15634.

[7] Classic studies of *Trümmerfilme* include Brandlmeier, Pleyer, and Shandley.

[8] For more on this trope and surrounding debates see Brockmann.

[9] This critical stance on Allied policies may be one reason why *Bei Betty* was never produced. On Allied occupation and military censorship as well as German self-censorship see Wilms 28 and Brandlmeier 36.

[10] This terminology includes variations such as *Nazisäuberung, Generalsäuberung*, etc. See Felbick 250–51.

[11] This mixture of paraphrase and completed dialogue is typical for the state of the screenplay. See note 3 for more on Koeppen's manuscript.

[12] Stoss's most famous work, the Krakow altarpiece (completed 1489), was stolen in 1941 by the Nazis during their occupation of Poland. The altarpiece was re-discovered in Bavaria in 1946, seized by American cultural officers, and returned to Krakow in May 1946. See Kurtz 136.

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