

FOOTBALL, MYTHOLOGY AND IDENTITY IN SÖNKE WORTMANN'S *DEUTSCHLAND. EIN SOMMERMÄRCHEN*

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I. INTRODUCTION: "THE SUMMER WE BECAME A NATION"

I. 1 Outline

The following study regards film as a form of cultural product that is recognized as particularly influential in the construction and deconstruction of national identities.¹ Within this context, I take a closer look at identity formations in the much-hyped documentary *Deutschland. Ein Sommermärchen* (2006) by German director Sönke Wortmann. Despite having received relatively little scholarly attention,² there is no doubt about the movie's relevance for discussions of what a new reunified Germany should and could be. Fast on the heels of heated debates regarding Germany's public image in the new millennium and accompanied by much press coverage, Wortmann significantly chose to film the German football team during the FIFA World Cup 2006 which took place in Germany. The film's premiere on 3 October 2006, the Day of German Unity, became a spectacle of national importance: Attended by many members of Germany's high society, including German chancellor Angela Merkel, the first screening was simultaneously broadcast in several movie theatres and on TV networks across the nation.

The true significance of Wortmann's movie lies in its proposition of what was once taboo, namely the creation of a positive identification with the German nation. The following key questions guide my reading: How does Wortmann's film create a new German national identity? Is it coming from a neutral place of entertainment or ideologically charged, whereby, according to Jeff Hopkins, "meanings of place and society are made, legitimized, contested, and obscured"?³ Furthermore, does the director critically analyse or, rather, reinforce national myths and traditional hegemonic hierarchies? And finally, what is the specific importance of mental (sports) maps for Wortmann's re-imaginings of Germany and its position in the world? Wortmann's *Deutschland. Ein*

¹ See Hilary Winchester et al., *Landscapes. Ways of Imagining the World* (Harlow: Pearson, 2003), 42f.

² See, for example, Christian Tagsold, *Spiel-Feld. Ethnografie der Fußball-WM 2006* (Konstanz: UVK, 2008), 135; The movie also served as background for a collection about the European Cup 2008, in which the authors pointed out the flaws in various expectations created by the German press, FIFA and the government in 2006: *(K)ein Sommermärchen: Kulturindustrielle Fußball-Spektakel*, ed. Torsten Heinemann and Christine Resch (Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 2010).

³ See Jeff Hopkins, "A Mapping of Cinematic Places: Icons, Ideology, and the Power of (Mis)representation," in *Place, Power, Situation, and Spectacle. A Geography of Film*, ed. Stuart C. Aitken and Leo E. Zonn (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 1994), 47.

Sommermärchen, as I show here, is a nostalgic celebration of an “imagined community,”⁴ a stylised and emotionally charged dream of a *Mythos Deutschland* for the new millennium.

After a closer look at the movie’s reception, part II examines the presence of myths in Germany after 1945 and highlights the repeated function of football as a sort of release valve for the national trauma following the war. My investigation then questions why Wortmann connects the 2006 games to Germany’s victory in the 1954 Football World Cup. Interviews and statements by Wortmann, coach Jürgen Klinsmann and others further elicit the intentions and objectives behind the movie, namely to elevate the German football team to a positive utopian vision of what Germany could be. Part III explores not only how masculinities are constructed in and through cinematic space but also more importantly, how these illusionary spaces are used to convey ideas of nationalism. Wortmann, as I show, strongly alters the real appearance of sportscares, with the goal of turning them into powerful politicised spaces, emphasising intimacy, inward concentration and elitism. In accordance with Mike Crang’s reflections on cultural geographies, part IV explores how Wortmann’s imaginative geographies ascribe meanings to people and places through the construction of relational identities.⁵ Points of interpretation include re-imaginings of Germany’s position in Europe as viewed through the lens of football, portrayed attitudes towards other countries, and processes of “otherings.” Finally, I consider Wortmann’s attempted revision of Heinrich Heine’s *Deutschland. Ein Wintermärchen*, both for its motivation as well as its possible negative repercussions.

I. 2 In Search of a Unified Country

The summer of 2006, the year Germany hosted the World Cup, has been widely publicised by the German media as “the summer we became a nation.”⁶ The result was a widespread debate about patriotism in the German public. Ever since 1945, public discussions in Germany have focused on the predicament of whether or not a positive national identification was allowed despite the nation’s National Socialist past. Instead, influential studies, such as Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich’s *The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behaviour* (New York: Grove Press, 1975), revealed a country in an ongoing state of shock. However, Germany’s reunification in 1990, together with the increasing openness of Germany’s young generation to discussing the Nazi past, slowly triggered new positive public expressions towards identification as a nation. In addition, a variety of professionally planned image campaigns (such as the *Du bist Deutschland* campaign) accompanied the World Cup in 2006. Even though they cannot be regarded as political myth per se, political scientists such as Herfried Münkler rightfully granted them an equivalent role. The purpose of

⁴ See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1991).

⁵ Mike Crang, *Cultural Geography* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 79.

⁶ See Peter Kümmel, “Fußball wie noch nie,” *Die Zeit*, 5 October 2006, <http://www.zeit.de/2006/41/WM-Film> (last accessed on 16 February 2011).

these campaigns has always been the same: To strengthen a sense of national community via controlled images, while instilling specific emotions in the German public.⁷

The search for a new national identity in the reunified Germany has not been limited to documentaries, as shown by the films of several young directors (i.e. Leander Haußmann, Michael Haneke or Fatih Akin), which address political tensions, refigure perceptions of German space as well as discuss the country's integration of subcultures.⁸ Cinematic approaches to national identity-formations are especially intriguing, when considering that Benedict Anderson's famous study on imagined communities had declared the creation of a national awareness impossible without the media.⁹ After the media hype produced by the German press, particularly by the widely circulated German tabloid paper *Bild*, Wortmann's *Deutschland. Ein Sommermärchen* was immediately very popular with German audiences. Wortmann's documentary went straight to the top of the movie charts after its initial release in theatres on 5 October 2006 and was the 6th most-watched movie in Germany in 2006.¹⁰ Current reviews on the popular sale site www.amazon.de, where the movie still holds the top spot in the category "football DVDs," also show an overwhelming number of positive reviews (with an average of 4/5 stars) repeatedly citing Germany's "magic summer of 2006."

