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## "Raus aus der Haut": Division and Identity in Current German Cinema

A Report from the "48. Internationale Filmfestspiele Berlin," February 11-22, 1998

### I

It has become commonplace to bemoan the state of German filmmaking in the 1990s. The notorious new German comedy might amass astounding domestic box office returns, but what it has to offer aesthetically and thematically remains rather bleak. No longer troubled by generic pleasures, commercial imperatives, and Hollywood influences, this new German cinema revels in the mystery of sexual identity, yet strangely neglects the ruptures of political identities outside the movie theaters; it bonds viewers to the pleasures of multiple subject positions, yet largely denies the processes of temporal and spatial dislocation that mark post-unified Germany at large. As both a catalyst and symptom of displacement, the body is contemporary German cinema's most viable commodity. It helps supplant experience with the ideological effigy of what Gerhard Schulze calls the post-industrial German "Erlebnisgesellschaft;"<sup>1</sup> it helps engineer images of normalcy that gloss over the dramatic fractures of the body politic. Hesitant charades and triangular love-relationships are the stuff that dreams are made of in commercially successful filmmaking today. While newspaper feuilletons discuss the promises and perils of globalization, the new German comedy entertains the viewer with a world in which local choices, domestic ties, and nearby involvements constitute the order of the day. One may understand this curious fixation on desire and the local as popular culture's peculiar way of addressing and working over utopian fantasies in commercial contexts. At the same time, however, it should come as no surprise that the restructuring of fantasy in current German cinema often results in a monstrous return of the repressed, and this both in formal and thematic terms.

The only German entry in this year's competition at the Berlinale, *Das Mambospiel*, is a good case in point. Directed by former GDR actor and filmmaker Michael Gwisdek, the film zooms in on the love-hate relationship between the untalented actor-director Martin (Gwisdek) and the unsuccessful actress Maria (Corinna Harfouch). Maria, in the opening sequence, finds a plastic bag full of money that was left by bank robbers in a public garbage can. She takes the money, leaves her current lover Gregor (Jürgen Vogel), a hapless would-be writer, and finds herself once again involved with her former boyfriend Martin. More a film buff than a filmmaker, Martin needs money for a movie project about the rock 'n' roll age just as much as he needs someone to help him out of the mess of a life populated with cinematic fantasies. The ensuing relationship between Maria

and Martin, their difficult and conflict-ridden path towards happiness, is meant to be at once passionate and funny, but there is little in this film that warrants this intention. Maria's devotion to Martin, her masochistic impulse to follow her abusive former lover, remains completely unmotivated and unconvincing. The script is excruciatingly imprecise, and neither the dialogue nor individual sequences hang together properly. As a result, the film turns in circles. It aspires to the cultic status of trash, but Gwisdek is so adamant about reaching this goal that his film erases the very resources that might motivate narrative progress and make people talk to and love each other in the first place. Alluding to the present vocabulary of hipness, the film fails to convince the viewer why anything we see and hear should really matter. In the final sequence, the film resorts to a highly worn film-within-the-film device in order to convince the viewer of its otherwise implausible happy ending. What started out as a film about emotional confusion at this point peters out into simply a confused and confusing film. After drawing on all kinds of generic expectations and cinematic pretexts, *Das Mambospiel* in the end—when Martin finally realizes that he is not much of a director after all—obliterates itself. More pulp than fiction, the film in the final moments admits what the viewer suspected all along: that one could have done very well without it.

Though set in present-day Berlin, Gwisdek's *Das Mambospiel* situates characters and storyline in an astounding vacuum. Nothing connects Martin and Maria to what is around them; neither Berlin's unsettled cityscape nor the protagonists' domestic spaces gain any kind of plastic depth or persuasive coloratura. *Das Mambospiel* shares this tendency to arrest the particular in two-dimensional displays with many other films that typify contemporary German film. Even sweeping historical dramas such as *Comedian Harmonists* (Joseph Vilsmaier, 1998) or message films such as Sönke Wortmann's *Der Campus* (1998) follow this lead and insulate central characters from their spatio-temporal environments in the hope of transforming political faultlines into melodramatic intensities. Needless to say, in many cases this absence of adequate framing and historical contextualization, this radical turn toward the intimate play of desire, simply recycles ideological tropes that structure public discourse at large. Escaping the real, the narrative economy of these films reiterates the hegemony of dominant meanings as generic reference and ritualized convention. This becomes particularly striking if we turn our attention to films that address, in one way or another, the history of divided Germany and the legacy of the Cold War today. A

