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***Raumpatrouille*: The Cold War, the “Citizen in Uniform,” and West German Television**

What sounds like a fairy-tale today can be reality tomorrow. This is a fairy-tale from the day after tomorrow. There are no more nation states; there is only humankind with its colonies in outer space. Faraway stars are settled. The ocean floor is used as living space. At speeds unimaginable today, space ships are crossing our Milky Way. One of these space ships is the Orion, tiny part of a gigantic security system that protects Earth from threats from outer space. Let's accompany the Orion and her crew on their patrol duty at the edge of eternity.¹

This rousing voice-over accompanied the credit sequence of each of the seven episodes of the science fiction series *Raumpatrouille: Die phantastischen Abenteuer des Raumschiffs Orion* (Space Patrol: The Fantastic Adventures of the Space Ship *Orion*), produced by the German Bavaria Film Studios and shown on West German television in the fall of 1966 on a biweekly schedule. Credited as the creators of the show are Rolf Honold, born in 1919, and W.G. Larsen, the collective pseudonym of five steady contributors: the three producers (Hans Gottschalk, Helmut Krapp, and Oliver Storz) and two of the directors (Theo Metzger and Michael Braun).² Shot in black and white because of budget constraints, each episode is an hour in length, thanks to the general practice of German public television at the time of not interrupting programs in progress with advertising. Though all events take place within a single fictional universe at some unspecified time in the future, each episode tells a self-contained story revolving around the crew of the spaceship Orion and a host of secondary characters. The seven episodes form an overarching narrative trajectory, starting with humankind's encounter with the Frogs, a hostile alien race, and ending with the final defeat of the Frogs' grand attempt at invading Earth. Two of the episodes are more loosely connected to this plotline. “*Hüter des Gesetzes*” (“Guardian of the Law”) deals with robots running amok, while in “*Kampf um die Sonne*” (“Struggle for the Sun”), a secretive matriarchy on another planet, a breakaway product of humanity's period of space colonization, inadvertently jeopardizes Earth by stoking up both planets' common sun in order to save itself from an imminent global ice age.

The success of the show at the time of its initial run, as well as the cult status it has acquired in subsequent years, show that Honold and Larsen hit a nerve. Hans Kneifel started publishing novelizations of the original seven episodes of the show in March of 1968, an industry that generated 145 volumes over a period of 16 years.³ A well-organized web site called “Starlight Casino,” named after one of the recurring locations of the show, keeps the fan community up to date on television rerun dates, theatrical screenings, and rumors about future projects connected with the show. The web site also caters to this community's interest in production and plot details. Besides regular television reruns, all seven episodes have recently been issued in a double-DVD set; and during the summer of 2003, a feature-length film entitled *Rücksturz ins Kino* (Plunge Back into Movie

Theaters) was released that included highlights of the original episodes. In the film, the original material was padded with transitional passages shot in the style of the original series but featuring television personality Elke Heidenreich providing tongue-in-cheek commentary. The theatrical release was accompanied by generally positive, though bemused, reviews that signalled nostalgic fondness more than serious critical appreciation. These revivals must cater to the nostalgic yearnings of a generation eager to relive childhood or adolescence because, viewed objectively, the show has not aged too well. Considered a marvel of special effects at the time, it now comes across as cheap, corny, and dated. For the fans, however, the ham-fisted writing, overacting, dated attitudes towards gender, and cleverly circumvented technical limitations make the series an object of high camp. Unfortunately, the camp aesthetic applied to the show obscures the possibility that the object of the fans' affection could also be a substantial contribution to postwar German culture. The dividing line between high and low culture always has been, and still is, much less penetrable in Germany than in Anglo-American discourse; this gets in the way of a serious critical assessment of the show.

Hence, the number of web sites by fans and for fans has increased over the years, but critical attention has remained sparse. Though the show aired in other European countries (including France, Sweden, and Hungary), it never made the transition into an English-dubbed or subtitled version, and has thus never reached a wider audience. The language barrier, as well as the fact that it was shot in black and white at a time when American television had already made the transition to color, kept the show out of the US market (see Milosch). Even the recent DVD release does not feature a subtitle or dubbing option, which means that the show remains limited to a German or German-speaking audience.

For those interested in German culture, this essay introduces *Raumpatrouille* as an important phenomenon of the postwar period and its popular culture in West Germany. The series sheds light on the function of popular genres, in this case science fiction, in 1950s public discourse about the troublesome legacy of the Third Reich and concerns about the Cold War. Especially in the controversy about German rearmament, we see a focus point of German ambivalence toward a military suspended between Cold War *Realpolitik* and *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (the official term for the collective acknowledgment and working-through of the Nazi period).

To understand the current cult status of *Raumpatrouille* in Germany, it is necessary to take a closer look at its demographic appeal. The audience Honold and Larsen had in mind would have been raised on a cultural diet that included large helpings of US popular culture. Substantial US loans for rebuilding German infrastructure under the Marshall Plan created favorable circumstances for the import of US culture into a rapidly recovering German market.⁴ Although not exclusively or primarily an initiative to gain the "hearts and minds" of average Germans, US economic investment in postwar Germany was nonetheless undertaken with the idea that "European economic recovery was essential to the long-term interests of the United States" (Michael Hogan 26). This meant, Hogan argues, "the reconstruction of major trading partners in Europe," or, in other

words, the cultivation of foreign markets for US products in the future. Having been cut off from most cultural imports during the Nazi period, most Germans were open to new things. In the postwar years, they took their first vacations to the Mediterranean and were as interested in American as in German literature. They were eager for an escape from hard times and for visions of a better future thanks to technology. As the US cultivated West Germany as an increasingly profitable market for its entertainment industry, the number of American sf authors translated into German tended to exceed the presence or prominence of their native counterparts in the German publishing industry. While postwar German sf needed to make a fresh start, or deal with the cumbersome burdens of the immediate past, the US market for science fiction, from magazines to movies, had been flourishing all along. This historical situation also applied to the German film industry, which labored against a strong presence of American films in German theaters.

