

Andres Veiel

Bordering on Fiction – Documentary Filmmaking on the Edge of Reality

Preceded by the screening of Andres Veiel's film *The Kick* (2006).

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INTRODUCTION *THE KICK*

During the night of 12th July 2002, two brothers, Marco and Marcel Schönfeld, and their friend Sebastian Fink, fatally maltreated a 16-year-old boy named Marinus Schöberl. For hours on end the shaven-headed perpetrators beat their victim, a member of the HipHop scene with a tendency to stutter. Perpetrators and victim all knew each other. They all came from Potzlow, a village in the Uckermark region of Brandenburg, sixty kilometres north of Berlin. The unbelievable cruelty of this “skinhead murder” as it was known, attracted media attention far beyond the immediate locale of the crime. Marinus was made to bite the edge of a feeding trough in a pig sty. Inspired by the kerb killing in the film *American History X*, Marcel executed Marinus by jumping onto the back of his victim’s head. The perpetrators buried the boy’s body in a cess pit. Marinus Schöberl’s skeletal corpse was not found until four months later, in November 2002.

Andres Veiel’s filmic protocol for two actors is based on more than twenty conversations conducted with two of the perpetrators, as well as the victims’ relatives, friends and neighbours in Potzlow. Just as in the stage version of this text, which was performed at Berlin’s Maxim Gorky Theatre, all of the speaking parts in this screen adaptation are played by Susanne-Marie Wrage and Markus Lerch.

The film won several awards (f.e. Grand Prix at the Visions du Reel Festival in Nyon, Best Feature Film at the Achtung Berlin Filmfestival 2006 and was awarded Film of the Year 2006 (Evangelische Jury).

UNWANTED RESEARCH

In September 2004, two years after the murder of Marinus Schöberl, the co-author Gesine Schmidt and I started our research work. When we first visited the village of Potzlow the local priest said to us: “The media have done enough damage already. We’re fed up. We don’t need you. Stay away.” Many other people in the village reacted in the same way. In the first days of our research we got some idea of how long the process of building up trust, of finding some sort of approach would take.

In comparison to a journalist we had a big advantage. We had time for our work. I sent him the priest some films of mine, and said, “Okay, you can stick to your decision, but maybe at least after a few weeks or months we can have some sort of debate or discussion without any camera, of course, and without even my microphone.”

So the same thing happened with the parents of the perpetrators in this case. One of the lawyers helped us. The perpetrators’ mother and father just gazed at us for the first hour or two, gauging how we were reacting. They were full of distrust. They didn’t allow us even to take out a pen and write down something. So we just asked questions and let them talk. When we left five hours later, the mother asked one question: “Will you come again?” And I felt that this was both the ambivalence of silence and the necessity of talking about it. In a way, this was a turning point.

This was a situation that happened time and time again with other people in the village. And we were not always able to get people to trust us. For example, the victim’s family, even today, after two-and-a-half years of research work – first the theatre play and then the film, and then the book about the whole case –

are still not willing to talk to me. So it was always a tightrope walk – would we find some sort of approach to the village and to the families or is there something like a wall of silence we have to accept?

The lawyer told us that the victim's family only wanted to find some kind of peace. Maybe they'll never find it, but they're pretending that it's a healing process. On the other hand, time never heals such wounds, but they hoped to find some kind of healing process, and didn't want to be disturbed while going through it. And this was something we had to accept.

So we had to take everything step by step – sometimes three steps forward and two steps backwards.

BUILDING UP TRUST WITH A KILLER?

But the main point for us, of course, was to go to the prison. We wanted to talk to the perpetrators. I had made another film about terrorism and had dealt a lot with people who have killed others. But in this particular case, I remember the morning when we went to the older brother Marco. I went with my co-author Gesine Schmidt, and asked her in the car: "Should we shake Marco's hand? How do we say hello to him?" I've never asked myself this question before when going to meet someone for the first time. But in this case, I asked Gesine. And she said, "I don't know, but I'm not going to shake hands. Maybe we should just sit down and see what happens."

