

# **FROM DEBORD TO DEUTSCHLAND: RAMMSTEIN AND MEDIA SPECTACLES IN MUSIC VIDEOS**

A Visual and Critical Discourse Analysis on Media Spectacles in  
Rammstein's Music Videos Between 1996-2022

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## ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the narratives presented and framed via various societal discourses in Rammstein's music videos, particularly synthesized through Debord's society of the Spectacle. In light of the main research question *“How do Rammstein engage with constructing narratives via controversial discourses in their music videos, and what is the significance of the music video medium as the platformised dissemination for their storytelling?”*, and three sub-questions (1) “does the media spectacle challenge and dispute a discourse as social commentary?”, (2), “does the media spectacle help to advocate for an ideology?”, and (3) “does the media spectacle help with engagement and notoriety?”, this paper explores how Rammstein employ media spectacles under three main societal themes in order to provide storytelling through controversial imagery: national & totalitarian, sex & gender, colonial & racial. Moreover, the music videos are also studied through their media medium and the band's interactions with platforms like YouTube in terms of their visual language. This study is mainly grounded on Debord's works on the spectacle, Garber et al.'s media spectacles, Wicke's Gesamtkunstwerk, Kong & Yeoh's studies on nationalism, Schippers' gender hegemonies, Said's Orientalism, and O'Leary's platformisation. A total of 32 music videos are analysed with a mixed method approach of visual analysis and critical discourse analysis (CDA). The results suggest that Rammstein's media spectacles around nationalism are often multifaceted and intentionally placed to communicate a message, create irony, or provide social commentary. While media spectacles on sex, gender, colonialism and race are utilized much more loosely, creating less irony and reinforcing more traditional notions on sex, gender roles & race difference. Furthermore, the band's media spectacles have followed the shift of platformisation by favouring more universal topics in their latest videos compared to their earlier ones. However, the platforms are not a source for the curation of their media spectacles but more of a facilitator. This paper contributes to the overall knowledge and perception of the media spectacles with the application of spectacle theories onto new mediums of media, and their interactions with platformisation.

**KEYWORDS:** Rammstein, media spectacles, music videos

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## 1. Introduction

In the current media sphere, use of controversial imagery is one of the fundamental means to curate a perspective and aesthetics for media players and their platforms (Turner, 2011, pp. 180-181). There are a variety of different aims as to why controversial depictions are chosen to be implemented into a piece of media, such as advocating for an ideology by reiterating with language and visuals, exaggerating to highlight problematic aspects, or grabbing and maintaining the attention of viewers. But throughout the history of rock'n'roll and metal, controversial imagery and lyricism are often intentionally utilized as a tool for adding shock-value for depth, irony and satire. Nationalist or hypermasculine sound design and symbols are hyperbolically portrayed to criticize totalitarian regimes (Zander, 2024, p. 29). Nonetheless, such controversial imagery can still combine the aforementioned purposes, creating a stage for artists to showcase and gather a following alongside communicating a message. Imagery, ambience, and storytelling take the form of spectacles to act as an attention-grabber (Burns, 2008, pp. 458-459).

It can be argued that Rammstein the band utilize media spectacles in their music videos with a similar purpose of social commentary via striking imagery to support their otherwise abstract lyricism (Kellner, 2005, p. 60; Lüke, 2008, p. 22). They touch upon a variety of discourses on nationalism, sexuality & gender, and colonialism via spectacularizing settings, objects, symbols, relationships and historical periods to strengthen the storytelling of the music. However, Rammstein have caused ongoing disputes on the band's integrity due to their controversial and explicit imagery alongside other lewd scandals. (Kopanski, 2023, p. 138; Zander, 2024, pp. 30-32). Such disputes lead audiences to question whether the band's spectacles are indicators of their ideologies, their satirical approach, or simply attention-grabbers for press (Binas-Preisendorfer & Wachtmann, 2016, p. 158).

The term “Spectacle” – first originated by Debord (1967/1994, pp. 2-5) – and its occurrences in media are mainly explored by Garber et al. (1993, p. 13), Thompson (1999, pp. 16-21), Kellner (2005, p. 60), and Kopanski (2023, pp. 140-141). Spectacles present societal discourses in various frames to invoke certain emotions and reshape interpretations of audiences. Controversial discourse and disputable topics surrender to this spectacularisation quite easily, given that controversies already inherently induce reactions. Moreover, Taylor (2007, p. 230) and O’Leary (2023, pp. 21-27) underline the significance of the use of mediums on media, specifically the impact of music videos on visual culture and the impact of MTV on transmedia. Platforms play the crucial role in carrying media spectacles across multiple media channels and completing the immersive experience. Therefore, they extend the intensity of engagement for an audience (Dahlgren & Hill, 2022, p. 32). Rammstein’s music video “Deutschland” exemplifies the

presentation of similar media spectacles that touch upon national and political discourses by portraying Germany across different historical periods (Zander, 2024, pp. 32-35).

Whereas previous literature on spectacles is mostly focused on TV and film, the media landscape has shifted towards small and personalised screens, and away from big screens for the masses. Social media platforms have transformed the framework and the impact of media spectacles. This leads to my research question: *“How do Rammstein engage with constructing narratives via controversial discourses in their music videos, and what is the significance of the music video medium as the platformised dissemination for their storytelling?”*. I am going to answer this question by synthesizing the discourses present in the music videos via the lens of media spectacles, followed by a mixed method of visual and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Under the light of this research question, this thesis aims to explore under what themes media spectacles are presented more frequently, what is the role of the spectacle in relation to the context, and why do media spectacles hold importance for Rammstein. Essentially, this research aims to find out whether the band’s repertoire of music videos reflect their ideologies, is the controversial imagery a form of social commentary and criticism, or such imagery is simply utilized for notoriety and popularity. Therefore, there are 3 sub-questions to consider in order to expand the main research question’s scope: (1) “does the media spectacle challenge and dispute a discourse as social commentary?”, (2), “does the media spectacle help to advocate for an ideology?”, and (3) “does the media spectacle help with engagement and notoriety?”.

This thesis holds academic significance by virtue of the application of established studies on media spectacles onto the new media landscapes and mediums. Previous literature perceives spectacles as a part of posters, TV and theatre (Garber et al., 1993, p. 13), whereas this thesis intends to apply the literature around media spectacles on music videos, perceiving them as an independent medium of media rather than an accessory to a song. Additionally, learning about the aim and saturation of media spectacles is important in the current climate of platformisation and abundance of media content. Platforms essentially provide a globalized podium for artists, such as Rammstein, motivating these artists to issue more globally recognised discourses. Comprehension of the ideological messages within the presented discourses allows for a critical reception of the spectacles, minimizing indoctrination.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

### 2.1 The Formation of Rammstein & Controversial Imagery

For this paper, it is important to mention the origins of Rammstein because the purpose, context and philosophy of which the band is formed upon heavily influence their past and current media portrayals. Rammstein is a rock/metal band who are known for their industrial, heavy, and rhythmic sound design, accompanied by low vocals and German lyrics (Yeung, n.d.). The band was first idealized by their guitarist Richard Z. Kruspe (Rammstein World, n.d.). After escaping from East Berlin in 1989, he first formed his own respective band called Orgasm Death Gimmicks, particularly influenced by another American rock band Kiss. After the fall of the iron curtain, Kruspe moved back to Schwerin in the east where he shared a house with a drummer and a bassist, and met the band's frontman, all of whom became the current members. Longing to create an original sound independent from the American rock scene, Rammstein the band was finally realised in 1994, after winning an amateur band contest in Berlin which granted them an opportunity to record four demos with a producer. After recruiting their keyboardist and second guitarist, they started to record their first album in 1995 (Yeung, n.d.). The band has never switched members since, which is uncommon in the rock/metal scene. The German press at the time arranged Rammstein a new genre called “New German Hardness”, emphasizing their heavy, industrial, and krautrock elements as well as their German lyrics and clear enunciations (Petrusich, 2019).

Introducing the band is important in order to understand the extent and the weight of their music, imagery and spectacles. All the members of the band were born in East Germany in the 60s and 70s, which has greatly influenced their sound design and imagery, featuring a lot of industrialism in their music. The ideas of Ostalgia, an East German phenomenon which yearns for the lifestyle and governance before the German unification, becomes prevalent in the band's body of work (Littlejohn & Putnam, 2010, pp. 36-41). Socialist affiliations of the band members are likely rooted in their soviet upbringing in the 80s and 90s of East Germany (Burns, 2008, pp. 458-459). The band's political stance is reflected in songs like “Links 2 3 4”, “Amerika” and “Moskau”, pieces which bring totalitarian audio-visual stereotypes to the forefront, such as armies marching, alongside criticisms of capital dominance of the western world (Littlejohn & Putnam, 2010, p. 40; Rossol, 2010, p. 621).

Even though the members of the band openly claimed to hold no right-wing political ideologies, their current national spectacles often consist of controversial nationalist imagery such as Nazi-leaning stories. For example, Rammstein has portrayed nationalist, hypermasculine, and fascist imagery with “Radio”, “Auslander”, and “Deutschland” where storytelling of the music clips follows a common theme

of corrupt populist systems, white western imperialism and the infringement of freedom of expression (Zander, 2024, pp. 33-34). Burns (2008) emphasize the desire of notoriety in the rock music, that is, the individuality and reputation of a band often than not depend on producing controversial promotional content. (Burns, 2008, pp. 458-459). This points towards the prioritization of commercial interests rather than the ethical implications, and the unalignment of a band's ideological stance versus their portrayal. On the other hand, such imagery is often used in alternative music genres for satirical and ironic criticism: to judge the system, one imitates that system to highlight its shortcomings (Zander, 2024, p. 29). Slavoj Žižek (2024), a Slovenian social scientist, disproves fascist allegations on Rammstein by claiming that it is a fanatical costume to mock and make fun of such totalitarian regimes.

Outside of national and political imagery, the band is also known for their graphic representations of sex and gender. the topics they touch upon include sexual desire, objectification, nudity, BDSM, LGBTQ, paedophilia and necrophilia, as demonstrated with songs such as "Bück Dich", "Mann Gegen Mann" and "Weit Weg" (Zander, 2024, p. 30). Wicke (2023), a member of the German Music Council since 1998 (Seibt et al., 2021, p. xii), calls Rammstein's provocative approach to their music and imagery as "the spectacle of brutality" (Wicke, 2023, p. 14). Most of the band's profane depictions of sex and gender are usually from the indulgent perpetrator's point of view with very little penitence towards the victims which adds to the brutal, provocative and extreme identity of the band. In an ever-growing attention-economy with abundance of content, Rammstein aims to "hold up a mirror to people" and reflect the lowest and most violent sides of the society, as the keyboardist Lorenz states (Wicke, 2023, p. 14). This approach of grabbing attention of the press is in a similar vein to Burn's (2008) notes on band notoriety.

## 2.2 The Spectacle & Media Spectacles

There is an abundance of research on the idea and formation of spectacles and their portrayal in media. The term was first academically established by Debord (1967/1994, pp. 2-5), in his renowned study “Society of the Spectacle”. Originally written in 1967, the spectacle is the phenomenon in which society and its reflection on life is a world to be perceived, watched, and consumed. Especially for visual media, such as film or theatre, the spectacle as a concept turns tangible emotional experiences to a superficial yet material products, heavily inspired by Karl Marx’s commodity fetishism. Billig (1999, pp. 315-316) unpacks commodity fetishism as the outcome of capitalist production structures erasing the value of labour from awareness. Thus, social relations which are involved in producing commodities are concealed. A commodity – product that is to provide pleasure – stands as its price in relation to other commodities, and the value attributed by labour is forgotten (Billig, 1999, pp. 318-319). Debord (1967/1994, p. 4) translates this into the Spectacle as experiences losing their own value and actuality, receding into its own mere representation. An example can be recording a video during a concert: The experience and ambience is attempted to be captured through a screen whilst losing its actual value experiencing, only existing through image and not through memory.

Although, the Spectacle is not just a bundle of images or videos, it stands for the societal and personal relationships that is mediated, facilitated or inhibited by visual media mediums (Debord, 1967/1994, p. 2). The Spectacle is simultaneously the society itself, the representation of that society, and the means to unify or fragment both societies. It is not solely a decoration to reality, but it gradually becomes the ideal model to document and prevail life and its experiences. Whilst people live real lives, the reflection of those lives in images start to merge with and define reality (Debord, 1967/1994, p. 3). This separation of real and image divides the understanding of reality where people prioritise living to be seen or watched as opposed to living without the pressure of the lens of a camera. The spectacle is an artificial and phony copy of life, whilst gradually becoming reality. The symbolic value of the reality surpasses the actual value.

The modern societies and industries do not just naturally adapt to or prioritise spectacles, they are both inherently and actively spectaclist (Debord, 1967/1994, p. 5). In hegemonic neoliberal production systems, the value of “being” shifts towards “having”; power attributed to individuals and industries is a lot more monetary. As the production economies move with mass-media, this value of “having” moves towards “appearing”, where the aim of the spectacle is not reality, but itself. As producing mere representations of life is far easier than producing actual life in media, reality becomes mere images and mere images become real beings. To be seen becomes equal to having power in society, and the desire to

be seen is to take control. Being perceived and the constant need for self-objectification consequently becomes second nature to humankind (Debord, 1967/1994, pp. 7-8).

However, media spectacles as a concept have evolved beyond Debord's initial convictions about the nature of *The Spectacle* itself. His works have shifted the perspectives on picture media, studies on media industries and use of spectacles have expanded. Media spectacles are further explored and tied into the current socio-economic spheres by Kellner (2005, p. 69) who emphasizes the volatile technological advancements proliferating the domination of neoliberal notions of media production and consumption. The gradual digitalization of media, quickly followed by the globalized supply and consumption chains have steered the media agenda into combining information with entertainment. For enterprises to stay afloat and remain competitive, they attempt to fuse commercial interests with the spectacle culture: To have power is to be seen, to be seen is to entertain (Kellner, 2005, p. 60; Debord, 1967/1994, pp. 10-11). In a neoliberal context, – which is the natural habitat of the spectacle – this power is mainly represented by the market share, and recently represented by clicks or milliseconds of appearances on screens. Nonetheless, this power is almost always quantified, parallel to the dilution of labour value into monetary masks (Billig, 1999, p. 319). Hence the impact of a certain spectacle in the current media sphere is measured by its reach and turnover.

Currently, media players exhibit a heightened and ever-growing awareness of the ambience, mood and the “wow-factor” of the media content that they disseminate, therefore they have studied spectacles rather as instruments. Now, instead of manifesting in every image or video almost as an omnipresent guide, the spectacle is a tool that is consciously utilized and curated to support media content. Especially in the media scene of 90s corporate USA, media spectacles have dominated other forms of information exchange on news, politics and scandals (Kellner, 2015, p. 55). Commercial logic aims at exponential growth, meaning the expansion of this aforementioned power, competing to engulf the media sphere. For these commercial interests, media spectacles are purposefully employed to be the “attention-grabber”, ensuring exposure, appearing on every screen. As the Spectacle forms its own court where nobody else is allowed to speak, media spectacles are the storytellers with a purpose of reinforcing or challenging media trends (Debord, 1967/1994, p. 7; McClean, 2007, pp. 17-18).