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well-intended crime story set in the former East and shown out of competition at the Berlinale, Andreas Kleinert's *Im Namen der Unschuld* is a good example here. Although the film includes conspicuous allusions to post-Wall German conflicts, it makes no attempt whatsoever to enlist such references for the characterization of its protagonists (Barbara Sukowa and Matthias Habich) or to intensify its narrative development. An exercise in political posturing, Kleinert's images of post-unification divisions thus remain as vacuous as Gwisdek's valorization of theatrical gestures and passionate confusions. In both films, soporific stereotypes recast the course of German history in the aftermath of the Cold War as fate and destiny.

Stereotypes reflect a phobic desire to uphold structures of identity against all signs of dissipation. They at once recognize and disavow difference so as to produce stable contours of otherness and deny the decentering power of shared histories and meanings. The stereotype, as Homi Bhabha has written in a different context, "is a complex, ambivalent, contradictory mode of representation, as anxious as it is assertive, and demands not only that we extend our critical and political objectives but that we change the object of analysis itself."<sup>2</sup> Shown in the context of the "Internationales Forum des jungen Films," the Berlinale's series of independent, experimental, or simply less extravagant productions, a handful of smaller German films work through this role of stereotype in contemporary understandings of German division and unity. In aspiring to emphasize what has been anxious as much as assertive about the construction of particularistic German identities during the Cold War, these films open new perspectives on shared experiences and overlapping rather than conflicting interpretations. They explore the ambivalent ways in which West and East recognized themselves through respective projections and negotiations of the other, and thereby indicate how Germans during and after the years of division inscribed and continue to inscribe the respective other in the very center of their selves. What these films have in common, then, is the attempt to revise dominant narratives of postwar history, emphasize the fundamental hybridity of German self-conceptions during and after the years of division, and explain how the power of stereotype helped mythify the course of time and reify geographical and cultural boundaries into sites of absolute difference. It is to this handful of smaller productions, to their narrative, cultural, and political interventions, that we turn our attention in the following pages.

## II

A light comedy told in a series of vignettes, Matl Findel's *Alle Zeit der Welt* does not specifically address issues of post-unification identity. Nonetheless, the film, which takes place in Berlin, envisions a multicultural society unfolding

outside the windows of the city—whether its German residents choose to take heed or not. One has the feeling that Anton (Jockel Tschiersch), the film's sole German character, would not have embarked on his adventure to discover and participate in this "other" Berlin, to get beyond the ossified stereotypes of national and cultural identity, if he had not just been diagnosed with a fatal brain tumor which will allow him only six more months to live. Like other characters in recent German film comedy, Anton bears the traces of national trauma inscribed on his sick body. But in contrast to these other films, Anton's illness is not ultimately "cured" through a reinscription of norms. Instead, Anton quits his job as a successful ice hockey player for a Berlin team and embarks on a week of flanerie. Meeting various people, he integrates himself into the public spaces of a city that he has previously contemplated only from the inner space of his apartment in Berlin-Mitte, which affords a beautiful view of an emblematic topography of the city including the dome of the recently restored New Synagogue and the television tower on Alexanderplatz. When Anton ventures out of his apartment, he encounters Toost (Josepha van der Schoot), a Dutch artist who creates intricate sculptures out of autumn leaves and ice crystals. Left in their natural environments in parks or on the banks of the Spree, these sculptures fascinate and stimulate discussion among passersby and then melt, rot or blow away. Anton also meets Radka (Ivana Broukova), a young woman from the Czech Republic who works as a nanny in Berlin and spends her free time singing Czech folk songs with a small choir.