In stark contrast to the movie's popularity, only a small number of critical reviews exist in secondary literature and respected news magazines. Anthropologist Christian Tagsold emphasises, in his very positive assessment, that Wortmann's movie rejects classical forms of nationalism.¹¹ His review goes hand in hand with various articles in the magazine *Der Spiegel*, which had previously devoted an entire issue to the phenomenon of Germany's summer fairy tale (06/25, 19 June 2006). On 3 October 2006, *Spiegel*-journalist Reinhard Mohr praised the film's unpretentious and objective content as a refreshing change in Germany and its depiction of a "happy historical caesura."¹² Others, such as Peter Kümmel's review in the highly respected weekly newspaper *Die Zeit* from 5 October 2006, show significantly less excitement. Instead, Kümmel warns against the movie's insistence on the uniqueness of the events and detects a surprising emptiness behind Wortmann's cinematically hyped-up myths.¹³ My interpretation of Wortmann's documentary goes against popular readings of his film as an objective portrayal of Germany's football summer in 2006. Building on Kümmel's critique, the following investigation places

⁷ See Herfried Münkler, *Die Deutschen und ihre Mythen* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 2009), 489f.

⁸ For more information see David Clarke, *German Cinema: Since Unification* (London and New York: Continuum, 2006); *The Cosmopolitan Screen. German Cinema and the Global Imaginary, 1945 to the Present*, ed. Stephan K. Schindler and Lutz Koepnick (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2007); *Spatial Turns. Space, Place, and Mobility in German Literary and Visual Culture*, ed. Jaimey Fisher and Barbara Mennel (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2010).

⁹ See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

¹⁰ See, for example, a ranking on the following webpage: <http://www.insidekino.de/DJahr/D2006.htm> (last accessed on 6 January 2011).

¹¹ Tagsold, *Spiel-Feld*, 135.

¹² See Reinhard Mohr, "Das ist unser Spiel! Das ist unser Spiel!," *Der Spiegel*, 3 October 2006, <http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/kino/0,1518,440495,00.html> (last accessed on 16 February 2011).

¹³ See Kümmel, "Fußball wie noch nie."

Deutschland. Ein Sommermärchen in its wider national and political context: with respect to the film's cultural significance, my analysis explores both origins and rewritings of national myths in Wortmann's film.

II. THE MIRACLE OF FOOTBALL: STANDING STILL OR MOVING ON

II. 1 The Myth of Bern, 1954

Sport and film, according to Roland Barthes, have two things in common: they both can convey myth.¹⁴ Within this assessment, football occupies a role of special importance due to its worldwide influence and, as a major news and television event, its ample marketing opportunities. The *Fédération Internationale de Football Association* (FIFA) has been acknowledged as a global socioeconomic force that shapes cultures and identities.¹⁵ FIFA-president Joseph Blatter even sees football's specific importance in its power to bring all nations, races, religions, generations and sexes together.¹⁶ But football is also a politicised and commercialised media event, an ideal space of projection for different political agendas.

One of the key scenes in *Deutschland. Ein Sommermärchen* shows German chancellor Angela Merkel as she speaks to the German football team in the Schloss Grunewald in Berlin. Merkel states that she will give neither tips about sports nor political lectures. The reason for this, the audience hears the chancellor say, is her belief, "*dass Fußball und Politik ganz unterschiedliche Sachen sind*" ("that football and politics are completely different things").¹⁷ Yet, Merkel emphasises, the German government would do anything they could to help the German team. As a result, the chancellor's differentiation between football and politics comes as something of a surprise. Germany, under the initiation of then-chancellor Gerhard Schröder, wanted to present itself as the *land of ideas*, resulting in the federal government's support and financing of several cultural programs and projects centring on the FIFA World Cup 2006.¹⁸

The media took on an immensely influential role in the shaping of collective emotions as commentaries and "expert" interpretations of the individual games had the power to make and break the star status of the football players. West Germany's victory in the Football World Cup in 1954 undoubtedly became one of the major myths of the Federal Republic of Germany. Often cited in everyday

¹⁴ Roland Barthes, *Mythen des Alltags*, transl. Helmut Scheffel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1964), 86.

¹⁵ See Leslie Sklair, *Sociology of the Global System* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991).

¹⁶ Holger Meeh, "Faszination Fußball," *Politik & Unterricht. Zeitschrift für die Praxis der politischen Bildung* 32/1 (2006): 6.

¹⁷ All film quotes from Sönke Wortmann, *Deutschland. Ein Sommermärchen* (Germany: Little Shark Entertainment/WDR Mediagroup, 2006). All translations by the author.

¹⁸ See Erik Eggers, "All around the Globus: A Foretaste of the German Football Imagination, c. 2006," in *German Football: History, Culture, Society*, ed. Alan Tomlinson and Christopher Young (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 229f.

West German life, it came to symbolise the hope of prevailing, even in the toughest times. Not surprisingly, football was also in the foreground in the weeks and months before the opening of the World Cup on June 9, 2006. “Wir brauchen einen Rausch” (“We need an inebriation”), wrote the German magazine *Der Spiegel* (06/23) almost conspiratorially on June 3—only days before the Cup started. The reason behind this statement was the common perception that the collective German mood had sunk into the doldrums. Instead of optimism, high unemployment and economic crises dominated the headlines.

As a counter-story to the omnipresent depression, the narrative of the *Wirtschaftswunder* (the industrial miracle of post-war Germany symbolically expressed in the 1954 World Cup) reappeared in the public debates. It was none other than Sönke Wortmann who decided to turn the myth into an epic and hugely successful film entitled *Das Wunder von Bern* (2003). Evinced by over four million viewers in movie theatres and eleven million viewers at its television premiere, Wortmann had obviously touched a nerve in German society—much to the surprise of the German *Fußball-Bund*. It is interesting to note that officials had actually feared that Wortmann was going to destroy the “myth” of the 1954 World Cup. Myth, according to Aleida Assmann, either distorts historical facts or affectively transforms one’s own history into specific references to be used as orientation for the future.¹⁹ Wortmann’s cinematic portrayal sought to do the latter. It transformed the events into suggestive images for the collective memory of the nation, into memories to be passed on to future generations.