The same pattern characterizes German television. Though German science fiction has been a discernible pop-cultural genre since the end of the nineteenth century, sf was rare on German television until the arrival of cable in the early 1990s. Yet even then, as more channels became available to German viewers, it was primarily the number of US imports that increased, not the number of sf programs produced in Germany itself. When *Raumpatrouille* began to air on September 17, 1966, there were, strictly speaking, only two channels, both of them state-run.⁵ Even the foreign imports that were to dominate televised sf in Germany began their runs a few years later. From August 1969 to April 1970, German audiences were treated to *The Prisoner*, while *The Invaders* had its run between April 1970 and January 1971. The British show *UFO* was broadcast between June 1971 and January 1972. The only sf series produced in Germany with German actors and scriptwriters during the 1970s was *Alpha Alpha*. Similar to *The X-Files* and largely a commercial failure with German audiences, the brief 25-minute episodes ran between May and August 1972, after the first wave of imported science fiction had already aired. The success story on German TV, however, which was to define sf for viewers of this generation, was an import, *Star Trek*, which premiered on May 27, 1972 and has remained a steady presence on German television through frequent reruns.

For viewers unfamiliar with *Raumpatrouille*, a comparison with *Star Trek* provides the best introduction to the feel of the show. Both programs began to air in 1966 and the similarities between them are striking, although there is no indication that Honold and Larsen borrowed from Gene Roddenberry, or vice versa. Each episode opens with a voice-over introducing the show's premise and inviting the viewer to join the crew on its mission. The interior layout of the two space ships is similar, as the action moves from bridge to engine room. Attacks on the ship are in both cases simulated by tilting and wiggling the camera while the actors lurch sideways. In accord with gender roles during the late 1960s both in Germany and the US, both captains are irresistible to the opposite sex yet also surrounded by a core crew in which women are featured prominently. Both shows present a military command structure, though *Raumpatrouille* foregrounds the

military element over that of peaceful scientific space exploration, the mission of the *Enterprise* in *Star Trek*.

Equally striking are differences between the shows. Unlike *Star Trek*, which takes place in a multicultural universe modeled on the ethnic diversity of the US, *Raumpatrouille* reflects the social reality of a Germany that had yet to experience the massive immigration of foreign workers from Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Turkey during the 1970s. Germany's postwar culture was fairly homogeneous; hence, apart from the Frogs, there are no aliens in Honold and Larsen's universe, only "humankind with its colonies in outer space."

To German sf fans three years shy of their first glimpse of *Star Trek*, *Raumpatrouille* was a spectacular event. By all standards of its day, the show was a lavish production, featuring 38 sets spread out on 2900 square meters in two large halls of the Bavaria Studios (DVD liner notes). Special effects were top-notch for the time, featuring, for example, blue screen f/x in which up to 13 different images were combined in a single shot. In order to produce these images on a budget, corners were cut elsewhere. To keep down the cost of the extensive sets, the set designers integrated objects from everyday life, including pencil sharpeners and bathroom faucets, into their futuristic designs. Plastic beer cups were glued to the ceiling of the *Orion's* bridge, and a clothing iron became part of a futuristic tool chest as well as a control panel. To the delight of the show's present following, most of these items are still recognizable despite the designers' best efforts to disguise their origin.

As was, and still is, common with many television productions, a certain number of shots and sequences were recycled as stock footage. In retrospect it is difficult to say whether the rate of recycling was uncommonly high for *Raumpatrouille*, but, as in the case of the misappropriated household objects, the strategy is too transparent not to draw unwanted attention to itself. For example, the lengthy special-effects sequence of the *Orion's* lift-off from its undersea base recurs in every episode, suggesting that its high production cost outweighed considerations that the viewers might tire of seeing it again and again. In one episode, a lateral pan of the camera through the empty engine room of the *Orion* is used twice within ten minutes; then it is repeated, with the image simply turned upside down, as viewers supposedly see the inside of another ship. Whenever footage like this is not visually disguised by simple inversion or recontextualization, it is altered superficially by minor editing, as in the case of the lift-off sequence. In most cases, the results are ingenious yet unintentionally comic in their mix of technical imperfection and dramatic seriousness.

If the masking of such stock images works at all, it is because the set designers, Rolf Zehetbauer and Werner Achmann, decided on a visual style borrowing heavily from German Expressionism. Most interiors use modular elements of such geometric simplicity that interiors can be reassembled in different configurations, as floors become ceilings or doors become windows. The interiors of the *Orion*, the star bases, the asteroid-mining colonies, and even the headquarters of the military administration back on Earth feature large geometric shapes set off against each other in stark contrasts of light and shadow. Clear polished surfaces create mirror images that give the illusion of space and impart

a sense of depth to the otherwise two-dimensional television image. Clear plastic and polished steel dominate the look of the show. Machinery is always visually simple; the Orion itself, for example, is the classic flying saucer of UFO lore, with a few tailfin-like triangles added here and there. The board computer is an egg-shaped contraption, reminiscent of a football suspended along its vertical axis. For all their visual simplicity and lack of visual detail and richness, the sets often feel surprisingly spacious; rooms open up above, or extend vastly into backdrops designed to create a sense of the techno-spatial architectural sublime. To these stark geometric design elements, Zehetbauer added enough ellipsoids and organic, flowing shapes to give the show a decidedly 1960s spin. The black and white images are lit conventionally, though cameraman Kurt Hasse occasionally inserts a more self-consciously “artistic” shot using backlighting, spotlighting, or chiaroscuro effects.