In a parallel plot we encounter Matthew (Matthew Burton), an Australian pilot who flies for a Berlin airline. His girlfriend, a Swiss woman named Evelyn, has left him and Berlin early in the film, and Matthew mourns for her by reopening and running her small cafe, though his talents include neither cooking nor serving drinks. Toost, who happens to play the piano in the bistro, and who provides the connection between the two plots, initiates Matthew into the secrets of operating a coffeeshop. He is also helped occasionally by his new love interest, an English woman named Lilith (Ruth Vaughn) who has just arrived in Berlin on her way to do research on singing brown bears in the Gobi desert.

The film's climax—a hilarious send-up of national stereotypes—occurs on a Friday evening, when all the film's characters end up in Matthew's cafe. Every Friday, Matthew has learned from Toost, a tour guide brings a group of Japanese tourists to the cafe. Toost plays the piano, her friend sings, and Evelyn generally serves them a Swiss dish, raclette. On this particular Friday, Matthew enlists the help of Lilith in cooking and serving the raclette, and Toost invites her new friend Anton to come hear her play the piano. When the singer fails to show up, Anton calls Radka and her singing group to fill in. The Japanese tourists arrive and are told by their tour guide that this is a "typical Berlin

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cafe." By the end of the evening, the Japanese are having such a good time that they refuse to leave. It is clear by now to everyone that Anton is the only German in this "typical" cafe, where Swiss food cooked by an Australian is served up by a Brit to the tune of Czech folk songs played by a Dutch woman. The irony is crowned when one Japanese man asks Toost why the Dutch hate the Germans. "When you think of Holland," Toost replies, "you think of cheese and tulips. When you think of Germany, you think of sauerkraut and Hitler." Emphasizing the precariousness of these stereotypes, she adds (sardonically?), "Though I don't know any Germans who really like sauerkraut."

The final sequences of *Alle Zeit der Welt* fragment the ideal of this integrated community and suggest that society cannot be a fixed body but should be imagined as something in process. Even the budding love stories (which in most recent German film comedy end in marriage and procreation, and thus become the reified site of a "healthy" body politic) are displaced here. Lilith, who has finally gotten the necessary visas and funding, heads off to the Gobi desert, hoping to find Matthew waiting for her when she returns. Matthew hires Radka to run the cafe and goes back to flying planes. Anton, who has organized a locomotive for Toost to drive and thus fulfilled her biggest dream, slips on the first snow while hanging a banner to greet her across the railroad tracks. Falling down, he breaks his neck and dies in an almost willful triumph over the destiny of his brain tumor. Shot in German and English, with actors from Germany, Australia, England, Holland, and the Czech Republic, all of whom speak German (and English) with varying degrees of fluency in the film, *Alle Zeit der Welt*, without making any great claims or grandiose political statements, gently and humorously posits a hybrid German public sphere where no one group holds an exclusive claim on language, identity, or urban space.

Directed by Andreas Dresen, the hilarious black comedy *Raus aus der Haut*, a film which more explicitly thematizes politics and national identity and attempts to inscribe the overlapping histories of the two German states in new ways, was certainly one of the more successful and stimulating German films to be showcased at the Berlinale. Set in the GDR, *Raus aus der Haut* rethinks the events of October 1977. Through positing a kind of "Deutsch--Deutscher Herbst," the film explodes the often artificial boundaries between East and West, public and private. The film's plot is set into motion by the RAF's kidnapping of industrialist Hanns-Martin Schleyer, an act which was followed by their hijacking of a Lufthansa jet to Mogadishou, and which culminated in the subsequent deaths of the leaders of the RAF in Stammheim prison. At the outset of the film, Anna (Susanne Bormann), the prettiest, hippest girl in the twelfth grade, comes to school with some presents she has just received from her boyfriend Randy (Matthias Walter), who plays in the rock band Feuersbrunst.

