VIOLENCE ELSEWHERE 1

Imagining Distant Violence in Germany 1945–2001

EDITED BY CLARE BIELBY
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Problematizing Political Violence in the Federal Republic of Germany: A Hauntological Analysis of the NSU Terror and a Hyper-Exceptionalized "9/11"

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8: Problematizing Political Violence in the Federal Republic of Germany: A Hauntological Analysis of the NSU Terror and a Hyper-Exceptionalized "9/11"

Katharina Karcher and Evelien Geerts[1]

> Manchmal rütteln uns Berichte über skrupellose rechtsextremistische Gewalttäter auf. Für einige Tage bestimmen sie die Schlagzeilen der Nachrichten. Manchmal bleibt auch der Name einer Stadt als Tatort im Gedächtnis. Doch oft genug nehmen wir solche Vorfälle eher nur als Randnotiz wahr. Wir vergessen zu schnell—viel zu schnell. Wir verdrängen, was mitten unter uns geschieht; vielleicht, weil wir zu beschäftigt sind mit anderem; vielleicht auch, weil wir uns ohnmächtig fühlen gegenüber dem, was um uns geschieht.[2]
>
> [Sometimes reports about the violence of unscrupulous right-wing extremists shake us up. For a few days, they make headlines. Occasionally, the name of the city where the crime took place becomes a lasting memory. Most of the time, however, we consider such events only marginally. We forget too quickly—far too quickly. We repress what happens right here in our midst; maybe because we are too busy with other things; maybe also because we feel a sense of powerlessness when it comes to what happens around us.]

This chapter discusses the lives and deaths of some of the forgotten victims of far-right violence in the Federal Republic of Germany

1 This research was funded by the European Research Council and is part of the project "Urban Terrorism in Europe (2004–19): Remembering, Imagining, and Anticipating Violence" at the University of Birmingham (851329)

2 Chancellor Angela Merkel in a speech about the NSU terror on February 23, 2012. "Die Hintergründe der Taten lagen im Dunkeln—viel zu lange," *Sueddeutsche.de*, February 23, 2012, https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/merkels-gedenkrede-fuer-neonazi-opfer-im-wortlaut-die-hintergruende-der-taten-lagen-im-dunkeln-viel-zu-lange-1.1291733. Unless otherwise stated, translations are the authors' own.

(FRG; West Germany).[3] Specific focus will be on three brutal killings committed by the German neo-Nazi terror group Nationalsozialistischer Untergrund (National Socialist Underground; NSU) in 2000 and 2001,[4] which were overshadowed by the violent events in the US in 2001 that made global headlines as "9/11."[5] The September 11 attacks are often described as a caesura or turning point in the history of terrorism and political violence. As we will show, however, in the FRG they reinforced a preexisting tendency among the white German majority to forget about victims of far-right violence. While the September 11 attacks were conceptualized as a hyper-exceptional event—as "9/11"—supposedly changing the course of history forever,[6] the NSU killings were wrongly classified as ordinary crimes committed by foreigners. As we shall see, they were labeled "Bosphorus murders" by investigating authorities and derogatively referred to as "kebab murders" in the German press. While the police response, media reaction, and NSU trial (re)traumatized the victims, they gave the (white) majority a sense of closure.

In what follows, we analyze the affect-laden "lingering trouble"[7] that the NSU killings and their problematic reception history provoke through a critical (new) materialist hauntological perspective.[8] Such trouble

3 Anna Brausam, "Todesopfer rechter Gewalt seit 1990," *Antonio Amadeo Stiftung*, December 10, 2012, https://www.amadeu-antonio-stiftung.de/rassismus/todesopfer-rechter-gewalt/.

4 The NSU was a far-right terrorist organization responsible for numerous crimes including ten murders, two bombings, and more than ten armed robberies between 2000 and 2007. The only person who stood trial for membership in the NSU is Beate Zschäpe.

5 The September 11 attacks will be referred to as "9/11" in this piece only when the hyper-exceptionalization process and the citational value of 9/11 as "9/11" are underlined.

6 "Hyper-exceptional" is used here as by Jacques Derrida in Giovanna Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jurgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003) as part of the "Derrida-Habermas" dialogues on September 11. Taking place in New York not too long after said attacks, these dialogues give readers an insight into 9/11's impact on the sociopolitical and philosophical landscape. Also see Evelien Geerts, *Materialist Philosophies Grounded in the Here and Now: Critical New Materialist Constellations & Interventions in Times of Terror(ism)* (Santa Cruz: University of California Press, 2019), for more contextualization.

7 Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), xix.

8 New materialist thought is a type of post-poststructuralist philosophy that emphasizes the subject's worldly embedment and material embodiment, as well as the agency of the more-than-human. See Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin, *New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies* (Ann Arbor, MI: Open Humanities Press, 2012); Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013). Critical new materialist thought stands for those new materialist theories that

requires a hauntological perspective, we would like to argue, as hauntology not only captures the immaterial characteristics of that trouble as they unsettle spatiotemporality, but, in addition, it captures the material events that provoked said trouble and allows us to show how some of the most horrific home-grown terrorist acts in the postwar Federal Republic have been prescribed an "exotic violence [from] elsewhere" status. As a space-time–crossing perspective, hauntology sheds a different light on the hyper-exceptionalized September 11 attacks vis-à-vis NSU's exoticized terror, as it disturbs the narrative of linear temporal progression that supports the construction of 9/11 as "9/11"; that is, as the most important caesura in the contemporary history of terrorism and political violence. It does so by zooming in on moments pre-, during, and post-NSU murders in nonlinear, diffracted ways, showing that there was a tendency to link crime and terrorism to imagined and real violence in other parts of the world. To unpack and problematize this "exoticizing elsewhere" dynamic and its many haunting materializations across space-time, we therefore rely on the materialist methodology of diffraction, that, because of its particular philosophical roots and queering nature, neatly complements such a hauntological point of view.[9] By diffractively weaving together crit-

incorporate a strong power analytic and build onto the critical materialist tradition of thinkers such as Theodor W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer, and Walter Benjamin. Also see Evelien Geerts, "Nieuw Materialisme: Een Kritische Cartografie," *Wijsgerig Perspectief* 61, no. 2 (2021): 34–41. The conceptual-methodological perspective that is explored in this piece is in line with the following critical materialist and new materialist authors' works: Benjamin, "Critique of Violence," in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings* (New York: Schocken Books, 1978), 277–300, and "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 253–64; Derrida, "Force of Law: The Mystical Foundation of Authority," in *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 3–67, and *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*; Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), and "Nature's Queer Performativity," *Qui Parle: Critical Humanities and Social Sciences* 19, no. 2 (2011): 121–58. By combining historical materialist (Benjamin and Gordon), deconstructivist-with-Marxist-tendencies (Derrida), and critical new materialist (Barad) authors, philosophical room is made for linking critical new materialist work to previous materialist thought, while giving hauntological research—most often seen as a part of "affect studies"—more material(ist) grounding.

