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Between Idealization of a Martyr and Critic of a Society: Analysis of Axel Corti's "Der Fall Jägerstätter"

Abstract

The new film approach to the figure of Franz Jägerstätter by Terrence Mallick in 2019 is an occasion to take a critical look at the first movie about the Catholic martyr that was made by the Austrian director Axel Corti in 1971. Although the movie turned out to be a huge success and until now is viewed as one of the turning points in coming to terms with the Nazi past in the Austrian film history, it idealizes, against the director's intentions, the protagonist and preserves some of the characteristic elements of the history discourse of the times it was made.

Keywords

Franz Jägerstätter, Axel Corti, Austrian film, National Socialism, Radegund

Author Notes

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A Hidden Life, a film by Terrence Malick, had its premiere in the Cannes film festival in 2019. Malick, the director of films such as *Days of Heaven*, *The Thin Red Line*, and the Palme d'Or-winning *The Tree of Life*, decided for the first time to make a biographical film. The main protagonist of his latest work is Franz Jägerstätter, a peasant from Innviertel in Austria, who was sentenced to death in 1943 because of his conscientious objection to being drafted into the Wehrmacht. The release of *A Hidden Life* provides a good occasion to remember the first film devoted to the life and death of Franz Jägerstätter, *Der Fall Jägerstätter*, directed by Axel Corti and broadcast both in West Germany and Austria in 1971. Although the film turned out to be successful and led to a debate about Jägerstätter and the refusal of military service in the Third Reich, very few scholars have been interested in the content of the film and its significance in medial and historic discourse.¹

I will begin this essay by highlighting the most important facts from the biography of Franz Jägerstätter, predominantly using information provided in the texts of his biographer, Erna Putz, a Roman Catholic theologian.² Next, I will analyze Corti's film in two ways. I will first concentrate on the film's portrait of Jägerstätter. I take the view that Corti, together with screenwriter Hellmut Andics and the director of photography Walter Kindler, present the protagonist as a saint. On the one hand such an interpretation of Jägerstätter's last days are confirmed in historical source materials, mainly the letters and essays that Jägerstätter recorded

during his incarceration. On the other hand, from the perspective of time, the efforts of the authors resemble an idealization of a martyr, and deprive him of any ordinary, human characteristics.

Secondly, I will look at Franz Jägerstätter and the other characters of the film from a different perspective of numerous debates regarding Austria's role in National Socialism and the Holocaust. Even though the film perfectly fits the perception of the country's Nazi past in the 1970s, underpinning the Austrian "victim myth" and exonerating the army from any culpability, it does offer the first signs of a shift in Austrian cinema and the role that filmmakers would play in overturning the national myth of the country as the first victim of Nazi aggression. I will, before concluding, also place the film's reception in the Austrian press within this context.

Franz Jägerstätter's life and death

Franz Jägerstätter was born on 20 May 1907 in St. Radegund, a small village in Upper Austria, to an unmarried couple, Rosalia Huber and Franz Bachmeier, who died in the First World War. Franz was adopted by Heinrich Jägerstätter, who married his mother and gave the boy his surname in 1917. In his youth, Franz was known as a cheerful and even mischievous boy. He was the first person in the village to own a motorcycle. He took part in many arguments in the local tavern and once was even arrested for the severe beating of a man. In the late

1920s he had a brief affair with a village girl, Magd Theresia Auer, with whom he had his first daughter, Hildegard. Gordon Zahn, who popularized the figure of Jägerstätter in the 1960s, underlines that he conjured up an image of two Jägerstätters on the basis of many interviews he had conducted with the villagers of St. Radegund. Describing the early image he notices, "It had been gently observed that there were times in his youth when he 'crossed the line' in reference to the episodes related by the Radegunders."³

In 1935, Franz fell in love with Franziska Schwaninger and married her the following year. The couple had three daughters: Rosalia, Maria und Aloisia. From 1936, Franz's religious faith began to grow. Apart from his work at the farm, he engaged actively as sexton of the parish and offered his services at funerals. In April 1938, he became famous in his village once again as he was the only local citizen to vote against the annexation of Austria by Germany. His disapproval of National Socialism was well-known and contributed to his image as an outsider. Instead of taverns, however, he now regularly attended church and received communion every day.

In June 1940, he was called up for military service. However, he only completed his training in the garrison in Enns and thanks to his mayor, Franz Sperl, was brought home on the grounds of his "reserved civilian occupation" as a farmer.⁴ In his writings, Jägerstätter deliberated on the irreconcilability of the Nazi regime and Christian ideology. As a consequence, he turned to the Bishop of

Linz, Joseph Calasanz Fließer, who disagreed with his argument and advised him not to question whether the war was righteous or not but to be aware of his responsibility to his family. After being conscripted once again in 1943, in the face of German losses in the Eastern front, he instantly refused to join the armed forces and was taken first to the military remand prison in Linz and subsequently to the prison in Berlin-Tegel. Charged with undermining military morale, Jägerstätter was sentenced to death. He did not change his attitude despite the endeavors of his wife Franziska and a priest from his village who visited him in the prison. On August 9, 1943, Franz Jägerstätter was taken to Brandenburg/Havel and executed by beheading.

After the war, he remained an unknown hero for around two decades. This finally changed in 1964 with the publication of the book *In Solitary Witness. The Life and Death of Franz Jagerstätter* by Gordon Zahn.⁵ However, “Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung” in its March 29, 1967 issue, claimed that in his homeland, Jägerstätter is still regarded as a madman, while one bishop supposedly said that he had been “the victim of his own stupidity.”⁶ The process of Jägerstätter’s rehabilitation began three decades later, when the District Court of Berlin annulled the verdict of capital punishment, which was tantamount to the symbolic exoneration of a man who opposed Nazi crimes. In 2007, Pope Benedict XVI officially confirmed his martyrdom and declared him beatified. Nonetheless, not everyone in Austria was satisfied with the acknowledgment of this martyr. Hubert

Keyl, a prominent politician from the right wing Freedom Party (Freiheitliche Partei Österreich – FPÖ), classified his beatification as a punch in the face of many soldiers since someone who turns his back on comrades, according to Keyl, deserves to be called a traitor and a traitor needs to go on trial and not be beatified.⁷ However, the attitude of one politician could not stop the process of the popularization of Jägerstätter in Austrian remembrance culture. His case was promoted by Erna Putz, who apart from publishing a biography and numerous essays on Jägerstätter, collected and published many letters and writings bequeathed to him that serve as testimony to his unshakeable faith and undeterred resistance to the inhuman Nazi regime.⁸ An English translation by Robert A. Krieg of these letters and writings appeared in 2009.⁹ In addition, Franz Jägerstätter and his wife, Franziska, were honored in the artistic field. In the fall of 2007, the German television networks ARD and SWR broadcast a documentary, *Die Witwe Des Helden - Das Leben der Franziska Jägerstätter* by Irene Kündler. In June 2009, the Theater des Kindes presented a play *Franziska Jägerstätter erzählt*, made in collaboration with the European Culture Capitol Linz, the Theater Festival SCHÄXPIR and the Land Upper Austria. The play was performed again in April 2010 in the Haus der Geschichten in Linz. Finally, Felix Mitterer directed the play *Jägerstätter*, which had its premiere in June 2013.