Wortmann decided to make the movie—as he explains in his World Cup diary—to “keep the myth alive through film.”²⁰ Even more, the mass medium of film, according to the director, could be used to introduce this “German myth” to Germany’s next generation. Wortmann’s politically charged explanation reveals the main motivation behind his football movies as one that is anything but a neutral documentation: namely to perpetuate German myths. The decisive factor is the director’s belief in football’s power to symbolically visualise imagined ideas of the nation. Football’s creation of favourites and opponents, its symbolic venues of international competition, and the raising of emotions through exclusive fan identification with the team and players indeed seem to turn the sport into a substitute location for national pride. This brings us to the following question: How and with what results does Wortmann transfer the myth of 1954 to Germany’s football summer of 2006?

II. 2 A Utopian Vision of Germany, 2006

Since the imagination of a nation relies heavily on markers from the collective memory, Wortmann’s diptych of *Das Wunder von Bern* and *Deutschland. Ein Sommermärchen* can and should be read as an attempt to intentionally anchor a specific image of (past and present) Germany in the mind of the audience.

¹⁹ See Aleida Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit. Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik* (München: C.H. Beck, 2006), 40.

²⁰ Sönke Wortmann, *Deutschland. Ein Sommermärchen. Das WM-Tagebuch* (Köln: Kiepenheuer und Witsch, 2006), 16f.

Wortmann's diary gives further insight into his intentions. Here, the director remembers—after experiencing 25,000 fans waiting for the national team in front of the hotel in Stuttgart (the day the team won 3rd place in the World Cup)—the tens of thousands of people welcoming the West German team returning home after their victory at the 1954 World Cup.²¹ In the year 2006, Wortmann concludes, the circle was finally made complete. Whereas the 1954 team had given the young West German republic its first sense of “*Selbstwertgefühl*” (“self-worth”), the 2006 team helped the country to like itself again.

As previously mentioned, the national euphoria in the 2006 football summer created a passionate debate about a “new patriotism” in the German newspapers.²² The explanations reached from a “post-war normalisation” through a “football-only-patriotism” to the idea of “partyotism,” the carefree celebration of national victories without nationalistic tendencies under the official motto “*Zu Gast bei Freunden*” (“a time to make friends”). Wortmann himself participated in the debate through his diary, in which he made clear that his movie is neither about “partyotism” nor “football-only-patriotism,” but rather adheres to a bigger political picture. He again emphasised the extreme importance of the German national team for the country as its main catalyst in times of a stasis. According to the director, he too, in an attempt to convince possible critics, used to be sceptical about the national anthem and flag due to the country's dark past. As Wortmann tells his readers, the new German government in 1998, as well as a stay in the United States, helped him to bridge this distance. Wortmann concludes that the World Cup in 2006 finally confirmed his positive feelings about Germany, since the national team embodied “the perfect image of the new modern Germany.”²³ For him, the German football team is an idealised construct of the imagined German community, a utopian vision of what Germany could be. Their model, Wortmann implies, possesses the power to inspire and set the nation as a whole in motion.

In the film, this idea of a new Germany gets further support from team coach Jürgen Klinsmann. During the hype of the World Cup, Klinsmann had reached a symbolic height in the public eye, comparable to that of influential political figures. For a while, he was even portrayed by the German press as the nation's rightful future leader.²⁴ Wortmann treats him with unquestioned reverence and repeatedly shows lengthy speeches by the coach in which certain motifs keep reappearing. Throughout the movie, Klinsmann emphasises the uniqueness of the World Cup, thereby turning it into a larger than life event with a profound meaning for Germany. No one would ever experience anything like this again, the coach tells his players several times during the preparations for the World Cup. The German team, however, would seize this moment and turn it into something special (“*Das packen wir an und machen was ganz Besonderes draus*”). In addition to Klinsmann's immediate and passionate insistence on the

²¹ Wortmann, *WM-Tagebuch*, 188.

²² See Dagmar Schediwy, *Sommermärchen im Blätterwald. Die Fußball-WM 2006 im Spiegel der Presse* (Marburg: Tectum, 2008).

²³ Wortmann, *WM-Tagebuch*, 113.

²⁴ See Schediwy, *Blätterwald*, 63.

extraordinary relevance of the games for Germany's future, Wortmann further allows the coach to retrospectively shape, *a fortiori*, his projected homology between football and the national identity.

The director inserts carefully selected excerpts from an interview with Klinsmann in August 2006 in Huntington Beach, California, with the intention of underscoring the movie's main message. Here, Klinsmann once more stresses the significance of the team's performance for the German mentality, even after the end of the World Cup. Klinsmann's biggest concern is the German mentality of "*Stillstand*," of standing still instead of moving on. Wortmann's film diary gives even more insight into the interview beyond what is shown in the movie. The coach continues by stating that the goal of the German team was to demonstrate that "we could build an identity for everyone."²⁵ The World Cup in Germany, according to Klinsmann, led to a new perception of Germany within the global market as a country of parties, hospitality and openness. Wortmann's selective and highly orchestrated insertion of Klinsmann's statements in his documentary seeks to equally convince the targeted German audience of this proposed changed state.

The director further manipulates the coach's role in this development into a crucial one by blending in comments from the manager of the German team, Oliver Bierhoff. His message is straightforward: after years of disheartenment and slackness, Klinsmann had managed to make things hum because of his "positive thinking" and his "courage for change." More than anything, the coach had always propagated forward-oriented movement. With co-trainer Joachim Löw the audience hears the third anchor of the team repeating the same message. Löw confirms that the so-called "German virtues", with their emphases on an inflexible technique and a stiff fighting spirit lacking any multitasking skills, needed updating. The German team needed to exemplify a positive attitude and enthusiasm. This spark of how to live had finally ignited the German nation, Klinsmann adds in the movie, when the German team scored a goal against the Polish team. It had triggered a "wave of euphoria, good mood and positive thinking" which in turn had enabled the team to perform even better. The victory (again supported by the message of "positive thinking") against the Swedish team on June 24, Klinsmann later continues, had finally opened up this dynamic to the entire world, causing other nations to ask: "*Was bewegt sich da in Deutschland?*" ("What is going on in Germany?").