The image of Marco was built up, of course, by the media. We had a lot of newspaper reports about the trial, and he was described as an ice cold person who gazed at the witness with a look like, "Okay, I'll be in for ten, twenty years, and then I'll get out and we'll see." So he was, in a way, intimidating people. At least they felt intimidated. That's what they told us. So no remorse, no apologies, nothing until the very end. He just looked down with these cold eyes.

So this was the image we had of him. And then we entered this small cell, where a woman with a walkie-talkie was sitting. She controlled the whole conversation. I can't really describe it, but at first I felt something like pity for him. Marco was sitting in the corner of this small cell, looking down. He was depressed, and was talking about suicide. This was not a situation where you act manly and say, "Well, if I'm going to have to spend my whole life in prison, I'll just kill myself."

I really felt his deep desperation, and some sort of self-pity. Yet at the same time, I was fighting against my own empathy. I didn't want to feel *any* empathy for Marco. And when we left the prison, I said to Gesine, "Maybe this is the key for the structure of the play and the film – we have to follow this ambivalence. We have to give these people a biography. But we also have to keep this monster-type of coolness of the deed they did. So we have to find this tightrope walk where we keep both parts in it, and don't apologize and make victims out of these perpetrators. But we also have to find a way of understanding why they are the way they are or why they were the way they were that night."

This was the starting point – to talk as much as we could. The problem was with Marco. After the first visit, he had some problems because he was talking about suicide. And the guard said afterwards, "You're crazy! You're asking him about suicide. Do you know what this means? For him, it means he won't sleep anymore because every half an hour we're obliged to turn on the lights. And this will kill him. You will kill him because of this. It's better you don't show up again. I'll tell Marco it's better for you to leave him alone." And that's what he did. So he said, "I'm fed up. Don't come anymore."

So our only contact was with the younger brother Marcel. And with him, we also felt this extreme ambivalence. Sometimes he was like a charming young boy of eight or ten, where he seemed very innocent. And sometimes he had this cold, stiff look on his face, and I felt like I didn't have a chance of getting beyond this façade of coldness.

We started to ask questions. Marcel said, "I'm not willing to talk about that night. We can talk about me as a child, about my parents, about the prison conditions." So we came the first time and talked about his childhood. We came a second time and talked about school. Then we came a third time and talked about

his parents. We came a fourth time and talked about the prison situation. And each visit, I felt like we stopped at this door to that night. That was the reason we were there. And I said to my co-author, "Next time I will start, even if it means breaking the rules."

So we came, and I asked him a very simple question: "What happened the morning of that day in July?" So at least it was 10-15 hours before everything started. It was still some sort of innocent realm of the whole day. And he started to talk. We went through what happened during the next hour, what happened this minute and that minute, the next hour. And I was uncertain because I felt like he was starting to get edgy. He wanted to have a drink. I went out and got him a drink. Then he wanted to have a cigarette.

So it was a mix of feelings. Sometimes I felt like a policeman because I pulled him back and said, "Okay, let's go back to this minute." He kept wanting to escape, not in terms of wanting to stop the conversation or leaving the cell, but in terms of jumping to the next day or the next week. And I took his hand and said, "No, let's go back to this very moment."

And so we went through the whole night, minute by minute. It took maybe three hours. He got a drink, and suddenly he was relieved. He was telling jokes. He was talking in complete sentences. Before he would say two or three words, then stop. Then he'd say another two or three words. And it was like a door opener to talk about what it means to him now, two-and-a-half years later, in terms of remorse. I asked him, "Think about the mother of the victim Marinus. It's not me. I'm the mother. What would you tell the mother if she were sitting here?"

QUESTION: Did you record any of this?

VEIEL: Yes, we did. But only audio. There was only silence for three or four minutes. I was just waiting. I didn't know where he was. I didn't feel like he was really thinking about it. He was somewhere else, in another world, I felt. And then I built some sort of bridge. I said to Marcel, "Think about the mother. If she would say, 'You did the worst thing you could do to a mother – you killed my son. That's why I want to look you in the eyes. I want to know you.'" This was a bridge he could enter. And he said, "Then in this case, I think I could apologize. Or at least I could say, 'Thank you.'"