The cast featured well-known German actors, mostly with stage or minor television experience. Dietmar Schönherr, who plays Cliff Allister McLane, commander of the *Orion*, was to go on in the 1970s to become German television’s first *talkmaster* (the German *faux* anglicism for the emcee or host of a talk show) with *Je Später der Abend*. Wolfgang Völz, who plays weapons specialist Mario diMonti, and Eva Pflug, the Secret Service officer who is supposed to keep an eye on McLane, had long and distinguished acting careers after the show. Though the sets and special effects of *Raumpatrouille* were designed as visual spectacle, the melodramatic intensity of the actors’ performances ultimately carries the show. The size of the television screen defeats most attempts at subtlety, since even closeups of actors’ faces are limited in size, depth, and detail. Consequently, overacting runs rampant, which nonetheless suits the show, because it goes with its tone of high adventure and space opera.

The opening voice-over, quoted in my epigraph, suggests the show’s basic preoccupation with the workings of empire and the anxieties it triggers, especially as seen from the perspective of the military. Except for a few scattered references to a civilian economy, the military is the show’s exclusive milieu.⁶ There are no shots of cities, schools, roads, or other civilian spaces. We only see spaces associated with the military: the launch bay, the Starlight Casino (where crews and personnel go when they are off-duty), and the meeting rooms of the upper echelons of the command structure. These military spaces are populated by characters who are either directly working for or affiliated with the military (examples of the latter would include scientists and politicians). Civilians appear as caricatures or examples of laughable incompetence and self-importance. In the first episode, one of the crew members is picked up by his wife after his drinking binge at the casino. Throughout her brief appearance, she is the epitome of the irate housewife, from whom the henpecked husband needs to be protected by his boss. Another civilian, sf writer Peter Paul Ibsen, is forced upon the crew of the *Orion* as a passenger after his powerful father-in-law pulls some strings. Ibsen gets on everyone’s nerves with his pretentiousness, and he puts the crew in danger. Only after he falls in with the social discipline on board and discards his upper-class mannerisms does the crew begin to accept him. The further he

removes himself from his civilian persona—i.e., attains a kind of classless practical competence—the more likeable he becomes.

With civilians such as Ibsen identified as irrelevant outsiders, the military takes center stage. The institutional structure that emerges is one in which the military is supervised by the Security Service (*Galaktische Sicherheitsdienst*), which gathers intelligence but also enforces a political rationale on what are portrayed as the essentially apolitical operations of the Space Patrol. The show opens with an unauthorized daredevil landing, deemed impossible by textbook standards, that leads to McLane's demotion and the disciplinary transfer of ship and crew from active combat service to patrol duty. As two of his superiors discuss his demotion, one emphasizes that this is only the most recent item on a long list of McLane's stunts and escapades. As he recites the list, his fellow general interrupts him, pointing out that, without one particular stunt of McLane's, a war would have been lost. While even the general advocating his demotion grudgingly admires McLane's courage and skill, the Galactic Security Service insists on planting a female officer on his ship for the duration of the punishment. Tamara Jagellovsk (Eva Pflug) is to curb McLane's swashbuckling impulses by keeping him under surveillance and enforcing regulations and procedures. She is given the power to override his command in a crisis.

Over the course of the seven episodes, Jagellovsk undergoes the same process of assimilation as Ibsen, transforming herself from hated outsider to cherished crew-member. As McLane grows increasingly interested in her romantically, she begins to switch sides, transforming herself from a robot who mechanically enforces rules without showing emotion into a human being. Her humanization also confirms the show's preference for the military over the secret service, in which is reiterated the class preference already visible in the treatment of Ibsen. While the operations of the military are portrayed as practical and transparent, the Secret Service is shown as morally dubious—more interested in the pursuit of power politics than in the achievement of clearly defined objectives. The show's disdain for political elitism is coded in terms of social class. While characters from the military tend to fit the stereotype of blue-collar bluntness and physical solidity, characters from the Secret Service appear refined, in control of all outward displays of emotion, and socially sophisticated. While the military is portrayed on the show as governed by clear and agreed-upon goals, the Secret Service is seen as a power elite, a state within the state raising the specter of un- or anti-democratic cabals behind the scenes.⁷

In its depiction of the subordination of the military by the secret service, the show criticizes the bureaucratic regulation of what should, by the logic of the genre as well as the psychological disposition of the show's protagonist, be pure adventure. McLane's defiance of bureaucratic strictures is justified, since the space patrol constitutes the last remaining arena for adventure in an administered world; he himself says as much in one episode. In the world of this series, then, politics is complicit in the suppression of adventure. In effect, the activities of the Secret Service turn military heroics from what should be self-realization into alienated labor. Bureaucrats and politicians think of their careers, while heroes of space opera such as McLane act out of instinct and impetuosity. The series

repeatedly shows political leaders in long and fruitless discussions that delay necessary military action. Instead of instinct and intuition, political calculation and bureaucratic obfuscation reign supreme. When, for example, the destruction of Earth by a supernova is imminent, politicians deliberate about whether the general population should be informed. Infighting breaks out and fingers are pointed in what amounts to a shameless display of petty self-interest in a situation that calls out for a hero, or at least for some practical problem-solving. Jagellovsk's transformation from an enforcer of politically motivated bureaucratic rules into "one of the boys" is an indication that the show is troubled by politics at the same time that it depicts military actions as "adventures."

The grand conflict of the series, posited as one of good versus evil, is the war with the Frogs. From the first episode, there is little doubt about the Frogs' malevolent intentions. Their native environment is hostile to humans. They do not breathe oxygen, which would make defection physically impossible or a fatal error. From a base at the edge of Earth's sphere of influence, they threaten invasion and, ultimately, the extinction of the human race. No motivation is ever given, just as there is no clear motive for the pre-existence of "a gigantic security system that protects Earth from threats from outer space," as the voice-over in the prologue has it. Though there are conversational references to wars in the past, most involving one group of humans against another, the discovery of the Frogs as an external enemy by the crew of the *Orion* serves as retroactive justification for this vast military complex. Honold and Larsen must have assumed that such logic would be familiar enough to an audience raised on Cold War rhetoric.