One of the functions of media spectacles is in the broader context of narrative and storytelling through pictures. Thompson (1999, pp. 16-21) in her study on storytelling in film and television talks about how picture entertainment can follow a non-linear narrative and unconventional imagery and storytelling to transcend media into an artistic domain. Media spectacles are most striking and noticeable when this artistic balance is met. McClean (2007, pp. 16-33) highlights the digitalisation of the film

industry, and how technological aspects influence the impact of visual communication and immersiveness with spectacle culture. Drawing inspiration from history, literature and other socio-cultural domains can bring representational arts to media and its content.

Spectacle culture and storytelling through digital media can translate to the music industry as the necessity of platformisation of their repertoire for the sake of their reach and reputation. Transmedia storytelling by Schiller (2018, p. 102) can shed light upon how picture, such as covers or music videos, can be of a supportive role for the band's primary product, the music, and create a complete sensory experience with narrative expansion across different platforms. This experience, exhibited for the world to see, can have substantial impact based on its intense or spectacular display. Inspiration can be drawn from advertising in fashion for the difference in the intensity of response to narrative persuasion of ads by Phillips & McQuarrie (2010, pp. 379-380): The more "grotesque" a visual gets, the more immersion and narrative it evokes, the visual acts more as an aesthetic piece rather than overtly selling a product. The ad essentially becomes an explicitly appreciated piece of art by the consumer. This is similar to Rammstein's own "Gesamtkunstwerk" philosophy about their repertoire; the band sees their own work as complete body of art, carried by brutal and uncensored imagery and lyricism (Wicke, 2023, p. 13). Even though their music is fundamentally a product to be distributed, the self-expression and spectacular display are both the purpose for making art and the means for the band to gain exposure and admiration.

### 2.3 Categories of Spectacles

Due to this increasing awareness on media spectacles by the industry players, media organs have started to construct different types of media spectacles each with a different aim in accordance with its suited theme (Seeck & Rantanen, 2014, pp. 169-170). Garber et al. (1993, pp. ix-xii) talk about the different categories in which spectacles are formed, such as politics, borders, sex and AIDS, and how media spectacles are utilized through various frames to invoke certain emotions. For example, the media coverage on AIDS patients and contracting HIV more often than not included depictions of immoralism and monstrosity. This framing and plague metaphors around the disease has marginalized and dehumanized AIDS patients, causing a long-lasting societal stigma (Garber et al., 1993, pp. 209-250). This can be exemplified with how drastic events such as September 11 are captured with extraordinary images to get attention by creating an immersive frame, also named as terror spectacles (Kellner, 2004, pp. 43-44). Moreover, Fryd (2000, p. 283) takes the painter Georgia O'Keeffe's compositions to exemplify the usage of spectacles with gender, sexuality, modernism and urban imagery through the composition of the objects and persons presented. Her paintings mainly bring the dynamics of masculinity, femininity and the relationship between them to the forefront, coupled with urban imagery. For example, O'Keeffe's portraits photographed by her husband Stieglitz portray the triangularity of her as an artist, a sensual woman, and an androgynous (Fryd, 2000, pp. 283-284).

Inspired by the categorization of spectacles of Garber et al. (1993, pp. 209-250), the following sections of this paper are going to examine the different themes media spectacles highlight, such as national & totalitarian, sex & gender, and colonial & racial. Unpacking their aim, use, and outcome under such themes will paint a clear picture of how media spectacles can substantiate media framing and result in steering perceptions on controversial and disputable topics.

### *2.3.1 National & Totalitarian Spectacles*

Usually, national spectacles have one of two purposes: either to spectacularize national identity by elevating it as an ideal profile to uphold, or to offer a critical perspective by wearing one's nationality as a costume (Dai, 2001, p. 162; Zander, 2024, p. 29). Especially since the 20<sup>th</sup> century of eurocentrism and the dominance of the Western world not only economically but also socio-politically, patriotism and kinship for the developing East become a source of pride as a form of uprising. A citizen's national image becomes liberating and therefore valuable; cultural assimilation equals to death. This national favouritism reflects on the media spectacles curated by nations' governments. Theatrical elements, symbols and military showcases contribute to the collective and national identity in parades, social gatherings, or commerce (Kong & Yeoh, 1997, pp. 224-227). For example, in the late 90s of China, nationalistic and militaristic slogans and imagery all around media and advertisement resurfaced as a reaction to globalization and dependency towards the West. Whilst such slogans advocate and reinforce patriotism among the citizens, this is achieved through spectacularizing their cultural artifacts and practices. Catchphrases such as "Chinese people eat with chopsticks" in Chinese fast-food chains, as well as "China can say no; China must say no" from a best-seller book of the 90s marked the rebirth of nationalism in media (Dai, 2001, pp. 161-162).

With national spectacles, Rossol (2010, pp. 618-620) highlights the use of sports and gymnastics within German politics between 1926 and 1936 to symbolize and associate the political authorities with physical prowess, but also to reflect the national image as strong, concrete and sovereign. Due to the extensive spectacularisation of athleticism, the current imagery of mass rallies and well-trained personnel are common tropes for spectacles representing national, totalitarian or socialist propaganda. Such spectacles stem from the ideologies of unification, existing not as many but as one, and completing each other as a nation. This is parallel to the East German longing of Ostalgia (Littlejohn & Putnam, 2010, pp. 36-41).

Another popular trope for media spectacles, particularly for regimes under the soviets, are workers and soldiers, wielding shields, hammers or sickles to showcase the value of labour and its contribution to the nation (Bonnell, 1994, pp. 345-361). Similar to the spectacularisation of national artifacts in China (Dai, 2001, pp. 161-162), the excessive representation of workers' tools and labour is designed to heighten the sense of belonging and motivation in many socialist regimes. According to previous literature on social identity theory, patriotism and chauvinism can mediate the prioritization of local or cultural goods and profiles over others (Meuleman et al., 2013, pp. 439-441). Decorating a media

spectacle with one's nationally recognizable ornaments, such as patterns, clothes, or music, can lead to a more positive digestion of the media spectacle by the consumer.

Whereas such spectacles are purposely intended to foster national pride and belonging, they can also be used as ironic imagery to criticize, resist, and create satire on the national hegemony (Kong & Yeoh, 1997, pp. 224-227). An example can be given from the movie *The Dictator*, portraying an Arabic dictator and his national and international relations (Hassan, 2021, pp. 44-45). The dictator is emphasized as a an incredibly conservative and barbaric leader on purpose, in order to provide social commentary as opposed to showing sympathy for a dictatorial regime. Nevertheless, as much as the movie explicitly criticizes the regime and governance, the Hollywood effect on perceptions on middle Eastern cultures and Islam undeniably exacerbates the notions on the progressive “us” versus the backwards “them” (Hassan, 2021, pp. 46-47). Hence, media spectacles can have a dual effect, that is criticising one concept whilst reinforcing the other.

The sense of collective identity can also be highlighted by not only elevating self but also degrading the other, parallel the previous studies on social identity theory (Meuleman et al., 2013, pp. 439-441). Baker (1990, p. 27) demonstrates this with a poster labelled “anarchy” with an ape with a knife and a bomb from post-world-war-one Germany, alienating the socialist regimes and signalling the savagery and therefore the undesired nature of socialism. Ginsburg et al. (2002, pp. 91-92) exemplify this use of spectacles as the political duty bestowed upon mass media, as images of cultural difference both make a spectacle out of indigenous cultures and perpetuate their otherness from an orientalist perspective.

### 2.3.2 *Sex and Gender Spectacles*

Expanding on sex and gender spectacles, there are skewed depictions of gender stereotypes and roles in television media, which are then utilized to create gender and sex spectacles. This can especially be observed in teen dramas of the 90s and early 2000s, where female characters are highlighted by their sex appeal and their enthusiasm about looks, influencing their self-esteem and surpassing their intelligence or capabilities (Van Damme & Bauwel, 2013, p. 172). Physically, the female characters are visibly slim with revealing clothing. Male characters usually do not participate in societally stereotyped activities, like house chores or shopping.

One of the reasons that the fetishization of the female figure is significant for media spectacles is due to the reinforcement of societal expectations from the female and its supposed “duties” to the male. In cinematic productions, the female’s willing or unwilling sexuality lessens the “castration fear”, supporting the dominance of phallic desire rather than threatening it (Shugart & Waggoner, 2005, pp. 66-67). A parallel study on gender hegemonies done by Schippers (2007, p. 90) reiterate the hegemonic femininity’s association with establishing the hegemonic masculinity’s superiority by taking the centre of objectification of the male desire. O’Keeffe’s floral paintings are great examples of how still picture can have indirect representations of sex by using Freudian connotations (Fryd, 2000, p. 286): Tubular and elongated aspects representing the male, soft and hollow aspects representing the female. Moulding sexual desire into content, sex spectacles allow socially taboo subjects around sex and sexuality to be consumable, albeit under the frame of the ostentatious spectacle culture. In some cases, sex spectacles can also be utilized in favour of the ordinary mass media to ensure the hegemonic social conformity by the spectacularisation of the socially unwelcome (Hugart & Waggoner, 2005, p. 66).

Gender and sex can be coupled with patriotism through how national identity is shaped, moulded and attached to certain notions of gender through spectacles (Taylor, 1997, pp. 60-76). A hypermasculine image for the military can be curated to represent strength and unwavering control. Whereas the female bodies are utilized as spectacles to symbolize the femininity, fragility and incapability of the enemy. Furthermore, the oppression and sexual violence towards the people is represented by the disappearance of mothers and daughters disrupting family structures. Additionally, the resistance against military oppression have used gender spectacles to constitute the “motherland” as a maternal symbol.

Gender spectacles – and gender studies in general – do not solely talk about traditional gender roles and identities, but also different gender identities and sexualities as well. The depiction and representation of queer cultures and identities on media also shape media spectacles around sex, gender,

and hegemonic heteronormality (Ng, 2013, p. 272). One of the prominent examples of queer representation is demonstrated by Berlant & Freeman (1992, pp. 150-151) and drawn examples from Queer Nation's promotions, an LGBTQ activist organization in the US. Similar to Taylor's (1997, pp. 60-76) findings on the reinforcement of traditional gender roles, the authors accentuate the heteronormality in national discourse; queerness is put under the same definitions of otherness, which contradicts with national belonging. Therefore, queer spectacles usually portray critiques on division and exclusivity which is often implicitly connoted by nationalist rhetorics (Berlant & Freeman, 1992, pp. 158-160).

The connection between gender and media spectacles do not exclusively depict traditional relations between femininities and masculinities either. One of the ways of resisting to gender hegemony is through drag (Hugart & Waggoner, 2005, p. 67). The performative culture of drag already aligns itself with the spectacle culture by purposefully portraying an overly feminised figure under the name "drag queen", or vice versa, as an overly masculinised figure as a "drag king". This artform typically performed by men dressing up as women grants the performance a spectacular element by challenging the convenient depictions of gender. Although Debord (1967/1994, p. 107-108) frames the spectacle as a realm to be challenged, drag culture contradicts this resistance by embracing the spectacle of drag as self-expression and liberatory (Hugart & Waggoner, 2005, p. 67). However, this is the case for only the real experiences of people; as for media, drag depictions can be utilized to substantiate the storytelling, ultimately bringing drag back to the realm of the spectacle.

### 2.3.3 Colonial & Racial Spectacles

Most theoretical explorations done on colonial spectacles and imagery on media often mention Said (1978/1995, pp. 9-28) and his works on Orientalism and the unbalanced depictions of the East by the West. The Occident – as Said refers to the Western World – has always been interested in keeping its identity healthy through a desirable image and simultaneously depicting the Orient – the Eastern World – as dangerous and underdeveloped. His approach encourages to scrutinize the very lens which media industries digest, evaluate and reflect cultural identities through image and film, revealing not only the sociopolitical power struggles between the West and the East but also the perspective of which the West views the East (Bloembergen, 2006, p. 6). This positive connection to the self and the negative connection on the other is similar to the notions of the social identity theory once again (Meuleman et al., 2013, pp. 439-441). Fundamentally, in order to uplift oneself, downgrading the other is a conjoined outcome.

Diluting the indigenous identities within the “other” in media is usually through these colonial spectacles, which are curated to emphasize the savagery and eccentricity of lesser-known cultures. The colonial and export exhibition which opened in 1883 in Amsterdam perfectly exemplifies the spectacularisation of indigenous cultures (Bloembergen, 2006, pp. 50-52): Elephant ornaments with Hindu patterns and decorations, representing the Dutch East Indian culture. Even though these oriental perspectives in the western sphere might stem from an authentic expression of indigenous cultures, the western media depictions ultimately trickle the richness and meaning behind these cultures down to how “different”, “exotic”, and “amusing” they appear. This is demonstrated with a study on themes parks done by Clavé et al. (2023, pp. 130-135) and how these parks do not solely stand as spaces of leisure, but they also communicate a euro-centric worldview by spectacularizing and marginalizing non-hegemonic cultures. An example can be given from a Dutch theme park called Efteling, where inspiration is heavily drawn from different local fairy tales as well as international stories. Although, some international themed rides, such as Monsieur Cannibale and Fata Morgana, depict exclusive and problematic colonial discourses which still persist since its imperialist historical roots (Clavé et al., 2023, pp. 137-140). Therefore, the ideological significance and the subtle nuances between indigenous and local cultures are practically deleted for the sake of turning representational arts into consumable media products.

For colonial spectacles in media, it is important to consider the target audience, that is, the role of spectatorship regarding the visual medium. Apter (2002, pp. 584-586) emphasizes how colonial spectacles are constructed as a form of soft cultural power, as imperial dominance is not just geopolitical but also spectacular. Hence, seeing, watching, and perceiving is not a neutral act, rather it is a demonstration of western and imperial power; the position of the spectator represents their respective

power relation. Drawing inspiration from Marxian studies, Apter (2002, pp. 566-571) analyses photographs taken of the locals in British Nigeria at the end of 1800s, highlighting the value given to the photos by documentation and objectification – not by the social context – which grants richness and meaning to the picture. On the contrary to the western-centric depiction and reception, the same photos are interpreted as displays of cultural autonomy and prestige by the locals. Within the imperialist framework, the indigenous cultures resist western ideological hegemony by paraphrasing the pictures as liberating and reinforcing the local identity.