9 See Donna J. Haraway, *Modest_Witness@Second_Millenium*: *FemaleMan©_Meets_Oncomouse™; Feminism and Technoscience* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*. Also see Evelien Geerts and Iris van der Tuin, "Almanac: Diffraction & Reading Diffractively," *Matter: Journal of New Materialist Research* 2, no. 1 (2021): 173–77. As will be noted later, diffraction,

ical theoretical snippets on the troubling powers of hauntology and the September 11 attacks' presumed hyper-exceptionalism and caesura status (9/11 as "9/11"); vignettes and other affect-laden phenomena that paint a fuller picture of the NSU terror; and some of the Federal Republic of Germany's Annual Security Reports, we piece together how this "exoticizing elsewhere" dynamic is constituted.

December 7, 1993 (Buchholz, Germany): A Racist Killing, Definitions of Violence, and the Violence of Definitions

> Bakary Singateh, also known as Kolong Jamba, entered the first-class compartment of a train from Hamburg to Bremen. The only other passenger in this part of the train was Wilfried Schubert, a white German engineer traveling home from work. After a short argument about an open window, Schubert stabbed Singateh in the abdomen with a 12 cm knife.[10]

In court, Schubert successfully claimed that he had acted in "Notwehr" (self-defense) against the young Gambian asylum seeker and was acquitted.[11] The victim's brother found it hard to accept the judgment. He commented, "Wenn man in diesem Land einen Hund tötet, kommt man ins Gefängnis. Wenn man einen Menschen tötet, nicht" (If you kill a dog in this country you end up in prison. If you kill a human, you don't).[12] After a successful appeal, the court revised the decision in the case in 1997, and Schubert received a two-year prison sentence. Although colleagues

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like hauntology, is embedded in materialist, and specifically *new* materialist, thought as well, and is characterized by a similar spatiotemporality-disrupting—here thought of as queering—nature. Because of its space-time–queering character, a diffractive reading and writing methodology is said to transcend the more traditional (and distancing) method of comparison. Meant to produce situated knowledges (also see Donna J. Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 [1988]: 575–99), diffraction focuses on the potential of weaving new threads of understanding that alter the examined phenomena and take into account the affective responses provoked (with)in the researcher(s).

10 "Kampf in der 1. Klasse," *Der Spiegel*, March 9, 1997, https://www.spiegel.de/politik/kampf-in-der-1-klasse-a-1e2d4a25-0002-0001-0000-000008674540?context=issue.

11 "Bakary Singateh alias Kolong Jamba," December 7, 1993, *Antonio Amadeo Stiftung*, https://www.amadeu-antonio-stiftung.de/todesopfer-rechter-gewalt/bakary-singateh-alias-kolong-jamba/.

12 "Kampf in der 1. Klasse."

reported that he had repeatedly made derogatory remarks about Black people, the court ruled out racist motives. Instead, the judges attributed the attack against Singateh to the victim's irritating behavior and the perpetrator's undiagnosed personality disorder.

Bakary Singateh is not among the 109 people officially recognized as having been killed by right-wing extremists in the FRG since 1990, but journalists and activists have identified him as one of more than 100 "vergessene Tote" (forgotten dead).[13] The court's failure to recognize the political nature of the attack against Bakary Singateh reflects a broader pattern. Often, violence linked to far-right ideologies appears to be spontaneous and targeted against marginalized groups. Although this violence can create an atmosphere of terror and intimidation among significant parts of the population, many violent attacks that contribute to this atmosphere of terror do not meet the definition of violent political extremism in the FRG. Schubert, for example, was clearly no (neo-)Nazi, and his attack was not "political" in the sense that it did not constitute a premeditated act of violence with the clear objective of undermining or overthrowing the democratically elected government. To understand the evolution and impact of this narrow concept of political extremism in the FRG, we need both to go back to the postwar years and to move forward to the twenty-first century.

After the end of World War II, the Allied powers introduced a range of "denazification" measures with the aim of destroying the political and cultural power of Nazism. In the following decades, political authorities in the FRG were keen to move on. Trying to establish a "wehrhafte Demokratie" (democratic state that could defend itself), West German authorities created a range of institutions to monitor and control what was held to be political extremism. In this context, *extremism* is an umbrella term for all efforts to undermine the FRG's constitutional democracy. As part of this effort, the Federal Republic's domestic intelligence agency, the Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz (Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution) releases an annual report on potential threats to the German state and its citizens. The first report was published in 1969 and focused on the turbulent year 1968.

In the 1970 national security report, threats to the state and its citizens were divided into four categories: "Bestrebungen" (efforts) by the radical right, "Bestrebungen" by the radical left, espionage, and "sicherheitsgefährdende Bestrebungen von Ausländern" (safety-endangering efforts by foreigners). Over the years, some new categories were added, but the classification has remained more or less the same.[14] Right- and

13 Brausam, "Todesopfer rechter Gewalt seit 1990."

14 The 1997 report included the new category "Scientology Organisation"; the 2005 report introduced "Islamistische/islamistisch-terroristische

left-wing extremism were seen as domestic problems if they were linked to white German nationals. By contrast, until 2005 all political activity linked to non-German subjects or immigrants fell into the catchall category "foreign extremism." Like espionage, the political activity of foreigners in Germany was seen as a major threat to the state because it was believed to have the potential to bring the problems associated with violence elsewhere to the FRG. As we will show, this classification and the ways in which it has been applied can be seen as both cause and result of institutional racism.

Nazism and neo-Nazism did not fit into the (self-)image of the supposedly denazified, democratic FRG. This may explain in part why the far right was underestimated for decades. Another reason is that federal authorities defined right-wing extremism in such narrow terms that violence only fell into this category if it had the clear aim to undermine the rights and values enshrined in the German constitution. In 2001, German authorities decided to broaden the focus somewhat by introducing the new category of "politisch motivierte Kriminalität" (politically motivated crime/criminality). This category included political violence motivated by racism, sexism, homophobia, and other forms of prejudice. In order to fall into this category, however, such prejudice had to be formally identified as the main motive for an attack. This did not apply to Singateh's death. As we shall see, in the case of the NSU murders, the investigating authorities did not even consider racism as a motive—casting institutional racism into a type of lingering trouble, in need of a hauntological analysis.

