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## Narratives of Revenge and Identity in Munich (2005): A Literary and Political Analysis

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### ABSTRACT

Steven Spielberg's film Munich (2005) presents a narrative that departs from the tragedy of the 1972 Munich Olympics and Mossad's retaliatory response against the group deemed responsible. The representation of violence in this film has sparked widespread debate in the realm of literary and political criticism, particularly regarding the ethics of revenge, state legitimacy, and the impact of individual and collective trauma. This study aims to analyze how violence and revenge are represented through the storyline, characterization, and cinematic symbolism, while also examining the ethical dimensions debated in public and academic discourse. The research method used is a qualitative study based on a literature review with an interdisciplinary approach, namely literary narrative theory, the ethics of violence representation, and cultural political analysis. Data was obtained from academic journals, film reviews, and literature related to the representation of violence in cinema. The results of the study show that Spielberg refuses to give absolute legitimacy to state violence or individual revenge, but rather opens up a space of moral ambiguity that challenges the audience to reflect. The narrative of revenge in Munich is depicted as an endless cycle that traps perpetrators, victims, and nations in repeated trauma. Finally, Munich serves as a reminder that revenge, no matter how strong the political or emotional motivations behind it, is never free from ethical consequences.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Munich (2005), directed by Steven Spielberg, presents a fictionalized account of a revenge operation linked to the real-life massacre of Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics, also known as Black September. The film immediately became a subject of public and academic debate due to its mixture of historical facts and narrative fiction (Thomas Nachreiner, 2014). As a cinematic text, Munich combines elements of thriller, psychological drama, and political allegory. This combination allows for a cross-disciplinary reading that is relevant to literary studies, film studies, and political science.

One of the main concerns in this film analysis is the theme of revenge, both as an individual motive and a national strategy, which is explored not only as an action but also as a narrative that shapes and destroys the identity of the perpetrator and their community (J.J. Foy, 2008). From a literary perspective, the narrative of revenge in Munich can be analyzed as a narrative structure that combines the motif of classical revenge with contemporary moral issues. This structure triggers the main character's inner conflict and forces the audience to reflect on the legitimacy of violent actions.

This film is also seen as a work that tests the ethical boundaries of art: is it possible to represent violence and secret operations without justifying such actions morally? The ethical discourse in art criticism of Munich shows that there are differences in interpretation, with some assessing the film as a moral reflection, while others accuse it of obscuring the facts.

The reading of identity in the film highlights how the main characters (most of whom are operatives) experience a shift in identity from sovereign citizens to agents whose morality is fractured by the burden of secret missions. The collective trauma that enveloped the Israeli community after Munich became the emotional backdrop that motivated acts of revenge; the film presents this trauma as both the main driving force and the subject of criticism against the endless cycle of violence.

Spielberg's narrative and audiovisual techniques scene editing, use of music, lighting, and framing are employed to represent recurring memories and recollections; these techniques transform historical events into aesthetic experiences that invite reflection. In terms of characterization, Avner as the protagonist serves as the narrative focal point; he is not only the mission executor, but also a reflective subject who represents the ethical dilemmas of the group and the nation. His psychological transformation is key to understanding how identity is reshaped by acts of violence.

The film's narrative does not merely show acts of murder; rather, it displays the psychological consequences, damaged interpersonal relationships, and moral isolation that eat away at the souls of the perpetrators an approach that rejects the glorification of violence (Nathan Abrams, 2017). In the political realm, Munich asks the question: to what extent can a state use covert operations to enforce security? In this way, the film enters into the discourse on the legitimacy of state violence and its limits in modern democracy.

The film is also fraught with historiographical ambiguity. Many critics and studies note that the depiction of events and characters is not always accurate; however, it is precisely this inaccuracy that opens up space for literary studies to read the film as a text that serves to shape collective memory, rather than merely recording facts (Gupta, 2023). From the perspective of narrative identity theory, the act of revenge in Munich intervenes in the personal and collective stories that shape "who we are"; the narrative of action reshapes or destroys the continuity of the subject's identity (James H. Liu, 2007).

An intertextual approach can be used to compare Munich with other cinematic texts about trauma and war; this comparison helps to place the film within a tradition of

cinematic discourse that addresses the ethics of violence and revenge. Furthermore, an analysis of the political discourse within the film reveals how language, symbols, and media representations influence public perceptions of terrorist acts and state responses, including the framing of “enemies” and “heroes.”