Although there are also the depictions of the “Occident” itself as well, not just the “Orient”. the term Orient can be about the sociocultural position of which a cultural identity places itself. Therefore, this Occident does not only depict the heightened and perfected West, but also identities which view their profile as the dominant discourse and others as subversive. After all, Orientalism stems from the basic assumption that a sense of self-identification with a certain culture brings the notions of “otherness” about outsider identities (Said, 1978/1995, pp. 9-28; (Meuleman et al., 2013, pp. 439-441). Identification is defined by its differences to the external (Shih, 2010, p. 542); within this framework, any nationalist rhetoric, not just western superiority, carries an Orientalist perspective regarding other nations and cultures. This can be exemplified with the interpretation of the West by the West through the perspectives of China and Japan, suggested by Shih (2010, p. 552-554): In order for the Orient to understand the Occident, it must become the Occident and deem itself as universal. Thus, national and colonial spectacles do exist in parallel to each other, especially in the western media industries where a colonial history is present. However, this research is going to examine national and colonial spectacles respectively. In this theoretical framework, there exists extensive literature for both topics, therefore it becomes significant to consider as respective themes to allow for a grounded application of theory to this research.

## 2.4 Music Videos as a Channel for Spectacles & Platformisation

Importantly, spectacles are not explored within the context of music videos compared to previous literature on film, TV, posters, and other physical visual mediums. Nonetheless, they have grown to be more than just an accessory to the music. Taylor (2007, pp. 237-240) contextualizes the influence of music videos on art education and its reception by younger generations due to their dramatic storytelling coupled with the emotional modalities of the song. Whereas music videos can serve the music to create a visual representation of the message and emotion of songs, sometimes the videos can stand as a performative spectacle on its own which is accompanied by the music (Taylor, 2007, p. 235). More often than not, artists and creative industries appropriate performative and spectacular elements in their content for the neoliberal demand of notoriety and spreadability. Music videos ultimately become another channel for media spectacles to carry out their task of grabbing and maintaining attention. Additionally, Björnberg (1994, pp. 68-70) notes a typology between music and visuals through music videos: The variation of the intensity of either music or visuals can result the prioritization of one alongside the support of the other. For example, when narrative visuals are coupled with epic music, the music sets the mood for the scene. Thus, the storytelling of the music clip itself is highlighted as the music increases the intensity of the communicated emotions of the video. Essentially, the music augments the spectacle's severity.

There are a variety of contexts which spectacles in music videos are presented, one of the prominent topics according to Turner (2011, pp. 180-181) is depictions of sexual behaviours. Sexuality is often utilized in the name of spectacles, which creates a dependence of explicit content for notoriety. Even though rock music as genre portrayed sexual acts the least according to Turner (2010), Rammstein as a band are infamous for their explicitness of discourses around sex amongst other topics (Turner, 2011, p. 180; Zander, 2024, p. 30). On top the increasing dependency of sex spectacles in music videos, both Taylor (2007, p. 243) and Turner (2011, p. 186) issue the impact these spectacles have on younger generations. Sex and gender spectacles not only attempt to boost the virality of a piece of media, but they also effect the perception of younger generations about sexuality, gender identity and gender roles. Music videos have become powerful and influential media forms which can skew the natural development of understanding of sex, masculinity and femininity (Turner, 2011, p. 186).

Consequently, these music videos are broadcasted on different platforms. O'Leary (2023, pp. 21-27) emphasizes how platforms play a role in connecting audiences with audio-visual media products. Social media platforms such as YouTube do not curate their own content; they bring value on top of the content in different ways. The value in question is both measurable and abstract. The platforms shape the music videos to become marketable and consumable commodities; the success of the music video is

quantified with views (O'Leary, 2023, pp. 17-18). At the same time, the more abstract value is the sense of community for the viewer as well as a virtual podium for the artists (O'Leary, 2023, pp. 21-22).

Platformisation overall can elongate the lifespan of a band by digitalizing their content and bringing from the underground to the mainstream.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Design

In light of the theoretical framework, a qualitative research design is curated in order to provide an academically sound basis to unpack Rammstein's media spectacles. These media spectacles are retrieved from the band's music videos. To proceed with the analysis, *a visual analysis* and *critical discourse analysis* (CDA) together are coupled due to the importance of utilizing the adequate semiotic tools to collect visual data alongside the examination of societal discourses constructed by spectacles present in every music clip (Machin & Mayr, 2012, pp. 49-56; Aiello & Parry, 2020, pp. 29-31; van Dijk, 2015, pp. 466-468). The instruments offered by visual analysis help this paper to collect and understand the curation and framing of the media spectacles through visual elements in each respective video. After the data collection of through visual analysis, the next step is to categorize the data to their respective themes, formulated in the theoretical framework inspired by Garber et al. (1993): National & totalitarian, sex & gender, colonial & racial. This preliminary categorization aligns with the following analysis step, which is the CDA, to scrutinize each spectacle for their aim and constructed meaning that communicates a message under its theme. This method will help to answer the research question "*How do Rammstein engage with constructing narratives via controversial discourses in their music videos, and what is the significance of the music video medium as the platformised dissemination for their storytelling?*" by conducting an extensive analysis on meaning making through the framework of the spectacle by Debord (1967/1994) on visual material, that is the music videos of Rammstein. By doing so, this research will uncover the band's ultimate reasons to employ media spectacles on the spectrum of art versus engagement.

Given that certain imagery is intentionally included and presented within the spectacle culture, firstly considering the semiotics in visual storytelling gains significance. The visual analysis tools proposed by Machin & Mayr (2012, pp. 49-56) and Aiello & Parry (2020, pp. 29-31) are employed to extract dissectible data. Such tools are (1) *Iconography (denotation & connotation)* to point out what is simply presented and what idea this is representing; (2) *attributes* to unpack the role of objects; (3) *settings* to understand the contribution of locations and ambience; (4) *salience* to see what message is explicitly designed to stand out in the visual; (5) *myths* to comprehend the subliminal messages beneath the salience, that is, what kind of hegemonic discourses are implicitly self-evident in the visual.

After the data is provided by the visual analysis and preliminary categorisation is finalised, CDA is conducted. Considerations from Fairclough (2013, pp. 10-21) and van Dijk (2015, pp. 466-468) are

taken into account to fractionate and inspect the construction and the goal of the media spectacles presented in the music videos in regard to their societal frame. CDA not only provides general insight on discourses, but it also examines systematic and societally constructed power relations through a transdisciplinary lens (van Dijk, 2015, pp. 475). CDA is descriptive as well as it is normative, examining the systems of constructed language and knowledge and their consequences (Fairclough, 2013, pp. 10-11). Thus, the collected data is both unpacked and interpreted through various societal and media perspectives, such as nationalism or gender hegemonies. Therefore, CDA helps this research to unpack the same discourse through different lenses and allows for a cross-comparison. That is also the reason why, for CDA, clear-cut analysis tools like the semiotics are not present; CDA provides the flexibility to apply and synthesise various literature on media spectacles presented in Rammstein's music videos. Whilst visual analysis provides a descriptives on the media spectacles of Rammstein, the CDA applies a categorical understanding to scrutinise such spectacles within different social frameworks. CDA is typically performed on mediums of text and language to examine the systems of thinking and interpretation (van Dijk, 2015, pp. 477). However, this paper is going to utilise CDA on visual mediums because the theoretical framework showcases the significance of studying visuals on media through different societal topics, synthesized by Debord's Spectacle.

### 3.2 Data

#### *3.2.1 Sampling*

A total of 32 Rammstein music videos are included in the corpus of this research, following a combination of criterion and quota sampling. The criteria to include music videos are: (1) It is an official Rammstein music video, (2) derived from the band's official YouTube channel. Quota sampling is achieved by retrieving every possible Rammstein music video on YouTube on their official channel, which equates to 32 (see Appendix A). Even though 35 is the sum of all the music videos which Rammstein have produced over the years (Rammwiki, n.d.), this research excludes 3 music videos. 2 of their music videos were left unreleased (Das Modell and Zeig Dich); 1 music video (Pussy) is released but not on the band's official channel, therefore these videos are not included in the corpus. This paper intends to study the effect of media spectacles, which calls for publicly available music videos on their official channels to study an actual effect. The reasons to not include the music video for Pussy specifically are sampling and validity. Firstly, It does not satisfy criterion sampling; secondly, the music video runs the risk of alteration because it is not released on Rammstein's official platform, therefore posing a risk of hindering the validity. Moreover, the music clips made from their live concerts are also not included in this research due to the focus of this research on studying media spectacles on music videos which differs from spectacles of live performances.

The release dates of the music videos range from 1996 to 2022. However, majority of the music videos on YouTube were not released concurrently with their actual release date. Only 8 out of the 32 music videos on YouTube were released on their official date, starting from 2019 and onwards, parallel to Rammstein's progression with music and adaptation to platformisation (see Appendix A). The band had a 10-year break between their 6th and 7th studio album around 2009-2019, during that period YouTube as a platform established itself as one of the preeminent visual media mediums and the main outlet for music videos. Hence, 24 of their music videos on YouTube do not align with the original release dates of those music videos. The band's attention to YouTube as a powerful platform for content can be observed by their extensive releases of their previous music videos in July 2015; even though new music was not produced at the time, their online presence is kept alive and relevant by making their older works available with current social media platforms and trends. Keeping such aspects in mind will help this research to do a complete examination of the band and their visual representation of their work: how has their imagery changed over the years and how has the platformisation of their works impacted their utilization of media spectacles.

### *3.2.2 Data collection*

The data is collected by downloading the music videos with youtube-dl, a software which helps to download YouTube videos free-of-charge with an ethical manner. The software is installed via GitHub (Bolton, n.d.), where individuals are provided a collaborative platform to construct software and upload them onto a publicly accessible medium. The downloaded 32 music videos are stored in a safe online drive. All music videos are individually watched, and physical notes are taken by the researcher. Each music video will be watched twice: The first watch is to ensure that the initial media spectacles are observed and noted down; the second watch is to note down the overlooked details which otherwise might have been missed during the first watch. This data collection style enhances the exhaustiveness and constant comparativeness of this paper, boosting validity (Silverman, 2011, p. 369). Data is noted down physically with a pen and notebook and stored both physically and virtually by uploading the codes onto the researcher's secure drive. The data is stored for 5 years.

### 3.2.3 Coding Scheme

The codes extracted during the data collection process are formatted with a coding scheme, inspired by the coding techniques and organizations of Johnson et al. (2011, pp. 245-247) and Fazeli et al. (2023, pp. 6-12). The coding scheme of this research (see Appendix B) utilizes a common qualitative coding organization style, including first order concepts, second order concepts, and aggregate dimensions. However, this paper looks at visual data with common media spectacle tropes under national, gender & colonial themes established with the theoretical framework. Therefore, prioritizing the higher-order concepts such as the aforementioned themes becomes significant for this paper's analysis process. This technique helps to minimize common method variance, which typically causes the data collection to be saturated with miscellaneous indicators and lowering validity (Johnson et al., 2011, pp. 243-244). Moreover, high-order concepts are often done on textual data; this paper partially integrates the organization of visual data proposed by Visual-Verbal Video Analysis (VVVA) in order to fit the construction of the coding scheme to this paper's angle on visual analysis tools, like *iconography*, *settings* and *objects* (Fazeli et al., 2023, pp. 6-12). Still, this paper benefits from the presence of first and second order concepts and aggregate dimensions due to the cross-examination of data via the application of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Ultimately, VVVA's coding style on primary & secondary characteristics of individuals, emotions and settings are integrated onto the first-order concepts, whilst considering the insights of Johnson et al. (2011, pp. 243-244) on high-order concepts.

### 3.3 Operationalization

Looking at the catalogue of Rammstein's music videos, this research follows an inductive approach with a mixed method of visual and CDA. The next sections operationalize each step taken during data collection and analysis. Firstly, data collection is presented including the specifics on what data is significant enough to be collected. Then preliminary categorization of the collected raw data is established in light of the theoretical framework. Lastly, the CDA analysis steps will be explained, that is, what questions are asked the data to seek the underlying discourses that the spectacles reproduce, reinforce, or challenge.

### 3.3.1 Visual analysis –Iconography, Attributes, Settings, Salience, and Myths

To extract the initial information to proceed with the analysis, the visual analysis tools are coupled (Machin & Mayr, 2012, pp. 49-56 pp. 49-56; Aiello & Parry, 2020, pp. 29-31): *iconography* (*denotation & connotation*), *attributes*, *settings*, *salience*, and *myths*. This step in the data collection ensures the inclusion of a variety of visual elements present in the music videos alongside the proper application of theoretical visual instruments, boosting the exhaustiveness and intersectionality of the methodology.

To start with, *iconography* describes the composition of the imagery (Machin & Mayr, 2012, pp. 49-51). One of the aspects to be observed is the depiction and the role of persons in the music videos. On an individual level, specifications are noted, such as a portrayed person's age, gender, nationality; facial expressions, gestures, body language; hair, make-up, and clothing. Additionally, the person's relation in regard to their surroundings are equally important for the storytelling, like their positioning; job and occupation; relationships and hierarchical position; reactions and responses. These individual and social aspects can overlap, such as a muscular man in a military uniform representing multitude of aspects like control, masculinity, hierarchy and order. Moreover, the use of colour in specific contexts is also significant to connote particular affiliations. For example, red is used to represent emotions like anger and passion; but red is also embraced by certain regimes and ideologies such as the Soviet Union.

*Attributes* in this research identifies the objects which give the composition certain meanings (Machin & Mayr, 2012, pp. 51-52). Here, the data collection process will include the wielded utensils, gadgets and weapons; purposeful attire; decorations and furniture; the object's position and utility in relation to its surroundings. For example, a matching set of shirt and pants with blue and white stripes have become well-known representation of the nazi camp prisoners. More often than not, attributes are already addressed during iconography. Nevertheless, attributes are still considered as an integral part of the data collection to secure the complete analysis of the data.

*Settings* within the music clips according to this research includes the locations, backgrounds and the attributed ambience (Machin & Mayr, 2012, pp. 52-54). Such backgrounds can help to give more context to the composition of the imagery; the settings can connote towards class divide, cultural difference, political polarization, and gender roles. The type of settings which will be observed are institutional; domestic and intimate; public and urban settings; natural and green; abstract and neutral. This can be exemplified with how a bedroom can be correlated with intimacy, privacy or purity. Arguably more so than other mediums, music video settings often feature abstract or neutral settings, such as a

single colour or patterned background. Neutral settings are often preferred because it helps to highlight the subject in the frame without taking away attention.

After gathering the data on the music videos on the surface level, *salience* is performed to reveal the core message of each music video, providing the analysis with the appropriate groundwork for the necessary literature comparison. The reason to consider salience at this point of analysis is to attempt to look at the “bigger picture” of a piece of image (Machin & Mayr, 2012, pp. 54-56). Salience’s role in visual analysis is that it is not only to observe data, but also to bring all that is collected with the previous tools – iconography, attributes and settings – within one stream to extract the significance and category of an image. The use of salience will provide clarifications to the research question by looking at the underlying messages communicated in the music clips, which will reveal the duty of media spectacles within each respective music video. Ultimately, the salience of each music video differs. For example, the similar depiction of a woman wearing revealing clothing can be interpreted differently regarding salience: the frame might have been assembled to highlight body autonomy through clothing, or the frame might accentuate the infidelity of the subject.