Affective Musings: Political Violence and the "Troubling" Powers of Hauntology

> The way of the ghost is haunting, and haunting is a very particular way of knowing what has happened or is happening. Being haunted draws us affectively, sometimes against our will and always a bit magically, into the structure of feeling of a reality we come to experience, not as cold knowledge, but as a transformative recognition.[15]

Hauntology;[16] spectral hauntings; being haunted . . . taken together, these notions point to radical disruptive troublings. Be it the troubling

Bestrebungen und Verdachtsfälle" (Islamist and Islamist-terrorist efforts and suspected cases) as a separate category, which meant that it was no longer a subcategory of "safety-endangering efforts by foreigners."

15 Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 8.

16 "Hauntology," coined by Derrida (1994), is a play on the French pronunciation of "ontology" (*ontologie*). In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida employs a

caused by critical theorist Walter Benjamin's historical materialist unpacking of how "Gewalt" lies at the heart of the Western nation-state;[17] the deconstruction of Western philosophy's presence/absence dynamics by philosopher Jacques Derrida;[18] or even, as sociologist Avery F. Gordon describes it so beautifully in the above epigraph, the self-reflexive researcher's realization that submission to the research "object" haunting them could lead to a different, more embodied type of knowledge. A type of embodied knowledge that recognizes past sociopolitical transgressions, while making space for that which exceeds the purely representational. . . .

As critical theorists working on all matters of political violence and terrorism, we find that such a "hauntology-as-troubling" perspective strongly resonates with us. This particular perspective and style of writing, in this essay fully embedded in critical (new) materialisms, undoes the traditional epistemological relationship between the researcher, the research "object," and the knowledge produced as strictly separated and "distanced" from one another. In this sense, hauntology makes much-needed space for the agential capacities of research phenomena, such as their ability to provoke something affectively within the researcher in question. This forces the researcher to reflect upon their situated positionality vis-à-vis what haunts, troubles, and, basically, *touches* them. "Hauntology-as-troubling," moreover, highlights the limits of conceptual representationalism that researchers theorizing violence and the traumatic know all too well:[19] the animated state that trauma-laden spectral hauntings often engender in researchers when "repressed or unresolved social violence"[20] announces itself again—through, for instance, the narrating of lived experiences, objects, or artifacts—suggests that concepts and theories at times fall short.

The limits of the conceptual-theoretical certainly become clear when doing research on acts and events of political violence, and especially so when they are terrorism-driven: these acts and events are almost always hauntological in nature, coming back to us as lingering trouble with an added dimension of perceived senselessness; something emotional-affective exceeding the representational. Think of emotions that are often

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hauntological analysis to disrupt Western philosophy's oppositional absence/presence logics, while writing deconstructionism into the Marxist materialist tradition to show Marxism in fact had never left us.

17 Benjamin, "Critique of Violence." The term *Gewalt*, as will be demonstrated later in the main text, has multiple, interconnected meanings: "violence," "illegitimately used force," and "institutionally legitimated power."

18 Derrida, "Force of Law"; Derrida, *Specters of Marx*.

19 Representationalism and an overreliance on the discursive are critically inspected in new materialist discussions (on the hauntological). See Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*.

20 Gordon, *Ghostly Matters,* xvi.

expressed by those impacted by terrorist violence—in this particular case the families of the NSU victims, as we will shortly see—such as fear, anger, sadness, . . . and particularly of bodily-animating affects, which are harder to pin down, such as sudden tensions filling the interview, courtroom, or testimonial space, bewilderment, disgust. . . . It is the affective[21]—characterized by what affect theorists Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seighworth label as "visceral forces" located in between entities and entities and their representations and found in "those intensities that pass body to body (human, non-human, part-body, and otherwise)"[22]—that encapsulates this space-time–crossing trouble. A kind of bodily felt trouble that, furthermore, long after terrorist acts, events, and attacks have left their marks and markings, keeps remanifesting itself through sociopolitical, bodily, psychological, and other wounds inflicted. Such rematerializing lingering trouble is quite hard to catch, unless spotlighted through a hauntological perspective capturing its triple "inbetweenness": bridging research phenomena and researcher (*through their affectivity*); present and past (*being space-time–crossing from within the here and now*); and immateriality and materiality (*through its rematerializations*).

Working with the grief-filled lived experiences of NSU victims, we soon realized that there was no other option than to let that which unnerves us in this case study take the lead; that is, Germany's troubled relationship with far-right violence. As we will show, the NSU terror materialized itself not only against the backdrop of Germany's troubled relationship with the Nazi past but also in relation to a hyper-exceptionalized "9/11."

Hauntings Diffracted: The NSU-*Mordserie* (series of murders) and a Hyper-Exceptionalized "9/11"

The year 2021 marked the twentieth anniversary of the September 11 attacks in the United States and of three brutal murders committed by

21 The affective, affects, and affectivity are all focused on in "affect theory" (Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seighworth, eds., *The Affect Theory Reader* [Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010]), a humanism-troubling paradigm within literary studies that has a lot in common with new materialist and posthumanist thought. For Deleuzoguattarian thinker Brian Massumi (*Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* [Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002], 28 and 260n3), affects differ strongly from emotions, as affects, being agency-possessing intensities, do not require a human subject. Affects basically *affect* in their own agential ways and are hence referred to here as separate from more consciously formed emotions.

22 Gregg and Seighworth, *The Affect Theory Reader*, 1.

the NSU. The attacks in the two countries were, however, inscribed into Germany's sociocultural imaginary very differently.

Reflecting on the September 11 attacks, Derrida starts with the act of "recalling."[23] Critical of how the attacks were mediatized—and in particular broadcast live—as the event-of-all-events, Derrida points at hyper-exceptionalization through date-giving and reciting praxes. While all "'major'" events tend to be marked,[24] Derrida claims that the attacks instantly received a citational value that has been reiterated globally by the mass media ever since. Eternally linked to a date, the more the attacks are cited as "9/11" (i.e., as a linear temporality-disturbing hyper-exceptional event), the stronger their reference, or renewed presence in the here and now, becomes. The constant reciting—and rematerialization—of 9/11 as "9/11" thus disrupts and queers space-time. The "matter" that "9/11" is supposed to be referring to in this rematerialization process, however, complicates things, giving everything an extra spectral touch: the fact that a concrete date is used to refer to the event in question shows that we "have no concept and no meaning available" to fully capture and explain the horror brought about by the September 11 attacks.[25] A great deal of the affectivity attached to this event thus escapes our conceptual understanding of it, remaining with us as lingering trouble. . . .