Wortmann creates a visual sign system based on progressive enhancement to demonstrate the truth behind Klinsmann's repeated message of a change in Germany and the nation's concurrent support. He not only shows ever-larger crowds of excited German fans following the team's every move, but also depicts a growing number of figures (such as police officers or soldiers) representing the German government surrounding, celebrating and protecting the team bus as it drives past and the team members look down from their elevated position. The slogan "*Für Deutschland – durch Deutschland*" ("For Germany – through Germany") as well as German pop star Xavier Naidoo's song "*Dieser Weg*," ("this way") a song about prevailing over difficulties, accompany the bus tour. As

²⁵ Wortmann, *WM-Tagebuch*, 196.

poignant summaries of the movie's intention, they complete Wortmann's celebration of an unquestioned unity between team and country. On July 4, the day of the fateful game against the Italian team, Klinsmann is seen euphorically screaming:

70.000 warten auf euch in ihren Herzen [...]. Wir werden Geschichte schreiben, weil wir diesen Moment packen [...]. Ihr habt 80 Millionen fasziniert [...] Wir sind ein Team! Wir sind ein Team! Wir sind ein Team!

[70 000 are waiting for you in their hearts. We will write history because we seize this moment [...]. You have fascinated 80 million [...] We are one team! We are one team! We are one team!]

Klinsmann's assessment is underlined climatically by Wortmann's cinematic cut to masses of German fans waving flags and painted in German colours. The German team wants to write history, a history that encompasses the whole nation and will give it future direction. Wortmann's film leaves no doubt: Politics, film and football are no separate entities. A closer look at the director's utilization of statements by the German team coach showed a strong evocation of feelings of togetherness, which Wortmann visually enhances to a national level through images of increasingly euphoric crowds. It is precisely this emotional presentation of the German football team and, more importantly, how Wortmann's assignment of space(s) conveys ideas of nationalism, which I explore in part III.

III. ENTERING THE TABOO: THE AESTHETICATION OF FOOTBALL

III. 1 Forbidden Places: The Locker Room

Several geographers have commented on the power of film in regard to the cultural construction of spaces.²⁶ According to Denis E. Cosgrove, cinematic landscapes represent a way of seeing and being seen, including national projections of social and global contexts.²⁷ These geographical self-images, however, are always imaginative, as pointed out by Edward Said.²⁸ Jeff Hopkins also confirms the power of film in its ability to blur the lines between reality and fantasy.²⁹ Imaginative geographies in Wortmann's film are equally complex in so

²⁶ Examples include Sean Carter and Derek P. McCormack, "Film, geopolitics and the affective logics of intervention," *Political Geography* 25/2 (February 2006): 228-245 or *Engaging Film: Geographies of Mobility and Identity*, ed. Tim Cresswell and Deborah Dixon (Lanham et al: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002).

²⁷ Denis E. Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 1.

²⁸ See Edward Said, *Orientalism. Western Conceptions of the Orient*, rev. ed. (London and New York: Penguin, 1995), 49ff.

²⁹ Hopkins, "Cinematic Places," 48.

far as they are constructed from several different sources: historical events, celebrities, speeches and the camera's biased gaze. The actual country in which the film is set remains relatively obscure as the main places shown are, for the most part, limited to hotel rooms, locker rooms, the bus and the football field. The question, however, arises as to whether the football players' actions within these anonymous spaces promote or undermine a global consciousness, essentially turning Germany into the place of mobility and encounter that Klinsmann's statements want to make us believe.

In his diary, Wortmann stresses that the "forbidden places" behind the scenes were not only of greater interest to him, but also to the viewers.³⁰ In fact, the director's footage of these previously hidden spaces was so explosive, that the filmmaker even renamed the unedited film reels "*Die schottischen Rosen*" ("The Scottish Roses") in order to avoid any theft. This perception of intense curiosity refers especially to the space of the locker room, the ultimate symbol of the team's "intimate space," which usually remained inaccessible for anyone outside the team. As a result, the locker room is temporarily transformed into a place of utmost mystery and secrecy. It is here that the coach can truly wield his power over a chosen elite group of players; in stark contrast to the performance on the field witnessed by millions, what happens in the locker room is usually hidden from view, thereby regarded as something nearly sacred. Several borders must be crossed in order to breach this sacred place—an experience that Wortmann charges with excitement and a reverential attitude towards the extremely choreographed space. The camera shakes when we get a peek into Klinsmann's speeches to his team. Wortmann further positions himself as one that does not belong; shot from either above or below the bench as the players walk by half-naked, embodying male fantasies of potency and strength.

The director emphasises the performance of the border by often remaining in the background, showing the players only from behind, or resting the camera on the official uniforms, thereby fetishising them as icons of national power. According to Wortmann, the practice strips emblazoned with the symbol of the German football team inspire in him "a very special respect."³¹ With him, the audience sneaks around in places of exclusive solidarity where—it is suggested—we are not supposed to be but wish we could gain entrance. Despite gaining access to the "taboo," Wortmann nevertheless seeks to enhance the mental image of the locker room as a mysterious, powerful space focused on the male body.

Other examples include a moment when Oliver Kahn, the famous German goalkeeper, watches Klinsmann's reaction to his resignation on TV. The camera moves away from Kahn's face and leaves the viewer to imagine the intensity of emotions that must be going through Kahn's head. A similarly mysterious episode includes Jens Lehmann, the main German goalkeeper for the World Cup, holding up a piece of paper that had helped him to win the penalty against the Argentinean team. Its contents had caused much speculation in the press. Rather than showing Lehmann's list, Wortmann instead blurs the focus, leaving

³⁰ Wortmann, *WM-Tagebuch*, 37.