This was a starting point for the next meetings to talk about his present, how he deals with the images of that night, the images of Marinus, about his dreams. And this was interesting for me because there were some differences between the interrogation reports and what he told us. The main difference was in the responsibility. He took full responsibility when he was talking with us. He said, "It's not my older brother Marco. It's me." And when he was interrogated after his arrest, he said, "Oh, I was afraid of my older brother. I had to do it because if I didn't, my brother would have beaten me up or even killed me."

So he stopped finding excuses. But on the other hand, I knew it wasn't the question of responsibility in terms of "Oh, I've changed my mind. I'll take responsibility for it." It had another level – the prison itself. The prison, or the majority of the young prisoners, still had this Nazi attitude. And to survive in this prison, you have to be the hero. So he told us frankly, "After I came here, after I was arrested, I said, 'I killed a Jew. I killed one of these guys.' And they said, 'You're great.'" He was something like a real tough guy. And that was the reason why he said it wasn't his brother. "I'm not afraid of my brother. I did it. I'm the hero."

It was absurd for us because we had the conversation recorded onto tape, but we couldn't use it because we knew if we used these parts of the interview in the play or in the film, we'd have to tell something about the background, about how and why he's talking like that. Then we decided not to include the prison situation today in the play. So we had to go back to the interrogation transcriptions."

For us, it was an interesting experience because when we came out of the prison after this marathon of three or four hours of interrogations, I was shivering. I was so deep in the whole shit that I wasn't sure how I could stand it any longer. But I felt some sort of necessity for us. So it was very strange that we couldn't use this interview.

In a way, it was a journey to make this whole thing, which took us more than seven months. And it was very disturbing, very irritating. Sometimes I was at the point of thinking it was all too much for me – something that's never happened to me before. It was so demanding that at night I got these images how Marcel jumped on Marinus head.

HOW TO DEAL WITH VIOLENT IMAGES

At least something was clear – we have to find an abstract approach in terms of not showing the violence directly, of not showing any images from *American History X*. Of course, we watched the film, and initially thought of using this image because it's the event that triggered everything. Without *American History X*, Marinus might still be alive.

So the idea came up that we had to use this scene in the film or play. But then after that conversation with Marcel, we said, "No images. Everything is so strong. We can just rely on words. That's enough." This was the first decision. The second decision that came up was to use only two actors. Everything that tries to imitate or illustrate the situation in the village, the situation that night is a dead end for the process. And the third decision was to minimize everything. First of all, we had the idea of costumes. We had a lot of possibilities to create each part, each role in itself through the costumes. We had them one day, then we got rid of them. I wanted to reduce everything even more.

At first, we were going to have the man play all the male parts and the woman all the female ones. But then we decided to mix them up. As much as we could, we wanted to add distance to the subject in terms of Brecht's alienation theory. You don't have to show the accident, but what happens as a result of it – how everyone reacts to it and is changed by it. But the accident in itself doesn't need to be shown. In fact, it would only be disturbing to show it.

We had the idea to work with these particular actors because they could work with very subtle gestures. We had a long casting process, especially for the man. It was very, very hard to find somebody who was able to play both the public prosecutor as well as Marinus' friend in the playful sense of this boyish character. We had a good public prosecutor and a good boyish character, but it was hard to find someone who could play both roles.

So it took three or four casting sessions before we found Markus Lerch.

SEARCHING FOR THE ROOTS OF THE VIOLENCE

What was astonishing for us, especially with the perpetrators' parents the more and more time we spent with them, was the question of why they were so normal. When you see the way the two sons not only murdered Marinus but also how they tortured him for hours, you wonder what the parents are like. What kind of story do they have?

Well, we met the parents, and they still had contact to their sons. They still visited them. They still loved them. This was even more irritating because for us, it would have been very easy to say, "Okay, here you have the monsters – the sons – and the parents must be similar. Maybe they tortured their children, too. Maybe the father was drunk in the morning, and he took Marco over his legs and beat him up or whatever. That's what we expected.

Far from it. He was talking about his children with a lot of sympathy. Somehow he felt guilty, but for other reasons. For his job he was most of the time absent. When he came home on the weekend, he did some work for other people in the village, building houses, repairing a roof. He was absent as a father, but he was not a monster. So there was no simple pattern for explaining where this violence came from, no father perpetrators. So we knew we had to look elsewhere.