Despite their name, which is originally given in English, the Frogs are not conceptualized as animal "others." Nor do they seem linked to Karel Čapek's *Newts*, as they are not an object of satire. The imagery likewise has little in common with such Cold War sf as Heinlein's *Starship Troopers* (1959) or Jack Finney's *The Body Snatchers* (1955), for the Frogs are humanoid in shape though absolutely other. This strange oxymoron is picked up in their visualization. Medium shots are rare, closeups non-existent. Their anthropomorphic physical shape is slightly elongated, stretched past the point of ordinary human proportion. Within these unfamiliar outlines, the effects designers of the show have inserted the image of a fluid oscillation that suggests a gelatinous consistency—hence the nickname Frogs. The high degree of abstraction is maintained with long shots, which keep us emotionally at a distance. We never hear their voices or see them interact with each other. No attempt is ever made to communicate or negotiate with them. They are otherness personified, and the human response to them is equal to the military imperative: to eliminate the threat they pose by destroying them before they have a chance to destroy Earth.

Episodes of the show help themselves from an inventory of Cold War themes familiar to contemporary audiences, not just in Germany but in the US as well. Indeed, their use by German writers for a German audience confirms Cynthia Hendershot's assertion that during the Cold War, sf provided a pool of universal political myths and that sf among all popular genres most poignantly expressed the themes of fear and paranoia (Hendershot 7). In one episode, for example, the Frogs find a way to brainwash human beings into defecting. In the best

Manchurian Candidate manner, the victims of the procedure, unaware of their own treachery and helplessly in the clutches of post-hypnotic commands, are ready to deliver their ships into the hands of the enemy while being hunted by their own uncomprehending comrades. In another episode, the Frogs succeed in steering a supernova toward Earth. A race against time ensues, thematically reminiscent of such films as *Dr. Strangelove* (1963) or *Fail Safe* (1964), to neutralize the doomsday weapon. Humankind itself has at its command the so-called Overkill weapon, a device installed on the *Orion* that is capable of destroying entire planets. The relation to the hydrogen bomb is obvious, as is the suggestion that, under desperate conditions, its use may be inevitable. Fears of invasion and subversion by the Frogs run through all the episodes. These fears culminate in the show's final episode, which features a climactic attempted invasion by the Frogs that is foiled by—who else?—the crew of the *Orion*, after high-ranking members of the Security Service are brainwashed and begin to aid the invasion. This episode dramatizes enemies on one's own side, in short, as well as demonizing an enemy who is "other."

Even the two episodes that do not explicitly feature the Frogs employ Cold War imagery. In "Guardian of the Law," the theme of technology out of control and turning against its creator is reminiscent of *Fail Safe*. Honold and Larsen's rebellious robots are intended to aid and protect human beings, but they become a menace when they implement the "Three Laws of Robotics" with a perverted single-mindedness after witnessing a killing among the humans. In the episode, miners and the crew of the *Orion* become prisoners within a technological apparatus that was supposed to remain subservient. "Struggle for the Sun" describes a military stand-off between Earth and a matriarchic counterpart on the planet Chroma: McLane must assume the role of the diplomatic negotiator preventing an intergalactic war. Both episodes deal with topics only marginally relevant to the show's larger themes, and yet each articulates its theme in Cold War imagery: the tense diplomatic stand-off as the world hurtles toward apocalyptic war, and runaway technologies exceeding, in their complexity, the grasp of their creators.

How strongly the show is tied into Germany's postwar history also becomes visible in other details, such as the proper names that Honold and Larsen give the characters. Names are assigned mostly for their capacity to evoke vague national stereotypes. One *Orion* crew member is called Helga Legrelle, another called Hasso Sigbjörnson, and yet another Mario diMonti. Though one member of the crew is Athan Shubashi, one half of which sounds vaguely Japanese, the absence of Asian names is as noticeable as the predominance of Anglo-American and European names. The French, Scandinavian, and Italian names denote the "disappearance of nation states" that the opening voice-over announces. They also indicate that the German writers imagined the "united states of humanity" predominantly as a European postwar utopia, from which Germany's role as the instigator of two World Wars has been mercifully erased.

Such characters as diMonti evoke the Italy to which Germans flocked during summer vacations in the 1950s and 1960s, not the Italy from which it was to recruit thousands of foreign workers in the 1970s. Turkish names, too, are

conspicuously absent. The show's brand of Eurocentricity excludes, by default, Asian cultures. It seems obvious that Russian names would not appear on the crew roster of the *Orion*. Tamara Jagellovsk is the exception, but she is conceived as the Security Services "political officer," a humorless Ninotchka-like apparatchik and spy for the Security Service in keeping with Western ideas of sinister KGB and Communist Party machinations behind the Iron Curtain. Anglo-American names are given clear prominence—as in the name of the protagonist, Cliff Allister McLane. German names appear as part of the mix, but never to such a degree that they would mark the show as German or evoke images of German ethnocentricity. On the contrary, most German viewers would take as a sarcastic comment on the German institution of state employment, *Beamtentum*, that McLane's nemesis, who epitomizes the smarmy, obstructionist bureaucrat, carries the most German of all names, Spring-Brauner. As sacred as the German *Beamtentum* is to the German *Beamte* (civil servants), many Germans regard it, with a complex mixture of pride and dread, as the archaic fiefdom of petty tyrants, the last holdout of tenured incompetence.

In its insistence on an absolute ethical and political difference between humankind and the Frogs, the show conforms to the ideological consensus within the Western bloc during the Cold War years. If it were for those features alone, *Raumpatrouille* would stand as a contribution to Cold War culture comparable to such American counterparts as *The Invaders* or *Star Trek*. But there are cultural idiosyncrasies that make the show quite different from other Cold War space operas. Anti-Communist sentiments may have run strongly on both sides of the Atlantic, but within the contexts of German postwar politics, the experience of World War II, and the geographical position of Germany on the front-line of the European Cold War theater, the show implies opinions different from those common in the US, and perhaps even from the NATO consensus.

