

Josefin Graef

The Dynamics of Narrating Public Violence: The *National Socialist Underground* and the (Re-) Negotiation of Germanness

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My research looks at the right-wing extremist "National Socialist Underground" (NSU) in Germany to investigate the social dynamics behind the processes of (re-)narrating public acts of violence across time. The NSU is suspected to have committed ten murders, two bombings and fifteen bank robberies between December 1998 and November 2011 before they were identified by the police. Since then, the news media in particular have referred to these acts as 'terrorism', whereas before they had been classified as drug-related crime or attributed to the Turkish mafia ("Kebab Murders"). My project asks: How and why were the events narrated so differently over time?

To answer this question I draw on Paul Ricoeur's textual hermeneutics and work on collective memory, critical terrorism studies and narrative theory, and employ news media narrative analysis as a method. I analyse the changing narratives created in connection with the events now attributed to the NSU over a period of thirteen years (2000-2012) in selected national newspapers and news magazines in Germany, and develop a theoretical framework that can account for the dynamics of narrating public acts of violence over time in the news media.

Based on an approach to the news media that sees them as a forum for the development, exchange and contestation of collective narratives, I argue that the narrative discourses on the acts of violence committed by the NSU reveal a process of (re-)negotiation of different dimensions of *Germanness*. This (re-)negotiation is provoked by the embeddedness of these discourses in collective memories and expectations, revealing the perpetually incomplete process of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* – which is, however, no longer exclusively focused on Germany's National Socialist past –, the complexities of Germany as an immigration society and the narrated nature of the "terrorism" label.

Profile

I hold a BA in European Studies from the University of Passau, Germany, and graduated with an MA from the University of Hamburg and an MSc from the University of Edinburgh, both in European Studies, in 2012. My MA thesis is entitled "Creating EU Memory Standards: On the Link between Turkey's Denial of the Armenian Genocide and the Concept of Europeanness".

I am the IGS/DAAD project scholarship holder and project assistant on the Institute's major research project "Worldviews. The German Past and the Contemporary World: The Domestic and Foreign Politics of Memory" (2013-2015) and writing my PhD on public violence and German identity in context with the *National Socialist Underground* (NSU).

In the academic year 2013/14 I also held the position of Co-Chair (Events) of the Graduate Centre for Europe (GCfE), an interdisciplinary initiative for postgraduate students of Europe (www.gcfe.bham.ac.uk (<http://www.gcfe.bham.ac.uk>)).

Qualifications

- BA European Studies, University of Passau
- MA European Studies, University of Hamburg
- MSc European Studies, University of Edinburgh

Research interests

- Concepts of National and European Identity
- EU Enlargement Policy and EU-Turkey Relations
- Collective Memory Studies
- Political Violence and Terrorism
- 20th Century German History
- Narratives Discourse

Conference Papers

'Attack on Germany: (Re-) Negotiating Self-Images in Response to NSU Terrorism', 21st International Conference of Europeanists 'Resurrections', Council of European Studies, Washington, D.C., 14th-16th March 2014

'Collective Memory Revisited: How Useful is Halbwachs' Approach to Memory for Understanding European National Memories of the Holocaust?', DAAD Young Scholars School 'The German Past and European Memory: Dictatorship and Democracy in the 21st Century', Institute for German Studies, University of Birmingham, 24th-26th July 2013

'Performing Memory Conflicts in the European Parliament: Turkey's Denial of the Armenian Genocide and the Creation of EU Memory Standards', Conference 'Memory, Conflict and Space', The Archbishop Desmond Tutu Centre for War and Peace Studies, Liverpool Hope University, 10th-12th July 2013

'Re-approaching European Identity: A Conceptual Framework for Analysing Europeanness', Young Scholars School "European Identity: Concepts - Evidence -Research Methods", Friedrich-Schiller-University of Jena, 17th-23rd March 2013.

Teaching responsibilities

- [Introduction to the European Union: History, Politics and Institutions](http://www.bham.ac.uk/undergraduate/courses/govsoc/modules/year-one/introduction-european-union-history-politics-institutions.aspx) (2014-2015)

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