Munich can also be read as a reflection on post-9/11 politics; some critics see parallels between the cycle of violence depicted in the film and the dynamics of international security in the post-2001 era, thus making the film a contemporary commentary. A literary-political study of this film needs to consider aspects of production (director, screenwriter, sources of inspiration), reception (critics and the public), and historical context, all of which are interrelated and shape the film's textual significance. In summary, Munich (2005) offers rich material for study: it is not only a historical/action film, but also a visual literary text that projects ethical debates and political identity. Studies that combine narrative, trauma, and political ethics theories are most productive for understanding the complexity of this text.

The study of film as a visual literary text allows Munich to be read through a narrative theory approach. Narrative has two important elements: story and discourse. In Munich, Spielberg constructs a revenge story based on historical facts with a discourse that is fraught with moral ambiguity. This narrative theory highlights how plot, conflict, and characters are used to construct ethical meaning while shaping the audience's interpretation (Seymour Chatman, 1978).

In classical literary tradition, revenge is often depicted as an endless cycle, for example in Greek tragedies or Shakespearean plays. With his concept of mimesis of violence, explains that violence tends to be repeated due to the urge to imitate. In the context of Munich, the narrative of revenge carried out by Mossad shows a pattern of violence that is relevant to Girard's theory, namely that state violence actually prolongs conflict (René Girard, 1977).

Argues that human identity is formed through narratives that tell the story of one's life. Narrative identity emphasizes how subjects interpret themselves through the stories they live. In Munich, Avner's identity as a Mossad agent is reconstructed through the story of revenge. However, moral conflict undermines the continuity of his identity. This demonstrates the relevance of narrative identity theory for reading character transformation (Paul Ricoeur, 1991)

Introduced the concept of cultural trauma, which is a collective experience that leaves a mark and shapes the narrative of a community. The 1972 Munich incident can be understood as a collective trauma for the Israeli nation. Munich visualizes this trauma through flashbacks and memories that haunt Avner. The theory of collective trauma helps us understand how historical experiences become both a motivation for revenge and a burden on identity (Jeffrey C. Alexander, 2004).

Emphasizes that representation is not merely a mirror of reality, but a construction of meaning through language and media. Munich represents terrorism, state violence, and Jewish-Israeli identity through narrative and visual codes. Thus, the film becomes a political arena of representation that shapes public perceptions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Stuart Hall, 1997).

Discuss ethicism in art, namely the view that moral values contribute to the aesthetic value of a work of art. Munich can be analyzed through this lens: does the moral ambiguity it displays strengthen or weaken the film's quality as a work of art? In other words, ethical values become part of both literary and political analysis (Noël Carroll, 1996 and Halwani, 2006).

Distinguishes violence from power. True power arises from public legitimacy, while violence often signifies fragility. In Munich, the use of secret operations and state violence raises a dilemma of legitimacy: is the state still sovereign if its identity is compromised by acts of terror similar to those of its enemies? (Hannah Arendt, 1970).

Emphasizes that cultural memory is produced through narratives, rituals, and media. Munich serves as a medium that revives the 1972 tragedy for a global audience, thus functioning as an agent that shapes cultural memory about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Jan Assmann, 2011).

In Orientalism highlights how the West constructs political representations through stereotypes. In Munich, there is the potential to read representations of “the other” (Arab-Palestinians) as opponents in global political narratives, thereby reinforcing the construction of Israel's collective identity through binary opposition (Edward Said, 1978).

Thomas Nachreiner's (2014) research entitled "'Inspired by Real Events' Media (and) Memory in Steven Spielberg's Munich (2005)" is an important reference in the study of the narrative of revenge and identity in the film Munich. Nachreiner emphasizes that this film functions as a form of memory media, namely, a representation of historical events constructed through the language of cinema and modern media. According to him, Spielberg not only records the 1972 Munich tragedy, but also constructs a reflection on how media (television, news, visual archives) shape the collective memory and political identity of its audience. Within this framework, the narrative of revenge appears not merely as Israel's political action against Palestine, but as a moral and existential drama about how violence changes how humans understand themselves and their history.