First of all, the violence in the village was striking. You may remember this scene when Marco's fourteen, and he has to place this dead eel around his neck and masturbate. This type of cruelty is something you cannot invent. We were trying to figure out if this was something that took place there everyday or if it was something out of the ordinary. And we discovered that it was normal for these people. So this was one way of looking at the whole story.

Then we started talking to the parents about their biographies, and about their parents – about the perpetrators' grandparents. And suddenly we were in the mud of German history. There's this little scene where some people ask me, "Why do you have this boring scene in the film? It's a detour. What does it have to do with the perpetrators?" It's a detour, of course, when the father talks about his father and how he had to watch his parents being strangled by Russian soldiers. He was eight-years-old – the grandfather of the perpetrators. But, of course, this was clear what kind of feelings of guilt must exist for an eight-year-old who has to watch his own parents being strangled. And he did nothing. Of course, he was eight-years-old; he couldn't do anything. But the image of his parents being killed, and he's just watching and can't do anything about it. And he can't talk about it. The grandfather wouldn't talk about it.

And then we talked about the grandmother, who was raped by Russian soldiers. This isn't in the film, but it's in the book, which I finally wrote about the whole issue. (*)

She got pregnant, and the child was born. And she took it to the forest nearby and left it to die. Nobody talked about this.

And the grandmother's sister committed suicide at the end of the war. Why? Because the grandfather was in the Waffen SS. He was a real Nazi, and he took his pistol and shot himself in the head before the Russians came. And the grandmother's sister went to the lake in Potzlow, which was frozen, took some sleeping pills, and drowned herself along with her children.

So there were a lot of dramatic experiences in the generation before. And we just thought if you touch this, it's a little glimpse of something which is beyond everything else. Of course, it's not an explanation for what happened in July 2002, but it's something like the second wall, a small room you can enter which gives some light, some glimpse into what happened.

1.500 PAGES OF INTERVIEWS – HOW TO STRUCTURE THE MONSTER

We had more than 1.500 pages of transcribed interviews. And we had to figure out how we could structure this all, and minimize the enormous number of possibilities. In this case, we chose one version very quickly. It's interesting because I said, "Okay, we have to check with the actors if this is really the right decision." The main idea for it was our own experience – what we experienced while talking to Marcel, to other friends. There was Marco as the black shadow looming over everything. Marco was the one who was responsible. He seduced and suppressed his younger brother. He was the criminal. He was the monster.

So we decided to build up this monster – the whole experience we had before entering the prison. We waited as long as we could. First there's this little scene where he's sitting on the bench – only three or four sentences – about how people think he looks like his grandmother. I said we had to wait as long as we could, then we had to try to pull him closer. I knew we had his girlfriend Sandra. It was good fortune that we could talk to her because she was living someplace else and was not willing to talk at first. When she's talking about Marco's soft hands and how cute he was, it was something totally unbelievable for us. And I said to my co-writer, "We're going to have to use this." Because in the beginning, you have all these images of the black shadow, and suddenly this shadow is reduced. At first you don't think it's one person but two or three or four. And this irritation – our irritation – we had to try to transfer onto the text. This was a very simple idea, and we just tried to use elements to follow this idea, to mention Marco in the beginning sometimes, and suddenly after fifty-five minutes, he's there, and that's Marco.

Sometimes we looked at a word or half a sentence, for example, when Marco is describing how he looks at Marinus' smashed face, and this part was much longer. Of course, we could have kept it like that, but then we decided we'd keep two-and-a-half sentences. Then we took away a word, and put it back. I gave it to the actors and told them to speak it slowly. And then we put it back again. So really, we approached the text millimetre by millimetre. That was the challenge. We had the feeling that we needed to find some kind of approach for the ambivalence. If we cast too much light on the monster face, you can't stand it any more. You're so fed up and unwilling to listen to his biography anymore. But, on the other hand, we had to look at the cruelty; we had to look at this monster face. So it was a long process with the actors to determine which lines to keep and which to leave out.