Last but not least, the *myths* within the music videos are obtained. This is one of the most central parts of the data collection for each music clip because it touches upon the entire framework for which a piece of media exists. In order for the message of the visual to come across, the myth is already naturally and instinctively accepted (Aiello & Parry, 2020, pp. 29-31). Without the presence of myths, the media spectacles would come off as disjointed and jarring, losing its intensity. Whereas salience pinpoints the central message communicated within the framework of which the visual is formed, myths pinpoint the framework itself. Consequently, the myths unveil the societal discourse the image is actually conveying. Similar to salience in this case, the myth within each music clip differs. The myths will be extracted by first obtaining the salience and then questioning the presence of the salience by pinpointing what visual element or societal discourse is absent. For example, in the music clip “Deutschland”, depictions of the Nazi concentrations camps with the Nazi military communicate the salience of graphic brutalities which were imposed upon the Jewish people during the WWII. However, the myth emphasizes that even though the clip constructs a historical reference, it conceals the reality that individuals who hold Nazi ideologies still currently exist, they just do not explicitly wear swastikas to communicate it. Therefore, Nazism is not purely an ideology of the past, but it is still rampant; the clip is simply attributing to a historical period.

### 3.3.2 Preliminary Categorization

After the visual analysis is finalised for each music video, the raw data collected and categorised to facilitate a more structured analysis in the forthcoming stages. This categorisation is split into three sections: national & totalitarian spectacles (Garber et al., 1993, pp. 117- 134; Rossol, 2010, 631-633; Meuleman et al., 2013, pp. 439-441), sex and gender spectacles (Garber et al., 1993, pp. 138-150; Taylor, 1997, p. 88; Hugart & Waggoner, 2005, p. 65-70), and colonial & racial spectacles (Garber et al., 1993, pp. 78-90; Kong & Yeoh, 2001, pp. 231-233). The significance of this step is to give the raw data more of a “body” by creating subheadings, allowing the research to compare the data with previous literature more efficiently and effectively during the upcoming stages of analysis. The categorisation will not be performed between the music videos, but rather the spectacles present in each music video. For example, a video mainly portraying national history of Germany may still feature nudity or sexual behaviour, thus that spectacle will be categorised under the theme of “sex & gender”. Even though the visual may be supporting to the overall storytelling of the clip, this paper is separating and researching the aim, use, and context of the spectacle in relation to the story.

Evidently, different visuals belong in different categories. National & totalitarian spectacles (Garber et al., 1993, pp. 117- 134; Rossol, 2010, 631-633; Meuleman et al., 2013, pp. 439-441) feature national and cultural imagery, and totalitarian regimes. Whether it is German, or portraying any other nation, any historical or current visual around discourses on politics, oppression, nationalism, fascism, communism, populism, tradition, culture, homogeneity and polarization will be included. Sex and gender spectacles (Garber et al., 1993, pp. 138-150; Taylor, 1997, p. 88; Hugart & Waggoner, 2005, p. 65-70) will include visuals around sex, sexual behaviour, predatory behaviour, nudity, gender roles, sexuality, subversion, and cross-dressing/drag. Lastly, colonial & racial spectacles (Garber et al., 1993, pp. 78-90; Kong & Yeoh, 2001, pp. 231-233) will feature visuals on colonialism, imperialism, slavery, orientalism, and race difference. Even though the categories are theoretically sound and straightforward, some spectacles might overlap. Namely, the black woman in the “Deutschland” music video representing “Germania”, a personification of the nation. Even though the German expression of the nation stands as the “fatherland” (Lu, 2022), a woman playing the role of Germania is the part of gender spectacles, and her race being a part of racial spectacles. Given that spectacles can combine discourses, the results will be presented accordingly based on which discourse is highlighted. Moreover, some spectacles manifest separate from nation, gender, or colonial topics. Hence, new categories may emerge, independent from what is issued by the theoretical framework. For example, some visuals highlight class struggle, mass production, consumerism, commercial logic and general media culture by the music videos of “Amerika”, “Mein Land”, and “Zick Zack”.

### 3.3.3 Analysis - CDA

Right after the categorisation, this research commences with CDA. The importance of conducting CDA for this research is the flexibility and inclusion of various literary frameworks for assessing discourses and societal power relations (Fairclough, 2013, pp. 10-11). Because CDA is not just a lone-standing method type, CDA brings qualitative methods and discourse studies together at an intersection (van Dijk, 2015, pp. 466). Therefore, CDA brings a critical view on all areas of discourse studies, in this case how semiotics on visual mediums is constructed and presented. Although most studies on CDA showcase the analysis on textual and linguistic data, this paper chooses CDA on visual mediums for the significance of the inclusion of various literature frameworks and contested social perspectives. Given that CDA is going to be performed for each respective category, the theme of the relevant discourses will carry the same categorisation, present three distinct themes: national & totalitarian, sex & gender, colonial & racial.

In order to effectively apply CDA to the categories, certain visual semiotics presented by the data collection will be considered. First of all, symbolism is decoded by asking the following questions: “What cultural and/or national motifs are present?”, “What historical references are depicted?”, “What is the role of persons regards to these references?”, “What is explicitly visible, implicitly visible, or completely absent?”, “What is idealised or marginalised by framing?”, “What are the recurring imagery among the music videos?”. Position and framing of persons in the music videos by asking the following questions: “How does the story in each music clip commence?”, “What persons are present?”, “What is their position and relation regarding their surroundings?”, “What is the communicated emotion?”, If applicable “What is the power relation between persons?”, “What are the repeated roles persons occupy among the music videos?”. Given that this research is examining music videos, certain media questions are also directed to the data to unpack media discourses as well: “Is the imagery abstract or concrete?”, “Is the viewer watching a short film with a story or a music video with no story?”, “Is the setting consisting of colours and patterns, or tangible locations?”, “How the visual medium of music does videos affect the storytelling?”.

### 3.4 Ethics & Positionality

Ethically, there are little to no concerns due to the data and cultural content being publicly available and retrievable. There are no ethical issues with confidentiality, anonymity or informed consent, as this research does not include any data collection strategies including participants. One could argue that the content of the music videos should be mentioned due to their various degrees of controversy. For example, the music video for the song “Pussy” was never released on Rammstein’s official YouTube channel, given its title, topic and imagery. Nonetheless, all the music videos included in the corpus are publicly obtained through Rammstein’s YouTube channel. Therefore, selection of the material and the analysis do no raise ethical concerns or implications, keeping in mind that the music videos are intentionally disseminated by Rammstein themselves on their platforms.

In order to ensure the reliability of the research, it is important to mention the positionality of the researcher (Silverman, 2011, p. 361; Tracy, 2010, pp. 846-847). I am a frequent listener of Rammstein for several years, which helps me to contextualize and point out particular nuances which otherwise would go unnoticed. Although it can be argued that it might hinder the research as being a fan of the band might create shortcomings for critically analysing the corpus due to my self-identification with the band. Nonetheless, there have been numerous scandals around the band which have been off-putting for me on a personal level. The internet coverage around the band on their predatory allegations was particularly upsetting, which inspires this research to be critical and observe the material underneath the surface level, “it’s just good music”.

## 4. Results

In this section, the results extracted via the visual analysis and CDA will be presented and discussed. The visual analysis has given this research plenty of insight on visual storytelling elements – which have already been remarked in the methodology – such as facial expressions, the colour palette of the settings or clothing items, symbolism of certain items or activities, and so on. The CDA, following the path sketched by the methodology and building upon the visual analysis, has provided this research a deeper understanding on the social cues and power relations underneath the visual elements which would otherwise be missed and regarded as basic assumptions of society. Some examples of such elements include interpreting the visual connotations and symbolisms from a broader context of its literary framework, like a swastika and its presentation, framing and historical connections.

The analysis distinguishes three major themes for media spectacle usage in light of Garber et al. (1993, pp. ix-xii), as mentioned in the theoretical framework and methodology as (1) national & totalitarian spectacles, (2) sex & gender spectacles, and (3) colonial & racial spectacles. This paper argues these three categories are where the main mobilisation and utilisation of media spectacles occur by the band Rammstein in their music videos. Moreover, the analysis also finds classical spectacle usage whether the spectacle is tied to a broader social context. Finally, the analysis points out the music video medium, progression of platformisation and transition to YouTube, and the mix of music clip and short film. The use of classical media spectacles will be discussed immediately in the section 4.1, followed by detailed examination of the three major themes of media spectacles with examples under sections 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4. The result section will be concluded by discussing the use of media medium, platformisation, and transition to YouTube in 4.5.

Additionally, the data collection also uncovers other themes which stand outside of the three major themes, predominantly featuring relationships of humankind with media culture, humankind with nature, and humankind with consumerism. For example, some scenes in “Ich Will” feature hundreds of cameras and press pointing towards the band members, a scene in “Angst” showcases band member’s face merging with small tv screens, some scenes in “Zick Zack” include the band members with extreme plastic surgery, lip filler and other body alterations, the music clip of “Ohne Dich” tells a story of mountain climbers and their struggles against the climate. However, as the three major themes are sufficiently substantial, this paper excludes these less prominent themes from a deeper analysis and interpretation. Nevertheless, these excluded themes are also fit for anthropocentric inquiry and analysis for future research.

#### 4.1 Classic Spectacle Usage

To put it simply, this section pinpoints the visual elements which are present in not just a few but a vast majority of Rammstein's music videos, which make up of their typical imagery. Such visual elements can of course be tied to a more general societal context, such as how fire and blood can be tied to other discourses like violence and weakness. However, this paper argues that these recurring visual elements serve a dual purpose for Rammstein, that is the narrative support of the spectacle as a piece of imagery as well as the band's "brand" stamp. Therefore, the repetitive use of the same visual elements tied to or independent from a particular social context distinguishes Rammstein from other bands. Consequently, when a viewer watches music videos, these elements can act as the determining factor for recognising the piece of media as a product of Rammstein.

#### 4.1.1 The Band

More than half of the music videos feature an abundance of scenes of the band members performing the song of the clip. The performance is in the same vein of a live concert with the formation of a band, placing the frontman in the centre with the other members playing their respective instruments like guitars, bass, drums and a keyboard. Within the genre of rock and metal, this technique of presenting the band members is a common visual trope. However, metal and its sub-genres tend to be niche, varying in popularity through different trends but rarely becoming mainstream. This visual element of a “band” distinguishes Rammstein as a metal band with each member contributing to the music, as opposed to pop music which usually only depicts the singer(s). The most prominent examples of this can be found in the videos of “Rammstein”, “Benzin”, “Feuer Frei!” and “Ich Tu Dir Weh”. In contrast to others music videos which feature the band members, these videos mainly depict the band in their performance formation to grab the viewer’s attention by spectacularizing the band itself. Hence, instead of attaching media spectacles through a theme or topic alone, the spectacle is the band and its members. This is parallel to the “Gesamtkunstwerk” philosophy of Rammstein of perceiving their music as a complete body of art, including themselves (Wicke, 2023, p. 13).

It is important to mention that most of the Rammstein music videos convey a story within a certain context, societal perspective or historical period through their chosen media spectacles. The band continues to spectacularise themselves also through these social contexts by adapting their attire to embody the music video’s settings and narrative. Some examples can be shown from the music videos “Mann Gegen Mann”, “Amerika”, “Keine Lust” and “Radio”. Mann Gegen Mann’s video features hypermasculine imagery with a crowd of nude male persons (which will be unpacked further in 4.3) and the band members are also performing, presented with no clothing and covering their private areas with their instruments. “Amerika” features notions of Western (specifically Neoliberal American) dominance with some scenes of the band members on the moon with astronaut suits, alluding to the moon landings in the late 60s. However, this technique of self-insertion can cause viewers to conclude that the members’ portrayals align with their ideologies, which is not always true. This paper claims their approach to music videos to include the band as themselves is again a part of “Gesamtkunstwerk” (Wicke, 2023, p. 13).

#### 4.1.2 Aesthetics

Alongside the members, there is a certain continuity of visual aesthetics which Rammstein use in various music videos. Aesthetics in this case stands for frequently observed artifacts, colours, facial expressions, and conveyed emotions. This is best exemplified by the music videos “Seemann”, “Mein Land”, “Mutter”, “Mein Herz Brennt”, and “Mein Herz Brennt (piano version)”. BDSM-esque, Industrial, black and leather gear and paint are quite evident. Especially the contrast in Mein Land encapsulates the deterministic characteristics of Rammstein’s aesthetics. The music video presents the members and a group of women with clear and shiny skin, dancing and surfing behind a projected screen of the sea, all showcased with bright and contrasted colours. Whereas the second half of the video depicts a completely opposite aesthetic by showing the members and women in white and black face & body paint, performing circus acts with fire and hula-hoops, and dancing a lot more freely and roughly. This type of imagery spectacularizes the band’s aesthetics by accentuating their lack of fear for portraying an uncontained, unfiltered and unmediated aspects of life all the while conveying how mainstream media is shed of brutality and paints a perfect, glistening and yet phony portrayal (further explored in 4.2.3). This music video communicates the grander message of humankind’s more raw and explicit side and how mainstream media tends to erase these rough and yet more real parts of human interaction, which is parallel to what Debord (1967/1994, p. 3) issues about the problematic features of media spectacles.

#### *4.1.3 Pyrotechnics*

One of the most prominent visual elements which Rammstein is characterized by are fire and pyrotechnics. Naturally, fire as a visual tool is quite flexible; explosions can be representative of destruction & violence, a fireplace can represent comfort & warmth, a torch can represent enlightenment & knowledge, and so on. In the case of a lot of Rammstein's music videos, fire is used in a variety of contexts to support the storytelling or stand alone as the spectacle of fire. For example, the video of "Feuer Frei" displays many forms of fire with pyrotechnics with the band's performance, flamethrowers, explosion of cars, firing of guns, background lamps and so on. In "Du Hast", the display of fire is also frequent yet supportive of the general storytelling of sacrifice and brotherhood. Whereas the fire itself is the spectacle in Feuer Frei, the representative message beneath the fire is the spectacle in Du Hast.

#### 4.2 National & Totalitarian Spectacles

In this section, the analysis of media spectacles featuring imagery on nationalism, totalitarianism, autocracy, culture, imperialism and political neutrality/polarization will take place. Rammstein takes quite a versatile approach with portraying nationalism and totalitarianism through different regimes and national lenses, albeit the two main messages revolving around these spectacles are: The uproar against oppression and the power of unity of the people. Throughout their music clips, these two main messages are communicated with many ironic impersonations of these oppressive systems, reflecting the works of Kong & Yeoh (1997, pp. 224-227). To be able to achieve this social commentary, the band not only utilizes particular regional, traditional and German culture, but they also present imagery which connote to broader national and political discourses.

