



# HUNTING α WHALE of α STATE: KITTLER and HIS TERRORISTS

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**ABSTRACT** This essay is a companion piece to Friedrich Kittler's lecture "Of States and Their Terrorists." It provides additional background, especially for Kittler's discussion of the German Red Army Faction (RAF), and discusses the various sources (from Friedrich Nietzsche to Carl Schmitt) that inform Kittler's broader historical survey of technology and enmity.

**KEYWORDS:** Friedrich Kittler, terrorism, Horst Herold, Red Army Faction (RAF), al-Qaeda

## TERRORIST *KLARTEXT*



At first glance Friedrich Kittler's 2002 Mosse Lecture, "Of States and Their Terrorists," explores a straightforward thesis: *every system of power has the enemies it produces*. It is a statement of impeccable logic with a no less impressive pedigree. For Karl Marx (a nineteenth-century structural theorist occasionally praised by Kittler), each historical stage in the acrimonious dialectic of productive forces and relations of production creates the agents responsible for a revolu-

tionary realignment. Once you have cities filled with bourgeois palaces, their basements will release a proletariat commissioned by history to tear them down. For Paul Virilio (Kittler's true theoretical brother in arms), each new stage in the evolution of technology creates its very own accidents and forms of abuse. Once you have skies filled with jet planes, you have Air France 447, Lockerbie, and 9/11. For Kittler, each new "state"—let's phrase this more carefully: each environment associated with a historically contingent network of data-processing technologies and discourse protocols—will produce agents keen to disrupt the reigning power structure by making full use of their environment. Once you have highways and high-rises, you have terrorists speeding along the former to blow up the latter. Once you have global air travel, global communications, and a global black market for military hardware, you have globally operating terror networks. Media determine the situation of our terrorists.

To reactivate a term the young Kittler was inordinately fond of, this is *Klartext*, or "cleartext," a basic set of algorithms and archival rules that determine the conditions under which statements make sense. The rest—and that would include several libraries' worth of political, sociological, cultural, and anthropological explanations of violent deviance—is interpretation. Interesting, no doubt, maybe even correct, but not radical in the original meaning of the term, not at the root of things. Put differently, the most important word in Kittler's title is the possessive pronoun. It indicates that terrorists' practices are a matter of closed systems and localized feedback. States produce their own homegrown terrorists. Do not, therefore, scour Kittler's lecture for grand continuities; do not expect an unbroken bloody red thread running through history that will reveal once and for all what makes people blow up themselves and others. Look, at each and every stage, for lifeworld incursions, political protocols, weapons standards, degrees of surveillance, and all the other questionable activities that constitute a "state." In line with this emphasis on rupture, Kittler (as in so many of his texts, including the following *Odyssey* lecture [in this issue]) offers a series of snapshots: the late British Empire facing off against early rogue states and insurgent natives, the newly installed American Empire securing its resources across the Pacific, the global American Empire locked in mortal combat with equally global terror networks. If you read fast enough the individual frames will merge into a continuous narrative of escalation and loss of identity.

But in violation of chronological order Kittler begins in the middle, in the Germany of the Rote Armee Fraktion, or RAF, around 1970. He certainly knows what he is talking about. This is his country and his generation; these are his terrorists. Indeed, so familiar is the ground that despite the grim subject matter a certain lightness creeps in. At times the story of the face-off between the RAF and the German security apparatus reads like a comedy of terrors. Yet once the lecture moves beyond the first section, things turn fuzzy. It seems that

Kittler's *Klartext* was the result not so much of reduction or implosion but of compression: as when sand is pressed through the narrow midsection of an hourglass. Now, as the argument moves forward and outward, the argument dissolves and is spread out all over the place. But this is where matters are most interesting, for as in so many Kittler essays, the real message is not the content of the argument but its debris pattern. Let us retrace compression and dissolution by following Kittler back to his younger days, where we will discover a strange, very unexpected hero taking his seat in Kittler's pantheon.