AUTHENTICITY IN A FICTITIOUS PROCESS

There's one thing when I think about my work with the actors which I would call the core experience because it was something I never expected. One of the principle ideas was not to give the actors any videos, and not even show them any taped material because I was afraid they'd start to imitate the real persons. I said, "I want you to rely on the text body. That's all you get – papers. Nothing more." And they always said, "Well, just give us a hint, an idea. We'd at least like to listen to the tapes." And I said, "No way, just the text."

So they got the text, and we read it, and I said, "Find some sort of gesture for this character." Sometimes it was hard work. Sometimes it was very easy. But in the very end, what they developed was so close – sometimes one-to-one – with the real character. And it was the text. It was the grammar, how people talk. They were so sensitive for how to transfer the way the text was structured that the body found an expression which was authentic. I was shocked. This is something I really wanted to avoid – that they were so close to these people. And then I said, "Okay, maybe it's some sort of truth. We can rely on just one element. And we are so close when you use this one element. And we just use it, and you put away all the other layers and levels reality offers and that we always think we need – landscape, rooms, atmosphere, costumes, décor, etc." I said, "We'll keep all that out, and it's enough." This was, for me, a tremendous experience and proof of how important the language in itself is and how much we can rely on it. It's possible to form a character with only a sheet of paper. That's enough.

PREMIERE OF THE PLAY

In a way, it was an ethical question because we developed a feeling of complete trust with most of our interview partners. We asked them if they wanted to read the text, and they said no. And I said, "Why not? You always asked to read it. Now we have it." And I had the feeling they wanted to keep some kind of harmony. They were great at that. They knew there could be something in the script that creates a conflict, like maybe the harmony is killed and we don't come anymore or whatever, so they said, "Okay, we don't want to read it. Go ahead, do what you want." So the whole responsibility was suddenly on our side, and I was uncertain if they would come to the screening or the performance of the play. Some of them came. The perpetrators' parents didn't come, but other people from the village did.

There was one bad experience with Marco's girlfriend, Sandra. She came with two or three skinheads. And when the actress Susanne-Marie Wrage started her part, and was talking about how Marco was her true love, she stood up and yelled, "Bullshit! That's a lie. What are you talking about? I don't love him anymore. I never loved him." She was very aggressive, and so were the two other skinhead guys. I wasn't there that evening, but Susanne-Marie Wrage told me she nearly stopped the performance. But then she told herself it was like being in a tunnel: "Go ahead, go ahead. If they touch me, I'll stop. But if they just shout, I'll go on. I'll look her in the eyes and go on." And she did. And they left.

This was the only critical situation. And why? Because she had fallen in love with someone else and one of those skinheads was her new boyfriend. And of course, it was a question of loyalty. She had to show that this was a lie. But of course it wasn't a lie because it was what she had told us.

One of Marinus' friends called me the next day and said, "It was such a relief to look at myself. Thank you. You did it for me because you took something from me. And I can look at myself and it's like a mirror, but it's not me anymore. I finally started to sleep again. It was the first time I've been able to sleep well." So this was a very good experience. But not everybody reacted like this. For him it was like a starting point. He started a new apprenticeship. This was something good that came out of all of this.

WHY FILM?

For us, the question was: Why film? Because like I said in the beginning, we said farewell to the idea of filming. We didn't think there was any chance of using a camera. Then we thought about the play. And during the work itself, I discovered this subtle expression, like Susanne-Marie Wrage's twitching mouth, her shivering, all these elements – in theatre they're lost because they are 20-30 metres away from the audience. And I thought the camera is like a seismograph to catch these moments and transfer it to another language, to this subtle language of the face as a landscape. So it was a very quick decision during the rehearsal period. I said, "I can arrange some money. Let's do it. We have five nights." In the evenings we had the performance until 10 p.m., and we had six hours after that – from 10 p.m. until 4 a.m. – just before the whole thing stopped.

When you work at night, you have this strange intensity. And it helped. First of all, it helped, especially with Marcus, because he was sometimes doing too much. With all the parts, when he was doing too much, I tried to reduce it. But he had so much power, and he wanted to express himself. I waited until 2 a.m. or 3 a.m., and then he came down a little bit, but still had this tension. So I said, "Okay, let's do this scene again." It was fine. Excellent.