Franz Jägerstätter on Austrian television

The 90-minute-film by Axel Corti, *Der Fall Jägerstätter*, appeared many years before all of these events. It was produced by “Neue Thalia Film” under the auspices of the Austrian ORF and German ZDF in 1971. The two television networks had collaborated ever since ZDF's launch in 1963 and had produced many history documentaries. The first German television broadcast of the film was on June 11, followed by the Austrian television broadcast on October 26, 1971, an Austrian national holiday. Since then the film has been broadcast 18 more times, either on ORF 2 or ORF 3 or 3SAT. The film's most recent broadcast took place on May 8, 2018.¹⁰ A re-edited version of the film, entitled *Die Verweigerung* (The Refusal), was released in Austrian cinemas in 1973. Since 2007, the movie has also been available on DVD as part of a larger collection, *Der österreichische Film*, edited by the Austrian daily newspaper *Der Standard* in collaboration with Filmarchiv Austria and the film publishing house *hoanzl*. This is the version that I refer to in this essay.

The director, Axel Corti, who was 38 at the time of the film's premiere, was already an experienced journalist. He was the manager of the Department of Radio Drama in the local ORF studio in Tirol from 1956 to 1960. He also started work at the Burgtheater in Vienna, first as a director's assistant and from 1962 as a playwright and director. He made a name for himself in the weekly program, *Der Schalldämpfer* (The Silencer), which was broadcast on ORF radio from 1969

until his death in 1993. In the program Corti commented on the current political, social and cultural condition of Austria.¹¹ *Der Fall Jägerstätter* was not his first full length history film, but it was the first to deal with the period of the Second World War. Throughout the following two decades Corti, as "European as one could imagine" (due to the international roots of his ancestors), was to establish himself as one of Austria's pre-eminent filmmakers.¹²

The author of the script was Hellmut Andics, a journalist for the newspapers *Neues Österreich* and *Die Presse*, who was already well-known as a scriptwriter for many TV movies and series, for instance, the five-episode ZDF series *Der Bürgerkrieg im Rußland* (The Civil War in Russia), directed by Wolfgang Schleif in 1967. The title role in *Der Fall Jägerstätter* was played by Kurt Weinzierl, a theater, cabaret and film actor. Unfortunately, as Christian Hager mentions, it is impossible to analyze the production process of the film, since no archival data remains.¹³

However, before analyzing the film itself there are some aspects in reference to the role of Austrian television in shaping the collective memory that need to be mentioned. The production period of *Der Fall Jägerstätter*—from 1970 to 1971—coincides with the end of the last phase of the development of Austrian television. After the initial stage of popularization of television in the second half of the 1950s, and the second stage when the television set turned from a symbol of luxury into a domestic device in the first half of the 1960s, the medium was used

less frequently in public places and instead became a popular feature of many households.¹⁴ As Renée Winter argues, television became an active element in the institutional politics of memory. Firstly, it offered a wide range of homegrown programs about Austrian history, in formats including documentaries, feature films, teleplays, cabaret programs, and, last but not least, transmissions from national holiday ceremonies. Secondly, it also broadcast historical films made abroad (usually in the USA and West Germany), many of which pertained to the Second World War and the Holocaust.¹⁵ Thirdly, television itself was sometimes perceived as a medium which was replacing school in the educational process and specifically regarding recent Austrian history, offered very interesting and lively history lessons about events which school programs did not include. By the time Corti and Andics's film had its television premiere in 1971, television had become a highly developed medium, popular throughout society, with the established formats of transmission, a canon of historical content, and a strong position in propagating national history. The traditional distribution channel—the movie theater—in contrast, had begun a slow but steady decline. The decreasing number of movie theaters in Vienna (from 198 in 1963 to 98 in 1973) illustrates this negative trend.¹⁶ Maria Fritsche considers the decade between the end of the Second World War and the signing of the Austrian State Treaty as “the heyday of commercial Austrian cinema,”¹⁷ when film makers were only seldom inclined towards experimenting and were immune to the influence of French cinema and

Hollywood crime and film noir genres. The tendency to treat movies solely as a source of money continued in the 1960s, even though the films about the Habsburg monarchy, the Heimat and the biographies of famous Austrian composers gradually had become unfashionable. Maria Fritsche cites a comment from the conservative newspaper, *Die Presse*, which stated in 1961: "The Sissi-streams of gold have dried up."¹⁸

Among other reasons for this movie production crisis, one needs to point to the dearth of governmental film promotion subsidies (they only began in 1981, while in West Germany they have been in existence since 1962). Another factor in this crisis was the retirement or passing away of the representatives of the old national industry (such as Willy Forst, Paula Wessely, and Hubert Marischka). Robert von Dassanowsky calls the period between 1960 and 1979 a "missed wave" due to the fact that Austrian filmmakers did not nurture any artistic, independent movie style as in France, West Germany, Czechoslovakia or Poland.¹⁹ Axel Corti was one of the first directors who used the opportunity of collaborating with television. The medium appeared to be the only way that young filmmakers could establish themselves and develop their careers. Perhaps the positive reception of *Der Fall Jägerstätter* persuaded the producers to introduce the movie to the mainstream distribution method at the time of the movie theater.

Axel Corti and Hellmut Andics created a specific type of documentary, which in English is called "docudrama" and in German "Dokumentarspiel"²⁰ as

it combines non-fictional elements (of informative value) with scenes shot with actors that make the audience think the past could have really appeared in the way that it is presented on the screen. *Der Fall Jägerstätter* combines real interviews with staged, performed scenes, making it possible to imagine what the Jägerstätter case might have looked like. The impression of watching a documentary film is confirmed once we see a photograph of the real Franz Jägerstätter. However, the vast majority of scenes in this 90-minute film are re-enacted, while the talking-head interviews serve as an addition to or a comment on the most dramatic, re-enacted scenes. The interviews with the witnesses (eleven male farmers; one female farmer; Franziska, Jägerstätter wife; and two priests, Ferdinand Fürthauer and Josef Karobath) who recall Jägerstätter are not the only means employed to suggest the credibility of the narrative. *Der Fall Jägerstätter* is a black and white film, shot in a very modest style, with a rather static camera and a sometimes casual method of editing. The reason for this approach might have been the low budget of the production, but it nonetheless results in an effect that authentic footage would have had.

The dominant types of shots are close-ups followed by medium and occasionally American shots, both in the re-enacted scenes and the interviews. In the case of the interviews, the camera often shows a figure in front of a larger background (natural scenography of the village) and then zooms in to concentrate solely on the figure's face. Such a *mise-en-cadre* does not allow the scenography

to play any important role, making all the details related to it insignificant. Instead the close-ups, especially the extreme close-ups as very intimate types of shots, present all the subtle nuances of the psychological acting of the characters, mostly expressed through their mimicry. Therefore the stories they tell increase in credibility: we both get to know the stories themselves and learn more about their authors, while the topographical background of the story becomes less significant. In effect, to a certain degree, the film becomes close to the subgenre of the psychological drama. Lots of close-ups used in the film as well as an avoidance of wide and full shots render it an ideal work for the smaller television format. The "cipher of things"²¹ which enables the producers (who operate with a more limited budget than in the case of a movie) to transmit the meaning of particular scenes is based most of all, as in the case of the Corti film, on the mimicry, the gestures of individual characters and their juxtaposition towards one another. One of the scenes which surely does not require a movie theater format shows Jägerstätter's appearance at an army medical commission. The protagonist, half naked, stands before other men, all of whom are fully dressed – a doctor in a medical uniform and a few uniformed officers sitting behind their desks. What is more, behind the officers there is a large portrait of Hitler hanging on the wall between two swastika flags. After being examined by a doctor, Jägerstätter goes from one officer to another handing his papers over to each of them. The large, conspicuous Nazi symbols and the inequality between one half undressed man who is standing

and the many fully dressed men who are sitting, implies the solitude of the protagonist.