³¹ Wortmann, *WM-Tagebuch*, 18f.

most of the sheet unreadable and the audience presumably wanting more. These idealisations are reminiscent of Bachelard's description of intimate space, in which he regarded the imaginative value of a house as much more important than its objective space.³² For this reason, it seems that instead of demystifying the team as part of the "documentary," Wortmann rather increases feelings of suspense and curiosity.

In addition, hotel rooms, lounges, and white tents become exclusive spaces for the team. They are "non-places" according to Marc Augé, sterile locales constantly in transit, in which the formation of identity is impossible.³³ Their transitory character, however, is undermined through both Wortmann and the coaches—transformed into an almost "sacred" place through the team's ritual of lighting torches in the yard. The torches, symbolising each player, mark and mystify both team and place as pure energy, further enhancing the team's depiction as elite. In these sterile locations, we see the team signing autographs or life-size figures of themselves, whereas the fans only catch glimpses of their idols here and there. In stark contrast to the experiences of the everyday fan, several cultural and national reference points enter and mark these forbidden spaces. Figures ranging from Chancellor Angela Merkel to Formula 1 racing legend Michael Schumacher are allowed to breach the intimate space of the locker room or other taboo places, special occurrences further marked in the film by the music of German singer Xavier Naidoo. The celebrities do not disturb but rather *enhance* a sense of inward concentration. From Schumacher's legendary racing career to the recent popularity of new German pop, the appearances of these German icons activate shared memories in the collective memory of the German audience and help create a sense of community on screen.

In the implied completion of the "miracle of Bern," the presentation of the team's forbidden places gains its importance in the construction of a cultural founding myth of a unified Germany. Wortmann's chosen places combine figures and symbols from the German collective psyche—putting on display what it means to belong to the "German nation." How these manipulations affect the cinematic appearance of sportsapes, such as the stadium and the football field, is discussed in the next section.

III. 2 Super-Realism: The Stadium

Even though most scenes create illusions of intimacy and reflection, Wortmann's visual geographies become highly politicised spaces in which the individual players take on the role of German icons. Fictional centres of the hotel room or the locker room replace peripheries throughout the movie, transforming the German team into Germany's imaginary centre. At the same time, the movie shows a continuous movement of these "taboo" places, recalling Michel Foucault's assessment of utopia, the perfect image of the nation not having a

³² See Gaston Bachelard, *La Poétique de l'Espace* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1958).

³³ Marc Augé, *Non-Places. An Introduction to Supermodernity* (London and New York: Verso, 2008), 83.

place.³⁴ In his famous analysis of space and the social structures of power, Foucault distinguishes between real and ideal social space. According to Foucault, the latter could only be traced in so-called heterotopias—phantasmagorical sites of isolation and forbidden areas (such as hospitals, cemeteries or brothels). Strikingly, Wortmann’s film evokes the realization of the impossible. The German team, artificially stylised as a highly sexualised and emotional fantasy space “for and through Germany,” is constantly in transit: perfect yet intangible as the team moves from Sardinia and Switzerland, through Freiburg to Düsseldorf and finally Berlin, before leaving again for the individual games.

Wortmann, however, solidifies traditional associations and affections connected to specific German locations. Berlin, as Wortmann states, had an especially strong psychological effect due its double role as capital and location of the final game,³⁵ while Dortmund is considered a place of strength because the team knew “*Die deutsche Nationalmannschaft ist hier ungeschlagen*” (“The German national team is undefeated here”).³⁶ Scenes like these show the perpetuation of geographical myths—a collective attachment to the imagined place of the stadium, artificially created through legends of matches and victories. The results are intense feelings of loyalty to place, nationalism and superiority that are ultimately conservative, as John Bale confirms, “hence reinforcing existing power relations in society.”³⁷ Stuart C. Aitken and Leo E. Zonn refer to film’s power to transform place into symbolic spaces of spectacles, with the goal of either interrupting assigned meanings or enhancing them.³⁸ In Wortmann’s film, the games indubitably turn into a spectacle: in spite of the alleged playful character in the face of globalisation, they become places of territorial struggles and negotiations of power.

Still, football is bound to a concrete space, with the football field as its undisputable centre. Just as was the case with the locker room, the stadium is also a highly complex place, both public and private, real and imagined.³⁹ The stadium, in Wortmann’s words, enables “magic,” as the fans push the team with “their will to victory.”⁴⁰ Significantly, the new “*Sichtbarkeit sozialer Unterschiede*,”⁴¹ (“the new visibility of social differences”) made apparent in the stadiums built for the 2006 World Cup through their distinct delineations between different sections, lounges, business and VIP areas, is not included. Wortmann’s use of the word “magic,” in its double meaning of an unbelievable and unique

³⁴ See Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” *Diacritics* 16 (Spring 1986): 22-27.

³⁵ Wortmann, *WM-Tagebuch*, 78.

³⁶ Wortmann, *WM-Tagebuch*, 101.

³⁷ See John Bale, *Sports Geography* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 21.

³⁸ Stuart C. Aitken and Leo E. Zonn, “Re-Presenting the Place Pastiche,” in *Place, Power, Situation, and Spectacle. A Geography of Film*, ed. Stuart C. Aitken and Leo E. Zonn (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 1994), 17.

³⁹ See Tagsold, *Spiel-Feld*, 97f.

⁴⁰ Wortmann, *WM-Tagebuch*, 102.

⁴¹ See Markus Schroer, “Vom ‘Bolzplatz’ zum ‘Fußballtempel.’ Was sagt die Architektur der neuen Fußballstadien über die Gesellschaft der Gegenwart aus?,” in *Ernste Spiele. Zur politischen Soziologie des Fußballs*, ed. Gabriele Klein und Michael Meuser (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2008), 170.

atmosphere as well as its obvious connection to fairy-tale fiction, only underscores the imaginatively charged artificiality of the space, with its own hierarchy and rules concerning movement and conquest. Like the locker room, the stadium is a closed circle with strict boundaries; during the World Cup it was secured by a huge number of police, secret agents and even soldiers.