### THE GREAT COMMISH

In 1979 Hans Magnus Enzensberger published an intriguing talk titled "Persistent Attempt to Explain the Secrets of German Democracy to a New York Audience." The topic was timely: after more than a decade of extraparliamentary opposition and homegrown terrorism in combination with a right-wing media conglomerate running berserk and an allegedly left-liberal government out to prove that it had the chops to crack down on dissenters, after a long slew of bombings and assassinations that climaxed in the "German Autumn" of 1977, after more illegal surveillance operations than we will ever know of and the officially legislated exclusion of anybody with the wrong (i.e., left) party affiliation from civil service—after all this it seemed that the second German attempt at democracy was about to fail. Enzensberger, himself a target of state-sponsored snooping, did not deny the diagnosis, but he was eager to clarify that the erosion of freedom was the work of two very different, indeed incompatible, "systems of repression" (1982: 87).<sup>1</sup> On the one hand, there was the well-known strand of German authoritarianism running from Klemens von Metternich over Otto von Bismarck to Adolf Hitler and then on into the postwar conservatism of Konrad Adenauer and his successors—a sorry tradition that popular culture has captured in a sequence of iconic props: spiked helmets, marching jackboots, Gestapo trench coats. This system of repression, Enzensberger emphasized, had been around a long time; it originated on the political right and was marked by brutality, anti-intellectualism, xenophobia, and parochial ignorance. In a word, it was thoroughly German. By contrast, the other system had only recently emerged; it was a genuine postwar product whose political origins lay closer to the middle and the left; and its principal operators were highly educated, flexible, open-minded cosmopolitans. It was, by contrast, "about as German as IBM" (Enzensberger 1982: 88).

The ironic reference to IBM is a giveaway: what concerned Enzensberger was the inexorable rise of the modern technocrats, a class of well-meaning, electronically savvy administrative experts who had nothing in common with their reactionary predecessors other than "the delusional idea of perfect 'inner security'" (1982: 87). To achieve the latter they championed soft control technologies like

electronic surveillance, statistical surveys, endless questionnaires, and, above all, comprehensive database linkups with optimal access reserved for the police. At times, the interference between the old and new systems of repression was able to equip stupid prejudices with clever rationales (which is in itself a hallmark of political modernism). Unlike their elected superiors, the new technocrats were neither fools nor bigots; they did not believe that a couple of card-carrying party members preaching Marx to preschoolers posed a serious threat to Freedom and Christianity, but they realized that banning them had a welcome side effect. To ferret them out, the system had to process tens of thousands of dossiers, which resulted in a data trove that could be tapped to further refine the digital map of the human territory. If sufficiently detailed and interactive, that map could be made to rule territory. In one of his trademark intellectual somersaults Enzensberger presented this as a remarkable defection of utopian energy to the other side. Under the old system of repression it had been the task of the police to remove those who harbored utopian ideas; now, in the new Covenant of Security, the police itself had turned into the last stronghold of utopian aspirations. Seated in the upper echelons of the governmental security apparatus, administrators, their minds colonized by new data-processing capabilities, were pursuing their grand dream of a “cybernetically controlled friction-free society” (Enzensberger 1982: 91). Not surprisingly, the man who in Enzensberger’s eyes best embodies this craving, the high priest of the sanitary “sunshine state” (1982: 96) and courteous villain of his talk, is the tragic hero of Kittler’s lecture: Horst Herold, chief commissioner of the German Federal Criminal Investigation Office (BKA) from 1971 to 1981, known to some of his admirers as Germany’s—or even the world’s—best policeman.