#### 4.2.1 Germanic Imagery & History

There are two particular music clips, “Rosenrot” and “Dicke Titten”, which present a small rural German village. This is inferred by the settings and the objects present in the music videos: Mountainous terrain, wooden houses, an abundance of fresh crops and cattle, the clothing featuring cultural floral prints, women wearing traditional braids or bandanas with similar patterns and prints, steins of beer on tables, and a lack of electricity and technology. Via spectacularising their cultural imagery, Rammstein are highlighting the dysfunctionality of the social structures within these cultural grounds. Even though there is a story of gender roles (further analysed in 4.3) which the national and cultural spectacles are narrating in both clips, the rural German lifestyles and habitats as the setting becomes the fundamental media spectacle. Because the cultural imagery makes for an engaging perspective for a music clip, this paper argues that the choice of such traditional Germanic imagery maintains a conscious purpose of notoriety for Rammstein. In contrast, given the members’ past with the political divide within Germany during their adolescence as well as their explicit and brutal depictions (Littlejohn & Putnam, 2010, pp. 36-41; Wicke, 2023, p. 14), the German villages as the spectacle also intends to criticize the dysfunctional social structures as self-reflection through a story, as if Rammstein is saying “this is what is wrong in our culture”.

The music video of “Deutschland” is one of the most national and political piece of media Rammstein have ever produced, starring different periods in German History and potential future. This is again given away with the settings and objects. Whereas some scenes are with medieval knights and soldiers with chainmail armour, some are with a 1920s brawl arena, some feature the Nazi concentration camps, some are with peasants eating a live cadaver, and many other more. Rammstein showcase a variety of aesthetics from different historical eras of Germany and its regimes, specifically what can be attested as significant turning points or moments of political and socio-economic erosion. The meticulously chosen scenes spectacularize Germany as a nation even more so than regional and traditional imagery. This is achieved with a combination of the music video with the song’s lyrics. In between the shots of violence, fire and manic frenzy, the members and actors sing the words “Deutschland” and “Über allen” (stands for “Germany” and “above all”), often with their fist or weapon up in the air. This combination leads the viewers to consume this as German ultranationalism. Even further, the scenes with Nazi concentration camps and Nazi generals accompanying the lyrics raise critical questions about what ideologies Rammstein advocate for and promote within their music videos. Another spectacular element in Deutschland is the black woman (further analysed in 4.4) who is meant to represent Germania, a nationalist concept of the personification of Germany. She takes on different roles in different scenes: She is a Nazi general, she is the one eaten by the peasants, she is the queen during the

medieval times, and so on. The position of her occupation regarding the historical period tells a story of Germany's respective socio-political state. That is, her position in the administrative hierarchy communicates her power and authority, consequently reflecting Germany's power and stability.

On the other hand, the spectacularisation of their nation with violent and savage portrayal of the scenes (e.g. Germania eaten alive) combined with radically nationalist lyricism can be argued to be another way Rammstein are exaggerating their national imagery through media spectacles to reject notions of ultranationalism. It is important to mention that in genuine presentations of nationalist absolutism on media accentuate their superiority by shedding the depictions of people from any impurity, which is why many sports and gymnastics demonstrations for nationalist propaganda become popular (Rossol, 2010, pp. 618-620). In this music video, the depiction of Germany is quite the opposite. This paper argues that ultimately Rammstein illustrate how ultranationalism is not a healthy exercise of patriotism in the music video of Deutschland; to love your country is to embrace the imperfect past it carries.

#### 4.2.2 Unity versus Freedom

There are three specific music videos starring totalitarian spectacles that reflect homogeneity, unification and conformity, which are “Links 2 3 4”, “Stripped”, and “Radio”. Starting with Links 2 3 4, the music video tells the story of a group of ants uprising against 3 other large bugs which come to destroy their habitat. The ant colony are painted to be a socialist community with objects and the activities, such as sudden flashes of the hammer and sickle, the ants working within their stations, playing group sports (e.g. football), dancing to Rammstein songs in a group, and going to the movies altogether. There is a lack of individuality in the ant’s lifestyle. The totalitarian spectacles are depicted as one single ant remaining powerless, however gathering comrade ants to synchronise the vibrations of their antennas and organize various marching military formations to retaliate to the big bugs. The totalitarian spectacles in this case convey the message of the power of unity, power of the people and strength in numbers. These totalitarian spectacles can be pegged as quite a classic trope used particularly in socialist media (Bonnell, 1994, pp. 345-361). Though quite simplified and idealistic, this music video reflects the members’ socialist upbringing and advocacy quite accurately.

Alternatively, Rammstein depict the weakness and oppression of these notions of unity and totalitarianism by yet again wearing these ideologies as a costume for the purpose of critique. In Stripped, this message of unity and conformity is particularly done with sport and gymnastics demonstrations within the Olympics, quite similarly to the works of Rossol (2010, pp. 618-620). Although certain visual elements refer to the specific period of history between WW1 and WW2 when such sport demonstrations gained popularity. These elements are the choice to have the video on black and white, the athletic attire being older and simpler, and most explicitly some of the country’s flags belonging to regimes which do not currently exist (e.g. Fascist Italy’s flag). Although this music video resembles that visual of which is purely united, in sync and altruistically adept, the demonstrations are so dragged out that it starts to act as a spectacle to showcase its absurdity. A similar case is posed in “Radio” of criticising these totalitarian impositions through longing for freedom of media and freedom of expression. The object radio is the spectacle of this video, where women are making love to radios, stealing them from stores, treating them like a baby in a stroller, and breastfeeding them. The spectacularisation of the radio, the band appearing as a simulation, and the heights of which women go to obtain radios communicate the message that freedom of expression will prevail despite the totalitarian counter measurements.

#### 4.2.3 Americanisation

It is important to mention that one common theme of criticizing totalitarianism by Rammstein is spectacularising the first half of 20<sup>th</sup> century, with grey scale colour palettes and popularized 20s-50s tropes and symbols like the swastika or the hammer and sickle. However, the myths within these music videos holds only specific regimes responsible for totalitarian governments, whereas totalitarianism is neither exclusive to socialist or communist regimes nor is it nation bound. Rammstein demonstrate national spectacles in the form of cultural imperialism of the US with the music videos “Amerika”, “Mein Land”, “Zick Zack”, and “Angst”. In Amerika, the effect of cultural and neoliberal imperialism of US based commerce is quite evident with the clash of settings and objects. Settings present varying regional cultures (further analysed in 4.4), although the people engage in Americanised activities, for example monks in orange robes eating hamburgers and drinking coke in plastic cups. Rammstein utilize national spectacles from a consumerist perspective to highlight the US culture as neoliberal, as opposed to previous sections where national symbolism includes more common visual elements like flags, sports, and the military. The spectacles convey the message about how global and dominant the American culture has become, seeping into other cultures’ daily practices and lifestyles.

In the other music videos (Mein land, Zick Zack, Angst), these US centric national spectacles are a lot less overt. Instead of explicitly mentioning the US, Rammstein spectacularize the certain visual elements to spotlight hyper consumerism under the broader discourse of media culture. For example, Mein Land stars the members and a group of women in 50s style swimsuits on the beach, text boxes popping on the screen accompanied by contrasted colours (see 4.1.2), nodding to the rise of perfectionist and sensationalist characteristics of pop culture in media after WW2, originating from the US. Zick Zack depicts all the members with extreme plastic surgery, Botox, body altercations, wigs, hair implants, and sparkly costumes, alluding towards the consequences of over consumerism, body dysphoria and dehumanisation of media culture. Angst features the band members divided with white fences, their faces merging with TV screens, constantly buying materials and guns from cheerleaders by throwing money in order to build walls and protect their territory. This music video articulates the indoctrination and the implantation of fear by the US centric media culture. Nonetheless, all of the US centric national spectacles decode the ramifications of the global dominance of western media trends.

#### 4.3 Sex & Gender Spectacles

In this section, the media spectacles utilized to accentuate sex, gender identity, gender roles, sex attributes or stories conveying a story through a relationship of people will be analysed. This paper finds that there are two types of music videos to be analysed under this theme: The ones which visibly present a story regarding sex and gender, and the ones which do not tell a sex & gender story and yet still evident of sex and gender spectacles. In contrast to the versatility of topics and socio-cultural tensions under nationalism and totalitarianism, Rammstein's depictions of sex and gender are a lot more directional. That is, the storytelling of sex and gender, the roles of which the members and other actors play, and the positioning of characters in the music videos follow a more frequent pattern, whether if it is a conscious choice or they manifest naturally due to Rammstein's unmediated outlook on sex & gender.

#### *4.3.1 Gender Hegemony and Patriarchy*

The establishment and the reinforcement of the gender hegemony, specifically the male dominance and the female inferiority, is quite evident in a lot of Rammstein's music videos. This reinforcement is done by certain sex and gender spectacles some of which are common tropes, and some are a lot more covert and alternative. Some of the most common tropes can be observed in the music videos "Du Riechst so gut '98", "Mein Teil", "Keine Lust" and "Haifisch". In Du Riechst so gut '98, the imagery of sex and yearning is straightforwardly spectacularized via depicting the men as a wolf following a woman, breaking into her house, and having sex with her. In Mein Teil, an angel is having sex with one of the members whilst the member is ripping the feathers of her wings, signalling the loss of her innocence. In Keine Lust, the members – who are depicted to be extremely overweight with breathing issues – are accompanied by women in miniskirts and tight button up shirts who help with their health needs by feeding them pills or wiping their sweat. The common point of all of these spectacles is how women are unstained but equally dirty, pure but equally erotic, and supportive alongside how men are lustful, instinctive and savage. These spectacles are not constructed with classic tropes like a stay-at-home wife but depicted with much more explicit and sexualised scenarios. Sexual scenes are favoured to support the salience of acceptance of the gender hegemony by the female characters by unleashing the hidden sexual desire of women have towards men.

Amongst others, the more implicit depictions of gender hegemony can be found in "Seeman", "Du Hast", "Auslander" and "Ich will". In Du Hast and Ich Will, the band members or other male actors in these music videos are spectacularized about their power and authority by wearing businessman suits. In Seeman and Du hast, the female characters seem to be inattentive, hazy and disassociated, indicating their mental yield and incapacity. In Auslander, the natives which the members meet (further analysed in 4.4) are very sexually welcoming without defiance or question. These more overt depictions of the gender hegemony subliminally conveyed within the story, especially with the women's emotional surrender, communicates biological wiring of the women's inferiority towards men assumed by Rammstein.

Even though there are music videos – like "Sonne", "Rosenrot", "Radio", "Zeit", "Engel", and "Mutter" – which attempt to protagonistise women instead of the band members in order to highlight a woman's autonomy, this is only done by highlighting their sex appeal, their desire for sexual freedom, their maternity, or their villainous side. In Engel, the main performer on the stage is a woman who is wearing an embellished bikini with a snake around her neck, who later puts her foot inside a man's mouth and pours liquor down her leg. In Sonne, the story is a reference to Snow White where she is a drug addict with an assertive and bossy personality and the dwarves are her servants who collect precious gems

for her in the mines. Zeit, alongside Deutschland, depicts a very explicit birth scene, highlighting the women's maternal traits. Therefore, the women in the stories are literally the villains in the story, or women's autonomy is villainised by exercising her autonomy with sexual activities, or the women's power only comes from her femininity and biological abilities (e.g. giving birth). Even when aiming to demonstrate a women's power or discretion, Rammstein still fail to break the mould of the gender hegemony, perhaps not even intending to challenge it in the first place.

#### *4.3.2 Objectification of Women*

In previous sections about gender hegemony, the objectification of women is already alluded to; though there are specific visual elements which clarify this objectification. In music videos like *Du hast*, *Du Riechst so gut '98*, and *Sonne*, the women wear a lot of red, which is a common colour used to connote eroticism, passion and desire. In contrast to men's clothing, the women rarely wear formal clothing or pants in any of the videos; they are usually seen in skirts, dresses, swimwear, or bodysuits. Moreover, women are observed in a lot of BDSM gear or naked. Even though BDSM is an aesthetic Rammstein commonly use, such gear is also used even in music videos – like “Rammstein” – where a gendered storytelling is absent or the aesthetic of the music video does not call for BDSM. In music videos *Du Riechst so gut '98* and *Rammstein*, the women are in a state of orgasm which can be observed on their face. Most music videos, the women are often skinny and compliant of the supposed gender hegemony. Homosexuality of women is also objectified, communicated by the settings; music videos like *Mein Land*, *Engel*, and *Keine Lust* present scenes of women kissing, often in the presence of men watching or at a sexual alternative party. Most forms of women's objectification become the spectacle to supposedly transform the music videos into engaging pieces of media.

In contrast, Rammstein also provides social commentary about this objectification of women in music videos “*Zick Zack*” and “*Dicke Titten*”. The difference of the objectification in these two music videos than the rest is the salience. The physicality of women is so visible and apparent that the visual elements become a spectacle of the act of objectification, criticizing objectification by exaggerating it. In these videos, objectification is done purposefully to contribute to the general storytelling, as opposed to other music videos mentioned above which utilise objectification of women as a spectacle to boost virality. The camera frame centres on the women's cleavage numerous times, zooming in and out on their breasts and hips and backside. Whereas *Zick Zack* provides social commentary on over consumerism and body altercations, *Dick Titten* spectacularizes the feral and instinctive desire of men towards women.

#### 4.3.3. *Hypermasculinity*

Objectification of men is also evident in numerous music videos of Rammstein, such as “Du Riechst so gut ‘95”, “Mann Gegen Mann” and “Ich Tu Dir Weh”. However, the distinction of the objectification of men is the hypermasculinity attributed by their physicality and occupation. Alongside the suits mentioned in 4.3.1, the band members are either topless or completely naked. Du Riechst so gut ‘95 is quite an abstract music video compared to the others, although the display of the band member being topless, their seemingly shiny skin, and the gestures of the frontman while singing accentuate their muscle definition. The contrast between their muscular build and the flowers they hold in their hand bring a contrast between the masculine power and the fragility of the flower. Mann Gegen Mann tells a story about brotherhood, masculinity and male homosexuality with nude members performing the song and a crowd of nude men laying on, holding and wrestling each other. The light source on top of their seemingly shiny and oily skin spectacularizes the muscles as a sign of power and masculinity.

Amongst the apparent visual indicators of hypermasculinity, the occupation and the positioning of men in some music videos like “Mein Herz Brennt”, “Ich Will”, “Du Hast”, and “Adieu” highlight the control, authority, violence and the hegemony of masculine power. Both in Mein Herz Brennt and Ich Will, some scenes include a band member holding a woman as she faints or struggles, contrasting the vast dominance of the men against the damsel in distress. Ich Will, Du Hast and Adieu present the band members in their suits walking assertively and committing arson and armed robbery. Their positions and attitudes regarding their surroundings are quite distant, emotionally detached, and indifferent. They seem to be very methodical, moving carefully and disregarding explosions around them. All of these denotations put together signal towards their physical and emotional power of men despite criminal activity, which is the image Rammstein wants to project for themselves.