In the context of further research entitled “Narratives of Revenge and Identity in Munich (2005): A Literary and Political Analysis,” Nachreiner’s writing provides a conceptual basis for examining the relationship between media representation, trauma, and identity formation. This study can be updated by combining literary and political approaches that highlight narrative structure, visual symbolism, and moral ambiguity in films as cultural texts. By linking theories of cultural trauma and the politics of representation, the updated research can explore how Munich mediates the tensions between national identity, the ethics of revenge, and post-9/11 global memory, thereby opening up new analytical spaces for how cinema reproduces ideology while inviting humanitarian reflection on the cycle of violence.

By combining narrative theory, identity, trauma, representation, ethics, and the politics of violence, Munich can be analyzed as a literary-visual text that represents moral and political dilemmas. The narrative of revenge is not only seen as an action, but as a narrative structure that shapes individual identity (Avner), collective identity (Israel), and global ethical-political debates.

## 2. METHODS

Systematic/Structured Qualitative Literature Review based on a critical approach. The aim is to summarize, categorize, and synthesize literature discussing representations of revenge, identity, trauma, and politics in the film Munich (2005) from the perspectives of literature/film and political science. The scope covers literature from 1970 to the present, with an emphasis on academic writings (journal articles, book chapters, theses), peer-reviewed academic critiques, and important secondary sources (critical essays, theoretical reviews) that provide a theoretical foundation. Topical focus: (a) revenge narratives; (b) identity transformation (narrative/psychological); (c) trauma theory (individual & collective); (d) the ethics of representation and counter-terrorism politics; (e) relevant narrative/cinematographic techniques.

Databases and repositories searched in Scopus, Web of Science, JSTOR, Google Scholar, Project MUSE, Wiley Online Library, ResearchGate, Imaginations (open access), university libraries (for classic books). (Example findings: Nachreiner in Imaginations; Halwani in the Journal of Applied Philosophy). Additional search engines (for broad articles/reviews): Google Scholar & ResearchGate (for preprints or relevant essays on the representation of Munich).

Inclusions comprise articles/book chapters/reviews that: (a) discuss the film Munich directly; (b) discuss themes of revenge, identity, trauma, representation in the context of film/media; (c) are relevant theoretical writings for framing the analysis (Ricoeur, Alexander, Hall, Girard, Halwani). Peer-review is preferred. Exclusions include popular writings without an analytical basis (e.g., non-critical short reviews unless they contain important insights into reception), non-relevant articles that only mention Munich without thematic discussion, and documents whose sources cannot be verified. Quality criteria (scores/checklists) include peer review (yes/no), topical relevance (scale 1–5), methodological rigor (qualitative/quantitative/descriptive), citations (citation index as proxy), and journal/publisher credibility. For classic philosophical/theoretical essays (Ricoeur, Girard, Hall, Arendt), even though they are not empirical articles, they are still included as key theoretical foundations.

Thematic analysis (thematic synthesis) after extraction, perform manual/thematic coding: identify main themes (e.g., mimesis of violence, narrative identity breakdown, ethical ambivalence, representational accuracy, political framing). Major theories (Ricoeur, Alexander, Girard, Hall, Halwani) are used as analytical lenses. Mapping arguments illustrates conflicting positions (e.g., those who assess the film as a moral reflection vs. those who accuse it of historical distortion), then explains how each argument contributes to the understanding of the themes of revenge and identity. (Example sources: Nachreiner; Halwani). Critical syntheses should not merely summarize, but perform critical synthesis: highlight gaps in research (e.g., lack of comparative studies with other films, lack of research on reception in Israel/Palestine) and offer an agenda for further research.

Maintain validity through triangulation of sources (peer-reviewed articles, theoretical books, and critical essays) and transparency of search procedures. Ensure reliability by using clear inclusion/exclusion criteria and recording screening decisions (e.g., PRISMA). If there are co-reviewers, conduct inter-rater checks for selection and extraction. Limitations include publication bias (the breadth of literature on Munich may be greater in Western humanities), access to some paywalled articles, and potential subjectivity in thematic interpretation. Mention these in the report. This systematic review adhered to the PRISMA guidelines, an international reporting standard that helps ensure transparency in the study selection process. In addition, inter-rater reliability was performed to verify consistency in data assessment by two independent researchers.