The intricate ways in which the September 11 attacks have been constructed to mean something in Germany stands out when compared to the portrayal of the NSU terror. Three 2021 newspaper articles about "9/11," taken from the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Die Welt*, and *Die Zeit*, underscore the contrast between the reception of the homegrown NSU terror and the September 11 attacks:[26] The first article zooms in on terror-capturing pictures that haunted the globe via mass media, perfectly underwriting Derrida's critique of the attacks being constructed as hyper-exceptional. The second one narrates the life and career of a German journalist who was in New York on the day the attacks took place. The final piece is a tribute to one of the German victims who worked at the offices of Deutsche Bank in the World Trade Center.

23 Derrida in Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, 85.

24 Derrida in Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, 90.

25 Derrida in Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, 90.

26 See Alfons Kaiser, "20 Jahre nach 9/11: Die Erinnerungen verblassen nicht," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, September 11, 2021, https://www.faz.net/aktuell/gesellschaft/20-jahre-nach-9-11-die-erinnerungen-verblassen-nicht-17531250.html; Jan P. Burgard, "Und dann denkt man: Ja, da ist er jetzt. In dem ganzen Gewirr und Feuer," *Die Welt*, September 11, 2021, https://www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article233725800/9-11-Hinterbliebene-Und-dann-denkt-man-Ja-da-ist-er-jetzt-In-dem-ganzen-Gewirr-und-Feuer.html; Andrea Böhm, "Der lange Schatten," *Zeit Online*, September 10, 2021, https://www.zeit.de/2021/37/11-september-terror-anschlag-krieg-al-kaida-militaer.

Through annual reciting practices all over the world, 9/11 as "9/11" seems only to have become more important.

To tease out the "exoticizing elsewhere" dynamic in relation to the NSU vis-à-vis the hyper-exceptionalization of 9/11 as "9/11," we utilize a diffractive strategy. Briefly put, diffraction is a physical phenomenon—revealing itself as colorful diffraction patterns when, for example, sunrays hit the surface of a CD-ROM—and a metaphor for more embodied ways of situated theorizing. Put on the map by feminist theorists Donna J. Haraway and Karen Barad, it can be best understood as a critical new materialist methodology or "critical consciousness."[27] Unlike the distancing methodology of scientific reflection, which separates researcher and research phenomena, this critical new materialist methodology looks at how differences materialize in the world and what effects these differences have on knowledge production, subjects, and life. Barad in *Meeting the Universe Halfway* theorizes diffraction through their agential realist philosophy as something that "attends to the relational nature of difference" and therefore can be used as a way of philosophizing.[28] Diffraction "does not fix what is the object and subject in advance, and so . . . diffraction involves reading insights through one another in ways that help illuminate differences as they emerge."[29] A diffractive methodology in our regard is therefore characterized by a certain openness to the hauntological's troubling powers that often assert themselves in (im)material ways.

September 11, 2000 (Nuremberg, Germany): The First NSU Murder, Institutional Racism, and the "Exoticizing Elsewhere" Dynamic

> Semiya Şimşek will never forget the shock and grief she felt at the hospital bed of her dying father. On September 9, NSU members shot her father Enver Şimşek in broad daylight at his flower stall near Nuremberg in Bavaria, Germany. Enver Şimşek was still alive when police officers found him later in the afternoon, but his gun wounds were so serious that he passed away a few days after being rushed to hospital. At the time of the horrific attack, his daughter Semiya was fourteen years old. She and her brother had been born in Germany and had grown up there. Their father was from Salur, a small farming village in the Isparta province, Turkey. He had moved to Germany to work and build a better future for his family. Through decades of hard work, Enver Şimşek had built a successful flower business. He loved the smell of roses, jasmine, olive trees, and pines because it

27 Haraway, *Modest_Witness@Second_Millenium*, 273.
28 Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 72.
29 Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 30.

> reminded him of home. Now that their children were almost grown up, he and his wife Adile were planning their return to Salur.
>
> Enver Şimşek's family knew that he wanted his final resting place to be in Salur. A few days after the funeral in Turkey, his wife and children returned to Germany. Instead of experiencing empathy and compassion, they were treated like suspects. The whole family, including children, had to give DNA samples and pose for police photographs. Mobile phones, photo albums, jewelry, notes, buttons, documents, bills, and other personal possessions were confiscated without explanation. Semiya's mother, Adile Şimşek, and other family members were interrogated multiple times.

The murder investigation that began in 2000 followed a pattern that reflects the institutional racism of German authorities.[30] Although there are different definitions, *institutional racism* generally refers to a range of (im)material practices and structures that create and maintain racial inequalities in society on macro and micro levels. Many analyses of institutional racism focus on the macro level and are based on "hard" empirical evidence. Hauntology offers a different—yet complementary—approach to institutional racism. It spotlights the micropolitical or, more precisely, the affective-disruptive power of particular moments and certain phenomena—which for us include objects and human-made artifacts. The lingering trouble that these phenomena and moments provoke can serve as a starting point for an analysis of broader patterns of racist oppression that extend across space-time.

The police investigations into the murder of Enver Şimşek and other NSU victims were fraught with moments that touch upon the affective, the present and past, and the (im)material while underscoring the "exoticizing elsewhere" dynamic addressed above. Investigating authorities labeled the racist NSU murder series in ways that strongly suggested a link to the Turkish Mafia by dubbing them the "Halbmond" (crescent)

30 In the UK, the term "institutional racism" received wide attention in 1999 when a public inquiry into the investigation of brutal murder of Stephen Lawrence concluded that the failure to solve this case was linked to institutional racism in the police force (See Sir William MacPherson of Cluny, "The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry: Report of an Inquiry," February 1999, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/277111/4262.pdf). In February 2014, the NSU victims' lawyers called for a similar inquiry in Germany to analyze and tackle "the crosscutting theme of institutional racism." Serkan Alkan et al., "Offener Brief," *MIGAZIN*, February 19, 2014, https://www.migazin.de/2014/02/19/nsu-anwaelte-beklagen-das-grosse-abhaken/.

and "Bosporus" (Bosphorus) crimes.[31] Determined to find evidence for Enver Şimşek's suspected connections to foreign criminal networks, officers used ethically questionable means. Among other things, they tried to provoke his wife, Adile Şimşek, by claiming that her husband had secret affairs and made his money not with flowers but with heroin. Although there was no factual basis to these claims, they were picked up enthusiastically by journalists. The loss of her husband in addition to these unfounded accusations drove Adile Şimşek into a severe depression and traumatized her two children. Semiya Şimşek describes the period between 2000 and 2011 as her father's "second murder" because of the aggressive campaign against him and everything for which he stood.