Furthermore, the same type of shots for the scenes with those people who were actually involved, being interviewed along with the re-enactment, gives an impression of uniformity to the film. Other means typical for documentaries which serve to suggest the authenticity of the story are a voice-over which introduces the history of Jägerstätter and ends with the phrase: “This is his story,” and the opening subtitles informing us that most of Jägerstätter’s dialog is taken from his notes and letters. This suggests that everything we see on the screen is based on true events.

The presentation of a martyr

As presented in the film, Franz Jägerstätter is an immaculate character with an extraordinary faith that is incomprehensible to others. He confirms his faith with his deeds: serves as a sexton in the local church, greets other people with a traditional “Grüß Gott” instead of the Nazi salute “Heil Hitler,” and, when imprisoned, prays while holding a rosary in his hands. In his reluctance to serve in the military, he refers to the New Testament whose long passages he can recite immediately. This astonishes his interlocutors. Regardless of the bishop’s opinion about his objection to joining the Wehrmacht, he firmly believes what the Holy Bible and his conscience say. He also claims to have experienced a dream and

considers whether the dream can be interpreted as a sign from God. Thus he is presented not only as a mystic but also as a religious fundamentalist. In this context, religious fundamentalism should be understood as a return to fundamental, original principles stemming from religious texts and a firm adherence to these principles and the defense of them. However, his fundamentalist attitude does not entail the will to impose these rules upon other people.²²

In the end, the mystic and the fundamentalist also becomes a martyr. When his wife, Franziska, assisted by the parish priest, pays him a final visit in Brandenburg prison and insists that she and their daughters need him as a father and husband, he resorts to the words of the Holy Bible and cites the Gospel of Matthew: "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me; and anyone who does not take up his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me."²³ Like Christ himself, Jägerstätter is exposed to the insults of his persecutors. Three guards in the prison sneer at him when giving away food rations by calling him a ministrant and saying he can share his ration because he lives through his Host. One of Jägerstätter's cellmates can hardly endure his unshaken faith and says he is fed up with his love and complains the man makes him feel sick; in another scene he angrily snatches a rosary from Jägerstätter's hands. But for the fact that the protagonist has a family, one could claim that Jägerstätter is Christ in times of

war. The protagonist tends to be immaculate in other ways, as well. He does not smoke, does not drink stronger alcoholic beverages than beer, and does not gamble at cards. His past, full of entertaining events and excesses, is mentioned only once and very briefly.

To a large extent, Jägerstätter's immaculate image is influenced by the way in which Kurt Weinzierl plays the role. The protagonist always speaks in a consistent vocal tone, never susceptible to anger or any other emotions, no matter who his interlocutor is: the Wehrmacht major, his attorney, or even his wife. Above all, it is his voice which expresses Jägerstätter's stoicism. Furthermore, Weinzierl's character generally remains composed while giving longer speeches. In two scenes—the dialog with the bishop, and then with his lawyer—he retains a still posture, and looks directly and piercingly into the eyes of the interlocutor without blinking. In this respect the protagonist can be seen as a closed, one-dimensional figure, a “Typus” in German film studies terms: that is, a film character with a limited range of features, whose characterization is consistent and in no way ambivalent.²⁴ The long staring into the camera, shown in extreme close-ups, recalls the association with the cinematography in the classic 1928 film, *La passion de Jeanne d'Arc* directed by Carl Theodor Dreyer. This film, dedicated to another Christian martyr, contains plenty of close-ups and extreme close-ups, concentrating on the face of the woman who is interrogated on charges of heresy. Her face, shown from such a close perspective, reflects the emotions and thoughts

experienced by the heroine, including her unswerving faith. However, unlike the eyes of Jeanne d'Arc, the eyes of protagonist in Corti's movie do not water, hiding any traces of suffering while not giving the impression of exophthalmia. The static figure of Jägerstätter presented in the film calls into question the way that Corti describes Jägerstätter in his radio broadcast *Der Schalldämpfer*:

He listened to the things this country propagated and he saw how it acted. And he took the appropriate measures. Not thoughtlessly. Not fanatically. Not without qualms, not without fear, not without desperation, not without dangers. Completely unheroically.²⁵

Corti's Jägerstätter, in contrast to the above cited claim, is static, he shows no fear, no desperation, no sadness, he does not even give himself away with any doubt about his decision and the anxiety of his family. The reading of the letters and writings that Jägerstätter left leads to the conclusion that his faith was indeed unflinching. His strong belief in the Holy Bible, adherence to the words of Jesus and the Disciples, his attachment to the Catholic tradition gave him a great deal of support in the most difficult moments and the close perspective of eternal life was a solace that helped him to overcome mundane sorrows. This, however, does not refer fully to his mental state during the time of his imprisonment and the fact that Jägerstätter was deeply concerned about his wife, who had to cope alone with the arduous daily work on the farm. In addition, he very much missed her along with his three little daughters: Maria, Louisi and Rosi.

On April 11th, 1943, he expressed his sadness in a letter to his wife: “Another sad day comes to an end. But I do not want it to end without me writing a few sentences to you.”²⁶ In another letter, written a week later, he deliberated on people who commit suicide and the way those people are judged. He argued: “How many people break under this burden and then take their own lives! We may condemn only the act of suicide, but never the person who commits suicide.”²⁷ These two statements might suggest that Franz Jägerstätter struggled with depression during his isolation. Furthermore, the martyr was not devoid of anger since he became annoyed with Pastor Fürthauer who visited him in July 1943 together with Franziska. The reason for his annoyance remains a mystery since neither Franz nor Franziska imparted any information about the conversation. However, soon after the visit, Franz had regrets about his behavior and repented in the letter to Franziska on August 8th, one day before being executed: “I am not angry about the pastor. I have asked for his forgiveness for all of my unnecessary words to him, which perhaps hurt him and only brought me regret. I did not want to bring pain with my words, just as the pastor did not want to do with his.”²⁸

The filmic convention of representing Jägerstätter as unambiguously “good” may perhaps serve to convince one that disobedience to the Nazis was possible, but not everyone was able to pluck up courage to resist. However, the impeccable protagonist in the movie seems superior and above the drama of the

plot. It is the supporting characters, trying to talk Jägerstätter out of his decision, who express the drama in the film. Therefore it is questionable whether Corti succeeded in avoiding the idealization of his hero as was planned.²⁹

Dealing with the Nazi past

Der Fall Jägerstätter is not only a film about an individual. On the contrary, it reveals a lot about Austrian society as a whole during the Nazi period. Moreover, it can be rated among the works of engaged cinema which participates in public historical discourse. On the one hand, Corti's film may be regarded as a work that perfectly fits the times in which it was created, one that should please and satisfy an Austrian audience. On the other hand, the film includes several signs of a shift in the attitude of Austrian cinema towards the country's problematic Nazi past and the involvement of many Austrians in National Socialism.