#### *4.3.4 Gender Subversion*

Despite the reinforcement of the segregation of both biological and societal gender roles, in the same vein Rammstein attempts to challenge this hegemony in music videos like “Mein Teil”, “Mann Gegen Mann”, and “Dicke Titten” by portraying gender subversion via cross-dressing and drag. In Mann Gegen Mann, the hypermasculine light upon the men are contested by the frontman’s knee-high leather heels, a black wig and red lipstick. Similarly, Dicke Titten portrays one of the band members discreetly going into the attic of a barn, sewing clothes, putting on a wig, putting a red lipstick and stuffing his chest with hay. Lastly, Mein Teil presents another band member in a wig, lipstick and a businesswoman’s clothing, walking the other band members on a leash out on the street. Even though these subversions provide a fresh point of view to the storytelling, some sexualities and gender identities are spectacularized and consequently alienated for the purpose of media engagement. Keeping in mind the potentially harmful and limiting perspective of men imitating women, the inclusion of these challenges to the gender hegemonies can have a beneficial effect on media literacy by using spectacles to question discourses around sex and gender, encouraging the critical reception of media.

#### 4.4 Colonial and Racial Spectacles

In this section, the visual elements which nod towards orientalism, colonialism, depictions of race and ethnicity, and imperialism will be presented and analysed. Imperialism has already been mentioned in 4.2.3 as Americanisation of cultures and media. However, it is equally important to mention imperialist spectacles here to be able to pinpoint the systematic power structures regarding race which grants the basic assumptions beneath the storytelling. By analysing what the colonial spectacles are communicating which social structures which take away and grant power to certain groups, the power of the message of globalisation and Americanisation of music videos like “Amerika” becomes a lot more apparent.

#### 4.4.1 Orientalism

The two main music videos which paint an orientalist depiction of cultures and communities is “Amerika” and “Auslander”. The aforementioned objects, which were the spectacle of cultural imperialism (such as the hamburger and coke), is further accentuated by the oriental spectacles projected upon the other cultures. This is achieved through the salience: These indigenous and less dominant cultures are outdated and backwards whereas the American culture is fresh and new. Taking the monks with orange robes from Amerika as an example, hamburgers and cokes they are consuming are juxtaposed by their clothing and setting of a temple. This polarised visual breeds the assumption that they cannot have burgers within their own culture because: (1) That belongs to the US culture, and (2) their culture is too outdated to house new cultural practices, that they are too backwards, so it must be the US.

These oriental portrayals become even more spectacular due to the stereotypical depictions of cultures. And this can be extracted by the myths. First of all, the basic assumption is natives of those cultures dress like how they are presented in the music videos in their daily life. Furthermore, the music video presents these cultures in their most traditional stereotypical form. The visuals lead the viewers believe that if they visited the home of these cultures, they would find it exactly how it is depicted. However, one culture cannot be diluted to one stereotypical clothing, food or object. That is, not every monk always wears an orange robe, or not every African person owns a spear. On the other side, American culture is similarly diluted to stereotypical visual elements like junk food, television and the moon landings. The myth hidden behind this oriental perception of cultures makes colonial and racial spectacles even more effective.

Racial spectacles are also constructed in a similar vein to orientalism. People of colour, specifically African cultures, are presented within their homeland, wearing feathers and animal fur, wielding spears or other weapons. Especially in the music video of Auslander, they hold different paper signs with the word “welcome” and different languages (e.g. English, French, and German), connoting the colonised past of indigenous cultures versus the colonial past of the West. White supremacy is shown as the colonial spectacle, which is portrayed with the children the band members have with the women of the indigenous community. This further communicates how the white man colonises the gene pool by giving his blue eyes to his children and lightening their skin.

#### *4.4.2 Reclamation of Power*

Although, Rammstein also brings importance to racial and colonial matters by portraying the power of other races outside of the race hierarchy. This is best presented by the native Americans in “Amerika” s music video and the Black Germania (see 4.2.1) in Deutschland’s music video. The native Americans are acted by the band members, who are wearing their traditional attire and dancing around a cultural totem on the moon. This scene, shown right after the band’s performance as astronauts with the US flag around them, creates a narrative of duality about the history of US. The salience of this scene tells the story of natives being the genuine owners of the land, and colonial dominance and the claim of the land of the US against the natives. The natives dancing on the moon reverses the historical narratives of the US, giving power back to the Native American identity.

Deutschland’s music video also refers to racial issues and assumptions with racial spectacles through the depiction of a black Germania. The created tension between the classic portrayal of Germania – a white woman with long blond hair – and the difference of the race of the actor in Deutschland functions in a similar way to the Native Americans in Amerika: The visual reverses the notions of white supremacy by replacing it with the contested race. This is further reinforced by the actor’s gestures and mimics; she usually has a stern look, her eyebrows are crossed, her occupations often indicate her dominance and there is a lack of fear with her movements. It can be argued that Rammstein might have chosen a black actor independent from the notion of issues of race and ethnicity. However, the spectacle culture can turn these sensible topics into the focal point of a piece of media, even though Rammstein might not have intended to do so. Considering that Deutschland touches upon a variety of discourses (see 4.2.1), it is doubtful that the race of the actor is an unconscious choice.

However, this reclaim of power only works due to the racial myth within the music video: the basic assumption is that the white race and power are already associated with each other. A powerful depiction of a white woman could simply be described with her actions, but the actor being black highlights both her authority and her reclaim of racial power together. Without the underlying basic assumption between white and power, the portrayal of Germania as white or black would pose no difference to the storytelling. Therefore, the myth of the visual is what allows this racial spectacle to provide powerful storytelling to the music video.

#### 4.5. Music Videos as a Medium

This section proposes elements of the music videos as a single unit, taking a more holistic approach to analyse the music videos. Rather than focusing on specific visual elements in each video, this section aims to analyse the music videos as the chosen media medium, the significance of the medium to the storytelling, the platformisation process of their music and the progression of Rammstein's repertoire over the 3 decades of their career. How this section differs from classic spectacle usage (see 4.1) is that the content of the music videos is unpacked within the framework of platformisation and modality theories whereas classical spectacles usage mentions specific visual elements with their intended meaning-making within the framework of media spectacle theories.

#### *4.5.1 Platformisation and Transition to YouTube*

Given that Rammstein has been making music and producing music videos since 1995, the medium they used for their music videos as well as their style of storytelling has also transformed from the beginning of their career. Independent social media platforms like YouTube did not exist until the mid to late 2000s, or they had not yet gained the popularity they currently hold. Therefore, the distribution of their music videos was through music channels on TV. The attention to the medium of Rammstein's videos is reflected upon the abstract settings and storytelling of their initial works. Looking at their discography chronologically, the storytelling in "Du Riechst So gut '95", "Seemann", "Rammstein" and "Du Hast" are a lot non-linear and abstract in the late 90s. The colours and Objects were more visible on TV, like flowers and fire; therefore, the band used to focus more on metaphors and symbolism for the construction of their spectacles. Starting from the early 2000s, Rammstein had started to incorporate more linear stories more realised characters, exemplified with "Sonne", "Links 2 3 4", "Benzin", "Rosenrot" and "Haifisch". These music videos were shot at a realistic location, with featuring actors other than the band members, which alludes to the given significance to settings and characters for the band's storytelling. Although majority of their music videos until 2019 still retained the non-linear storytelling characteristics like "Mein Teil", "Keine Lust" and "Mann Gegen Mann", or their abstract metaphors like "Mutter", "Mein Land" and "Mein Herz Brennt".

From 2019 and onwards, Rammstein's storytelling their music videos have transformed into 6- to 10-minute-long pieces of media, intending to act as social commentary as the symbolisms and metaphors are a less abstract and a lot more purposefully clear to understand. During their 10-year break in 2009-2019, YouTube has established to be one of the most influential platforms of social media for video-based content, including music videos for most artists. Hence, Rammstein has developed their music videos to become a lot more engaging through an individual screen, as opposed to TV. This reflects upon their music videos like "Deutschland", "Auslander", and "Zick Zack". Understanding that social media platforms are more globally accessible than TV, the nature of the topics within these music videos are a lot more internationally recognised or stereotypical (nationalism). Therefore, the symbols and metaphors used in the music videos are a universally acknowledged, such as pairing the song "Angst" with a stark colour palette with red, black and white to signal severity and anger.

#### 4.5.2 Music Videos versus Short Films

Building upon the transformation and the platformisation, Rammstein's music videos – especially the music videos produced after 2019 – have started to blur the lines between music videos and short films. This is observed due to three main aspects. As mentioned before, the length of the music videos has nearly doubled, up to 10 minutes. Their initial videos accompany the length of the song, but their newer videos have additional scenes in front and after the actual song's length, giving a cinematic flare to the music video. Secondly, many of their newer videos feature fully realised characters who have substantial contributions to the story (e.g. *Germania*), both played by the members and other actors. Whereas in older videos the side characters are either non-existent or play a supportive role. Thirdly, credits at the end of the video are present, including the production studio, costume and make up, actors name and so on. This addition lets the viewer know that this music video is more of a production involving many parties and resources as opposed to a simple visual accessory to the song.

However, there are three visual elements which Rammstein utilise that still help to retain the flare of a music video. Firstly, the band members perform the song with their instruments, which is a common visual in genres like rock and metal (see 4.1.1). The performance scenes remind the viewer that the music video's fundamental purpose is to create engaging modalities into Rammstein's discography. The second element is that the members, or the actors still mouth the lyrics of the song even if they are not performing the song. This technique is specifically executed with the frontman taking the centre of the frame whilst singing. This visual is quite frequently utilised by Rammstein, as it is present in almost every single music video. The third element is the fast-paced cuts, flashes and switching between different domains of scenes. Usually matching to the beat of the song, many of their videos attempt to spectacularise a person, an object or an action by cutting from frame to frame which keeps each scene engaging and memorable. This is most apparent in *Deutschland*, where the presentation of the historical periods is non-chronological and quite swift.

## 5. Conclusion

In this paper, I have attempted to unpack the aim and use of controversial imagery in Rammstein's music videos, specifically through the framework of the media spectacles, initially established by Debord (1967/1994, pp. 2-3). I aimed at not only examining the recurring themes and various utilisations of media spectacles across the band's clips, but also to accentuate what type of societal hegemonies are reinforced or challenged and how does the platformisation of their repertoire influence their visual language. To do so, I have come up with a research question: "*How do Rammstein engage with constructing narratives via controversial discourses in their music videos, and what is the significance of the music video medium as the platformised dissemination for their storytelling?*". This paper has analysed 32 music videos from Rammstein's official YouTube channel via visual analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), synthesized through the established framework of media spectacles. The sub-questions to consider during this analysis in order to understand the purpose of the spectacles were (1) "does the media spectacle challenge and dispute a discourse as social commentary?", (2), "does the media spectacle help to advocate for an ideology?", and (3) "does the media spectacle help with engagement and notoriety?".

In conclusion, Rammstein unquestionably utilise media spectacles consciously. It can be stated that the band has proved themselves to be hyperaware of their artistic work, and the meaning behind the metaphors in their songs and music videos. Given their "Gesamtkunstwerk" philosophy (Wicke, 2023, p. 13), the controversial topics are chosen undeniably because a more powerful story can be told through contested discourses. Controversial topics are the spectacle's natural habitat, as personal and unfiltered experiences and emotions of people are projected most clearly upon open-ended topics. And as Debord states, the spectacle always attempts to clone these experiences and emotions as authentically as possible whilst retaining its commercial quality (Debord, 1967/1994, p. 5). Rammstein as a band name their own approach as the "the spectacle of brutality" (Wicke, 2023, p. 14), aligning themselves with the framework of Debord and establishing themselves as quite adept when highlighting salience via visuals, symbolisms, and metaphors. The media spectacles within these stories of Rammstein are meticulously placed to exaggerate, reiterate, reinforce, challenge and dispute polarised ideologies, societal hegemonies and power relations.

Additionally, this philosophy of spectacular brutality, irony and satire grants the band the autonomy of their reputation and notoriety alongside their powerful visual stories. Not only are they aware of the placement and framing of their media spectacles, but they are also aware of the controversy behind such spectacles. Ultimately, the band know that controversial imagery will help them to gain

attention, fame and notoriety; all publicity is good publicity, especially in the current media scene driven by neoliberal interests (Burns, 2008, pp. 458-459). Therefore, it becomes nearly impossible to completely separate the spectacles from a purpose of grabbing attention in Rammstein's music videos, regardless of how much the spectacle contributes to the visual storytelling. Hence, the answer to the sub-question (3) about engagement and notoriety will always conclude as affirmative, only in varying degrees. As the music video "Deutschland" demonstrates, national spectacles provide so much more context and depth to a song that can otherwise be simply regarded as a common patriotic trope, however the chosen controversial compositions and symbols reignite disputes, pushing Rammstein onto the mainstream.

When it comes to national & totalitarian spectacles, Rammstein are able to embrace a multifaceted point of view. As discussed in the results (see 4.2), Rammstein couple classic nationalist and military visual tropes with uncommon points of view to support the story within some of the music videos. Whereas these can be argued to be more of a classic use of national & totalitarian spectacles, the hinted central messages within the music videos under the national theme often aim to create irony as opposed to uplifting a national image. To answer, the sub-question (1) about social commentary, Rammstein often present a lesson to teach via the narratives constructed through their media spectacles on national and political discourses, almost as if the band is saying "One mustn't be blinded to a nation's or an ideology's flaws". Perhaps this high level of nuance is rooted in Rammstein's members' personal experiences on national identities and political turmoil. Due to the political division of Germany until the early 90s, the band members have experienced their own country from a perspective of divide, fragmentation and conflict (Yeung, n.d.). Their soviet upbringing in East Germany and Ostalgia are already projected upon some of their music videos (Littlejohn & Putnam, 2010, pp. 36-41). Although Rammstein are quite transparent about their socialist stance, they still successfully depict various capitalist, fascist and other totalitarian media spectacles in other videos. Nonetheless the music video of "Deutschland" encapsulates their self-reflection and critique of their nation's ancient and near history. Therefore, it would be inappropriate to oversimplify Rammstein's political stance and labelling them purely as nationalist, or socialist. Their personal experiences on national and political polarisation in Germany provide the band with the knowledge and detail to create nuanced spectacles.

Rammstein seem to use sex & gender spectacles a lot more loosely with a lot less nuance, especially compared to their national & totalitarian spectacles. Some of the sex & gender spectacles in their music videos are purposefully inserted for social commentary, some are for notoriety, but most are reinforcing the gender hegemony. Their spectacles issue objectification, sexualization and sexual desire, often remaining in conservative and problematic frameworks of the gender hegemony which place women and femininities as inferior. As shown in the results (see 4.3), even though visuals in some music

videos spectacularise the gender hegemony and sexualization as a concept to criticize the objectification of women, many others spectacularise just women. The media spectacles revolving around the sexual and psychological surrender of women are parallel with Shipper's (2007, p. 90) findings on gender hegemonies and Shugart & Waggoner's (2005, pp. 66-67) studies on the spectacularisation of sex. In Rammstein's visual depictions in their music videos, women's femininity is directly tied to either their natural maternal instincts or their desire and longing for phallic pleasure. Despite the attempts of depicting women in positions of authority, their source of power is almost always connected to this femininity. The women's occupations and positioning in most music videos centre and revolve around men, reestablishing the gender hegemony as the dominant and predatory men versus the incapable and passive women. Unbalanced degrees of nuance between national & totalitarian spectacles and sex & gender spectacles can be explained by Rammstein's lack of insight, or their bounded rationality on topics around unequal gender roles, perceptions on womanhood, and the distorted societal consequences of such topics. Although these blind spots of Rammstein are not due to an unconscious choice for the sex & gender spectacles; the spectacularisation of sex, women, and nudity seems to be rooted in purposes of notoriety, parallel with Turner's (2011, pp. 180-181) findings. In the similar vein to marketing strategies which push the notion of "sex sells", Rammstein's sex & gender spectacles answer the sub-questions (2) and (3) by purposefully pushing sex and nudity for notorious gain while inadvertently trapping themselves into reinforcing hegemonic gender roles and objectifying women.