In the summer of 2012, Semiya Şimşek left Germany and began a new life in Turkey. In her book *Schmerzliche Heimat* (The Painful Homeland, 2013), she notes that she found it difficult to leave Germany, but after the move she felt even closer to her father. She regularly visits her father's grave in Salur and celebrated her wedding in the house he built there for his retirement. While the event still haunts them, she and her family are trying to feel joy again, or as she has put it, "Wir trauern gemeinsam, wir feiern gemeinsam" (We mourn together, we celebrate together).[32] In one of her rare public appearances since the publication of her book in October 2021, Semiya Şimşek explained that she feels no longer at home in Germany, but she doesn't feel a sense of belonging in Turkey either: "Es ist jetzt fast zehn Jahre her, dass der NSU aufgeflogen ist, seit 21 Jahren ist mein Vater tot: Ich weiß nicht, wohin ich wirklich gehöre. Ich kann keine Wurzeln mehr setzen" (Almost ten years have passed since the NSU was exposed, my father has been dead for 21 years: I don't know where I belong. I can't put down roots anywhere).[33]

31 This exoticized-racialized labeling is also discussed in critical new materialist Jasbir K. Puar's *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 4, when the author analyzes "the transnational production of terrorist corporealities" in relation to the Global War on Terrorism post-9/11. By furthermore zooming in on the—rather perverse—exploitation of homonationalist discourse by the global far right, Puar underscores the immense geopolitical impact of the September 11 attacks and "9/11" narrative. Although it would be an overstatement to say that said attacks and "9/11" created a far-right resurgence in Europe, they did offer the global—and specifically German—far right the opportunity to criticize the post-9/11 political order.

32 Semiya Şimşek, *Schmerzliche Heimat: Deutschland und der Mord an meinem Vater* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 2013), 255.

33 Elke Graßer-Reitzner and Stanislaus Kossakowski, "Semiya Simsek: 'Ich kann keine Wurzeln mehr setzen!'" *Nordbayern.de*, October 29, 2021, https://www.nordbayern.de/region/semiya-simsek-ich-kann-keine-wurzeln-mehr-setzen-1.11482558.

The brutal murder of her father by the NSU and his second murder as an effect of institutional racism forced Semiya Şimşek to seek refuge in rural Turkey. This illustrates the perverse logic of the "exoticizing elsewhere" dynamic: the (im)material practices and concepts associated with institutional racism create the illusion that a place whose main characteristic is that it is *not* Germany (in this case, Turkey) is both the origin of and explanation for a violent event in Germany. Since the affective burden of this process is carried solely by the victims of the racism enacted by and through the German state, the (white) majority of the population has the luxury of not having to feel affected by said violence and its lingering trouble. The racist assumptions and microaggressions underpinning the interrogations of Adile Şimşek and other NSU victims, for example, have caused them enormous suffering but were portrayed as "business as usual" by investigating officers. Faced with this multilayered, prolonged violence, many victims were left with no other choice than to start a life elsewhere without being able to leave the painful past behind.

In her speech in February 2012, Angela Merkel promised Enver Şimşek's family and other victims that the German authorities would do everything in their power to solve the murders and to ensure that such violence must never happen again. While Merkel's apology might have been sincere, she and other political leaders failed to clearly identify and tackle the institutional racism that had (re)traumatized the NSU victims and enabled the (white) majority in Germany to forget so quickly. As we shall see, this institutional racism—as a type of lingering trouble—is not limited to Germany's police force. Rather it manifests itself in a range of public spheres, including the courtroom and the media.

Historical Materialism—Deconstructivism—Critical New Materialism: Materialist Spectral Hauntings from Benjamin to Derrida to Barad, and Back

> In urgent times, many of us are tempted to address trouble in terms of making an imagined future safe . . . of clearing away the present and the past in order to make futures for coming generations. Staying with the trouble does not require such a relationship to times called the future. In fact, staying with the trouble requires learning to be truly present.[34]

At first sight, the type of affirmative troubling described by Donna J. Haraway here differs from Avery F. Gordon's take on the hauntological: "staying with the trouble" starts from a "being-troubled," but it is

34 Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 1.

also rooted in a critical new materialist praxis of hope, similar to Barad's "ethics of entanglement"[35] or feminist philosopher Rosi Braidotti's post-humanist philosophy that trusts "the untapped possibilities opened"[36] by engaging with the here and now. Both configurations of the hauntological—Gordon's backward-looking, Barad's and Braidotti's more affirmatively forward-looking—nonetheless disrupt the present in favor of recognizing past injustices and working toward a better future, queering space-time. Gordon and Barad and Braidotti, in tandem with Haraway, are invested in creating a new critical new materialist imaginary and reality, in which material conditions would be improved for all and ghosts of the past reckoned with. And this imaginary-reality is built upon the same materialist roots of hauntology diffractively explored in the critical theoretical snippet presented in this section: Benjamin's historical materialist and Derrida's deconstructivist-materialist perspectives.

Two of Benjamin's best-known pieces of writing are about reckoning with (re)materializations of violence-driven trouble and could thus be seen as anticipating the concept of hauntology. Benjamin's "Critique of Violence," written in the early 1920s and uncannily anticipating what was about to come in Germany, underscores these (re)materializations and the problem with Merkel's apology. Engaging with "Gewalt"—which means at once "violence," "illegitimately used force," and "institutionally legitimated power"—the essay examines the troubled relationship between "Gewalt," "Recht" (law), and "Gerechtigkeit" (justice), and how politico-legal interventions on the part of the nation-state, or its representatives, do not always bring justice. The crux of Benjamin's analysis is that violence has two functions: a "law-making function" and a "law-preserving"[37] one, connecting violence to the law and the state. The nation-state's violent origins—as the social contract is enforced through the threat of violent outbursts—are covered up by the installation of regulative laws, so that the violence from pre-social contract times never rears its head again. This original violence, however, is that which forever haunts the state. Whether manifesting itself as excessive unlawful violence used by the nation-state's police or military forces, or by the state apparatus's deep-seated institutional racism that amplifies the injustice already done to victims and their relatives, there is "something rotten in law"[38] or at the heart of the law-based nation-state.