Literature review organized by theme + study summary matrix. Theoretical map linking films → themes (revenge, identity, trauma) → reference theories (Ricoeur, Girard, Alexander, Hall, Halwani, Arendt). Research agenda recommendations (e.g., reception studies in local contexts; comparative analysis; studies of ethical representation). Since this is a literature study, ethical issues are fewer; still pay attention to copyright when quoting/presenting direct quotations (use quotations ≤25 words), and state the source of access (DOI/URL) in the bibliography.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### ***The Narrative Of Revenge is Represented in The Film Munich (2005) Through The Storyline, Characterization, and Cinematic Symbolism.***

The incident that triggers the story in the film Munich (2005) begins with a dramatic depiction of the kidnapping and murder of Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics, which cinematically establishes the main theme of revenge. The plot of this revenge thriller structures the film following the pattern of a thriller and procedural, where Mossad's mission of revenge is intertwined with increasing tension, drawing the audience's attention in a compelling plot both cinematically and narratively.

Avner as the driving force of the narrative, the main character, Avner, is central to the development of his character, which shifts from that of a patriot to someone overwhelmed by trauma, showing how the narrative can clearly illustrate the reasons behind the desire for revenge. Flashbacks as symbols of memory and trauma, the film relies on frequent flashbacks, particularly television scenes recalling the Munich incident and the names of the victims, as symbols of deep trauma and drivers of the desire for revenge.

Using television and media as historical observers, the inclusion of news clips and television presentations serve as visual reminders of the transformation of violence from historical moments to cultural narratives, giving symbolic depth to the theme of revenge. The distinction between home and acts of violence, the symbolism of family spaces, such as Avner's dimly lit living room illuminated by the television, reflects the intrusion of trauma into personal life and depicts revenge as something that threatens emotional stability.

Revenge through everyday objects. The use of everyday objects rigged with bombs (such as telephones, beds, and televisions) suggests that acts of revenge consider comfortable spaces as places of conflict, stripping them of their meaning of comfort. The comparison between victims and perpetrators, as well as the cross-cutting editing technique between the introduction of the victims' names and the Mossad target list, shows a striking similarity between victims and perpetrators, as a deep symbolism in this choice.

Sexual climax and acts of violence, the moment linking Avner's orgasm to a brutal explosion, underscores the symbolic connection between desire and brutality in a revenge story represented in extreme fashion by the characters. The synergy between plot and visual symbols, along with the narrative parallelism between Avner's fear at home and the threat on the battlefield, emphasizes how the desire for revenge separates personal and professional aspects. An ending without peace, the story concludes that loving revenge does not bring tranquility ("There is no peace at the end"), depicting the cycle of violence as a systematic and unsolvable problem.

The symbolism of the Twin Towers, the closing shot showing the Twin Towers after 9/11, becomes a symbol of international violence and the repetition of the cycle of revenge, expanding the scale of the story from the local to the universal. Supporting characters who serve as representations of ethics, such as Robert the bomb maker and Ephraim the manager, function as symbols of ethical doubt and identity confusion in the story of revenge.

The main dialogue reflecting ethics, expressions such as "Jews do not do wrong..." serve as symbols of ethical musicality and identity that are increasingly eroded by stories of revenge. Depicting terror as a mutation within the family, which emerges through acts of murder in close circles and the targeting of individuals, this film presents revenge as a form of family deviance and a threat to personal safety. Urban spaces and landscapes as symbols of conflict, the dark and unfamiliar backdrop of European cities symbolizes the moral alienation and feelings of estrangement felt by the perpetrators of revenge. Although not explicitly stated, this setting reinforces the symbolic atmosphere of the existing conflict.

A narrative of double ethics, the film does not show only one moral aspect. Spielberg develops a narrative of duality between perpetrator and victim, which is presented with depth, resulting in a symbol of ethical ambivalence. Historical failure as representation, the depiction of the failed rescue and intelligence errors in Munich (such as GSG-9) adds symbolic meaning to the narrative that revenge arises from failure to maintain security. The symbol of revenge as a mental legacy, the character Avner who develops in symbolic isolation reflects revenge as a persistent psychological burden. Parallels from mythology in contemporary stories, philosophical writings state that revenge in films is similar to ancient tragedies (Achilles), underlining universal story patterns. The symbol of the repetition of violence in the world, the thematic connection between Munich and terrorism after 9/11 reflects revenge as a recurring global motif, presented symbolically in contemporary narratives. The contrast between light and darkness as a symbol of ethical ambiguity, the sharp cinematography between dim lighting and darkness in night scenes signifies moral dualism in the story. (Supported by visual analysis on Reddit). Mirrors and reflections as symbols of identity, the use of mirrors in scene settings shows a divided identity that the perpetrator sees as a moral reflection. The symbolization of foreign spaces, scenes in various unfamiliar cities, gives the impression that revenge is not bound by local values or norms, but transcends the boundaries of identity and nation. A complex narrative without glorification, this critical essay elevates the film as a profound moral reflection, not merely a depiction of action, making revenge a moral symbol that provokes reflection. The destruction of collective identity, revenge in the film not only destroys Avner, but also reflects the destruction of Jewish identity, which was originally based on moral values. The symbol of this collective destruction remains a subject of critical discussion.