First of all, I will concentrate on the examples of the narrative in the film that are characteristic of the historical discourse in the early 1970s. Jägerstätter perfectly reflects the Catholicism of the vast majority of Austrians. As a deeply religious man from a small Austrian village, he symbolizes "die österreichische Gemütlichkeit" (Austrian congeniality). What is more, he also works as a farmer, a profession that symbolized peace, security and nature in post-war Austrian cinema.³⁰ What seems to be more significant, however, is Jägerstätter's status as

the embodiment of all the characteristics of a proud, brave Austrian citizen who protests against the imposition of National Socialism and repeatedly underlines his Austrian, not German, nationality. Jägerstätter views National Socialism as a system entirely unfamiliar both to Austrian culture and to a state founded on the rule of law. In a dialog with the Wehrmacht major he emphasizes:

I'm an Austrian, major. (..) Can I say that I have a homeland, if I am in a land, where I have only duties, no rights? Can anyone at all speak about the defense of the homeland?³¹

Jägerstätter's self-identification as Austrian, in opposition to the German character, confirms the efforts of the Austrians to protect their own national identity after the Second World War. This separation from Germany became exceptionally noticeable in the wave of so-called "sports patriotism" during international soccer tournaments.³²

The ideological separation from Germany went together with the myth of Austria being the first of Hitler's victims. I would highlight the significance of another scene in this context. In the dialog with two other inmates – one is a Frenchman from Alsace-Lorraine, the other says he was classified as a communist – Jägerstätter disagrees with the statement of the latter that he is German and juxtaposes two of Nazi Germany's military successes: "No, I am Austrian. The only difference is that Austria was occupied in 1938 and Alsace-Lorraine in 1940." This supports the myth of Austria as the unwilling victim of Nazi

Germany, which at the beginning of the 1970s when the film had its premiere still dominated the public discourse.

In addition, Jägerstätter's case is an example of a narrative of Austrian "Widerstand" (resistance) against the Nazi occupation. It is not my intention to go deeper into the details of this narrative of resistance, however, it should be noted that, belying the limited scale of the engagement of the Austrians (mostly Austrian communists and representatives of the Catholic Church), the documentation of the resistance and its popularization in the media and institutional politics of memory significantly shaped Austrian national identity up to the 1960s.³³ It is worth mentioning the role of three Austrian victim associations (VP-Kameradschaft der politisch Verfolgten, Bund Sozialdemokratischer Freiheitskämpfer and Opfer des Faschismus: KZ-Verband), which cultivated the remembrance of the resistance against Nazis, and the scientific activity of Österreichisches Institut für Zeitgeschichte (Austrian Institute for Contemporary History), established in 1961, one of whose first projects, commissioned by two Austrian ministries, concentrated on the Austrian resistance. Furthermore, in 1963, Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes (Documentation Centre of Austrian Resistance) was established and documented in the first instance the resistance against Nazism, the Nazi persecutions, and later anti-Semitism and the Holocaust. The resistance also became the subject of many 1960s documentaries broadcast on Austrian

television, and a popular motif in the first Austrian feature films shot after the war, for instance in *Frau am Weg* (1948) by Eduard von Borsody, *Das andere Leben* (1948) by Rudolf Steinboek and *Duell mit dem Tod* (1949) by Paul May.

Surprisingly, almost all of the other characters in *Der Fall Jägerstätter* are to be judged either positively or neutrally. There are almost no antagonists and all of the obstacles leading to the death of the protagonist are conditioned by his own world-view and deliberate decisions. There are only two exceptions: the first one is the local mayor (played by Hugo Gottschilch), a supporting character who appears in the scene after the funeral and in the local tavern. Unlike the real mayor who supported Jägerstätter, the mayor in the film is loyal to the Nazi rulers; he publicly condemns Jägerstätter's actions but acts as an opportunist, as Hager argues,³⁴ rather than as an active, eager Nazi. The second negative character—a soldier in the jail, present in one of the last scenes—controls the visit of Franziska and the priest to Jägerstätter shortly before his death. He prevents the convicted man from embracing his wife and confiscates a few pieces of chocolate that Jägerstätter wants to hand to Franziska. The soldier, however, is not even a supporting character, but an extra appearing solely in this single scene.

Nonetheless, the vast majority of the military officers are presented as positive characters. Even though they do not agree with Jägerstätter, they do not behave as fanatical Nazis; they do not look down on him; rather, they all do their best to deter him from his decision and get involved in discussions about morality,

religion and the question of disobedience towards the motherland. Undoubtedly his greatest advocate is the major who also turns out to be an Austrian. Not only does he have a long conversation with Jägerstätter but also, at its conclusion, he offers the dissenter the opportunity to serve in the military as a first-aid worker. This role, according to the major, should be reconcilable with the Catholic values that Jägerstätter holds. He is friendly and courteous to Jägerstätter to such an extent that he begins one phrase with the expression "Mein Lieber" and offers him a cigarette, although the man is under arrest. Moreover, in a conversation with a non-commissioned officer, he ponders aloud over the possibility of letting Jägerstätter go free instead of handing him over to the prison in Brandenburg. Such an act, however, could find the major and his younger colleague in a military court. The latter reacts promptly with outrage at the major's proposition and makes him reach the decision to send Jägerstätter to the court in Berlin.

Moreover, the representatives of the court also make a favorable impression and resemble a group of acquaintances carrying out a conversation and admonishing Jägerstätter for his naivety. The conversation takes place at the instigation of Jägerstätter's lawyer before the proper trial and is intended to persuade the convicted man to withdraw his refusal. All three officers talk briefly and firmly as befits military men, but they do give the accused plenty of time to elucidate the reasons for his protest and kindly underline that they want to help him. In spite of their best efforts they have no other choice than to sentence the

man to death. The scene of the execution itself is short. Jägerstätter, assisted by a few soldiers and a priest, is guided to a small, dark room in which the light is blocked by curtains. A military man asks him to confirm his name, then reads the sentence. After that Jägerstätter, with his hands tied behind his back, enters the space behind the curtains. The executioner, whose face is shown only for a few seconds and partially hidden behind the guillotine, puts Jägerstätter's head on the block and carries out the punishment.

From the outset of the protagonist's protest until the last minutes of his life, there is a strong impression here that there are no perpetrators of his capture, imprisonment and capital punishment. Because of the specific shooting locations, with only a few outdoor sequences and the dominance of interior shots, we can follow Jägerstätter's path from one institution to another. The modest look of the rooms—their frugal decorations and, in the case of the court room, its huge size with only a few men present—suggests cold, ruthless and inhuman institutions. Drehli Robnik points out the overwhelming character of the interior shots: the small rooms of the sacristy and the prison cells, but also the huge courtroom with only a few people inside.³⁵ In one shot, the camera is put into an open grave so we can see the priest and Jägerstätter bent over a coffin. In contrast to the inhuman rooms, the people that the protagonist meets along the way are very human and lenient with him, but cannot help to save his life. Against their best intentions the

cruel military code is a step beyond their powers, a system that persists metaphorically and literally above their heads.

Both in the office of the Austrian major and in the courtroom in Berlin there are large portraits of the Führer hanging on the walls. When the military men talk, assuring the accused of their willingness to help, we can see the austere face of Hitler above them. This both visual and narrative way of picturing the military undoubtedly constitutes a very mild and humane presentation of the Wehrmacht whose myth of alleged spotlessness during the Second World War had been very strong both in German and Austrian memory culture. It was finally questioned or even overturned thanks to the famous exhibition, *War of Annihilation. Crimes of the Wehrmacht 1941 to 1944*, which was shown in numerous German and Austrian cities in the 1990s. Jägerstätter's objection to National Socialism, Hitler and war in general—but not to Nazi clerks—perfectly corresponds with the image of the Austrians after 1945.