The director shows the football field as a hybrid of real and imagined place, emphasised by an extreme use of fast and slow motion, atmospheric music and blinding lighting. With the help of various cinematic techniques, Wortmann portrays the players as idealised and aestheticised images, in which their healthy bodies transcend the laws of time and gravity within the realm of the stadium. The audience sees the games in a stylised, dreamlike form, through which the individual players are again cinematically transformed, made larger than life and charged with almost supernatural energy. Abstract shapes and the use of slow motion mask the pain and suffering involved in the game. Instead, long shots over the various stadiums, supercharged with the choir of singing fans, further turn the players into icons and the stadium into a place of super-realism; when we see huge video screens displaying their pictures next to the German flag and advertisements, notions of grandeur are clearly implied.

The actual game is transformed into a media topography, received as part reality and part fiction. This artificial topography does not produce a world without distance, as Scott McQuire points out, “but one in which spatial dimensions and temporal rhythms are subject to dynamic reconfiguration” according to dominant political and ideological discourses.⁴² Despite Wortmann’s insistence that his movie will not include any choreographed scenes,⁴³ the director is well aware of the emotional power of suggestion inherent in the film clips. Several times throughout the movie, we see players watching their own games or opposing teams on screen. Wortmann even screens film clips for the players in order to motivate the team before each game.⁴⁴ In the act of having the players watch themselves in their performance, Wortmann establishes a mirror in which “values” get projected, sometimes even further condensed by the main soundtrack of the movie: Xavier Naidoo’s song “*Dieser Weg*,” used as a leitmotif, is meant to trigger optimistic thinking and action.

Analogue to the image of the torch, Wortmann follows the two goalkeepers, Jens Lehmann and Oliver Kahn, from behind as they walk through the tunnel until their individual forms dissolve in a white glistening light. This sublime image finally reaches its peak in the fireworks over the Stuttgart stadium after the team had won third place over Portugal on July 8. Consequently, the space of the stadium becomes an active participant in the telling of the mythic narrative of “Germany.” It is the image of a closed worldview, which easily leads to the loss of critical distance and the creation of passionate emotions (“*Ein Tollhaus in Dortmund*” [“A madhouse in Dortmund”], we hear the commentator scream after

⁴² Scott McQuire, “Public Screens, Civic Architecture and the Transnational Public Sphere,” in *Mediengeographie. Theorie – Analyse – Diskussion*, ed. Jörg Döring and Tristan Thielmann (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2009), 565.

⁴³ Wortmann, *WM-Tagebuch*, 33.

⁴⁴ Wortmann, *WM-Tagebuch*, 94.

the victory against the Polish team). Aesthetics, then, are applied in *Deutschland. Ein Sommermärchen* with two results; to convince the German nation of its (mythical) potential and to exclude any socio-political implications. Instead of a globalised world, Wortmann constructs his image of a “new unified Germany” through an inward focus and the alteration of sportscares into spaces of exclusivity and elitism. As a result, part IV discusses the inevitable question arising in the face of Wortmann’s intimate constellations: How does the movie re-imagine Germany’s position within Europe and the world?

IV. FAIRY TALES: THE RHETORIC OF WAR

IV. 1 The Need for Villains

Traditional ideals of exclusive male dominance remain unbroken in Wortmann’s film.⁴⁵ *Deutschland. Ein Sommermärchen* visualises its own mythic narrative of a bounded imagined country via a fixation on film. At the same time, Wortmann uses the power of cinema to evoke places of memory in the German mindset and to ascribe meanings to people and places through the lens of football. The number of places shown, therefore, is extremely limited and highly selective, and some are repeatedly celebrated and others dismissed. Football, however, is a theatrical event with heroes and villains, and can therefore not exist without an opponent (much like the nation).⁴⁶ Yet this required constellation on the football field of “us” versus “them” does not contradict Wortmann’s vision of a “new reunified Germany.” Indeed, Donald McNeill refers to national sports teams as easily manipulated vehicles to distinguish one from others, thereby symbolically enhancing the nation-state despite increased globalisation.⁴⁷ Unsurprisingly, Wortmann’s plot construction requires the “other” to be “othered” through depictions of opposing teams, a process that further supports the envisioned unification of national team and nation.

According to Edward Said, this mental designation of “ours” versus “theirs” can be entirely arbitrary—and this is unfortunately also the case here.⁴⁸ Most prominently, we see various coaches (such as Urs Siegenthaler) before each game, as they describe the “imagined” opponent versus “our boys.” Thus, merely encoding its national mentality could apparently defeat a team. This simplified explanation labels entire regions as homogeneous entities with essential characteristics. Costa Rica’s past, one of peaceful submission under Spain, would allegedly make the team easy to handle. On the other hand, Ecuador’s

⁴⁵ Bettina van Hoven and Kathrin Hörschelmann detected that recent socio-economic and political changes have not necessarily led to an abandonment of old social norms. See Bettina van Hoven’s and Kathrin Hörschelmann’s introduction to *Spaces of Masculinities*, ed. Bettina van Hoven and Kathrin Hörschelmann (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 6.

⁴⁶ See Gunter Gebauer, “German Football: Theatre, Performance, Memory. A Philosophical Epilogue,” in *German Football: History, Culture, Society*, ed. Alan Tomlinson and Christopher Young (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 237.

⁴⁷ Donald McNeill, *New Europe: Imagined Spaces* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 39.

⁴⁸ Said, *Orientalism*, 54.

“scrappiness” (their history of poverty and struggle) would reportedly lead to foul play on the field. A brutal victory over Ecuador on June 20 would make all nations not only respect Germany but also make them fear “us,” according to Klinsmann. The coach especially attacks Argentina’s “elitist mentality,” which would have to be destroyed through “strength of will” and “readiness to suffer”:

Brutal schlagen wir da zu...Es sind unsere Spiele, nur unsere Spiele [...]. Das entscheiden wir, wer mitspielen darf, nicht die. (“We will fight brutally [...] These are our games, only our games [...]. We decide who gets to play, not them”).