So we had these four of five nights. Then we got another amount of money because I said we would have to have a long editing process, especially because the sound design was very important. We have to offer the spectator something else. It can't be just filmed theatre; it must be something in itself which is a new possibility of finding what the film can offer.

Of course, we had another lighting concept. We used more light in this space to show the different possibilities or the echoes that the space offers. The DVD version is not the best quality, but on 35mm, you can discover that each person, each part has a different atmosphere. We worked very long and hard on this because it shouldn't be too obvious. It should be subtle. But just because it's subtle, it works deeper if you show it on the first level what you want to tell with the atmosphere.

This took a long time because I sent the sound engineer to different rooms ten times to record different ambient sounds and room sounds. Then we worked for quite a long time to find the right expression for each character. So the whole editing process took us more than five months, including the sound design, which you don't expect because you think, okay, you have the play, you have the actors, you have five nights, and we worked with two cameras. So it was quite obvious: sometimes you can take a close-up, you can take a wide shot. But it was very hard because if you use the close-up, you miss the body language, if you show the body language, you don't have the possibility to show what I call the twitching mouth of Susanne-Marie Wrage.

So it was a hard decision when to cut, when to use which shot because it always seemed to be a compromise, and we didn't want to make any compromises, of course, with the film. So it took us much longer than we expected. At first, we thought it would take two months, but it took much longer, as I said.

WHAT IS A DOCUMENTARY?

The main question many people ask me after watching the film is: What is it? Is it a documentary? Is it a theater drama documentary? I always answer: It's all of that. You have an authentic quality in it. On the other hand, it's fictitious in the most fictitious way because you have an actress and an actor who play the other part. You have this strange, theater-like room with just this cabin and bench. At the same time, Lars

von Trier's *Manderlay* had just come out, and I felt like it was time to make films like that. It's a challenge, of course, for the audience because they expect something else. People want to have action, etc. – not only young people. But the success of *Dogville* gave me some courage in a way to say, "Okay, let's try it."

It was a very cheap film. In terms of recouping its expenses, it did very well. But if you compare it to blockbusters, it's ridiculous. When you think about 10,000 spectators, it's ridiculous, of course. But I felt it was right to do this demanding experiment, even if it was a long fight with many people. Cinema owners were afraid, reluctant. They didn't think anyone would be interested, especially in the western part of Germany. Who's interested in a cruel story which deals with something that happened in Eastern Germany? Then it's too theater-like and people won't come. It was very hard because sometimes it played for only one week in theaters. The weekend is always critical because if you don't have 200 viewers over the weekend, the film gets dropped.

But other small cinemas tried to keep it. It was a really new experience. One cinema-owner said to me, "I will keep it, and I'll try to convince teachers to bring their classes. I will *pull* them into the cinema." So the first week there were about fifty people, and the next week there were about sixty. And I said, "Okay, let's wait half a year. And if each week you have ten more, then after half a year we'll have a thousand." Of course, after three weeks, he had to stop this experiment. But it was an interesting thing that sometimes beyond all the commercial aspects even this experiment has a chance if you have the right people in the right place.

So I will stop now. If you have any questions, ask them now. [*applause*]

MAN IN AUDIENCE: Thank you. I'm interested in why of the three perpetrators, you focused on only two. Then I'm also interested in the hour or two before the actual crime, when they went to this barn. They visited this couple, right, where one of them knocked off the door? Just out of curiosity, what happened to them? Were they ever brought before the court because apparently they observed the first round of beating?

VEIEL: I will answer the second question first. It was one of the most irritating things in the whole case – the three witnesses. Of course I wanted to talk to them, but they refused. They were on trial because they didn't help Marinus. And they were sentenced to eight months in prison because of that. But nobody, no witness ever said, "Well, I feel sorry about doing something wrong." No. Instead, they said to the public prosecutor: "How dare you accuse me of that?"