Figure 1: The Good Austrian Wehrmacht officer beneath a portrait of Hitler.



Figure 2: The piercing look of the protagonist.



Figure 3: A member of the military court attempting to talk Jägerstätter out of his decision. Above him is a bust of Hitler.



Figure 4: The bishop's secretary beneath a large crucifix.

It is also worth mentioning that the plot slightly echoes the narrative of the victims of the war cultivated by both Germans and Austrians. In the first scene, after transferring Jägerstätter to the military prison near Berlin, we can hear the loud whining and booming of falling and exploding bombs as well as images of flak. The room where the protagonist and two other inmates are kept is small with one window accessible only from the bed. One inmate hopes that the bombs will destroy the prison so that they can either escape or die before a long trial. The scene refers to the experience of many Germans and Austrians who survived the Allied air war against the Third Reich, this time, however, it's from the viewpoint of those persecuted by the Nazis. Reference to a fallen Wehrmacht soldier and a disabled war veteran also corresponds with the common Austrian belief of being victims of Hitler and war in the first instance rather than that of bystanders.³⁶ Thus it may seem that the behavior of the protagonist and the supporting characters would satisfy the film's TV audience.

The question of the Catholic Church during the war

Nonetheless, the film raises many fundamental and even delicate, if not thorny questions regarding the behavior of ordinary Austrians and the Catholic Church during the Second World War. The Church, as Wolfgang Neugebauer states, did not actively put up resistance to the Nazi regime, because it did not want to endanger its status.³⁷ The efforts and sacrifices of hundreds of Austrian

priests and friars who stood against the regime and gave help to persecuted people should not be diminished, but they did not make the bishops resist, as Anton Pelinka argues.³⁸ Some of the reproaches towards the church clerks in the film are openly raised, in long scenes filled with dialog between the protagonist and the characters who try to dissuade him from his refusal of military service, whereas other important issues are concealed beneath the veneer of brief remarks and are not developed.

The film seems to be a critique of the non-adherence to the Christian virtues and commandments by the clergy. The local parish priest, Ferdinand Fürthauer, admittedly belongs to the small group of people sympathetic to Jägerstätter, but he may be viewed as an opportunist, who is neither eager to include a pacifist or anti-Nazi tone in a funeral speech for a fallen Wehrmacht soldier nor to agree with Jägerstätter's argument that a Catholic cannot be a National Socialist at the same time. In the long dialog scene in the vestry after the burial, Jägerstätter tells the priest about his dream, which is a paraphrase of an original citation from one of his essays. In his dream Jägerstätter saw a train, surrounded by a large group of people, many of whom were children, who wanted to enter it in spite of the fact that the train's destination was hell. The priest replies briefly, telling Jägerstätter that the dream is nonsense. He also has no answer to the arguments of the man who easily cites the Holy Bible. Being unable to query the words of Jesus, he turns out to be a weak interlocutor to Jägerstätter, who

juxtaposes him with his predecessor, Josef Karobath, a priest in St. Radegund from 1934 to 1940, imprisoned by the Gestapo for seven weeks after his anti-Nazi sermon. Fürthauer, in response, argues that he is not for the Nazis. While Christian Hager, who analyses the film's characters in the context of political opportunism, attributes the feature to the character,³⁹ one could add that Fürthauer is also a bystander, who, though not supporting the regime, nonetheless tolerates it.

The characters with whom Jägerstätter seeks support and who instead disappoint him are the Bishop of Linz and his secretary. The latter seems to be absolutely astonished by Jägerstätter's opinion and is more active in the conversation with him than the bishop, as though trying to prove his loyalty to his superior. In this scene the martyr again reveals his theological erudition confirmed by citations from the Bible and very mature thoughts about the current war situation and the true colors of the war against the Soviet Union. He even invokes the encyclical of the Pope which condemned National Socialism. Thus the secretary suspects him of belonging to a conspiratorial organization or an outlawed political party. The bishop shares this skepticism regarding Jägerstätter's ability to formulate his thoughts in such a clear way. In this scene we can sense the bishop's disrespect towards Jägerstätter, based on a conviction that it is unlikely for an ordinary peasant to be so well-versed in the Holy Bible. In the end, after expressing disagreement about his protest, he makes a judgment on

Jägerstätter, announcing that he, as an individual, cannot help the injustices of the war and that, as a soldier of Wehrmacht, he would act under compulsion. In this respect the bishop's argument seems to be a negation of the Christian doctrine of the free will and moral responsibility of the individual regardless of the circumstances. Because of his high position in the Church's hierarchy, his standpoint makes a more disappointing impression. In this sense the bishop represents an institution and the scene in his office is followed by the scene at the medical evaluation board: another institution to stand in judgement on Jägerstätter's rejection.

In the scene at the bishop's office we can again notice a similar shot showing the silhouettes of a clerk (first only that of the secretary, then of both clergymen) beneath a significant symbol: in this case a large cross with the figure of the crucified Christ. Just as in the later scenes with the military officers, there is a huge gulf between the attitude of the institutional representatives towards Jägerstätter and the values of the symbol. However, in this case it is the Church clerk who refuses to offer any help and understanding.

Whereas the critique of the Catholic Church arises from the clash of Jägerstätter's viewpoint with that of the individual representatives of the Church, the critique of Austrian society strikes an even harsher tone and is expressed several times and on various occasions. The first time, in the discussion with the priest in the vestry after mentioning his dream about the train, Jägerstätter accuses

the Austrians of culpability in war crimes. Those who want to get into the train, he argues, are the people who saluted Hitler in March of 1938, appreciated the Anschluss and put on the uniforms: either of the SA, the SS, or the Hitlerjugend. In Jägerstätter's view, the bombings of Austrian and German cities and the soldiers' suffering in the Eastern front are results of the entanglement in National Socialism. He even compares the fate of the bombed cities to the Biblical story of the annihilation of Sodom and Gomorrah, so that the losses and the victimhood of Germans and Austrians appear to be a punishment from God for disobeying His rules.

However, referring to the involvement in National Socialism is not the only reproach that the protagonist makes. When he is visited by the Bishop of Linz he also calls into question the legitimacy of the war in the Soviet Union and doubts the eradication of Bolshevism. He reads one of his notes aloud:

Over and over again you can hear from Catholics that this war led now by Germany perhaps is not so unjust, because it eradicates Bolshevism. What does one fight against in this land? Bolshevism or the Russian people?⁴⁰

To argue that Corti and Andics disprove, in this way, the so called "myth of the clean Wehrmacht" would be far-fetched, since the protagonist does not mention the word "Wehrmacht" and formulates his utterance by using the passive voice. Nonetheless, this view differs a lot from the victimhood narratives of the war in Russia that were once very popular in German and Austrian politics and culture.

Departure from the myth of Hitler's first victim?

While in the notes that he reads out before the bishop, Jägerstätter uses the passive voice (“was bekämpft man in diesem Land”), in the prison scene with two other inmates he makes use of a collective form, the first person plural “we” (“wir”) in reference to the Austrians. After Jägerstätter declares himself an Austrian, not a German, the alleged communist replies: “In 1938, my dear, I was there. I got bruises, so many flowers and cigarettes, so much chocolate they threw at us. Your Austrians!”⁴¹ Then Jägerstätter answers: “I know. And now we pay for it.”⁴² Although none of the characters continues this particular thread of the conversation, Jägerstätter’s statement indicates the collective responsibility of the Austrians for supporting Hitler.