The operational transformation shifts to ethical representation, with the Mossad team, whose members initially had specific professions, now functioning as representations of a collapsed ethic, revealing characterizations rich in narrative elements. The symbolic tension of the identity conflict, the conversation among team members stating “we will defeat them,” reflects the symbolic tension between moral identity and operational identity. The symbol of the baby and the loss of family. The rational approach to Avner's shattered family shows the symbol of insecurity to seek revenge that absorbs the family's protective space.

Representing revenge as an ethical vortex, Spielberg does not see revenge merely as a trigger for action, but also as an ethical vortex that draws individuals and nations into endless moral conflict. Academic analysis shows that Munich is a film that delves into ethical considerations, not just a political thriller. Audience involvement in trauma: The film's composition makes the audience feel the indecision and conflict experienced by Avner. Through the use of close-ups and slow montages, the audience is forced to delve into the character's trauma, so that revenge is not just entertainment, but an emotionally touching experience. The narrative of revenge as an endless cycle, this film depicts how each act of murder brings new consequences, creating new targets, so that revenge is not a solution, but a cycle of violence. Cultural critics call this “a story about what happens next,” a narrative that never ends. Food and household symbols, in several scenes, food and dining tables become symbols of identity and household that are eroded. From Avner's family dinner to secret meetings at a Paris dining table, these symbols indicate that revenge encroaches on the most intimate areas of human life. The representation of gender in the narrative of revenge, the presence of female characters, such as Avner's wife, serves as a symbol of normal life that continues to be threatened by the cycle of revenge. This narrative shows how violence affects gender relations and reinforces the impression that revenge transcends the public sphere and destroys the domestic sphere.

The visual language of weapons as symbols of power; weapons that continue to appear throughout the plot are not merely physical tools, but symbols of state power, legitimacy, and moral burden. Spielberg uses the camera to emphasize the intimate relationship between the characters and their weapons, so that weapons become a “language of vengeance” in the film. The ambiguity of national identity, embodied by the character Avner, who leaves Israel for the sake of his family, illustrates the ambiguity of national identity. The vengeance initially carried out in the name of the state instead gives rise to alienation and loss of personal identity, a cinematic critique of nationalism built on violence. Through the narrative of revenge and political legitimacy, the film highlights how the government exploits revenge as a justification for secret political actions. This reveals the close relationship between the revenge plot and the narrative of the state, where Avner's personal actions represent collective revenge politics.

The ethical dimension of revenge, Spielberg emphasizes that every act of revenge always faces complex ethical questions. Avner and his team continue to be haunted by doubts, showing that revenge is not just an emotional response, but a moral choice full of consequences. The urgency of academic study, reading Munich (2005) through a literary and political perspective opens up a discussion about how narratives of revenge shape individual and collective identities. This study is important not only for understanding film representation, but also for reflecting on the phenomenon of contemporary global violence.

Munich as a visual literary text, utilizing a non-linear plot, deep characterization, and rich symbolism, can be read like a visual literary text. Revenge is present as a recurring literary motif, positioning this film not only as a cinematic product, but also as a literary study that deconstructs the meaning of identity and violence. Munich as a post-9/11 global allegory: many academics read Munich as a global political allegory, in which the narrative of Israeli-Palestinian revenge serves as a metaphor for America's post-9/11 policy of retaliation. In this way, the film transcends the historical context of 1972 and speaks to contemporary issues.

Overall narrative signs, as a whole, the film Munich utilizes various visual symbols, dialogue, and history to depict revenge as a destructive story that robs identity and creates ethical criticism. Cinematic references, in-depth character portrayals, and visual symbols come together in a narrative that encourages deep thought.