You have to know that Marco had beaten them up two years earlier, so they were intimidated. And in a way, they were happy – this time it's not us. It's Marinus. But this is no excuse, of course, because Marco was arrested one month later. First he was given a three-year sentence because he had beaten up a black guy. And then they could have at least gone to the police or to Marinus' father. So there is no excuse. But for me, it was actually one of the starting points for making the film.

First of all, it was this classical documentary idea because I felt like there was this dark shadow hanging over the entire village, not only what happened that one night. It's the whole village. Or at least it's a group in this village, which, in a way, was maybe involved. Maybe they knew more. But there was this vast silence, and there was no way to talk to them. The first time – and normally I don't do this – I offered them money. I wanted to bribe them. I really wanted to get them. But even with money, I couldn't get them.

But back to the first question of the third perpetrator. We did a lot of research into his biography and his character. And we decided that his story was an entirely separate film. He was not sentenced for the killing but for the excessive bodily harm which he caused. At first, we sprinkled parts of his biography throughout the story, but then we decided we'd have to have him on the same level as the brothers or take him out altogether. So we did the latter and focused on the brothers instead.

It's still very much, these eighty-two minutes. And I think this was the best decision. Then I wrote a book, and he's in the book.

WOMAN IN AUDIENCE: During your work – your interviews and so – you said it was very hard and sometimes you were on the edge. Were you ever scared you would never touch the reality? Like you said this sentence that was difficult for me: “After fifty-five minutes, there you have Marco.” And I thought: Will we ever have Marco somewhere, even after I don’t know how many minutes? Isn’t it too large between those five faces he has to catch him?

VEIEL: First of all, there was this pragmatic problem: We had only one chance to talk to him. Of course, we had his parents, friends, Sandra. So compared to the other protagonists, it was very little time. But at the same time, I felt like it was the essence – these nearly schizophrenic parts in his character that don’t fit. So I felt the necessity to put all these fragments we had into the script. So when you compare it to Marcel, with Marcel we took maybe five percent. And from Marco we used sixty, seventy, even eighty percent of what we had in the script. Of course, you still miss a lot or you want to know more, but that’s also my question.

One of my films is called *Black Box*, and in a way, we’re also in a black box here. Even if we do all our research – I did it in two-and-a-half years – in let’s say five years, we’d still be in a black box. We have some hints, something we can grab onto in this dark hole, and some lines we can draw in terms of reasons and being able to understand something, but other things will remain in the black box, in the dark part. That’s something we have to accept.

When I see other films where it’s so clear in the end, now you have the reasons – one, two, three, four, or why something like a murder is committed – I always feel like I’ve eaten fast food because I always feel like something is wrong. And I think we have these little hints, and we need to say, okay, we don’t get more. Maybe we are challenged to find something which fills the black holes. And it’s always connected with our own biographies, our own experiences. Some people do it. Some people start to develop projections and fill them.

WOMAN IN AUDIENCE: For me, it’s making me strong going that way because it’s hard to find people to help you. Isn’t it that people say: It’s not possible. You won’t make it. Like that black box, who do you think would be interested if you have only this, because you were working so long on it with little money? Who is taking you through all that?

VEIEL: Well, I have to talk about me. Along the way, I get a lot. The last period, when I was writing the book or the research work for the book, when I connected the night of July 2002 with Germany history – this sounds pathetic, but all these elements, not only the family, but the whole village, I felt like everything opened up and connected to other films I made before. It was like a new universe of experience – of war experience, of traumatic experience. And I felt like I started to enlarge this on a universal scale.

At first, you think it’s so specific, so extreme. And when I show the film – I just came from Kaliningrad – the film is understood. They were talking about Stalin, their grandfathers, their violence. They were talking about the rotten villages outside Kaliningrad. They were talking about alcohol. They were talking about nationalism. And they were talking more and more about the German past – what they experienced, what their grandfathers experienced, the silence. And so we jumped from the perpetrators to something else. I feel the magnetic force to work for so long on this was in order to reach that larger scale. The more I went into it, the more it was enlarged into another level.
No more questions? Thank you. [applause]

END

(*) *Der Kick, Ein Lehrstück über Gewalt*, Deutsche Verlagsanstalt (DVA) 2007, ISBN 978-3-421-904213-2