Randy has given her a rather glamorous photograph of RAF terrorists Andreas Baader and Gudrun Ensslin, as well as an issue of the *Spiegel* with a cover story about the RAF. As the class gathers around to look at the forbidden material, Marcus Wieland (Fabian Busch), who has a huge crush on the unattainable Anna, seeks to get her attention by grabbing the photo of Baader and Ensslin and showing it under the classroom projector. Just then, Rottmann, the school's dogmatic director (played by Otto Mellies, who delivers a wonderful caricature of the perfect East German bureaucrat), enters the room and catches Anna with the *Spiegel*. Though Marcus is not caught, he seeks to undo the damage he has caused Anna by stealing the confiscated *Spiegel* and photo back from Rottmann's office and is, in turn, caught in the act himself. Rottmann now threatens to oppose both Anna's and Marcus's impending applications for university study.

Anna's interest in the RAF stems from more than a desire to possess forbidden Western materials. Frustrated by the lack of vocal resistance to the political and social hegemony in her own society, she identifies with the RAF's dissident activism. Inspired by the Schleyer kidnapping, Anna enlists Marcus in a plan she has hatched: they will kidnap Rottmann, keep him in Anna's grandmother's cellar during her grandmother's operation at the hospital, and release him only after the decisions about university applications have already been made. This way Rottmann will be unable to influence their applications negatively. Marcus is skeptical at first, but both Anna's charms and his fear of being assigned to the army's officers' corps rather than the university soon win him over to the plan. Marcus and Anna study Rottmann's daily habits and develop a course of action; the kidnapping goes off without a hitch. They tie Rottmann up on a cot in the basement, and except for a few scares (he needs medicine for his heart condition, he refuses to eat) everything seems to be working out as they have planned it. Until Anna's grandmother comes home from the hospital unexpectedly, that is, and discovers Rottmann in the basement. In an attempt to stop her from entering the cellar, Anna and Marcus chase after her—and in the process expose their faces to Rottmann for the first time.

Surprisingly, rather than simply set Rottmann free, Anna's grandmother enters into the plot with Anna and Marcus. Agreeing that they cannot simply let him go and run the risk of his reporting them now that he knows who they are, grandma helps Anna and Marcus attempt to blackmail Rottmann with some letters they have found in his apartment which indicate that his former girlfriend fled to the West with his knowledge. Rottmann refuses to succumb to this blackmail attempt, so they keep him chained up—though by now he has begun to eat again and engages in occasional philosophical discussions with grandma about politics and the meaning of life. Meanwhile, Anna and Marcus have received word that they have been admitted to their desired courses of study (medicine and Latin American studies,

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respectively), and Rottmann, whose disappearance the Stasi cannot explain, has been replaced by a new school director. The school has manufactured a story about Rottmann's disappearance, saying that he is ill, and at the new director's inaugural ceremony they even read a faked letter from Rottmann. When Rottmann learns that despite years of service and personal sacrifice for the state and the party he has proved so disposable to them, he begins to rethink his assumptions about the ideologies to which he has subscribed.

As the RAF begins to issue ultimatums in the Schleyer kidnapping—*Raus aus der Haut* is punctuated by occasional TV broadcasts from the West that provide updates on the case—Anna's grandmother issues an ultimatum of her own: Marcus and Anna must figure out a solution that will lead to Rottmann's release by the GDR's "Tag der Republik" (October 7). On that day, Anna and Marcus go to a concert by *Feuersbrunst* (the band led by Anna's now estranged boyfriend Randy) at their school. In an attempt to win Anna back, Randy plays a song by the dissident musician Klaus Renft. Anna has chided him in the past for his cowardice in refusing to perform a Renft song; as he strikes into the first chords of the song "Raus aus der Haut" his fellow band members leave the stage, his amp is unplugged, and a speeding Trabi screeches to a halt outside the door of the auditorium. As pandemonium ensues, Randy is carted away by the Stasi. Marcus escorts Anna, who is in tears and filled with guilt about Randy's arrest, to her grandmother's house, where they discover that grandma has set Rottmann free. Anna breaks down, and Marcus attempts to comfort her with a kiss. They end up making love in the same bed to which Rottmann had been chained.