With colonial & racial spectacles, Rammstein hold the strengths which they have demonstrated with their national & totalitarian spectacles yet still retaining similar issues which are observed within their sex & gender spectacles. The band is able to strike a strong nuance about oriental depictions of cultures and racial discourses; the idea is that the orientalism, imperialism and Americanisation are spectacularized as opposed to the indigenous cultures themselves. Rammstein seems to favour stories which they might not personally reflect or relate to, and yet still providing social commentary on discourses on racial power and colonial history. However, the depictions are still achieved within the lens of the superior white Western Occident (Said, 1978/1995, pp. 9-28). The members' Caucasian positionality seeps into some of their music videos, especially when the racial reference is quite implicit. Answering the sub-questions (1) and (2), Rammstein attempt to challenge unbalanced oriental perspectives and partially succeeds, whilst unfortunately reinforcing racial basic assumptions implying white supremacy.

Nevertheless, Rammstein have constructed their media spectacles through different transition periods of platformisation. As mentioned in the results section (see 4.5), the gradual conversion from big, collective screens to small, personalized screens has also influenced how Rammstein's approach their

visuals, assessment of spectacularisation and framing. Platforms – especially social media – provide a virtual podium for the band, immortalising their collection and boosting accessibility (O’Leary, 2023, pp. 21-22). Ironically, the screens are getting smaller, but the reach is getting longer. The band’s imagery becoming increasingly universal aligns with the idea of platform marketability; globally recognised discourses are easier to spectacularize and therefore commodify. They rather have their music speak to the masses, as opposed to a selective few. Hence, two separate viewers from completely different backgrounds can relate to a Rammstein song. However, neoliberal market competition favours notoriety and visibility, which coerces media players like Rammstein to pay attention to their online presence to stay afloat (Kellner, 2005, p. 60). As mentioned by Debord (1967/1994, p. 5), definition of power in society and on media as expanded to include prolonged appearance and visibility. This is where platformisation and spectacularisation go hand in hand; whereas platformisation provides the accessibility, media spectacles provide the necessary notoriety which convinces audiences to engage. Overtime, media spectacles manifest and travel between different mediums of media and take shape of what is favoured by that specific medium or platform. In cases such as Rammstein’s, use of media spectacles for notorious purposes is inevitable on social media platforms like YouTube even though the visual language might not prioritise it.

Nonetheless, Rammstein are already quite spectacular. Their older music videos as well as their own self-reflection establish their visual language as ostentatious, grotesque and brutally explicit (Wicke, 2023, p. 14; Zander, 2024, p. 30). Consequently, the answer to the main research question is that music videos are another channel to create art for Rammstein. They provide a visual medium which can accompany, support or even surpass the impact that the songs hold. Their gradual adaptation to platformised media visibility only acts as a catalyst for their media spectacles, not a source. It is clear that their spectacles, regardless of their themes, carry a point of view. They are not merely engines of virality; they stimulate critical elaboration of societal discourses and power relations around identities, gender and race. The significance of notoriety only stands within the neoliberal framework built upon the current media scene. If the band did not need notoriety, they would simply disregard it. In a hypothetical scenario where platforms did not exist, Rammstein would continue to produce controversial music videos. This is reflected upon the philosophy of *Gesamtkunstwerk* which the band embrace, firmly claiming they do not produce content that is tailored or polished; they make complete, unfiltered, raw art (Wicke, 2023, p. 13). This indicates that notoriety is not a priority for Rammstein, staying as a supportive tool to be considered for their platforms.

Ultimately, controversial imagery in media is one of the fundamental aspects of media content for frame, aim and outcome. Media spectacles become both the means and the end goal; life and its

experiences become increasingly intertwined with spectacle culture as daily life fuses more with platformised media. Instead of media content being inspired by authentic and real experiences, the logic moderately switches these experiences towards becoming a stream of sources for media content to be curated upon. Whereas media used to depict lived experiences, now experiences are lived in order to be depicted on media. In order for any media content to be consumed at all in our current understanding of media frameworks, it has to possess certain spectacular characteristics, such as commodification, algorithmic alignment, and controversial connotations. The utilisation of media spectacles is so frequent that viewers turn desensitized to regular content, deeming it as unstimulating or unengaging. Where media content becomes unamusing, controversies and polarised domains of discourses amplify and prolong engagement with media spectacles in forms of clickbait, rage-bait, taboo depictions and so on. People's attributes, ideologies, and actions are spectacularised to the point where livelihoods become performative. Even though artists like Rammstein practice freedom of expression and creativity through explicit and controversial imagery, the act of spectacularisation contributes to the grander fragmentation of reality and image, in this case authenticity and performance. Despite a person's occupation on media – content creator or consumer – everyone gains a platform and therefore a stage. Everyone becomes a showman.

## 6. Discussion & Future Research

There are numerous strengths and weaknesses of this research in terms of application of theory, sampling, positionality, and confirmation bias. Firstly, this paper is strengthened by the combination of established media frameworks like Debord (1967/1994, pp. 2-5) and Garber et al. (1993, pp. 209-250), and their applications of new media mediums, such as music videos. The exploration of media theories on upcoming media trends and technologies brings academia an innovative and *spectacular* perspective on how to produce and interpret media content. On the other hand, it can be argued that the fundamental theories of this paper are outdated which can harm the theoretical framework's foundation and therefore the validity of this paper. More current studies on media spectacles could have been included.

Even though the sample is quite exhaustive by including most of the music videos of Rammstein, the scope of this research is still limited. There are many more different styles of storytelling, videography, and media spectacles which are tailored for their own music genres and audiences. Despite the choice of Rammstein as a band is suitable for academic analysis due to their take on societal discourses, the sample could have still benefited from a more extended corpus for a more nuanced interpretation between genres and artists. Furthermore, some themes were discovered during the data collection and yet were excluded from the analysis process due to the limited capacity of this paper. These themes should be noted for future research to be explored further.

In terms of positionality, I have encountered both difficulties and advantages during the data collection and analysis process. As a woman, I have faced some troubles watching some of the music videos of Rammstein, especially the ones which heavily featured graphic and sexual scenes regarding women. The data collection process might have been harmed due to this misalignment; however, the positionality has helped the analysis for a deeper and more detailed interpretation later on. Specifically for the analysis of national & totalitarian spectacles and sex & gender spectacles, my positionality issuing both themes have supported the results for a more nuanced approach rather than hindering them. Nevertheless, positionality partially lowers the validity of the analysis via confirmation bias. The prior knowledge I have about the band and their roster can be argued to affect this study negatively due to confirmation bias and a seeking pre-determined analysis. However, the theoretical framework helps to minimize this confirmation bias by providing the proper academic background to analyse the data.

For future research, this paper suggests a deeper analysis on topics like hidden visual references, linguistic storytelling, audience engagement on platforms, and fame. Firstly, the subliminal storytelling and symbolism in music videos should be examined deeper. This paper focuses on the initial effect of

spectacles and their designs; the underlying stories covered underneath the spectacles are not touched upon. Nevertheless, the future academic analysis of easter eggs, that is the hidden clues within visual media, will provide more insight on theories of narration in music videos. Secondly, the linguistic aspects of music and theories on songwriting are not included in this paper. The analysis of the music videos was mostly focused on visual spectacles, whereas storytelling of a song is both visual and textual, given the lyrics. Future research should focus on coupling visual spectacles and textual spectacles in order to fully dissect the spectacular elements implemented in songs. Thirdly, Rammstein has produced 8 studio albums so far, whereas this paper only analysed the 32 music videos they have disseminated over the years. For future research, analysing their extensive repertoire of songs and their textual spectacles will provide more reliable research in order to shed light on their storytelling and imagery.

Interestingly, Rammstein's comment sections underneath their music videos on YouTube is disabled. This paper covered their interactions with platforms and the effect of platformisation on their visual mediums, albeit their audience engagement is not mentioned. Future research can bridge the literary gap of this paper's understanding of media spectacles with their actual influence on audience engagement and perceptions on the band. Additionally, theories on fame are not issued either. Whereas this paper sheds light upon theories and effects of notoriety, this is demonstrated from a socio-economic perspective and neoliberal frameworks. Future research should bring up the individual and psychological aspects behind the desire for notoriety and fame for artists.

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## Appendix A

### Total List Of 32 Music Videos Of Rammstein Included In The Corpus

All of the music videos are retrieved from Rammstein's official YouTube channel, which are all publicly accessible (<https://www.youtube.com/@RammsteinOfficial>). Only official music videos are included; live performances are excluded. The list is formatted in chronological order of the videos' official release dates, according to Rammwiki (n.d.)

1. Music Video Title: Seemann
  - a. Official release date: January 8, 1996
  - b. YouTube date: July 31, 2015
  - c. Views: 36,9 million
  - d. Album: Herzeleid (released on Sept 25, 1995)
  - e. Retrieved June 24, 2025, from: <https://youtu.be/srN1GsnBui8?list=RDsrN1GsnBui8>
2. Music Video Title: Rammstein
  - a. Official release date: April 1997
  - b. YouTube date: July 31, 2015
  - c. Views: 32,9 million
  - d. Album: Herzeleid (released on Sept 25, 1995)
  - e. Retrieved June 24, 2025, from: [https://youtu.be/\\_sM2sKk4DPM?list=RD\\_sM2sKk4DPM](https://youtu.be/_sM2sKk4DPM?list=RD_sM2sKk4DPM)
3. Music Video Title: Engel
  - a. Official release date: April 1997
  - b. YouTube date: July 31, 2015
  - c. Views: 186 million
  - d. Album: Sehnsucht (released on Aug 25, 1997)
  - e. Retrieved June 24, 2025, from: <https://youtu.be/x2rQzv8OWEY?list=RDx2rQzv8OWEY>
4. Music Video Title: Du Hast
  - a. Official release date: July 1997
  - b. YouTube date: July 31, 2015
  - c. Views: 642,3 million
  - d. Album: Sehnsucht (released on Aug 25, 1997)
  - e. Retrieved June 24, 2025, from: <https://youtu.be/W3q8Od5qJio?list=RDW3q8Od5qJio>

5. Music Video Title: Du Riechst So Gut 95'
  - a. Official release date: March 25, 1998
  - b. YouTube date: July 31, 2015
  - c. Views: 20,7 million
  - d. Album: Herzeleid (released on Sept 25, 1995)
  - e. Retrieved June 24, 2025, from: <https://youtu.be/1HDV1fmtIKE?list=RD1HDV1fmtIKE>
6. Music Video Title: Du Riechst So Gut 98'
  - a. Official release date: May 1998
  - b. YouTube date: July 31, 2015
  - c. Views: 131,1 million
  - d. Album: Herzeleid (released on Sept 25, 1995)
  - e. Retrieved June 24, 2025, from: <https://youtu.be/rrrmsJhf89MY?list=RDrrmsJhf89MY>
7. Music Video Title: Stripped
  - a. Official release date: July 1998
  - b. YouTube date: May 10, 2019
  - c. Views: 20,8 million
  - d. Album: - (this song is a cover song as a single)
  - e. Retrieved June 24, 2025, from: <https://youtu.be/10JDA8SvwX8?list=RD10JDA8SvwX8>
8. Music Video Title: Sonne
  - a. Official release date: January 29, 2001
  - b. YouTube date: July 31, 2015
  - c. Views: 280 million
  - d. Album: Mutter (released on Apr 2, 2001)
  - e. Retrieved June 24, 2025, from: <https://youtu.be/StZcUAPRRac?list=RDStZcUAPRRac>
9. Music Video Title: Links 2 3 4
  - a. Official release date: May 18, 2001
  - b. YouTube date: July 31, 2015
  - c. Views: 132 million
  - d. Album: Mutter (released on Apr 2, 2001)
  - e. Retrieved June 24, 2025, from: [https://youtu.be/Ph-CA\\_tu5KA?list=RDPh-CA\\_tu5KA](https://youtu.be/Ph-CA_tu5KA?list=RDPh-CA_tu5KA)

10. Music Video Title: Ich Will

- a. Official release date: August 27, 2001
- b. YouTube date: July 31, 2015
- c. Views: 385,8 million
- d. Album: Mutter (released on Apr 2, 2001)
- e. Retrieved June 24, 2025, from: <https://youtu.be/EOnSh3QlpbQ?list=RDEOnSh3QlpbQ>

11. Music Video Title: Mutter

- a. Official release date: March 19, 2002
- b. YouTube date: July 31, 2015
- c. Views: 125,5 million
- d. Album: Mutter (released on Apr 2, 2001)
- e. Retrieved June 24, 2025, from: <https://youtu.be/gNdnVVHfseA?list=RDgNdnVVHfseA>

12. Music Video Title: Feuer Frei

- a. Official release date: September 21, 2002
- b. YouTube date: July 31, 2015
- c. Views: 232,9 million
- d. Album: Mutter (released on Apr 2, 2001)
- e. Retrieved June 24, 2025, from: <https://youtu.be/ZkW-K5RQdzo?list=RDZkW-K5RQdzo>

13. Music Video Title: Mein Teil

- a. Official release date: July 9, 2004
- b. YouTube date: July 31, 2015
- c. Views: 91,1 million
- d. Album: Reise, Reise (released on Sept 27, 2004)
- e. Retrieved June 24, 2025, from:  
<https://youtu.be/PBvwcH4XX6U?list=RDPBvwcH4XX6U>

14. Music Video Title: Amerika

- a. Official release date: August 20, 2004
- b. YouTube date: July 31, 2015
- c. Views: 221,1 million
- d. Album: Reise, Reise (released on Sept 27, 2004)
- e. Retrieved June 24, 2025, from: <https://youtu.be/Rr8ljRgcJNM?list=DRDr8ljRgcJNM>

15. Music Video Title: Ohne Dich

- Official release date: November 8, 2004
- YouTube date: July 31, 2015
- Views: 149,3 million
- Album: Reise, Reise (released on Sept 27, 2004)
- Retrieved June 24, 2025, from: <https://youtu.be/LIPc1cfS-oQ?list=RDIPc1cfS-oQ>

16. Music Video Title: Keine Lust

- Official release date: February 3, 2005
- YouTube date: July 31, 2015
- Views: 215,8 million
- Album: Reise, Reise (released on Sept 27, 2004)
- Retrieved June 24, 2025, from:  
<https://youtu.be/1M4ADcMn3dA?list=RD1M4ADcMn3dA>