While series depicting the military often appeared on US television during the Cold War era—e.g., *West Point Story* (1956-57), *Men of Annapolis* (1957), *Gomer Pyle* (1963-64), *Hogan's Heroes* (1965-71), and later *M*A*S*H* (1972-83)—such programs were, and have remained, altogether absent from German television programming. Given the legacy of the Third Reich, a show such as *Hogan's Heroes*, with its farcical approach to World War II, would be unthinkable. The general perception is that discussion of this serious topic is more suited to literature or historiography than a medium that aims primarily to entertain. The past that the newly democratic Federal Republic was trying to come to terms with was too close and too traumatic for comic treatment. Even the postwar status of the military was a matter of some anxiety. The existence of the Soviet occupied zone, which prefigured the separation of the country into East and West Germany, gave rise to great unease. Furthermore, whenever "denazification" impeded the quick and efficient rebuilding of West Germany into the first line of defense against Communism in Europe, it was pursued inconsistently. Consequently, the rearmament (or so-called *Wiederbewaffnung*) of Germany by NATO was fraught with troubling contradiction. What is one to make, for example, of the fact that at "the end of the 1950s, eighty per cent of

officers of the *Bundeswehr*, the new West German military, had served in the *Wehrmacht*, the army of the Third Reich" (Holert and Terkissides 125)?

If a subject as touchy as rearmament could be addressed at all in popular culture, it had to be approached obliquely. Genre conventions support this oblique approach. By returning the audience to a world reassuringly familiar from one installment to the next, and by confirming a sense of competence and control with regard to this world, genre conventions disarm the viewers' defenses when controversial or unacceptable ideas are introduced. Indeed, conventions of genre serve, in their emphasis on reassuring consistency in the fictional world, to distract or distance the audience from echoes of conflicts in their own world that otherwise might be too close for comfort. The conventions of science fiction helped this particular program to take just such an indirect approach. Sf's status as a popular genre, placed by Germany at a very low stratum of cultural production, likewise minimized the possibility for controversy: the show was not likely to be taken seriously as a contribution to public political discussion.⁸

Whatever century Honold and Larsen's future takes place in, the most striking features of the show are its focus on the military and on high-tech warfare against a merciless and inhuman enemy. "Given the subservience of the German military to Hitler and the Third Reich," the crucial problem faced by the show was how to represent the Prussian military virtue of unquestioning obedience and discipline, administered strictly from the top down (Watson 320). Once rearmament was established as an inevitable fact of German postwar NATO membership, "there was a fervent search for a new tradition and philosophy for these armed forces." Again, it is important to keep in mind that the writers of *Raumpatrouille* describe a split between the military and the Secret Service. This split projects anti-military and anti-bureaucratic sentiments upon the Secret Service, which implicitly exonerates the military from its tainted complicity in the genocidal politics of the Third Reich and presents it instead as the state's hard-working and essentially apolitical servant. The further down in the hierarchy they go, the more approval the writers bestow upon individual characters. Those in the trenches deserve respect, while those in the staff and command offices do not. As the lowest ranking (and most insubordinate) commanding officer we see, McLane has the most integrity, the best instincts, and the greatest courage. His command rank might seem to set him apart from the crew, but the writers strive to show how McLane's leadership style encourages interaction between officers and crew.

Because the writers show us McLane reading in his free time, we know that he is a thoughtful, educated man. And yet unlike the writer Peter Paul Ibsen, who, besides being a bothersome civilian, is discredited as an intellectual by his purely academic knowledge of the world, McLane is chiefly a man of action. While Ibsen's smug sophistication betrays class prejudice, McLane is dissociated from social class altogether, except for the fact of his military rank as officer. In one episode, we see him pick up tools and help out with routine manual repairs because his crew is overworked and incapable of meeting a deadline. The task demands the temporary suspension of officers' prerogatives. McLane's willingness to sacrifice the prestige of rank is at the bottom of his conflicts with superior officers, because it leads to his disobeying orders. His own superior

officer, General Wamsler (Benno Sterzenbach), is often called upon to mediate between McLane and the higher ranks of the staff, since his position makes him accountable to the top tiers of the hierarchy, while his own sense of integrity forces him to take McLane's side. In his willingness to forego hierarchical military prerogatives, Wamsler is presented as a secondary hero.

The series' distribution of social approval in inverse ratio to military obedience follows a pattern that Holert and Terkessides have seen in German popular magazines and movies of the time, including the films based on Hans-Hellmut Kirst's *08/15* novels, which trace the military career of the young recruit Asch from basic training to an American POW camp. In their view, "The basic discourse, which was strongly linked to the icon Stalingrad, seems to predict that which was to evolve around the lost generation of GIs in Vietnam: it wasn't the fault of the decent individual, but a totalitarian government and a largely incompetent military leadership" (127).⁹ For a new German military troubled by traces of the old *Wehrmacht*, a modified form of anti-Communism predicated on individual accountability does double duty. It exonerates the mass of individual soldiers who served in the *Wehrmacht* from the moral imperative to refuse military service during the Third Reich (an issue that the postwar debate in Germany often raised). Significantly, however, it also (in its anti-Communist emphasis) sustains some sense of historical continuity, for "the enemy of that [World War II] era and the enemy in the mid-1950s were identical: the totalitarian system in the Soviet Union" (Holert and Terkissides 127). It is significant that the writers of *Raumpatrouille* project historical responsibility onto a relatively small number of high-ranking officers at the upper levels of the command structure, if not altogether onto the secret services outside the regular army. In this sense, Honold and Larsen work along a discursive model that distances the genre of military adventure sufficiently from the past to allow its revival for new viewers, most of whom would have been born after 1945.