Derrida's "Force of Law" pushes this analysis even further by offering us a deconstruction of the entanglements between violence, the state, and justice in praxis. Building on Benjamin's argument that law is always

35 Barad, "Nature's Queer Performativity," 150.
36 Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, 194.
37 Benjamin, "Critique of Violence," 284.
38 Benjamin, "Critique of Violence," 286.

accompanied by foundational violence, Derrida envisions justice as a "gift without exchange,"[39] a regulative ideal transcending the politico-legal domain. Zooming in on "'democracy to come'"[40]—which is connected to the future actualization of justice-as-a-gift—Derrida claims that a democratic nation-state in its most perfect form "will never exist in the present."[41] It actually even carries the seeds of its own destruction, because "the state is both self-protecting and self-destroying, at once remedy and poison."[42] Derrida's Benjaminian take on violence and justice makes us wonder whether "real" justice can ever truly be achieved through litigation and trials alone—and this is underlined by Merkel's speech that, albeit well-intentioned, in the end underlines how hard it is to arrive at a fully realized justice-to-come.

There is thus more to be done than retroactively acting on a macropolitical level to put things right. Traversing space-time, one could argue that Benjamin hints at this in his "Theses on the Philosophy of History." In this work, composed in the first part of 1940 and consisting of a critique of linear history written by and for the victorious, Benjamin addresses the advance of political fascism in Germany—a phenomenon that in his view will keep making its presence felt throughout history. Representing the critical theorist who chooses to "stay with the trouble," the Angelus Novus or the "angel of history" has their back turned to the future, hauntologically engaging with past destruction and despair while simultaneously urged forward by a storm, labeled "progress."[43] Seen through a Benjaminian hauntological perspective, the angel and critical theorist need to first look at the past and "the spark of hope" it carries.[44] Present injustices must be connected to past wrongdoings, thereby queering space-time, so that the same mistakes would not be repeated in the future, and the threat of political fascism would be understood as perennially present. Or as Benjamin puts it, "the 'state of emergency' in which we live is not the exception but the rule."[45] The core of a better future, however, also lies in the past, its many injustices, and the lessons that can be learned from them. Trying to grasp that particular spark of hope is a tough exercise, as the angel and critical theorist tend to be seduced by the future promised by said storm (standing for the Enlightenment; scientific positivism; orthodox revolutionary Marxism . . .). Both thus need to resist the urge to jump too hastily into the future-in-becoming.

39 Derrida, "Force of Law," 25.
40 Derrida in Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, 120.
41 Derrida in Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, 120.
42 Derrida in Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, 124.
43 Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," 257.
44 Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," 255.
45 Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," 257.

This line of thought is taken up by Derrida and Barad in *Specters of Marx* and *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, respectively. Focusing on the absence/presence-disrupting and time-bending specter—or the wronged Other—Derrida again touches upon justice as something interruptive and always to-yet-be-attained. Justice-to-come not only includes corrections of wrongdoings but implies a learning to live "*with* ghosts" as well.[46] The specters of the past, together with their material markings—or, in many cases, *missing* markings—thus need to be incessantly tracked. The need to track specters of the past, together with their (non)markings, is echoed by Barad, when they, diffracting Benjamin through Derrida, state that "matter carries within itself the sedimented historialities of the practices through which it is produced as part of its ongoing becoming."[47] Seen through a hauntological Baradian agential realist viewpoint that emphasizes the constant queering of space-time, the wounds of injustice are all around us, as the past constantly shining through the present. Yet it isn't enough to honor the NSU victims and bring the perpetrators to justice; the institutional racism-filled system itself that made the NSU crimes possible and retraumatized the families of the victims needs to be tackled. For Barad—and for all the materialist thinkers mentioned in this extract—the world carries such ethical potential from within: "each moment is alive with different possibilities for the world's becoming and different reconfigurings of what may yet be possible."[48] In the case of the NSU terror, a first step toward future justice is a collective commitment to (re) visit the past materializations of institutional violence and to take responsibility for their traumatizing impact on the families of the NSU victims.

November 11, 2011 (Hamburg, Germany): The Exposure of the NSU and the Haunting Power of Images

> Ten years after Süleyman Taşköprü's brutal murder in summer 2001, officers finally returned some of his personal possessions to his sister. When Aysen Taşköprü asked why investigating authorities had kept these items for so long, she was told that they had simply forgotten about them. The officers said that there were no new developments in the murder case.
>
> On November 11, 2011, a work colleague called Aysen Taşköprü and told her that her brother's murder was being discussed in a news report. On that day, her phone didn't stop ringing. Suddenly, there was a huge media interest in Süleyman Taşköprü's death, and his sister received numerous interview requests. However, few journalists seem to have considered how traumatic it was for her and other

46 Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, xvii–xviii.
47 Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 182.
48 Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 182.

> NSU victims to see graphic images of their murdered relatives on TV. Aysen Taşköprü remembers November 11, 2011, as the day on which her brother died again.[49]

In November 2011, a failed bank robbery in Zwickau led to the suicide of leading NSU members Uwe Mundlos and Uwe Böhnhardt. In response to these events, their accomplice Beate Zschäpe tried to destroy evidence in a flat in Zwickau by setting it on fire. Then she surrendered to the police. Before her arrest, Zschäpe disseminated a DVD with a video in which the group claimed responsibility for the racially motivated killings of Taşköprü and eight other people. All these victims were men killed during broad daylight while working in small businesses. Eight had Turkish roots; one was originally from Greece. The tenth NSU murder does not appear to have racist motives: the victim was a white German woman police officer.

The NSU video combined footage featuring the American cartoon character "The Pink Panther" with graphic images of the NSU victims and news coverage about the attacks. In the burned-out flat in Zwickau, police found an external hard drive with multiple files used in the making of the fifteen-minute film. A police analysis of the material revealed that work on the video began in 2006. The Pink Panther footage was added at a later stage, probably because Mundlos was a fan of the American cartoon series.[50] The filing system and the film itself leave no doubt about the profoundly racist worldview of the NSU.[51] To this day, it is not known how many people were involved in the making of this video.