In this context it is worth mentioning one of the first scenes in the film, one of few to depict a group of people representing a collective of St. Radegund. More than a dozen men are sitting in the tavern and drinking vodka and beer. They meet after a funeral. Jägerstätter comes inside to join the others and takes a seat at a table occupied by a disabled war veteran, the brother of the fallen soldier who has just been buried. They comment on the eulogy of the priest, and the protagonist admits that Father Karobath would have given quite a different speech if he were still in Radegund. After several minutes the small talk between Jägerstätter and the other man is interrupted by the mayor who reminds them

about the war bulletin on the radio. Someone switches the radio on and all the men listen to the news from the Stalingrad front. Before the end of the communique the disabled veteran leaves the room and Jägerstätter immediately follows him. Jägerstätter and the disabled soldier continue to talk on the village road. It is one of the long shots in the film, showing the silhouettes of the characters on an entirely empty street, in contrast to the previous scene of the crowded tavern. In contrast to the many men listening to the radio army communique (and accepting or at least not objecting to the official war narrative) there are only two people who cannot endure it and prefer to take a stroll.

In retrospect one can reproach Corti and Andics for the almost complete exclusion of women in the narrative. All the characters in the re-enacted parts of the docudrama and nearly all of the interviewed witnesses in the film are male. The sole exceptions are one female farmer and Franziska, Franz's wife. The lack of a female perspective seems to be rather detrimental to the whole narrative. It would be very interesting, for instance, to learn the opinion of the St. Radegund women regarding Jägerstätter sacrificing his life and leaving his family on their own during the war. Franz could have decided to enlist in the Wehrmacht and perhaps would have returned home alive after the war and lived together with his wife and daughters. Instead of taking a chance to survive the war he chose a martyr's death. In the docudrama we only learn the male perspective on these issues. One can assume that the film is mostly aimed at the male viewer, which

corresponds with the general trends in television culture at this time. *Der Fall Jägerstätter*, as a ZDF and ORF co-production, confirms the “Männer der Geschichte” trend, shaped in the 1960s (and still evident, but judged more critically) in screening National Socialism in Germany and Austria.⁴³ As in the United States, television in Austria directed its programming to women in the day time and to men in the evening, mostly with informative, educational, documentary programs.⁴⁴

Most of the available sources indicate that both the TV and the theater movie version received a very warm reception. Ingeborg Fasching, a critic of the “Multimedia” film magazine, admits that the movie broadcast on the Austrian TV screens was to such an extent successful that one could speak about the time of birth of the Christian television drama (“Geburtsstunde des christlichen Fernsehspiels”) and also cites Anton Fellner, an Austrian journalist, head of the religion department in ORF who recalls that in 1971 the movie struck a chord in Austria.⁴⁵ *Der Fall Jägerstätter* triggered a debate about the significance of Jägerstätter’s behavior and led to the acknowledgment of his resistance. Five months after the premiere, ORF broadcast the discussion “Wehrdienstverweigerung aus Gewissensgründen” (refusal to do the military service on conscientious grounds) with Axel Corti and Karl Lütgendorf, the minister of defense, a former Wehrmacht soldier, who praised Jägerstätter for his resistance. The TV discussion was one of approximately 600 debates dedicated to

Jägerstätter that took place in the Austrian media.⁴⁶ Corti himself raised the question of the martyr in his program *Schalldämpfer* broadcast on November 7, 1971, less than two weeks after the premiere of the movie on ORF. Shortly before his death he returned to this topic in one of his last programs in 1993.⁴⁷

Both in the West German and the Austrian press, one could barely find a review of the TV movie. The only written review, from the Austrian "Arbeiter-Zeitung," praised the film for its simplicity, straightforwardness and the uncanny performance of Kurt Weinzierl.⁴⁸ However, the movie won several awards in 1971 and 1972: Kurt Weinzierl won the Austrian Television Award (der Österreichische Fernsehpreis) for his performance as Franz Jägerstätter in 1971 and the movie won the Austrian Public Education Price (Volksbildungspreis) in 1972. Sylvia Szely notes that the TV premiere of the movie took place at a very appropriate time in Austria, during an ongoing debate about military service supported by the political elites.⁴⁹ Perhaps the positive reception of the movie persuaded the film makers to present their work in theaters too. In 1972, French director Rene Clair saw the cinema version "Verweigerung" and proposed it as a candidate to the Cannes and Venice film festivals. Since it was too late for the movie to be shown in Cannes, it was presented in Venice where it was very well-received. It also enjoyed success in Great Britain.⁵⁰

From a 1990s perspective, the Austrian daily newspaper *Der Standard* praised the movie, indicating that it would be one of the first harbingers of change in Austrian film culture:

This work is one of the first signs of a renewal in the Austrian film culture: in a high-quality ORF docudrama of the late 1970s and in some cinematic films a new, critical realism announces itself and wants to come to terms with contemporary history and social questions in its program.⁵¹

On the basis of this analysis one can conclude that *Der Fall Jägerstätter* combines some of the deeply-rooted elements of the typical Austrian narrative of the post-war period with a new approach to questions of Austrian martyrdom, victimhood, the attitude towards “Anschluss,” and even war crimes. Although it was not a film to overturn the myth of the first victim and bring to light Austrians’ wide endorsement of Hitler and the “Anschluss,” it nonetheless blazed a trail for Corti to deal more deeply with the Nazi past of his compatriots.

The director would return to these questions in his later TV movies. In *Ein junger Mann aus dem Innviertel* (1973), another docudrama, combining interviews with witnesses who knew Hitler personally and scenes of reenactment, he shows the life of Adolf Hitler. However, not only is the film a portrait of a young man who would become a dictator, but also a dissection of Austrian society, which appears a perfect breeding ground for the emergence of National Socialism due to the influences of modern anti-Semitism, nationalism and a dream of a strong, German Reich. In the adaptation of the Franz Werfel novel *Eine*

blauschwarze Frauenschrift (1984), for the first time in Austrian cinema he discusses the latent anti-Semitism in interwar Austria and the exile of the Jews in the face of looming persecutions. It is worth mentioning that Corti's film (which in fact comprises two parts with each of them lasting approximately 120 minutes) concentrates to a larger extent on the social and political contexts of Austrian history. For instance, unlike Werfel's novel, the film illustrates the protagonist's fascination for Italian fascism during his stay in Perugia as well as the role of the propaganda used both in Italian and Austrian film newsreels and the instability of Austria in the international arena. In one scene, Corti underlines the insecure and grim situation in Austria when he shows the hostility of ordinary tram passengers toward a young breast-feeding woman who uses the slightest of political allusions. But above all, Corti attaches special significance to the protagonist's political opportunism and blindness at the same time. Finally, in his *opus magnum*, the trilogy *Wohin und zurück*, shot between 1982 and 1986, Corti depicts an odyssey of a young Viennese Jew who flees Europe as a teenager, emigrates to the United States and comes back to Europe as an American soldier. The first part, *An uns glaubt Gott nicht mehr*, is dedicated to the plight of the refugees trying to escape Austria after the annexation: their flight to Czechoslovakia and France, their permanent fear of being captured and the feeling of not belonging to any national community. An unfulfilled American dream is the subject of the second part of the trilogy, *Santa Fe*, while in the last part, *Welcome in Vienna*, we can observe

the disappointment with life in post-war Austria, especially with the mild denazification process, and once again the feeling of loneliness of emigrants, this time after returning home.