True, the cultivation of a style of discourse that *represses* as much about the Third Reich as it *expresses* became one of the targets of the 1960s student movement in Germany. But a more pressing concern, in 1966, for those young men who made up the audience for *Raumpatrouille*, was the draft. After being admitted in principle in 1954, the Federal Republic of Germany officially joined NATO on May 9, 1955. With the introduction of general male conscription, the *Bundeswehr* was formed in 1956. Germany's *Wiederbewaffnung* (rearmament) by the Adenauer government was a controversial move, and not only for Germany's suspicious European neighbors but also for Germans themselves. Although certain precautionary concessions to these European concerns were written into the constitution, widespread public demonstrations against rearmament occurred.¹⁰ Polls taken at the time indicate that most Germans were skeptical about the introduction of a German army. A striking figure emerges, for example, from a public opinion poll taken in September 1951, when Germans were asked who most deserves respect in the community. Of all people asked, 72% listed first a skilled worker, with only 9% naming the profession of soldier (Noelle and Neumann 445). Asked in March of 1950 whether they thought the German *Bundeswehr* would be independent enough from Western supreme

command, only 18% of all respondents said that they thought there was sufficient independence, while 48% registered concern about a lack of such independence (Noelle and Neumann 437). At the same time, 52% disapproved of Germany's rearmament within the context of NATO, as opposed to 33% in favor (436). General conscription also met with disapproval: 56% would have preferred an army of volunteers, while only 23% approved of the draft (443). In April 1958, 52% of Germans advocated a general strike to prevent the *Bundeswehr* from being equipped with nuclear arms (354), while in September of 1961, roughly equal numbers of Germans were for and against their country's neutrality, as opposed to its alliance with the US (523).¹¹

So not all Germans actively resisted the rearmament of their country: opinion within the general population was divided. There was controversy and the terms of the country's political future were contested. After all, West Germany did go ahead with its remilitarization. Despite the attitudes expressed in the polls, the example of *Raumpatrouille* demonstrates that political ambivalence and misgivings did not spoil most viewers' appetite for military adventure as a form of entertainment, albeit in a safely packaged (i.e., science-fictional) form. By the time the series began to air, incidents such as the Cuban Missile Crisis and John F. Kennedy's visit to Berlin may have, respectively, increased German concerns over Soviet military buildup and fostered a stronger commitment to the American strategic components of NATO. Moreover, when the show began to air, general conscription had been in effect for roughly a decade. The initial controversy about German rearmament had had sufficient time to die down, making way for a broader acceptance of the remilitarization of German society. After ten years of conscription, the reality of this reintroduction of the military into civil society had sunk in and the social effects of remilitarization could be seen. Thousands of conscripts had already returned from compulsory service in the *Bundeswehr*, bringing with them the concrete lived experience of the Cold War from a German perspective. *Raumpatrouille* spoke to this new dimension of social life in West Germany, addressing the differences between a Prussian military tradition made dubious by historical experience and a new, more egalitarian, concept of the German military.

Wolf von Baudissin, a political and strategic advisor in the Adenauer administration who had been a prisoner of war as an officer in the *Wehrmacht's Afrikakorps*, played a crucial role in the new military ethos. Central to his conception of a new democratic army is *Innere Führung*, "an ambiguous term by which is meant both the system of command within the army and the self-discipline of the individual officer" (Grosser 226). This concept was linked to the *Bürger in Uniform* (citizen in uniform), which meant that national servicemen

would view themselves as essentially civilian but serving their country in uniform for a short period of time. The ethos of the armed forces was to be that of *Innere Führung* or inner leadership.... *Innere Führung* involves soldiers thinking for themselves, questioning orders and rejecting the Prussian tradition of *Gehorsamkeit*, or unthinking obedience.... This was to be a democratic, thinking, moral army. (Watson 320-21)

The idea of the “citizen in uniform” meant that “drill would be reduced to a minimum, instruction would be given in civics, while everyone from general to private would be free (as the constitution required) to join a trade union” (Balfour 232-33). To these notions of a more democratic military must be added the so-called “nine theses, advanced by a group of twenty lieutenants.” As Grosser summarizes them:

According to [these nine theses], an officer is a man engaged in doing a job like any other; he discusses the orders he receives and is prepared to discuss his own, and he regards military discipline as a good thing provided it is the result of self-discipline based on the maturity of the individual. He is in the service of peace: his duty is to restore it in case of conflict, to maintain it, and, as a citizen, to help organize it.... For young officers of this way of thinking, the problem of overcoming the past is certainly no longer an issue. (226-27)¹²

With Commander McLane, Honold and Larsen have created such a new German officer, who opens his decisions up to discussion with his crew and questions the decisions handed down to him by superiors. This is perhaps the most striking feature of his character. His military ethos plays itself out as a process of ethical and pragmatic deliberation apart from the origin of orders or commands. Discipline is the outcome of a voluntary alignment of the individual with orders that might have been handed down from above but might have come from anyone. McLane represents a subject whose autonomy constantly needs to be defended against regulation and discipline from outside. Every one of his clashes with authority, every one of his acts of insubordination, redraws the boundary around this supreme subject.

By the same token, McLane is also portrayed as a functioning element within a structure that happens to be military but could just as well be civilian. His defiance is reserved for incompetence, self-importance, and ineffectiveness among his superiors, just as he shows impatience with those under his command who prove too dependent on external leadership. In this regard, his actions, even when they defy orders (and the hierarchal order), improve and reform institutional efficiency. He leads by example, and even his superiors are forced to admit, time and again, that his insubordination produces desirable results. The bureaucrat who follows orders and stubbornly obeys the letter of the law is exposed as the true sand in the gears.