What sparked Enzensberger’s horror elicits Kittler’s praise. The greatness of Herold is that he took full measure of the new medial conditions. He beat the terrorists because he understood what it means to be a bit too human in a digital world. Take Kittler’s prime example, the (in)famous *negative Rasterfahndung*, or “negative computer-based search.” On June 9, 1979, German security forces arrested the terrorist Rolf Heissler—later named as one of the assassins of Hanns-Martin Schleyer—in a Frankfurt apartment he had rented using a false name. How the police arrived at Heissler’s door is part of the Herold legend. Members of the RAF had long been suspected of living under assumed names in the greater Frankfurt area, but since it was impossible to check the names of well over a million tenants, the number had to be reduced by focusing on those acting suspiciously. But what is suspicious behavior? More to the point, what is the suspicious behavior of those trying not to appear suspicious? Herold was the ideal person to answer the question. To his cybernetically inclined mind, which processed social reality in terms of system dysfunctions and statistical deviation rather than crime and deviancy, suspicious behavior consisted not in adopting threatening practices but in avoid-

ing convenient ones. Just as the hideouts of Bram Stoker's (2008: 378) culturally backward Count Dracula are tracked down by his hunters because he, in conspicuously "vulgar" fashion, chooses to pay for his real estate purchases "in notes 'over the counter,'" Heissler was located because he paid his electricity bills in cash—something only eighteen thousand tenants in the suspect area did. Holed up in the BKA headquarters in the tranquil affluence of Wiesbaden (the city where the money made in nearby Frankfurt sleeps), Herold fed list after list of legitimate names—officially registered tenants, vehicle owners, student loan recipients, pensioners, insurance holders—into his database of cash-paying customers, thus gradually removing all the legitimate identities until only two fake names remained: that of a drug dealer and Heissler's. Security history had been made.

The twentieth century has constantly redefined the human: *Homo ludens* (Johan Huizinga), *Homo necans* (Walter Burkert), *Homo demens* (Edgar Morin), *Homo faber* (Max Frisch), *Homo amans* (Humberto Maturana), *Homo oeconomicus* (any economics textbook). Kittler/Herold introduce us to *Homo vestigia faciens*, "Man the Trace Maker," a being defined by inscription surfaces, recording devices, and storage facilities able to capture far more of its signs and traces than it is willing to divulge. If any one name is to be associated with this new regime of traceability, it would have to be French forensics pioneer Edmond Locard (1877–1966), originator of the eponymous exchange principle "Every contact leaves a trace." Whether you are paying your rent or killing your landlord, your every action is a transaction in the course of which you—unwittingly, unknowingly, unconsciously—leave something of yourself behind and take something along. In hindsight, Locard's exchange principle is an earlier, colder, more technical, and therefore more Kittlerian version of Paul Watzlawick's more famous dictum "One cannot not communicate." Kittler would point out that Locard's and Watzlawick's axioms (just like Freud's psychoanalysis) are based on the internalization of media-technological capabilities. They codify what storage facilities of their day are able to achieve, thus contributing to his basic argument that "so-called Man" is determined by technical standards. We are defined by the extent to which media model, trace, and store us. With the arrival of analog media, we entered a world in which we constantly betray ourselves because we constantly leave traces (Wikileaks and carbon footprints are as much a matter of media theory as they are of ethics and ecology). No wonder, then, that even the absence of an expected trace—for instance, an electronic transaction—is every bit as meaningful as its presence. Just a few years after Heissler's arrest, Kittler decreed: "What remains of people is what media can store and communicate" (1999: xl). And with that, Locard's exchange principle and Herold's computerized manhunt entered cultural critique. The Great Commissioner understood the extent to which media determine our situation. His enemies did not. Or at least not yet.