Video clips of the Argentinean team frowning not only bring the German players to laughter, but also reduce their fears, ultimately revealing that the clips serve as “fairy tales.” Argentina, as a whole, turns into a mental map exemplified by evil and weakness of character. This perception also caused much controversy during the 2010 World Cup in South Africa, when Bastian Schweinsteiger repeated these stereotypes about “Argentinean weakness” in a press conference.⁴⁹ Somewhat controversial and also heavily debated in the press reviews of Wortmann’s movie are Klinsmann’s now infamous comments about the Polish team. Statements such as “*Wir sind füreinander da. [...] Das lassen wir uns von niemandem nehmen, schon gar nicht von Polen*” (“We are there for each other [...] We won’t let anyone take that away from us, especially not Poland”), already demonstrate a rather eerie warlike rhetoric of unity, in which values of “absolute struggle, absolute will, courage, one team” are evoked. The same is true for Klinsmann’s awkwardly formulated speech: “*Die [Polen] stehen mit dem Rücken zur Wand und wir knallen sie durch die Wand hindurch.*” (“The [Poles] are standing with their backs to the wall and we will knock them through the wall”).

Klinsmann’s mental map of Poland’s position against the wall can be dismissed as common sports language, in which stories of greatness—great heroes, great deeds, great feelings—prevail in order to entertain the spectator. They can also be interpreted as ultimately insulting and insensitive with regard to the German past—a heated discussion which was recently reignited when German news reporter Katrin Müller-Hohenstein called Miroslav Klose’s goal against the Australian team during the 2010 World Cup in South Africa an “*innerer Reichsparteitag*” (an “internal Third Reich rally”, a colloquial way of ironically expressing joy by comparing an event to the overwhelming sensation felt at massive Nazi party gatherings). Wortmann’s reproduction of coach comments demonstrates that the true drama of the competition takes place not on the field but in the mind, as myths about the opponents’ alleged characteristics raise intense emotions.

⁴⁹ See Christian Gödecke, “Vor Argentinien-Spiel: Schweinsteiger eröffnet den Psychokrieg,” 30 June 2010, <http://www.spiegel.de/sport/fussball/0,1518,703895,00.html> (last accessed on 16 February 2011).

The true danger lies in Wortmann's uncritical repetition of these stereotypes, which then become entrenched in the popular imagination, as Schweinsteiger's comments four years later prove. In the filmmaker's narrative, every player takes on a different role within the binary of good and evil. The game itself gets reduced, in the end, to a few key scenes, which are repeated several times. In the case of the game against Argentina, it was the provocation after the game, which caused several players from both teams to start a fistfight on the field. Wortmann's biased message in his movie leaves no doubt: In no way was it the German team's fault, so that the intent of the relayed interviews is to suggest that the subsequent ban on national player Torsten Frings was a completely unfair punishment.

The line between the game and its socio-political implications is thin, as national myths are ever-present in football. According to Klinsmann, "*Der, der hungriger ist, der den Sieg mehr will*" ("The one who is hungrier, the one who wants the victory more"), will win. Foreign alliances have no place here. Indeed, they are only a distraction, as underscored by Wortmann's otherwise unnecessary addition of the commentator's provocative call during the game against the Polish team: "*Podolski! Podolski! Daneben! Mensch, Lukas. Denkt an seine polnische Oma und macht das Ding nicht rein*" ("Podolski! Podolski! He just missed it! Oh Lukas! He is thinking about his Polish grandma and can't get it in!"). As a result, the team embodies a collective memory after which the audience is encouraged to model theirs. Consequently, when we see Angela Merkel and then President Horst Köhler as spectators, the spectacle takes on the form of national culture.

Deutschland. Ein Sommermärchen reveals both political moods and aspirational self-images, in which the telling of mythic narratives creates a world at war. In stark contradiction to Germany's public image during the World Cup as a "land of friendly encounters," the intention behind Wortmann's otherings is transparent; the filmmaker seeks to implant simplified memories in the German collective psyche with the (literal and metaphorical!) goal of constructing a common past. This collective past is not only based on enhancement, exaggeration and exclusivity, as the final section will show, but also includes active revisions and rewritings of Germany's cultural canon.

IV. 2 Why Heinrich Heine?

Categorised as a "documentary" by the director, Wortmann's *Deutschland. Ein Sommermärchen* could provide a powerful site for the disruption of traditional meanings and hierarchies. After all, Kreimeier sees the potential of documentaries, despite certain aesthetic predicaments, in the depiction of reality and the genre's democratic.⁵⁰ And indeed, the title of Wortmann's film, "Germany. A Summer Fairy Tale," suggests the disruption of or rather deliverance from long-standing national hegemonies. In a special report, also

⁵⁰ Klaus Kreimeier, "Dokumentarfilm, 1892-1992" in *Geschichte des Deutschen Films*, ed. Wolfgang Jacobsen et al. (Stuttgart and Weimar: Metzler, 1993), 391f.

entitled “Deutschland. Ein Sommermärchen,” the German magazine *Der Spiegel* (06/25, 19 June 2006) celebrated Germany’s rediscovered patriotism by stating that the current celebration would finally free the country from the burdens of the Romantic period, which had since damned the German nation to constant brooding. Wortmann’s film title implies an attempt to support this reimagining of the German nation not as a *Land der Dichter und Denker* but as a *Land des Fußballs*.

As a clear allusion to Heinrich Heine’s satirical verse-epic “*Deutschland. Ein Wintermärchen*” (1844), Wortmann’s title rewrites Heine’s gloomy mental map of Germany’s myths and the poet’s call for their dismissal. Since 1945, Heine’s poem had become a warning to the collective German psyche concerning patriotic emotions and their possibly violent consequences. Heine’s ironically-named “winter fairy tale” portrayed a problem-stricken land, torn after the Napoleonic wars and a number of restorative political developments, which left the country at a political standstill. Just as Wortmann would do 150 years later, the disappointed Heine went abroad. However, unlike Wortmann’s, Heine’s exile to Paris in 1831 is a forced one, and his return is not that of the prodigal son. An odyssey from Paris to Hamburg and back allowed the poet to stop several times along the way and reflect on German patriotism.⁵¹ He experienced not a country open to visitors, but rather a hostile land with closed borders, one lulled into illusions of dominance. Symbols of power, such as the “*Reichsadler*,” the German flag, or the cathedral in Cologne, are exposed as cover-ups for lies, corruption and censorship. The appearance of national icons in Heine’s poem, among them Charlemagne, Barbarossa or Friedrich I., emphasised the conservative mood of German nationalism and arrogance.