The NSU video can be seen as performing various hauntological spatiotemporal disruptions: although Mundlos and Böhnhardt were dead by the time it was released, the video tells the story of the ten murders and other NSU attacks from their perspective, forcing us to jump between different space-times. Featuring graphic photographs of dying NSU victims and crime scenes, the video haunts in bodily-affecting ways. Most people find such images disturbing. In addition, however, those images were (re) traumatizing victims of racist violence, as Aysen Taşköprü's account illustrates, giving the lingering trouble of institutional racism an extra lived and eerie dimension. Like Semiya Şimşek, Taşköprü felt like a stranger

49 Aysen Taşköprü, "Sehr geehrter Herr Gauck . . .," *taz.de*, February 15, 2013, https://taz.de/Absage-an-den-Bundespraesidenten/!5073130/. Paraphrased by the authors.

50 Tanjev Schultz, "'Ali9' und 'Ali9 aktuell': Die Video-Arbeit des NSU," *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, March 15, 2016, https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/nsu-prozess-ali9-und-ali9-aktuell-die-video-arbeit-des-nsu-1.2908458-0#seite-2.

51 Out of respect for the victims, we decided to avoid including details in this essay that would force us to repeat the racist language used by the NSU and its supporters where possible.

in her home country, and this can be understood as a direct result of the "exoticizing elsewhere" dynamic described above. In an open letter to FRG president Joachim Gauck, Taşköprü said, "I don't have a home country anymore, because home is where you feel safe."[52]

Even more troubling is that the NSU video was not only shared by far-right activists (as one might expect). Unlike the testimonies and concerns of the victims in the pre-2011 era, the NSU video received a huge amount of media attention. It was even shown during the NSU trial.[53] We believe that a critical analysis of the NSU video and other perpetrator testimonies is important in order to paint a fuller picture of the violent events in question. It is, however, a painful truth that they often dominate public narratives about violent events. Against this background, it is an ethico-political imperative that an analysis of such material is characterized by respect for the victims and therefore avoids reinforcing the racist stereotypes and structural inequality it seeks to challenge. As we shall see, the NSU trial failed to do this. And this failure is completely in line with the spectral hauntings described by Benjamin and Derrida earlier.

July 11, 2013 (Munich, Germany): The NSU Trial and the Haunted Notion of Terrorism

> Pinar Kiliç used to run a small grocery shop in Munich. The shop was very popular among locals, including officers from the police station across the road. Occasionally, her husband Habil would help out in the shop after returning from his other job in a wholesale store. On August 29, 2001, he was shot while working there.
>
> Almost twelve years later, Pinar Kiliç found the courage to face Zschäpe in court. While Zschäpe made use of her right to remain silent, however, Kiliç was urged by the judge to tell him what kind of man her husband was. When she refused, the judge told her that he expected "polite answers" from her. To this, she replied: "For years I was treated like a suspect. There was a pool of blood in the shop; we had to clean that up ourselves."[54]

Habil Kiliç was killed with the same weapon as Enver Şimşek. The Česká 83 pistol was also used to kill Abdurrahim Özüdoğru and Süleyman Taşköprü in June 2001. All but one of the NSU murders followed a clear

52 Taşköprü, "Sehr geehrter Herr Gauck."

53 For a discussion of the two viewings during the NSU trial, see Tom Sundermann, "Der schmerzhafte Schrecken des NSU-Videos," *Zeit Online*, November 19, 2014, https://blog.zeit.de/nsu-prozess-blog/2014/11/19/medienlog-nsu-bekennervideo-zschaepe-boehnhardt/.

54 Annette Ramelsberger et al., eds., *Der NSU-Prozess: Das Protokoll* (Munich: Verlag Antje Kunstmann, 2018), 84.

pattern: the victims were shot during broad daylight while working in small shops. For example, Abdurrahim Özüdoğru was killed in his clothing alterations and repair shop in Nuremberg; Süleyman Taşköprü was shot while helping out in his father's greengrocer's shop in Hamburg. In all cases, investigating authorities suspected that the victims had been involved in organized crime and had links to the Turkish Mafia. These speculations were completely groundless. When investigating Habil Kiliç's murder, police did not even consider the possibility of a racist attack. Instead, they focused exclusively on suspected links with foreign criminal networks. Forty of the fifty witnesses questioned in the case were Turkish citizens. As if to defend himself against potential allegations of racism, one of the investigating officers stated during the NSU trial in 2013,

> Alle Hinweise, die kamen, gingen in Richtung organisierte Kriminalität, PKK, Graue Wölfe. Niemand vermutete Rechtsradikale. Der Modus entsprach auch nicht dem, was man sonst von Neonazis kannte, also Ausländer durch die Straße jagen, zu Tode prügeln. Und jetzt soll man mal nicht so tun, als ob es keine türkische Drogenmafia gibt. Im Fall Kiliç haben wir allerdings überhaupt keine Hinweise auf so was gefunden. Der Herr Kiliç war ein kreuzbraver, fleißiger, humorvoller Mensch.[55]
>
> [All evidence we received pointed to organized crime, PKK, Grey Wolves. Nobody suspected far-right radicals. The modus operandi did not correspond to what we know from neo-Nazis, i.e., chasing foreigners in the street, beating them to death. And let's not pretend that there is no Turkish drug Mafia. Having said that, in the case of Kiliç, we didn't find any evidence for anything like that. Mr Kiliç was as decent as anything, hardworking, humorous.]

The problematic conceptualization of (neo-)Nazism underpinning this statement is widespread among German authorities and reflects the FRG's troubled relationship with the far right.