**AMERICAN ZARATHUSTRA**

Kittler calls the German section of his lecture a “minor, manageable example.” It illustrates the basic thesis of the talk. We have a state—the Federal Republic of Germany around 1970—equipped with a specific socio-techno-architectural infrastructure producing its very own dysfunctional components that in their attempt to overthrow the political order adapt to and exploit this infrastructure. The stressed state responds with a mobilization of communication, storage, and cross-referencing technologies that for the time being vanquishes its overtaxed enemies. The logical next step in this strategic escalation is for the latter to adapt to these new technical standards and turn them against the state. What high-rises, handguns, and BMWs were to the RAF, disposable cell phones, satellite linkups, and military hardware are to al-Qaeda and other decentralized terrorist networks that wage a “new type of war in which cheap motels are used as barracks and commercial jets become powerful weapons, [and] public libraries and Internet cafés are quickly transformed into communications centers” (Bamford 2008: 72). Kittler could easily have sketched the post-9/11 state countermove by shifting from the BKA to the National Security Agency (NSA), from sleepy Wiesbaden to Fort George G. Meade, Maryland, where Cray computers, operating at speeds of hundreds of teraflops, are “plowing through phone calls, e-mails, and other data at more than a quadrillion operations per second” (Bamford 2008: 2). Indeed, if he were giving the talk today, he would move farther west to Bluffdale, Utah, where the NSA is erecting a computing supercenter with yottabyte “deepnet” processing capabilities that will dwarf the Maryland site (see Bamford 2012). Locard’s principle and Herold’s dream are being realized on an unprecedented scale: a global vacuuming up of everyone’s digital trail guided by the forensic axiom that every bit has a history and every keystroke tells a story (Bamford 2008: 101).

But are the terms Kittler started out with—“states,” “terrorists,” and the possessive pronoun connecting them—able to sustain this ascent to global levels, not to mention the historical excursions? When certain jihadi factions including al-Qaeda decided to carry their war beyond their traditional homelands to the distant shores of *al-Adou al-Baeed*, “the far enemy” (Gerges 2005), they were no longer fighting *their* states. Likewise, whatever the Americans have in mind when they talk of the “war on terror,” they do not seem to be waging it against *their* terrorists. By the time Kittler’s lecture is over, “state” has been forced to cover a lot of ground: early agrarian communities, dynastic kingdoms, nation-states, and global anglophone empires. “Terrorists,” in turn, appears to include early pastoral societies, nomads, bedouins, Arab royalty, assorted freedom fighters, and a *mélange* of Queen Victoria’s mobilized collective ethnic subjects. And in between there are trickster figures like Rudyard Kipling’s Kim and T. E. Lawrence of whom it is uncertain which side they belong

to, if they belong to any at all. True to the author's words, the "minor, manageable example" mushrooms into a "confused snapshot."

There is an easy way out. We could make more sense of Kittler's analysis by translating his terms into theoretically established, battle-hardened concepts. No doubt his lead binary States versus Terrorists has a lot in common with better-known binaries such as Georges Bataille's Military order versus Warrior, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's State versus War machine, maybe even Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's Empire versus Multitude. The final outlook that the enemies increasingly resemble each other, in turn, is consonant with ongoing discussions about whether or not the "new" wars of the world are effectively erasing the distinction between war and civil society. Kittler, however, leaves it to the Oracle at Delphi to make predictions and restricts himself to weapons-technological crossovers: the nomads are increasingly motorized, airborne divisions are increasingly nomadic; nothing resembles the modern GI more than the formerly United States-equipped jihadi. And who doubts that nomads (not to mention terrorists), should they win, will strive to impose and maintain their own states. As Genghis Khan, greatest of all nomad leaders, was told by one of his advisers, a country can be conquered but not governed from the saddle. This increasing indistinguishability, incidentally, may account for one of Kittler's major gaffes. He repeatedly refers to Kim as half Irish, half Indian. In the real world of Kipling's text, Kim, son of Kimball O'Hara and Annie Shott, is all Irish, without a drop of Indian blood. You do not have to be Edward Said to realize that this is of essential importance to Kipling; it would be a completely different novel if Kim's Indian identity extended beyond linguistic expertise, histrionic talent, and a deep sunburn. But of course Kittler's mistake fits neatly into Kittler's argument: nomads and states are already merging on an ethnic level.