### ***The Ethics of Representing Violence and Revenge in the Film Munich Debated in the Realms of Literary and Political Criticism***

The beginning of the ethical controversy, Munich immediately sparked debate about the ethics of representing state violence, as it depicted Mossad's retaliatory operations in a dramatic cinematic manner that raised moral questions. Spielberg's position as director, Roger Ebert assessed Spielberg as “placing himself between Israel and Palestine,” without taking sides, but the film remained a “haunting ethical argument”; this demonstrates an attempt to discuss violence as a moral dilemma, not propaganda.

The problematic nature of “fictional historiography” led Nachreiner to emphasize that Spielberg used narrative and symbolic strategies (such as media framing and flashbacks) to emphasize cultural trauma rather than historical realism, raising ethical questions about the visual representation of intense violence. Double moral ambiguity, critics at Alt Film Guide note that Munich has ethical ambivalence, where violence is shown without moral justification, but rather as a questionable dilemma.

The global symbolism of revenge, represented by the Twin Towers at the end of the film, touches on the politics of global revenge after 9/11, depicting the ethics of revenge as a universal phenomenon that triggers cross-border political reflection. Revenge as a cycle of violence, the film depicts institutions of revenge as endless machines. Each target is replaced, heightening the ethical sensation that acts of revenge never stop.

Individual ethical considerations, dialogues such as: “Jews don't do wrong because their enemies do wrong,” reveal deep-rooted moral conflicts and invite questions about ethical boundaries when violence is retaliated. Questions about counter-terrorism policies, Kowalski writes that this film serves as an open question: should the state retaliate against terror with terror? Munich rejects absolute answers, but challenges the logic of continued violence.

Skepticism about operational morality, Kenneth Waltzer asserts that Spielberg rejects moral equality between victims and perpetrators, but he also questions whether revenge is morally justified. By humanizing both perpetrators and victims, the film gives faces and motivations to all parties, including the Palestinians, thereby complicating the ethics of representation so that they are not seen as caricatures.

Moral criticism from international media, *Der Spiegel* calls the film trapped in a morally deviant “false moral middle ground” that does not take a firm stance against terror, but instead questions revenge. The visual intensity of violence, Redditor notes that the scenes of violence in Munich are brutal and explicit; this raises an ethical dilemma about how the media should represent violence without glorifying it but also without hiding it.

Aesthetic and moral conflict, critics say that the violent cutting of sexual scenes creates a strange and disturbing effect. This symbolism reflects the moral disorientation of the perpetrator. Narrative ethics in violence: Critics such as Ebert argue that the film shifts from thriller to ethical meditation, drawing viewers to think rather than simply watch the action. The representation of “proportional revenge”: Classical philosophical perspectives, such as those of Plato, reject uncontrolled revenge; this highlights the importance of proportionality in revenge, as raised by the film.

The medieval vs. modern moral debate: Kenneth Zanca states that the Judeo-Christian tradition limits revenge, which contrasts with the film's logic of depicting revenge that exceeds reasonable limits. Film as a political allegory: *Buenos Standard* writes that Munich is a modern allegory of America's “war on terror,” showing how the film's narrative functions as a global-scale political critique. Film as an aesthetic and moral text, the *Jewish Journal* states that the film's value lies not in historical accuracy, but in its representation of moral conflict. The humanized Mossad agent grappling with the system opens up an ethical space.

Extreme criticism from conservatives, some critics consider the film to promote a false “moral equivalence” that equates acts of terror with retaliation, but many also refute that view. The depiction of dual morality, in *Project MUSE*, highlights that the film shows the contrast between individual and societal violence; retaliation destroys collective morality. Reflecting on the ethics of modern warfare, within the discourse of political ethics, Munich sparks discussion about the legitimacy of state violence in the face of terrorism, which is relevant in contemporary global crises. A final analysis of visual symbols, the Manhattan scene at the end raises the question: does violent action destructively shape history as a symbol of global ethical vengeance?

The moral dilemma of the character Avner is depicted as wrestling with his inner voice and identity values; this representation presents an inner conflict that represents a universal ethical dilemma. A counter-propaganda film, Kenneth Waltzer asserts that Spielberg avoids moral propaganda, preferring instead to pose complex ethical questions. Retribution as a moral weakness, criticism in *City Journal* suggests that the portrayal of Mossad agents as

human, indecisive, and guilty highlights that revenge damages individual morality. The ethics of representing violence in academia, Anette Bringedal Houge emphasizes the importance of ethics when representing violence in films such as *Munich*, which must be presented with interpretative responsibility (Anette Bringedal Houge, 2023).