17. Music Video Title: Benzin

- Official release date: September 16, 2005
- YouTube date: July 31, 2015
- Views: 63,7 million
- Album: Rosenrot (released on Oct 28, 2005)
- Retrieved June 24, 2025, from: <https://youtu.be/z0wK6s-6cbo?list=RDz0wK6s-6cbo>

18. Music Video Title: Rosenrot

- Official release date: November 30, 2005
- YouTube date: July 31, 2015
- Views: 169,8 million
- Album: Rosenrot (released on Oct 28, 2005)
- Retrieved June 24, 2025, from: <https://youtu.be/af59U2BRRAU?list=RDaf59U2BRRAU>

19. Music Video Title: Mann Gegen Mann

- Official release date: February 1, 2006
- YouTube date: July 31, 2015
- Views: 37 million
- Album: Rosenrot (released on Oct 28, 2005)
- Retrieved June 24, 2025, from:  
[https://youtu.be/\\_EVKy35L7MM?list=RD\\_EVKy35L7MM](https://youtu.be/_EVKy35L7MM?list=RD_EVKy35L7MM)

20. Music Video Title: Ich Tu Dir Weh

- a. Official release date: December 21, 2009
- b. YouTube date: July 31, 2015
- c. Views: 188,2 million
- d. Album: Liebe ist für alle da (released on Oct 16, 2009)
- e. Retrieved June 24, 2025, from: <https://youtu.be/IxuEtL7gxoM>

21. Music Video Title: Haifisch

- a. Official release date: April 23, 2010
- b. YouTube date: July 31, 2015
- c. Views: 111,4 million
- d. Album: Liebe ist für alle da (released on Oct 16, 2009)
- e. Retrieved June 24, 2025, from:  
<https://youtu.be/GukNjYQZW8s?list=RDGukNjYQZW8s>

22. Music Video Title: Mein Land

- a. Official release date: November 11, 2011
- b. YouTube date: July 31, 2015
- c. Views: 81 million
- d. Album: Made in Germany (released on Dec 2, 2011, as a compilation of the ‘best of Rammstein’)
- e. Retrieved June 24, 2025, from: <https://youtu.be/6iaxDxHUWP8?list=RD6iaxDxHUWP8>

23. Music Video Title: Mein Herz Brennt (piano version)

- a. Official release date: December 7, 2012
- b. YouTube date: July 31, 2015
- c. Views: 37,5 million
- d. Album: Made in Germany, (released on Dec 2, 2011, as a compilation of the ‘best of Rammstein’) (originally Mutter)
- e. Retrieved June 24, 2025, from: <https://youtu.be/Dv6Th7kJ64Q?list=RDDv6Th7kJ64Q>

24. Music Video Title: Mein Herz Brennt

- a. Official release date: December 14, 2012
- b. YouTube date: July 31, 2015
- c. Views: 193,7 million
- d. Album: Made in Germany, (released on Dec 2, 2011, as a compilation of the ‘best of Rammstein’) (originally Mutter)
- e. Retrieved June 24, 2025, from:  
<https://youtu.be/WXv31OmnKqQ?list=RDWXv31OmnKqQ>

25. Music Video Title: Deutschland

- a. Official release date: March 28, 2019
- b. YouTube date: March 28, 2019
- c. Views: 415 million
- d. Album: Rammstein (released on May 17, 2019)
- e. Retrieved June 24, 2025, from: <https://youtu.be/NeQM1c-XCDc?list=RDNeQM1c-XCDc>

26. Music Video Title: Radio

- a. Official release date: April 26, 2019
- b. YouTube date: April 26, 2019
- c. Views: 105,2 million
- d. Album: Rammstein (released on May 17, 2019)
- e. Retrieved June 24, 2025, from: <https://youtu.be/z0NfI2NeDHI?list=RDz0NfI2NeDHI>

27. Music Video Title: Ausländer

- a. Official release date: May 28, 2019
- b. YouTube date: May 28, 2019
- c. Views: 87,6 million
- d. Album: Rammstein (released on May 17, 2019)
- e. Retrieved June 24, 2025, from: <https://youtu.be/pat2c33sbog?list=RDpat2c33sbog>

28. Music Video Title: Zeit

- a. Official release date: March 10, 2022
- b. YouTube date: March 10, 2022
- c. Views: 62,8 million
- d. Album: Zeit (released on April 29, 2022)
- e. Retrieved June 24, 2025, from:  
[https://youtu.be/EbHGS\\_bVkJXY?list=RDEbHGS\\_bVkJXY](https://youtu.be/EbHGS_bVkJXY?list=RDEbHGS_bVkJXY)

29. Music Video Title: Zick Zack

- a. Official release date: April 7, 2022
- b. YouTube date: April 7, 2022
- c. Views: 69,7 million
- d. Album: Zeit (released on April 29, 2022)
- e. Retrieved June 24, 2025, from: <https://youtu.be/hBTNyJ33LWI?list=RDhBTNyJ33LWI>

30. Music Video Title: Angst

- a. Official release date: April 29, 2022
- b. YouTube date: April 29, 2022
- c. Views: 58,8 million
- d. Album: Zeit (released on April 29, 2022)
- e. Retrieved June 24, 2025, from: <https://youtu.be/ONj9cvHCado?list=RDONj9cvHCado>

31. Music Video Title: Dicke Titten

- a. Official release date: May 25, 2022
- b. YouTube date: May 25, 2022
- c. Views: 101,4 million
- d. Album: Zeit (released on April 29, 2022)
- e. Retrieved June 24, 2025, from: <https://youtu.be/thJgU9jkdU4?list=RDthJgU9jkdU4>

32. Music Video Title: Adieu

- a. Official release date: November 24, 2022
- b. YouTube date: November 24, 2022
- c. Views: 58,5 million
- d. Album: Zeit (released on April 29, 2022)
- e. Retrieved June 24, 2025, from: <https://youtu.be/skl6N3zGv-s?list=RDskl6N3zGv-s>

## Appendix B

### Coding Scheme

| Preliminary Categorization Of Music Videos (Most Prominent Examples)   | First Order Concepts  |  |   |   | Second Order Concepts  | Aggregate Dimensions               |
|--|---|--|---|---|--|------------------------------------|
|  | Displayed descriptive characteristics of actors   | Displayed emotional states   | Displayed activities and gestures   | Displayed settings  |  |                                    |
| “Rammstein”, “Benzin”, “Feuer Frei!” “Ich Tu Dir Weh”  | The members are all white males; they are adapting to the aesthetics of the music video (e.g. dressed up at firefighters) | Focused, manic, happiness, upset, etc.                                       | Band performance, band formation, band members acting, members singing and playing instruments, headbanging                 | A stage, a firefighter department, a party  | <i>The Band</i> – insertion of the members in storytelling and the spectacularisation of self                            |                                    |
| “Seemann”, “Mein Land”, “Ich Tu Dir Weh”, “Mutter”, “Ich Will”, “Mein Herz Brennt”, “Mein Herz Brennt (Piano)” | Dark, Black and metal clothing, BDSM-esque gear,  | extreme facial expressions (e.g. Manic, screaming, open mouth, eyes rolling) | the perpetrator's PoV, chasing somebody, covering someone's mouth, looking directly into the camera                         | The beach, a circus, a lake and a cave, a children's hospital, a shipwreck  | <i>Aesthetics</i> – visual artifacts and gestures which distinguish Rammstein  | Classical Spectacle Usage          |
| “Feuer Frei!”, “Du Hast”, “Mein Land”  | Some women and mostly men, some PoC, mostly white   | Embracing fire, satisfied, smug, powerful                                    | Explosions, flamethrowers, Molotov, guns, circus fire performances  | A beach, a stage, an abandoned warehouse  | <i>Pyrotechnics</i> – the symbolism and spectacularisation of fire   |                                    |
| “Rosenrot”, “Dicke Titten”, “Deutschland”  | A lot of women and children as farmers or mothers, regional clothing  | Manic frenzy, happiness, upset, hurt, shame, pride                           | Drinking beer, farms and cattle, historical periods of Germany (e.g. Prussia, Nazi Germany etc.), fist or weapon in the air | Rural villages, Nazi Concentration camps, medieval towns, a medieval warzone, offices, nuclear centrals             | <i>Germanic Imagery &amp; History</i> – depictions of regional, cultural and historic Germany                            |                                    |
| “Links 2 3 4”, “Stripped”, “Radio”   | Ants. A lot of women either in skimpy clothes, or naked. Military uniforms.   | Anger, Sexual arousal, protest, pride  | Military marches, synchronization of ants, stealing radios, having sex or breastfeeding radios                              | An anthill, a radio centre, ancient Greek ruins, Olympics in the early 20th century                                 | <i>Unity Versus Freedom</i> – discourses on totalitarian regimes, populism, homogeneity, freedom of expression, uprising | National & Totalitarian Spectacles |
| “Amerika”, “Mein Land”, “Zick Zack”, “Angst”   | cheerleaders, women in bikinis, members as astronaut members in swimwear, members with extreme plastic surgery            | Fear, anger, pride, happiness, joy, annoyance, fearmongering,                | US commerce, Coca Cola and McDonalds, 50s pop culture, texts popping on the screen, dancing and surfing                     | An Asian metropolis, an African village, a beach, a monk's monastery, a desert, the moon, a native American village | <i>Americanization</i> – the dominance of US based media trends and cultural practices                                   |                                    |

|   |  |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|--|---|
| <p>“Du Riechst So Gut ‘98”, “Mein Teil”, “Keine Lust”, “Haifisch”, “Seeman”, “Du Hast”, “Auslander”, “Ich Will”, “Rosenrot”, “Radio”, “Zeit”, “Engel”, “Mutter”</p>                   | <p>The members in balaclavas and suits, women red dressers or gowns, pregnant women</p>  | <p>a haze, disorientation, sexual arousal, nervous, upset, heartbreak, pain, compassion</p>   | <p>member as he is ripping an angel’s wings, women fighting each other over the members, the men always doing something to a woman’s body, women giving birth</p>                | <p><i>Gender Hegemony &amp; Patriarchy</i> – the male centric social dynamics and the acceptance of inferiority by women</p>  |
| <p>“Du Hast”, “Du Riechst So Gut ‘98”, “Engel”, “Sonne”, “Zick Zack”, “Dicke Titten”</p>  | <p>women wearing a jewel bikini with a python, women in tight business suits, snow white wearing her blue and yellow dress</p>                                       | <p>Sexual arousal, passion, heartbreak, disgust</p>   | <p>women dancing and showing off their body, women kissing, women performing with a snake, snow white as a drug addict</p>   | <p><i>Objectification Of Women</i> – the highlight of women’s physicality and sex appeal</p>  |
| <p>“Du Riechst So Gut ‘95”, “Mann Gegen Mann”, “Ich Tu Dir Weh”, “Mein Herz Brennt”, “Ich Will”, “Du Hast”, And “Adieu”</p> <p>“Mein Teil”, “Mann Gegen Mann”, And “Dicke Titten”</p> | <p>Topless or fully naked men, half naked members or members in suits, members in military gear</p> <p>men in pencil skirts, a member wearing a wig and lipstick</p> | <p>emotionally unwavering, indifferent, detached, focused, bewildered</p> <p>Scared, nervous, secretive, judgemental, disoriented</p> | <p>Display of men’s muscles, men in suits, men holding weapons and firing guns</p> <p>Cross-dressing, a member stuffing his chest with hay</p>                                   | <p><i>Hypermasculinity</i> – the highlight of men’s physical strength and emotional indomitability</p> <p><i>Gender Subversion</i> – the challenge and rejection of gender hegemony</p> |
| <p>“Amerika” And “Auslander”</p>  | <p>Members in astronaut costumes, African people in feathers and loose cloth and often topless</p>   | <p>Pride, joy, happiness, acceptance, compliance, content, love</p>   | <p>Showing bald men in orange dresses as monks, showing black people with fur, feathers and spears, Showing the native Americans with a lot of war paint and fur fascinators</p> | <p><i>Orientalism</i> – oversimplified and stereotypical depictions of different cultures from the lens of the Western world</p>  |
| <p>“Amerika”, “Deutschland”</p>   | <p>Members and Germania in military uniforms, nazi uniforms, chainmail armour, peasant clothes</p>   | <p>Happiness, hurt, heartbreak, pain, confidence</p>  | <p>Germania being a black woman, native Americans dancing on the moon,</p>   | <p><i>Reclaim Of Power</i> – depictions of culture and ethnic difference as protest and rejection of Western dominance</p>  |
| <p>“Du Riechst So Gut ‘95”, “Seemann”, “Rammstein”, “Du Hast”, “Sonne”, “Links”</p>   | <p>Members as topless or in their aesthetic clothing, slowly switching to adapting their attire to the settings</p>  | <p>Indifference, apathy, reluctance, upset, annoyance, revenge, shame, heartbreak</p>   | <p>Abstract settings, non-linear storytelling, a lot of symbolism (e.g. yellow flowers, fire etc), transition into</p>   | <p><i>Platformisation And Transition To YouTube</i> – visual aspects which showcase the adaptation and the</p>  |

|   |   |   |  |
|---|---|---|--|
| “2 3 4”, “Benzin”,<br>“Rosenrot”,<br>“Haifisch”,<br>“Auslander”,<br>“Zick Zack” | Members and Germania in military uniforms, nazi uniforms, chainmail armour, peasant clothes, members as topless or in their aesthetic clothing, slowly switching to adapting their attire to the settings | utilizing settings and actors, transforming topics into more universal discourse  | shift towards platformised content curation  |
| “Deutschland”,<br>“Auslander”,<br>“Zick Zack”,<br>“Adieu”, “Dicke Titten”,      | Anger, manic, heartbroken, bewildered, happy, upset, focused, smug  | Credits, videos being up to 10 minutes, additional scenes before and after the music video, fast paced cuts, lip-syncing to the song matching scenes to the beat of the song                  | German villages, Nazi Concentration camps, medieval towns, a medieval warzone, offices, nuclear centrals<br><i>Music Videos Versus Short Films – The visual aspects which blur the borders between film and short-form media content</i> |
| “Mein Land”,<br>“Radio”,<br>“Angst”, “Ich Will”                                 | Members with clear skin and always smiling, members as a hologram, members as burglars  | Members’ faces merging with TV screens, fainting in front of cameras, setting up millions of cameras to record the frontman, members singing in a radio station, American pop-culture visuals | <i>(Excluded From Analysis)</i><br>Humankind With Media Culture  |
| “Ohne Dich”   | Mountain climbers, Hurt, shock, upset, defeat, peace  | a member falling and injuring himself, showing the  | <i>(Excluded From Analysis)</i><br>Humankind With Nature   |
| “Zick Zack”,<br>“Angst”   | Members with excessive lip filler and body alterations, women with excessive body alterations and plastic surgery lines on their body with bandages on their faces, cheerleaders                          | Fear, physical pain, shock, joy, manic, anger<br>throwing money at cheerleaders as they bring bricks to build walls   | <i>(Excluded From Analysis)</i><br>Humankind With Consumerism  |