Feigning normalcy, they decide to go to school the next day, despite everything that has happened. As they arrive, they encounter Rottmann and realize immediately that he has decided not to turn them in. Rottmann's return stuns his colleagues at the school, and the Stasi show up to debrief him on his disappearance. He tells the story of his kidnapping replete with all details—except the names and identities of his kidnapers. No one believes him, and he is driven forcibly into retirement. Several weeks later, as Anna is eating dinner with her parents and listening to a TV report about the deaths of the RAF terrorists in Stammheim, her father mentions that Rottmann died after having stopped taking his heart medicine. Anna is crestfallen, a reaction that surprises her parents, who thought that she hated him. In an epilogue to the film, which shows Marcus and Anna shovelling coal into her grandmother's cellar (the same cellar where Rottmann was held), Marcus tells us in voiceover narration that he and Anna didn't end up going to university that year anyway, because, as it turns out, there weren't enough spots. Instead they are now preparing for winter, and will move in together with Anna's grandmother.

*Raus aus der Haut*, a production of the Ostdeutscher Rundfunk, was premiered on German television during the

fall of 1997, the twentieth anniversary of the "German autumn," when public discourse was obsessively focused on the history of the (West) German terrorist movement and its ramifications for (post-unification) German national identity. When this discourse did touch on questions of German division, it was generally to excoriate the GDR for providing asylum to terrorists who chose to leave the RAF, or to investigate the Stasi's vexed relationship with these ex-terrorists once they had arrived in the GDR. *Raus aus der Haut* personalizes, indeed embodies, the East German reception of the West German events of fall 1977, shifting the focus of the debate away from such institutional maneuverings which maintain rigid divisions between East and West onto an exploration of the "positionalities" through which the two poles of history, geography and identity, overlap. In so doing, the film performs a different sort of excoriation: stripping off the "skin" of East-West stereotypes, *Raus aus der Haut* narrates its characters' embodied, counterhegemonic negotiations of "German" dissident identity vis-à-vis the political and historical events of October 1977.

In *Making Bodies, Making History*, Leslie Adelson writes: "In the West German context of the last twenty years, one could argue that the body in literature functions no longer as the mere object (victim) of history or as an allegorical emblem for the nation (or its moral conscience) but rather as the heterogeneous site of contested identities."<sup>3</sup> The same can certainly be said for the bodies in *Raus aus der Haut*. However, while Adelson goes on to pursue the question of "how literary representations of difference reflect or enact the historical embodiment of contested and conflicted identities" (36), what is striking about *Raus aus der Haut* is the ways in which the historical embodiment of contested and conflicted identities becomes enacted through a representation of "sameness." The East German bodies in *Raus aus der Haut* reflect their West German counterparts: Anna, tall and thin with long blonde hair, is a baby-faced version of Gudrun Ensslin; she emulates the terrorist by wearing jeans and a long black leather coat. More to the point, Anna and Marcus assume the subject positions of the RAF terrorists—dissidents and perpetrators—by reenacting their kidnapping of Hanns-Martin Schleyer, thus forcing their school director Rottmann to embody the position of the industrialist oppressor-turned-victim. The conflicting and contested identities, which arise as a result of the multiple subject positions the protagonists of the film enact, prompt each of them to gain new insights into their conceptions of self and other. It is symptomatic that the death of Rottmann, who comes to understand the motivations of Anna and Marcus and the limitations of the ideologies he has promoted in the past (in part through his experience of pain and of having his body wrenched out of its normal context, one is led to believe), is announced in the film in connection with the deaths of Baader and Ensslin. Ultimately, his body

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is metonymically linked not to Schleyer's but to the bodies of the dissident terrorists.