What makes the NSU terror so haunting is not only that it brought back uncomfortable memories of the so-called Third Reich and the ongoing relevance of its ideological foundations but also that it exposed the political limitations of the legal definition of terrorism in German law—reminding us of the ambiguous relationships between violence, the law, and the state noted by Benjamin and Derrida. To understand these limitations, we have to go back to the early 1970s when the founding members of the Rote Armee Fraktion (Red Army Faction, RAF) and other leftist groups took up arms to fight for a revolution in the FRG. At the peak of the Cold War, the threat posed by the far left was seen as

55 Rammelsberger et al., *Der NSU-Prozess,* 83.

far more significant than the threat posed by the far right. To combat this kind of threat more effectively, the state introduced a series of legal measures that became known as "Lex RAF."[56] Probably the most significant among these was Section 129a, which was added to the German Criminal Code in 1976 and made it a crime to be a member of a "terrorist organization." The law became the subject of controversial debate because it also made it an offense to support terrorist organizations in any way, shape, or form.[57]

Between 1976 and 2014, 236 people were charged with terror offenses on the basis of Section 129a of the Criminal Code.[58] One of the few individuals associated with the far right who faced charges of this kind was Zschäpe. This is not because there was no violence that could have been classified as right-wing terrorism. According to a survey from 2014, there were at least 2,173 arson attacks, 174 armed robberies, 12 abductions, and 229 murders by right-wing extremists since 1971.[59] Many of these attacks did not follow the same pattern as the RAF terror (for example, targeting business leaders, state prosecutors, and other public figures, and releasing claims of responsibility after each attack). This is because the NSU founders and others on the far right took inspiration from right-wing terror manuals from the US promoting a leaderless "race war."[60]

In one of the most detailed studies of far-right terrorism in Germany to date, Daniel Koehler shows that the "emerging academic interest" in this topic "was halted by the September 11 events in 2001."[61] According to Koehler, "Islamist terrorism" continued to dominate public debates

56 Jeremy Varon, *Bringing the War Home: The Weather Underground, the Red Army Faction, and Revolutionary Violence in the Sixties and Seventies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 228.

57 One of the most controversial applications of the Lex RAF was the so-called Mescalero affair. In 1977, the author of an article in a student magazine faced terrorism charges after expressing "clandestine joy" about the assassination of the attorney general of the FRG, Siegfried Buback, by the RAF.

58 "1976: Anti-Terror-Paragraf wird eingeführt," *bpb.de*, August 16, 2016, https://www.bpb.de/politik/hintergrund-aktuell/232718/1976-anti-terror-paragraf-16-08-2016/.

59 Daniel Koehler, "German Right-Wing Terrorism in Historical Perspective: A First Quantitative Overview of the 'Database on Terrorism in Germany (Right-Wing Extremism)'—DTGrwx' Project," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 8, no. 5 (2014): 48–58.

60 Of particular importance in this context was the concept of "leaderless resistance" by neo-Nazi Louis Beam; the *Turner Diaries* and the *Practical Guide to the Strategy and Tactics of Revolution* by David Myatt; and *The Way Forward* by Max Hammer, as Daniel Koehler shows in *Right-Wing Terrorism in the 21st Century: The "National Socialist Underground" and the History of Terror from the Far-Right in Germany* (London: Routledge, 2016), 57.

61 Koehler, *Right-Wing Terrorism in the 21st Century*, 3.

about political extremism and violence in Germany until 2011. Against this background, it is not surprising that the first extensive changes to the German terrorism legislation in 2002 were a direct response to the September 11 attacks and part of the Global War on Terrorism. The newly introduced Section 129b enabled German authorities to extend the definition of terrorism to organizations outside of Germany. These measures reinforced the status of the attacks as a hyper-exceptional event—as "9/11"—and violence from within Germany as coming from an "exotic elsewhere."

After the September 11 attacks, the headlines in Germany and many other countries were dominated by global Islamist terror networks. While security agencies were trying to respond to the emergence of this supposedly new international terrorism, the NSU murder series continued unimpeded. After the killing of Mehmet Turgut in Hamburg in February 2004 and of İsmail Yaşar in Nuremberg in June 2005 with the same weapon, journalists and police officers began to refer to the killings as "Döner Morde" (kebab murders)—a conceptual pairing that sparked international outrage.[62] Six years after it was first used, a jury of linguists declared the term "Unwort" (nonword) of the year because of its highly discriminatory nature.[63] These and other critical interventions in the post-2011 period could not, however, undo the damage caused by a decade of wild speculations and discriminatory treatment.

Conclusion: German Identity, Right-Wing Extremism, and Less Violent Futures

One of the key objectives of political authorities in the FRG in the post–World War II era was to show the world that the German people had come to terms with the past. Right-wing extremism and violence did not fit into the (self-)image of the "denazified" democratic FRG. There have, however, been thousands of violent attacks with a right-wing extremist background over the last decades. Many of these attacks received little attention by journalists and researchers and have effectively disappeared from public consciousness. The German reaction to the September 11 attacks in the US and the Global War on (Islamist) Terrorism further reinforced this tendency. Viewed from this perspective, it would be wrong to claim that "9/11" marked a turning point or caesura in Germany.

62 See, e.g., Thomas Meaney and Saskia Schäfer, "The Neo-Nazi Murder Trial Revealing Germany's Darkest Secrets," *Guardian*, December 15, 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/dec/15/neo-nazi-murders-revealing-germanys-darkest-secrets.

63 Christian Fuchs, "Wie der Begriff 'Döner-Morde' entstand," *Der Spiegel*, July 4, 2012.

In this essay, we have drawn on a critical (new) materialist hauntological perspective to challenge the collective forgetting of victims of far-right violence in the FRG. Specific focus was on three racist murders by the neo-Nazi-terror group NSU in early 2000 and 2001. In addition to the racist ideology of the perpetrators, the families of the victims were confronted with a less visible but equally traumatizing form of violence in the form of institutional racism. We have described this process as an "exoticizing elsewhere" dynamic: the (im)material practices and concepts associated with institutional racism create the illusion that a place whose main characteristic is that it is *not* Germany (in this case, Turkey) is both the origin of and explanation for a violent event in Germany. Since the affective burden of this process is carried solely by the victims of racist violence, the (white) majority of the population has the luxury of being able to forget.

Against this background, remembering can be an act of resistance. Bakary Singateh and other victims of far-right violence were never forgotten by their families and friends, but their lives and deaths have not received the public attention they deserve. In the early 2000s this began to change owing to the campaigning efforts of victims, journalists, artists, and political activists. But, as we have shown, it is not enough to honor the NSU victims and bring the perpetrators to justice; the institutionally racist system itself that made the NSU crimes possible and retraumatized the families of the victims must be tackled. Seen through a hauntological viewpoint, the wounds of injustice are all around us, but each moment offers manifold opportunities for less violent futures. After a far-right extremist carried out a series of racist killings in Hanau in February 2020, families, friends, and supporters bravely and persistently challenged institutional racism and the "exoticizing elsewhere" dynamic. Rallying around the hashtag #saytheirnames, they made sure that all of us know and remember Sedat Gürbüz, Ferhat Unvar, Hamza Kurtović, Gökhan Gültekin, Mercedes Kierpacz, Vili Viorel Păun, Said Nesra Hashemi, Fatih Saraçoğlu, and Kaloyan Velkov.