McLane’s insistence that his chosen profession is supposed to be personally enjoyable serves the same purpose. The thrill of adventure is simultaneously incentive and reward for creative problem-solving. Adventure reverses the alienation that professionalization brings with it, or at least masks it sufficiently. It confirms the individualist in his pursuit of self-actualization and shows him at the height of his skills. The easy camaraderie among the crew translates this confirmation of individual values into social relations. Instead of external discipline and enforced obedience, personal friendship holds the crew together. Their loyalty needs to be earned before it is granted. The new military ethos values this type of social bond because it preserves the integrity and wholeness of each autonomous subject even as it allows for the formation of organized

communities. Indeed, it dissolves the contradiction of imagining a community composed entirely of radical individualists.

It is necessary to point out that, for exactly these ideological reasons, *Raumpatrouille* draws attention to gender equality in the show's futuristic military. Radical individualism, to the extent that it is geared toward maximizing efficiency, is gender-blind. McLane's new superior officer might be a man, General Wamsler, but his commander when he was on active combat duty was a woman, General Lydia van Dyck. With the show being a product of the pre-1968 period, concessions to gender equality do remain superficial. Honold and Larsen write them consciously, in order to make a point, whenever they use characters in prominent positions. When they are not paying attention, their more marginal female characters are portrayed as secretaries—and every woman in the show seems fair game to Cliff Allister McLane.

I have already noted the show's peculiar hesitation when it comes to fleshing out the characters' social behavior with concrete historical content. Given the idea of the "citizen in uniform," this comparative silence works to dissociate the new personal and social ethics from fascist and proto-fascist traditions of unquestioning obedience, sacrifice, and submission to state authority, reflecting a change from the Third Reich to the new Federal Republic. Unfortunately, however, this "new" model of civic subjectivity remains entangled in old ways of thinking. It tries to replace one ideology that depends on the elevation of functional values (efficiency through unquestioning discipline) with another ideology (efficiency through autonomy); yet both models of civic responsibility are similarly ahistorical. Honold and Larsen's attempt at writing a new civic subjectivity is ultimately undercut by their hero's efforts, which are aimed at maximizing military efficiency. Though McLane's behavior is defined by acts of insubordination, his final reward in the last episode of the show is his reinstatement into his rightful position, not to mention a well-deserved promotion. The military acknowledges that it is better off reorganizing itself around McLane's individualist subjectivity rather than insisting on its own—or at least his superiors agree that leaders like McLane should be supported. Retroactively, every individual act of insubordination by McLane ultimately becomes a confirmation of the power structures he originally defied and challenged. The military profits from having their best man back in their ranks, and McLane, pleased to be reinstated, heads off to further adventures.

In their analysis of the contemporary culture of "global security," Holert and Terkissides argue that "in the Federal Republic of Germany in the 1950s, the military acted as an inventory of keywords for the [subsequent] control society" (125).¹³ They trace the "odd modernity" of the *Bundeswehr* back to the idea, advocated by Prussian military thinkers such as Hardenberg, Scharnhorst, Gneisenau, and vom Stein, that the military was to be the model for all of society (125). General conscription made the army an academy in which citizens were instructed in their duties. For these Prussian thinkers, the interpenetration of military and civil life was supposed to reproduce military values (including discipline, obedience, and readiness for personal sacrifice) within the civil sphere. Some historians, such as Dennis Bark and David Gress, see this "vision

reminiscent of the Prussian social and military reformers of the early nineteenth century” as a positive step toward “a mature ethically conscious soldier, who, in the service, would enjoy the same democratic freedoms he had sworn to defend” (369). They accept that—even though the values themselves have changed—von Baudissin’s conception of the “citizen in uniform” preserves a position for the military from which it shapes larger social structures outside its direct sphere of influence. Holert and Terkessides, in contrast, see the military as a more active agent in this process of interpenetration between military and civil spheres. What it models and produces is a mentality that accepts “war as mass culture”—that is to say, war as a basic metaphor for the processes of social relations:

We take it for granted that the fragmenting and decentering experience of war, as it is communicated through “war as mass culture,” serves as a model for neoliberal subjectivity. The subjects of the life-style cultures—those flex-workers of the self concerned with fitness, obsessed with diets, enthusiastic about sex, and hungry for success—are all fighting their way toward the goal of *triumphant autonomy*, either as mobile assassins or as socially competent team players, using either their elbows or their social skills (85).¹⁴

Holert and Terkessides argue that ultimately, even von Baudissin’s “citizen in uniform” remains a soldier, belligerent and aggressive, willing to postpone thinking about the historical context of his ethos of efficiency. They also challenge the assumption that the neoliberal subject has successfully negotiated the oxymoronic feat of being a radical individualist in social harmony with others like himself. Their list of life-style oddities and competitive excesses suggests that “triumphant autonomy” is not synonymous with immunity to unethical manipulation. The social is likely to become a casualty of this ultimate goal of the contemporary agenda of self-actualization as long as it is part of a larger competitive ethos.

Raumpatrouille is located at exactly the moment when these new conceptions begin to emerge and entrench themselves in postwar West Germany. The show pries away the old Prussian glamour of the military with one hand and reinstates it as an opportunity for self-actualization with the other. In this sense, the series reflects the public discussion about German rearmament. It advocates a political direction that the Adenauer government had been pushing with great insistence and yet separates its own politics from the burdens of the past through its progressive critique of the ideology of unquestioning obedience that marked the historical development of the German military. Since the show started airing roughly a decade after the introduction of general conscription, it must have reflected the experience of all the young men who had already served and returned to civilian life—although the German *Bundeswehr*, given its constitutional limitations, could hardly have provided these conscripts with the adventures that McLane and his crew were having.