## III

In the documentary *Barluschke*, director Thomas Heise presents his own kind of terrorist. The film focuses on the ex-spy Berthold Barluschke, who worked first for the Stasi in the United States and later for the West German Intelligence Service in the GDR—a man who served a number of different political causes and in doing so lost sight not only of his own political goals but also his own self and vision. Barluschke has wandered between East and West with ease and little hesitation, yet after the end of the Cold War he fails to leave the past behind, to strip himself of his former skin, and to assimilate to any new tasks in life. Talking to Heise about his previous profession, Barluschke recasts his past as legend and spectacle. "One has a certain repertoire," he insists, "You simply pick the relevant film and press start." Incapable of coming out of the cold, Barluschke decides to shoot videos about his family; he stages domestic conflicts and directs the camera like a weapon against his wife and children. Understood as a never-ending series of mere simulations and theatrical performances, past moments for Barluschke thus return forever as mechanical reproductions: "I set up the camera and just let it run. I wanted to record whatever conversations took place. Basically the film is a kind of stock-taking or a snapshot. How wonderful to have both picture and sound."

*Barluschke* begins with a drama of separation: Berthold and his American wife Joana, a successful pharmaceutical manager, split up and move into different apartments in Paris. Separation and detachment in fact are Barluschke's life story; they haunt whatever he recalls. Heise grants Barluschke ample time to remember and narrate, he rarely interrupts Barluschke's self-performance in front of the camera in order to push for further insight or reflection. What Barluschke thus delivers is a highly incoherent story rich in symptoms of repression and displacement, a story full of cracks left by the work of forced forgetting and evasion, a tale that remains pure surface simply because the turncoat spy Barluschke spent most of his adult life wrapping deceptive surfaces around his true profession. Heise's passive and invisible presence in the space-off therefore reinforces rather than debunks Barluschke's hybrid theatricality. Crucial details about Barluschke's secret lives remain unsaid. It is impossible to fancy, for instance, what had motivated his Jewish wife Joana to marry this emotional monster and follow him from the US to his later mission in the GDR. Although Heise interviews Barluschke's children, the film fails to mention how this narcissistic ex-spy tried to bribe his own family prior to the filming. In the end, Heise's collage of sounds and images, due to what it leaves out, exudes an air of sympathy with Barluschke that appears

strangely out of place. Is this now forlorn and frazzled would-be James Bond, who once traversed so many boundaries and slipped into so many different roles, indeed a victim of history? Does the misery that plagues Barluschke's family long after the end of the Cold War really derive from the earlier absence of alternative options? *Barluschke* as a whole leaves too many questions unanswered, which in the end makes Heise's inquiry into Cold War identities unsatisfactory. Whereas *Raus aus der Haut*, by exploring the transaction of dissident meanings and identities across the Wall, complicated conventional narratives of divided Germany, *Barluschke* in the final analysis renders pathological any decentering of identity. In doing so, the film—unwillingly—valorizes the figure of the undercover agent who secretly upholds stable boundaries with the intention to outrule the possibility that different cultures may open themselves up for mutual penetration and interpretation.

*Barluschke* suffers from the fact that by hiding himself behind the camera and trying to render the work of the apparatus invisible, Heise simply highlights what is theatrical about Barluschke's life to begin with. Heise fails to allow the very act of filmmaking to become a learning process of reciprocal curiosity and insight. Instead, the film provides Barluschke with a platform to do what he has been doing all along. In this respect, the Forum's other important documentary on things East and West German, Andreas Voigt's *Große weite Welt*, proves much more rigorous and successful. *Große weite Welt* is the final part of a decade-long project following the lives of a handful of Leipzig citizens. The documentary brings together interviews from 1989 and 1990 (shot in black and white) with conversations carried out with the same individuals in 1997 (shot in color). It splices together dreams and stories, utopias and disappointments, and gently urges its protagonists to comment on their own visions and experiences. We encounter Sylvia who used to work in a pub, but left for the West with her husband after the fall of the Wall. By 1997, he wants to be a scuba-diving instructor, she has not yet succeeded in establishing her own pub, and both admit that seven years of post-communist liberties have not helped them to master their manic impulse to resort to ever-more remote places and identities. We meet Renate, a journalist, who once had contact to the Stasi and now finds herself ridden with guilt and without any steady job. Two other interviewees, Sylvia and Dietmar, dream of nothing but their career options in the *Bundeswehr*, of their calling—in Dietmar's words—to protect German families and properties against foreign aggressors. And Wolfgang, who in 1989 worked in an old foundry, today looks back with anger and resignation, while Voigt—in a fascinating layering of images—projects earlier black-and-white footage onto the walls of what in 1997 remains of Wolfgang's former work place.