Paradoxically, Heine’s message is not one of resignation and melancholy, but is actually not so different from the official World Cup motto in 2006; a call for openness, the destruction of old hierarchies, and the necessity of widespread change. Therefore, Wortmann’s cinematic attempt to positively remap Heine’s literary subversion of Germany’s places of memory through yet another fairy tale, i.e. a cinematic recreation of presumably lost myths, exposes his rather superficial understanding of the contemporary context. Instead of liberating Germany’s collective memory from various past burdens and updating the country’s identity as a cosmopolitan nation in the new millennium, Wortmann’s movie reinforces traditional hegemonic hierarchies and confirms myths against which Heine had argued. Simply rejecting hierarchies and inverting canonised values allowed, according to Mikhail Bakhtin, the performance of myth and its simultaneous undermining.⁵² Wortmann follows this only insofar as he emphasises political disinterest in connection with the singing of the German national anthem and the waving of German flags. This suggests a child-like innocence, or rather, a lack of critical engagement, in which nationalism is, indeed, reduced to the realm of “fairy tales.”

⁵¹ See Heinrich Heine, *Deutschland. Ein Wintermärchen* (Frankfurt am Main and Leipzig: Insel, 2006).

⁵² Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, transl. and ed. Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1968).

Furthermore, Wortmann allows the uncritical reproduction of new myths of what it means “to be German” in a hostile world. Team and country are stylised into mutually influencing, timeless forces, in which the one cannot exist without the other. Wortmann performs the myth of unification between team and nation and emphasises their solidarity. *Deutschland. Ein Sommermärchen* revisits this idea when Wortmann shows star player Bastian Schweinsteiger as he enthusiastically repeats the heightened (“*beflügelt*”) emotions the audience’s cheering inspired in him. Player Per Mertesacker, nervous at the thought of being watched by 1.5 billion viewers on the screen, calms himself by focusing on the singing of the national anthem, accompanied by goose bumps, a sense of pride and an adrenaline rush. In the *horror vacui*, the fear of defeat in the face of anonymous masses, the national anthem becomes a mythical anchor, an emotional connection between the audience and “their” team.

As demonstrated in the previous sections, *Deutschland. Ein Sommermärchen* ironically employs several typical characteristics of a folk tale in its attempt to disenchant Heine’s image of Germany: A simplified world-view divided into good and evil, simple language, and a single-stranded plot geared towards the resolution of a specific task. Needless to say, this story grammar includes the requisite happy ending, in which the behaviour of the good characters “teaches” the reader specific ways to deal with everyday problems.⁵³ The team’s ultimate loss against Italy and its subsequent elimination from the World Cup had—as implied by scenes showing masses of crying fans—devastated the entire nation. Completely uninterested in the final winner of the World Cup, the end of the movie instead shows the team reuniting with its fans, a huge mass of Germans in front of the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, on 9 July 2006. The band and Xavier Naidoo sing with them. The final scene visualises in a nutshell the film’s own mythic narrative of a closed country united through football icons, pop culture and the Brandenburg Gate. After musical performances by the band *Sportfreunde Stiller*, in which the football players participate, Xavier Naidoo sings as one of the last lines of the movie, “*Diese Nation steht hinter euch und zwar sehr*” (“This nation supports you very strongly”). Wortmann’s phantasmagoria of music, icons and the German nation in front of the country’s main national symbol reinforces one final time the repeatedly expressed idea of a unanimous, positive emotion that had captured the entire nation.

V. CONCLUSION: BINDING THE IMAGINATION

From the “Miracle of Bern” in 1954 to the FIFA World Cup in 2006, football has repeatedly functioned as a release valve through which a German national identity could be (re-)constructed. Similarly, Wortmann’s football documentary *Deutschland. Ein Sommermärchen* is a cultural performance of an updated national identity for a reunified 21st century Germany. Wortmann attempts to capture and confirm otherwise transient experiences of the “nation” through

⁵³ See Stefan Neuhaus, *Märchen* (Tübingen and Basel: A. Francke, 2005), 9.

nostalgia and the addition of a mythical narrative. He turns the fleeting moment of watching the game into stylised sequences, in which the use of slow motion further counteracts the unpredictability of the game in exchange for “a secure identity.”

Deutschland. Ein Sommermärchen takes this “imagined community” to the extreme. It suggests one-dimensionality and unity, in complete contradiction to the everyday hybridity exemplified in the team itself (the players come from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds, with various international places of residence). The film’s fiction receives further authentication through the addition of various “markers” of the national space. In Wortmann’s theatrical vision of a “new Germany,” team coach Jürgen Klinsmann takes on the role of a leader, whereas the German team members are transformed into role models. Their actions within a limited number of intimate spaces allow the viewer to catch a forbidden glimpse at what Germany could be.

At the same time, football in *Deutschland. Ein Sommermärchen* becomes a “serious game” when it blindly incorporates social conflicts, acts of violence, racism or sexism for the purpose of “carefree patriotism.”⁵⁴ Instead of encouraging democratisation, as Heine intended in his poem *Deutschland. Ein Wintermärchen*, the film aims to reaffirm the nation’s common interest and shared culture or character by combining sport, imagination and the power of the cinematic medium. Whereas Heine’s poem is wary of nostalgia, Wortmann’s movie activates a collective memory by encouraging aesthetic and emotional commitment from the audience. In the interplay of commercialism and national myths, Wortmann’s *Deutschland. Ein Sommermärchen* is far from an objective documentation of the dramatic events that enthused the entire nation and released a storm of “partyotism” during the “summer we became a nation.”

⁵⁴ See Michael Meuser, “It’s a Men’s World. Ernste Spiele männlicher Vergesellschaftung,” in *Ernste Spiele. Zur politischen Soziologie des Fußballs*, ed. Gabriele Klein and Michael Meuser (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2008), 113.

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