Der Fall Jägerstätter was the beginning of Corti's film work in coming to terms with the difficult past of his country. Robert Dassanovsky regards Corti as one of those new filmmakers who helped to create the early New Austrian Film of the 1980s and influence the movement as it hit its stride in the 1990s, and was the most positive development in 1970s Austrian cinema.⁵² Until this decade the country had seen some debates about the Nazi past of Austria, for instance the aforementioned case of "Der Herr Karl" or the controversies surrounding the anti-Semitic remarks of the Vienna university professor, Taras Borodajkewycz that he continued until his enforced retirement in 1968. The Kreisky-Peter-Wiesenthal affair was about to flare up in 1975.⁵³ Finally, the controversy around Kurt Waldheim, a candidate for the presidential election, would ultimately bring a breakthrough in the discourse, but only in 1986. However, the events and debates before the Waldheim affair⁵⁴ did not trigger any special breakthrough in the collective memory of the country's Nazi past which in the 1970s was still dominated by narratives according to which the vast majority of Austrian society had rejected the "Anschluss" and externalized the responsibility for it to Germany.⁵⁵ Thus, the narrative of Corti's film reflects the condition of the Austrian collective memory of that time. To a certain degree this collective

memory both participates in the revisionist historical narrative and distances itself from it, appearing as an interlude before a more profound confrontation with the aftermaths of National Socialism in Austrian history.

¹ An exception is the master thesis of Christian Hager, who studies the film in the context of the political opportunism which the movie presents Hager. See: Christian Hager, *Darstellung und Bedeutung von Politischem Opportunismus im Film „Der Fall Jägerstätter“ von Axel Corti*. MA Thesis, University of Vienna, 2010.

² Erna Putz, *Franz Jägerstätter Märtyrer*, <https://www.dioezese-linz.at/site/jaegerstaetter/biografie/franz>, accessed 26 November 2018.

³ Gordon Zahn, *In Solitary Witness: The Life and Death of Franz Jägerstätter* (New York: Rinehart and Winston, 1964), 19.

⁴ Dokumentationszentrum des Österreichischen Widerstands (Documentation Center of the Austrian Resistance, DÖW), *Mitteilungen*, 183 (2007), 1.

⁵ Zahn, *In Solitary Witness*, 5.

⁶ Klaus Figge, "Katholischer Protestant. Der Fall Franz Jägerstätter", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, March 29, 1967, 19.

⁷ Peter Münch, "Rückzug nach scharfer Kritik. Umstrittener FPÖ-Mann sollte Bundesverwaltungsrichter werden", *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, September 18, 2018, 7.

⁸ Erna Putz, *Gefängnisbriefe und Aufzeichnungen. Franz Jägerstätter verweigert 1943 den Wehrdienst* (Linz/Passau: Veritas, 1987).

⁹ Erna Putz, *Letters and Writings from Prison: Franz Jägerstätter*. Translated by Robert A. Krieg (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2009).

¹⁰ The data about the broadcast received from the Austrian Television channel ORF, Multimediales Archiv. I would like to thank Ms. Mag. Ruth Elena Stifter-Trummer from ORF for the enquiry and delivering the "Vollinformation" about the movie.

¹¹ All biographical data about Corti is from the website Austria-Forum, https://austria-forum.org/af/Biographien/Corti%2C_Axel (accessed 25 November 2018).

¹² Christopher J. Wickman, "Wohin und zurück (Somewhere and Back): Perspectives on Axel Corti's Jewish Trilogy." In: *After Postmodernism. Austrian Literature and Film in Transition*, edited by Willy Riemer (Riverside: Ariadne Press, 2000), 106.

¹³ Hager, *Darstellung und Bedeutung*, 90.

¹⁴ Monika Bernold, *Das Private sehen: Fernsehfamilie Leitner, mediale Konsumkultur und nationale Identitätskonstruktion in Österreich nach 1955* (Wien: Lit-Verlag, 2007), 61-66.

¹⁵ Renée Winter, *Geschichtspolitiken und Fernsehen. Repräsentationen des Nationalsozialismus im frühen österreichischen TV (1955-1970)* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2014), 86.

¹⁶ Doris Schrenk, *Doris, Kinobetriebe in Wien, von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*. MA Thesis, University of Vienna, 2009, 80.

¹⁷ Maria Fritsche, *Homemade Men in Postwar Austrian Cinema: Nationhood, Genre and Masculinity* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013), 3.

¹⁸ Empress Elisabeth of Austria, nicknamed Sissi, the young wife of the penultimate Austrian-Hungarian empire Franz Josef, become a protagonist of three Austrian films directed by Ernst Marischka in the 1950s. The popularity of Sissi as a film top character began to decrease in the 1960s. Fritsche, *Homemade Men*, 28.

¹⁹ Robert Dassenowsky, *Austrian Cinema. A History* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2005), 178-208. Gertraud Steiner also adds that the orientation towards Germany in the Austrian movie industry as one of the premises of the crisis. See Gertraud Steiner, Steiner, Gertraud, *Die Heimat-Macher. Kino in Österreich 1946-66* (Wien: Verlag für Gesellschaftskritik, 1987), 224-225.

²⁰ The docudrama is a hybrid form between drama and documentary, offering the audience a movie that comprises something that Rosenstone calls a “believable scenario” of the past. See Robert Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past. The Challenge of Film to Our Idea of History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 30. Mixing of the forms are as old as cinema, but the origins of the television docudramas are to be found in the United States in the 1950s. However, the form of docudrama did not develop instantly and became popular on the British and American television in the 1970s. See: Tom W. Hoffer, Richard Alan Nelson, “Docudrama on American Television.” *Journal of the University Film Association*, 30 (Spring 1978), 21-27.

²¹ Ulrike Diethard, Evelyne Polt-Heinzl, Christine Schmidjell, Christine (eds.), *Fern-Sicht auf Bücher: Materialband zu Verfilmungen österreichischer Literatur, Filmografie 1945-1994* (Wien: Dokumentationsstelle für neuer österreichische Literatur, 1995), 27.

²² More about Christian fundamentalism see: Hassan Farzana, *Prophecy and the Fundamentalist Quest. An Integrative Study of Christian and Muslim Apocalyptic Religion* (Jefferson-London: McFarland & Company, 2008), 74-90.

²³ Matthew 10:37.

²⁴ Benjamin Beil, Jürgen Kühnel, Christian Neuhaus, *Studienhandbuch Filmanalyse: Ästhetik und Dramaturgie des Spielfilms* (München: Wilhelm Fink, 2012), 245-249.

²⁵ “Er hörte, was dieser Staat propagierte und er sah, was er tat. Und er zog seine Konsequenzen. Nicht leichtfertig. Nicht fanatisch. Nicht ohne Skrupel, nicht ohne Angst, nicht ohne Verzweiflung, nicht ohne Unsicherheit. Ganz und gar unheldisch”. Axel Corti in “Schalldämpfer”,

7.11.1971 in: *Axel Corti. Filme, Texte und Wegbegleiter - ein Porträt*, edited by Robert Neumüller, Ingrid Schramm and Wolfgang Stickler (Weitra: Bibliothek der Provinz, 2003), 78. Translation by the author.