No doubt all of this has been said before, and better. But such escape routes into established theory proposals miss out on the specifically Kittlerian qualities of the lecture, which are most noticeable in its puzzling forays into the past. Take the unexpected cameo appearance by Friedrich Nietzsche. Why him and his Zarathustra? Why this "small excursion into the history of philosophy"? Given its implications, it's certainly not small. In his attempt to out-Nietzsche Nietzsche (i.e., in his attempt to provide a concrete historical footing for Nietzsche's genealogical debunking of allegedly timeless moral evaluations), Kittler appears to be siding with those military historians and anthropologists who argue that the origin of war—the moment when societies are no longer, in Harry Turney-High's famous phrase, below the "military horizon"—is linked to the friction between the first early sedentary societies and their pastoral neighbors. This enmity, Kittler emphasizes, is and always has been a struggle over resources; hence there is no innocent party. The nomads raid and massacre the farmers and city dwellers for slaves

and surplus; the latter, in turn, evict and massacre the nomads to get their ploughs, spades, and rigs onto their soil and everything underneath. In one of his more complex moves, Kittler links these spiraling escalations to ever-deeper recursions—deeper into the past and therefore, quite literally, into the ground. Increasingly modern states evict, massacre, or conquer the stateless for ever-older and -deeper deposited resources: wood, charcoal, coal, and oil.

According to Kittler, this first nomad versus state ur-confrontation is morally transcoded by the first, original Zarathustra: nomads and other shifty itinerant folks are intrinsically evil, while farmers and other law-abiding citizens of stable, rooted communities are intrinsically good. Once this binary is in place (like all such binaries, it can easily be inverted with righteous nomads and mobilized partisans struggling against evil imperialist states), any rapacious struggle over natural resources can be recast as a high-minded crusade. Thus the “small excursion” back to the early demonization of nomads provides a resonating chamber extending across several millennia for the current dehumanization of the terrorists. Listen closely to Zarathustra and you will hear George W. Bush.

But let us be clear on this. When Kittler takes aim at Bush and his “tablet of values” he is condemning the rhetoric, *not* the action obscured by it. Anybody familiar with Carl Schmitt (who is very much the puppeteer behind these particular paragraphs) will recognize that Kittler is using arguments similar to those that Schmitt deployed against Woodrow Wilson and other prophets of universal values (cf. Schmitt 2011). The main target is the hypocritical bullying of the United States with its sanctimonious attempt to market its policy as the enactment of freedom and democracy. Since these are cast as universal values, the inevitable result is a vilification of the enemy—be it Germany, the quintessential rogue state of the First World War, or Iraq after 9/11. Accept our freedom, which is the freedom of all humanity, or pay the price; for if you oppose us, you are not just our enemy, you have removed yourself from the pale of humanity and deserve every grenade that comes your way. However, Kittler is not condemning the grenades. On the contrary, as he stated in an interview with *Die Welt* in early June 2003 (among the most controversial of his later interviews), the attack on Iraq has a sound reason and is therefore nothing objectionable:

*Welt am Sonntag [WamS]*: Did you participate in any of the recent peace rallies?

Kittler: Despite all sympathy for the desire for peace, and the irritation caused by the talk about a “preventive war”: if it is a matter of securing oil prices for the next twenty years rather than simply crying out for initiatives to preserve peace, then I am in favor of the operation . . .



WamS: A war in order to secure oil resources would be justified? . . .

Kittler: . . . It's nothing dishonorable. Of course, it is troubling that the United States, the world leader in wasting irreplaceable fossil fuels, consumes ten times more oil than it needs. But such is the American mentality.

WamS: A war would also mean: bombs on women and children.

Kittler: This type of air war is not as recklessly vulgar [*fahrlässig ordinär*] as the bombing of Japan and Germany in the Second World War. If the bombs are dropped now, then [it's] for the good purpose of getting to Baghdad as quickly as possible. That I can understand. . . .

WamS: . . . Would the use of military force against Iraq be a justified war?

Kittler: From a Western point of view it would certainly be a useful war. (Kittler 2003)

*Klartext* becomes realpolitik. What in the realm of literary analysis was the unearthing of discourse protocols framing and programming the production and reception of texts is now, in the realm of war and politics, the unflinching acceptance of dynamics and exigencies related to resources and technologies. The way in which Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* describes the Second World War applies to all wars:

This War was never political at all, the politics was all theatre, all just to keep the people distracted . . . secretly, it was being dictated instead by the needs of technology. . . . The real crises were crises of allocation and priority, not among firms—it was only staged to look that way—but among the different Technologies, Plastics, Electronics, Aircraft, and their needs which are understood only by the ruling elite. (1973: 521)

But even Kittler cannot completely brush aside the uncanny human factor that bursts through his talk in the shape of “hatred” and “defiance of death,” only to be shrugged off with stale phrases (e.g., “eternal riddles”). But maybe these two very different dimensions—the a-political, a-ideological, a-human character of war and its all too human extreme emotions—are linked. With this in mind, let us briefly go beyond Kittler by returning one last time to his state and its terrorists.