NOTES

1. The original German of the prologue is as follows: “Was heute noch wie ein Märchen klingt, kann morgen schon Wirklichkeit sein. Hier ist ein Märchen von übermorgen. Es gibt keine Nationalstaaten mehr, es gibt nur noch die Erde und ihre

Kolonien im Weltraum. Man siedelt auf fernen Sternen. Der Meeresboden ist als Wohnraum erschlossen. Mit heute noch unvorstellbaren Geschwindigkeiten durchheilen Raumschiffe unser Milchstraßensystem. Eins dieser Raumschiffe ist die Orion, winziger Teil eines gigantischen Sicherheitssystems, das die Erde vor Bedrohungen aus dem All schützt. Begleiten wir die Orion bei ihrem Patrouilledienst and Rande der Unendlichkeit." Unless otherwise noted, all translations from the German are my own, with the original (as here) reproduced in the notes.

2. For convenience, I will refer to "Larsen" as an individual person and co-creator of the show.

3. For further information on Kneifel's work, see the *Raumpatrouille Orion* website: <www.orionspace.de/ww/de/pub/larsens_planet/buecher/roman_autoren.htm>.

4. For further information about the Marshall Plan, see the official website of the Marshall Foundation: <www.marshallfoundation.org>.

5. In addition to these two channels, the *Allgemeine Rundfunk Deutschlands*, or ARD (General German Broadcasting Company, on air from May 27, 1951) and the *Zweite Deutsche Fernsehen*, or ZDF (Second German Broadcasting Company, on air from April 1, 1963), there were also regional channels loosely following the division of Germany into *Bundesländer*.

6. One episode, for example, features a freighter transporting ore from a mining colony; another begins with two children playing with a scale model of a space ship, running through the room in the starship base where McLane is relaxing. But just as the military's prerogative extends to mining operations, since they appear to be essential to the support of the military structure, the space in which we see the children play suggests that these children are the equivalent of "army brats." As in the case of the civilian population, which in the episode "*Angriff aus dem All*" ("Attack from Space") is expected to panic if news were to get out that Earth is about to be destroyed, non-military characters and spaces are mentioned in dialogue, or they make brief walk-on appearances, but they never emerge as concrete agents of the narrative.

7. It is possible to recognize in this dichotomy the ghostly presence of an analogous historical construction dealing with the Third Reich. The contrast between the German army on the one hand, the *Wehrmacht*, and the *Waffen SS* on the other has been used to vilify the latter and in this way exonerate the former from the worst atrocities against civilian populations during World War II. The controversy surrounding the so-called "*Wehrmachtsausstellung*," an exhibition of historical documents outlining the complicity of the army in crimes ordinarily attributed to the SS, is an indication of how sensitive this issue remains, almost sixty years after the war. For further information on the "*Wehrmachtsausstellung*," see Wigbert Benz's essay "*Die Wehrmachtsausstellung*" available online at <www.nachkriegsdeutschland.de/wehrmachtsausstellung.html>.

8. The German term is *Trivilliteratur*, which is comparable to terms such as pulp fiction in the US tradition. Though resistance against accepting television as a relevant cultural medium has waned in recent years, Holger Briel points out that public debate during the years of television's first introduction in Germany was dominated by such hostile critics as Theodor W. Adorno, recently returned from exile in the US. Adorno and other German intellectuals, including Günter Anders, Jürgen Habermas, and H.M. Enzensberger, all "portrayed the impact of television as a retrogressive step in the cultural development of Germany and mankind generally and an enslavement to technology" (Briel 331). Adorno's experience in exile is especially relevant here, because his critique introduced a fear of "the Americanization of German culture," which tainted a show like *Raumpatrouille* because of its generic association with American pop-cultural genres.

9. “Der zugrunde liegende Diskurs, der vor allem mit dem Chiffre Stalingrad in Verbindung stand, nimmt viel von jenem der späteren verlorenen G.I. Generation in Vietnam vorweg: Schuld war nicht der anständige Einzelne, sondern eine totalitäre Regierung und eine weitgehend inkompetente militärische Führung ... der Gegner von damals und der Gegner Mitte der fünfziger Jahre waren identisch: das totalitäre System in der Sowjetunion” (Holert and Terkissides 127).

10. One precaution written into rearmament was that German troops were not to participate in open conflicts even within NATO, but were to limit themselves to the defense of national borders; the right to refuse military service for ethical reasons was also constitutionally guaranteed.

11. For further information on the history of West Germany’s *Wiederbewaffnung*, see Bullivant and Rice, especially 230-43.

12. For a detailed discussion of the “nine theses” and the public debate surrounding the “citizen in uniform,” see “Reader Sucherheitspolitik: Die Bundeswehr vor neuen Herausforderungen” available online at <[www.reader-sipo.de/artikel/0102_AVII4 .pdf](http://www.reader-sipo.de/artikel/0102_AVII4.pdf)>.

13. The exact phrase Holert and Terkissides use is “*das Militär as Stichwortgeber der Kontrollgesellschaft*” (125)—that is, the concept of the military as actively delivering the key terminology for society.

14. “Wir gehen nun davon aus, dass die fragmentierende und dezentrierende Erfahrung des Krieges, wie sie als massenkultureller Krieg kommuniziert wird, für die neoliberale Subjektivität Modellfunktion hat. Die Subjekte der Lifestyle-Kulturen, die Fitnessbewussten, die Diät-Versessenen, die Sex-Begeisterten und Erfolgshungrigen, diese Flex-Worker am Selbst kämpfen sich entweder als mobile Einzelkämpfer oder sozialkompetente Teamplayer, mit Ellenbogen oder mit sozialer Intelligenz zum Ziel, der *triumphalen Autonomie*” (85).

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ABSTRACT

Kept in the public consciousness by a devoted fan following, the series *Raumpatrouille Orion*, all seven episodes of which aired in 1966, stands as the first science fiction program produced by and for German television. With its critical exploration of insubordination in a military setting, the show reflects ambiguities among the German population about West Germany’s role in NATO in the wake of German rearmament after World War II. At the same time, the show’s critique of blind military obedience and its positive validation of insubordination prepared the way for a new form of competitive individualism. The program echoes central features of the brand of neoliberalism common in post-War West Germany.

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