²⁶ Putz, Franz Jägerstätter. *Letters and Writings*, 98.

²⁷ Putz, Franz Jägerstätter. *Letters and Writings*, 100.

²⁸ Putz, Franz Jägerstätter. *Letters and Writings*, 128.

²⁹ Kindermann, *Der Paradigmenwechsel*, 183-184.

³⁰ Elisabeth Büttner, Christian Dewald, *Anschluss an Morgen: eine Geschichte des österreichischen Films von 1945 bis zur Gegenwart* (Salzburg-Wien: Residenz Verlag, 1997), 33-34.

³¹ "Ich bin Österreicher, Herr Major (...). Kann ich sagen, ich hab ein Vaterland, wenn ich in einem Land bin, wo ich nur Pflichten habe, keine Rechte? Kann man überhaupt noch reden von einer Vaterlandsverteidigung?". Translation by the author.

³² Winter, *Geschichtspolitik und Fernsehen*, 55.

³³ The narrative of the Austrian resistance was quite popular shortly after 1945 in the politics and media, it yielded, however, to the focus on the question of denazification, the necessities of repatriated prisoners of war and economic problems. The narrative of resistance enjoyed its resurgence in the 1960s. See Stephan Roth, "Österreichisches Dokumentationsarchiv" In *Ideologie und Wirklichkeit des Nationalsozialismus. Hermann Langbein Symposium 2007*, edited by Johannes Schwantner, Thekla Schwantner and Andreas Schwantner (Wien: Donau-Verlag, 2008), 78-122.

³⁴ Hager, *Darstellung und Bedeutung*, 102-103.

³⁵ Drehli Robnik, "Was (in) Wahrheit war. Inszenierungen nationalsozialistischer Vergangenheit in österreichischen Fernsehfilmen 1970-2005." In: *Spiele und Wirklichkeiten. Rund um 50 Jahre Fernsehspiel und Fernsehfilm in Österreich*, edited by Sylvia Szely (Wien: Verlag Filmarchiv Austria, 2005), 70-72.

³⁶ The analysis of press articles and declarations of selected Austrian politicians conducted by Meinrad Ziegler and Waltraud Kannonier-Finster confirms the persistence of such convictions in Austria in the 1950s and 1960s, especially visible during the anniversaries of the "Anschluss" in 1958 and 1968. See Meinrad Ziegler, Waltraud Kannonier-Finster, *Österreichisches Gedächtnis. Über Erinnern und Vergessen der NS-Vergangenheit* (Innsbruck: StudienVerlag, 2016), 41-96.

³⁷ Wolfgang Neugebauer, *The Austrian Resistance 1938-1945*. Translated by John Nicolson and Eric Canepa (Wien: Steinbauer, 2014), 124-130.

³⁸ Anton Pelinka, *Die gescheiterte Republik. Kultur und Politik in Österreich 1918-1938* (Wien-Köln-Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 2017), 148.

³⁹ Hager, *Darstellung und Bedeutung*, 105-106.

⁴⁰ “Immer wieder kann man von Katholiken hören, dass dieser Krieg, den Deutschland jetzt führt, vielleicht doch nicht so ungerecht ist, weil damit der Bolschewismus ausgerottet wird. Was bekämpft man in diesem Land? Den Bolschewismus oder das russische Volk?”. Translation by the author.

⁴¹ “1938 mein Lieber, da war ich auch dabei. Blaue Flecke hab ich gekriegt, soviel Blumen, Schokolade und Zigaretten haben sie uns nachgeschmissen. Deine Österreicher!”. Translation by the author.

⁴² “Ich weiß. Dafür bezahlen wir jetzt.” Translation by the author.

⁴³ Jüdithe Keilbach, “Geschichte als Geschichten. Koproduzierte Dokumentarspiele von ORF und ZDF” In *Spiele und Wirklichkeiten. Rund um 50 Jahre Fernsehspiel und Fernsehfilm in Österreich*, edited by Sylvia Szely (Wien: Verlag Filmarchiv Austria, 2005), 115.

⁴⁴ Winter, *Geschichtspolitik und Fernsehen*, 62-63.

⁴⁵ Ingeborg Fasching, “Von Jägerstätter zu Romero. Das christlich motivierte Fernsehspiel im ORF”, *Multimedia. Zeitschrift für kritische Medienarbeit*, 6 (March 16, 1986), 5.

⁴⁶ Neumüller, Schramm and Stickler, *Axel Corti*, 80.

⁴⁷ Hager, *Darstellung und Bedeutung*, 120-121.

⁴⁸ Arbeiter-Zeitung, 28. August 1971, p. 9, cited after: Kathrin Quatember, *Die Rezeption Franz Jägerstätters im Spiegel der Widerstandsrezeption nach 1945*, MA thesis, University of Salzburg 2008, p. 76. One can find no reference to the film in the most popular West German daily newspapers and news magazines: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Die Welt*, *Der Spiegel* and *Die Zeit*. Accordingly, Austrian film critic magazines did not notice Corti’s film. Research in the Austrian daily press is difficult as the editorial staffs do not carry out such research on demand and do not have their issues from the 1970s digitalized, so one would have to conduct research into a particular newspaper archive on location.

⁴⁹ Sylvia Szely, “Zwei Männer aus dem Innviertel. Axel Cortis Dokumentarspiele: Quellen & Interpretationen” In *Axel Corti*, edited by Florian Widegger (Wien: Verlag Filmarchiv Austria, 2018), 32.

⁵⁰ “Filmkunst. Zeitschrift für Filmkritik und Filmwissenschaft”, no. 69 (1975), 5.

⁵¹ “Diese Arbeit ist eines der ersten Anzeichen für eine Erneuerung der österreichischen Filmkultur: Im qualitätsvollen ORF-Fernsehspiel der später siebziger Jahre und in einigen Kinofilmen kündigt sich ein neuer, kritischer Realismus an, der die Auseinandersetzung mit Zeitgeschichte und sozialer Problematik zum Programm hat.” Alexander Horvath, “Österreich, Österreich - Hörst Du mich? Axel Corti - Ein Filmemacher als >>Stimme und Gewissen der

Nation<<." *Der Standard*, October 14, 1989. Cited after Kindermann, *Der Paradigmenwechsel*, 185. Translation by the author.

⁵² Dassanowsky, *Austrian Cinema*, 206.

⁵³ The Kreisky-Peter-Wiesenthal affair was a political struggle between the Austrian chancellor Bruno Kreisky and the Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal arising from the SS past of Friedrich Peter, leader of the Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (Austrian Freedom Party, FPÖ), which had been revealed by Wiesenthal. In this fight Kreisky supported Peter and and insulted Wiesenthal several times.

⁵⁴ The Waldheim affair involved a controversy concerning the military record of Kurt Waldheim (1918–2007), former UN Secretary General (1972-1981), member of the Austrian People's Party (Österreichische Volkspartei, ÖVP) and candidate in the presidential election in 1986. Questions about his past as an officer in the Wehrmacht, his membership in the Sturmabteilung (SA) and his knowledge of war crimes against Yugoslav partisans and deportations of the Balkan Jews led to suspicions about his alleged involvement in war crimes. Despite vehement protests he won the election in the second round, but became *persona non grata* in many countries, e.g. in the US.

⁵⁵ Ziegler and Kannonier-Finster, *Österreichisches Gedächtnis*, 85-86.

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