**ENEMY MINE: FROM HELL'S HEART**

In his detailed history of the Baader-Meinhof group, Stefan Aust (1987: 247–49) recounts that the imprisoned Gudrun Ensslin gave her fellow inmates cover names borrowed from Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. Holger Meins, who starved himself to death, was the steadfast chief mate Starbuck; the technically gifted Jan-Carl Raspe turned into the Carpenter; and Ensslin herself was Fleece the cook, who spends his time preaching to the sharks. Ahab's name was, of course, reserved for Andreas Baader, the group's self-appointed domineering alpha phallus. Given the limited success of Ahab's whaling expedition, the choice of names does not radiate great optimism. So why *Moby Dick*? The answer appears obvious: ever since the Bible, the whale is Leviathan; ever since Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan is the state. The small band of revolutionaries on the *Pequod* (again, not a name to inspire confidence) sail the treacherous seas to hunt down its most offensive creature, the great white state machine.

Leaving aside the cubic meters of secondary literature on the complexities of Melville's novel, it is obvious that Ahab's single-minded quest is driven by the conviction that he is heading toward a direct, highly personal confrontation. For Ensslin (as if ventriloquizing Schmitt), Baader is "the rival, absolute enemy, enemy of the state" (quoted in Wieland 2005: 86), just as Ahab is the "insufferable foe" (Melville 2010: 192) of the whale. It is an enmity that exceeds personal grievance or desire for revenge; it goes beyond the loss of a leg. There is an irrational intensity at work that remains immune to any intervention from reality, even though reality does everything to demonstrate the futility of the undertaking. Thirty years after the suicides of Ensslin, Baader, and Raspe, Herold claimed that underneath all the political and ideological rationalizations, underneath all petty feelings of resentment and the thrills of living undercover, and thus far out of reach of all the cybernetically informed strategies employed to apprehend them, the terrorists' "ultimately determining driving force was a boundless, all-consuming hatred" (Kraushaar and Reemtsma 2006: 1385). It was a form of hatred, Herold argued, that results in an utter disregard for yourself and others and that persists among some of the imprisoned members of the RAF to this day, long after any chance of even the smallest victory has passed. In Ahab's words: "To the last I grapple with thee; from hell's heart I stab at thee; for hate's sake I spit my last breath at thee" (Melville 2010: 587).

Ahab's hatred of this "unexampled, intelligent malignity" (Melville 2010: 188), however, requires that it be *intelligent*, that the actions of *his* enemy be that of a conscious, goal-oriented malignant entity as focused on *him* as he is on *it*. Like Schmitt's (2007: 85) enemies, Ahab and *Moby Dick* are "on the same level," their hostile gazes are locked and define each other. The worst that could happen to Ahab is not his actual fate (death), or even the awareness that the whale has

triumphed and may continue to do so until the oceans run dry, but the realization that his enemy is not infused with a symmetrical hatred—that everything the whale has done may turn out to be the random action of an “unintelligent agent” (Melville 2010: 189) operating on a different level. This is where Moby Dick’s appearance becomes so important. As Ishmael tries to explain in the chapter “The Whiteness of the Whale” (193–201), white is both the presence and absence of all colors, the most condensed message as well as meaningless (white) noise. Hovering between plenitude and emptiness, it is an affront to Ahab’s desire to “strike through the mask” to apprehend “some unknown but still reasoning thing” behind the unreasoning mask (168). Ahab must pin things down—be they whales or words. But he may be up against something whose color indicates a vast “indefiniteness” (200) that defies the very possibility of the envisaged personal confrontation—a domain as devoid of compassion as it is of enmity.