The moral narrative in the public sphere, critics juxtapose this film as material for public reflection, not only to be consumed as entertainment, but as an ethical discourse. With a fragile moral consensus, many critics assess that this film invites viewers to reshape the collective moral consensus on revenge rather than following traditional moral lines.

The ethics of spectacle (spectacle of violence), Spielberg presents scenes of violence explicitly, not for glorification, but to force the audience to face the moral consequences. Academic critics highlight that this film challenges ethical norms in Hollywood cinema, which often normalizes violence. Representation of revenge and religion: Some reviews mention that *Munich* contains theological tension: revenge as a sin vs. revenge as a national duty. The film shows the spiritual dilemma inherent in political conflict.

Trauma as a collective legacy: Spielberg depicts that revenge not only destroys enemies but also damages the heirs of identity. Trauma passed down from one generation to the next raises profound ethical reflections. Ambivalence of agent identity: The Mossad agent in the film appears torn between being a “patriot” and a “hitman.” This ambivalence shows how the ethics of representing individual identity clash with state politics.

The question of justice versus revenge: critics argue that *Munich* blurs the line between justice and revenge. This positions the film as an ethical text that challenges the concept of international law. A narrative of revenge in the post-9/11 context, many academics interpret the film as a reflection on US foreign policy after the 9/11 tragedy. *Munich* raises the question of whether preventive military action is ethical or whether it leads to a cycle of revenge.

The symbolism of home and exile Avner, who leaves Israel and lives in exile, symbolizes how a nation's revenge creates alienation for its own citizens. This gives ethical weight to the political impact of revenge. Criticism of moral equivalence: some conservatives accuse the film of equating the morals of terrorists and victims. Spielberg rejects this claim, emphasizing that his film only reveals a dilemma, not equating moral truths. The aesthetics of violence as criticism, cinematic techniques such as montage, dim lighting, and close-ups of physical wounds are used not merely as style, but as a visual ethical critique of repeated revenge.

Revenge as visual trauma, analyses such as Nachreiner's show that the film emphasizes media trauma and personal history, revealing the moral responsibility of representing violence. Requiring further academic study, this film opens up space for relevant interdisciplinary research (literature, ethics, politics), especially in examining how the media conveys violence and revenge in the realm of contemporary culture. Film as a global ethical text, by rejecting definitive answers, *Munich* functions as a global ethical text that invites cross-cultural, cross-religious, and cross-disciplinary discussion. Violence and revenge are represented as universal human problems.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Steven Spielberg's *Munich* (2005) is not only a historical film, but also a complex ethical text. The representation of violence and revenge in this film has sparked serious debate in the fields of literary and political criticism. Spielberg refuses to provide definitive answers regarding the legitimacy of state violence or the morality of revenge, instead opening up a space of ambiguity that challenges viewers to reflect on its impact. The narrative

constructed shows that revenge is not a solution, but rather a cycle that continuously reproduces trauma, alienation, and identity crises. Through the characterization of Avner and the Mossad team, the film reveals that violent acts based on revenge have devastating ethical consequences for both individuals and nations. The symbolism of home, family, weapons, and the post-9/11 global landscape underscores the universal dimension of this ethical problem. In addition, the debate about the ethics of representing violence in Munich also highlights the important role of film as a medium for social criticism. Cinema is capable of raising philosophical questions that are not always answered in formal political discourse. By presenting a human perspective, Spielberg shifts the audience's position from mere observers to participants in collective moral reflection. This confirms that literary criticism of films does not only assess aesthetic elements, but also the ethical implications of the narrative offered.

The study entitled "Narratives of Revenge and Identity in Munich (2005): A Literary and Political Analysis" makes a significant contribution to the discourse of film and political ethics by showing how the film Munich (2005) not only represents a story of revenge after the tragedy of the 1972 Olympics, but also questions the moral dimensions and national identity inherent in acts of political violence. Through narrative analysis and a political approach, this study broadens the understanding of how cinema can be a reflective medium for ethical dilemmas in international conflict and collective memory. In addition, this study opens up opportunities for further studies, such as comparative studies with other films on the theme of revenge or terrorism to examine their ideological differences, as well as reception analysis that examines how audiences from different cultural backgrounds interpret the moral and political messages in the film.

## 5. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. Authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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