“Der Feind ist unsere eigene Frage als Gestalt,” Schmitt decreed—the enemy is the shape or gestalt assumed by our own question. Psychologically, this implies that the enemy represents those aspects of ourselves we are in doubt about. More important, however, is the structural effect of creating stable identities. A collective defines itself by sharing a common enemy, the enemy thus shapes community as much as it delineates personal identity. This capacity allows Greg Ulmen to translate Schmitt’s (2007: 85) mantra as a simple conditional phrase: “If the enemy defines us.” From this point of view, Melville’s novel revolves around a possible negation of the conditional: If our great enemy does not define us, then who are we? Is there a “we” or an “I” left? Ahab’s monomaniacal hatred is both fueled by and eager to silence the doubt that he is defined by the pursuit of an enemy that may lack the contour, shape, purpose, intent, or intensity to define him. Enzensberger had a similar predicament in mind when he pointed out that one difficulty arising from the uneasy coexistence of old authoritarian and new cybernetic systems of oppression was the unwillingness of the critics and enemies of the state to face, engage, and try to understand the new regime. Instead, they tended to depict suppression in retro fashion by conjuring up older tropes and terms, above all the *Sturmabteilung* (SA, or “storm troopers”) wielding batons (which turned state enemies into Nazi victims). To the Baaders and Ensslins, Herold’s dissolution of the old tangible state apparatus into information circuits, feedback routines, and ineffable technological environments offered no footing for enmity. Better resort to fascism as the old guarantor of identity formation.

The bottom line is that Kittler’s spiraling recursions of states and “their” terrorists reach into post-Schmittian territory. As Eva Horn notes in her penetrating study of the changing configurations of enmity, in the post-9/11 world the enemy “no longer has a face, not because he has become ‘faceless’ but because he has assumed

a shape that no longer has a head” (2007: 479). This is true for both states and terrorists. The former are confronted with decentralized terror networks operating like swarms or infections, the latter are up against decentralized governmental technologies that work in no less amorphous fashion, and in between there is a new media environment that allows for the deconstruction of all high-rises of meaning. True to Kittler’s analysis and Melville’s novel, the state has become a nomadic whale: ubiquitous, inscrutable, dissolved, and then again concentrated like white passed through a prism. We have arrived at a disorienting symmetrical facelessness, a mutual lack of shape and contour that erodes Schmittian possibilities of identity construction by means of enmity. But we do not let go of our enemies so easily. Following 9/11, the endlessly recycled footage of Osama bin Laden astride a horse or walking along mountain trails was designed to assure us that the enemy still has a recognizable head and face. And as an added bonus, it came with the right amount of exotic appeal. “The venerable props of the Great Game are on display: we are faced with the nomad, the religious fanatic displaying all the charismatic Muslim asceticism propagated by T. E. Lawrence” (Horn 2007: 478). Ultimately, though, the imagery has more to do with Peter O’Toole than with Lawrence. It is a cunning revenge, as it were, of the absolute media spirit that the last image we have of bin Laden places him in the world of Kittler and Jean Baudrillard: a pathetic, faceless figure crouched in front of a computer watching mediated images of himself.

A quarter century after Herold was forced to retire, and with all the relaxed hindsight that comes easily to retired security experts, he mused that the RAF and other terrorist organizations should be appreciated as social early warning systems. “Terrorism was always a prelude and signal for profound future upheavals in the social and political spheres” (Kraushaar and Reemtsma 2006: 1387). History inevitably confirms the terrorists’ view of the world, but only once they are no longer around. The catastrophes of the future will confirm the suspicions of the present even though they were cloaked in the imagery of the past. Who could deny that much of what Ulrike Meinhof wrote in rusty left-wing jargon has come to fruition? The RAF of 1969 was fixated on the world of unchallenged and unfettered global capitalism that arose after 1989. Their hatred was directed at the future. It was a hatred not of the shape of things around them but of the shapelessness of things to come.

#### NOTE

1. All Enzensberger translations are mine.

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