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Voigt has managed with astonishing skill to encourage these people to think and talk about their own lives, and thereby to empower them to trace their shifting positions in the turmoils of most recent German history. There is nothing pathetic in these accounts, no nostalgia about lost securities or identities, no false idealism—only a sense of realism and disenchantment that throws into stark relief the many ways in which history marks even what we consider the most intimate spheres of our existence. Voigt's conscientious strategies of representation offer us slices of lived experience that speak for larger constellations yet do not sacrifice the particular on the altar of ethnographic over-generalization. Voigt asks tough questions, not out of disdain for but rather out of solidarity with his interviewees' destinies, with their experience of diverging temporalities and spatial dislocations. In this respect, it is the story of Isabell that provides the most compelling account in *Große weite Welt*. Isabell was fourteen when the Wall came down, a punk who lived on the bad side of town and armed herself in 1990 in order to protect her lifestyle against growing right-wing extremism. In 1997, we find Isabell as a legal assistant in Stuttgart, well-dressed and thoroughly domesticated. And yet, after her working hours, Isabell still tries to remain somewhat of a punk; she parties and entertains a complex network of eccentric friends. Leading what appears to be a double life, she hopes to recapture aspects of her past in the present, to maximize pleasure by hopping between compartmentalized subject positions. Here in the West, Isabell ponders, no one does anything without thinking about potential profits or ramifications. Instrumental reason triumphs, it does not even stop short of the realms of spontaneity and aesthetic pleasure, of friendship and solidarity. According to Isabell, fun and adventure have transformed into sole effects of calculation; identity has become something we purchase and trade in like merchandise in order to get the most out of our lives.

In a sense, one could say that Isabell's project is to out-Westernize the West, to out-calculate those who calculate too much. One can doubt whether she will succeed with this scheme in the long run. Her comments, however, shed light on the curious dialectics of post-Wall identity formation. Punk and bourgeois at once, Isabell reminds us that today's desire for difference and otherness, for multiple subject positions and hybrid distractions, may help decenter the legacy of Cold War stereotypes and strategic identities, but that in some cases this quest to become other and revise the past may also reflect nothing more than strategic reason's latest manifestation and practical joke. It is the merit of Voigt's *Große weite Welt* that it—in contradistinction to the dominant staples of 1990s German cinema—opens up a space in which it becomes possible to think through the historical index of pleasure, desire, and identity in unified Germany today. Like *Alle Zeit der Welt* and *Raus aus der Haut*, *Große weite Welt* breaks away from the stifling power

of stereotypes in formal and thematic terms. By trying better to understand the present, the film helps sharpen or correct our understanding of the past.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Gerhard Schulze, *Die Erlebnisgesellschaft: Kultursoziologie der Gegenwart* (Frankfurt/M.: Campus, 1992). For a critical discussion of Schulze's terms, see Axel Honneth, *Desintegration: Bruchstücke einer soziologischen Zeitdiagnose* (Frankfurt/M.: Fischer, 1995).

<sup>2</sup>Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994) 70.

<sup>3</sup>Leslie A. Adelson, *Making Bodies, Making History: Feminism and German Identity* (Lincoln: Nebraska UP, 1993) 36.

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**Filmography**

*Alle Zeit der Welt*, 1997. Schramm Film, in cooperation with ZDF, Mainz. Producer: Florian Koerner, Michael Weber. Director: Matl Findel. Screenplay: Matl Findel, Tamara Staudt. Cinematography: Christoph Krauss. Editing: Isabel Meier. Sound: Georg Maas. Music: Harald Kündgen, Christian Vogel. Costumes: Simone Simon. The Players: Jockel Tschiersch (Anton), Matthew Burton (Matthew), Ruth Vaughn (Lilith), Josepha van der Schoot (Toost), Ivana Broukova (Radka). Length: 93 min. Color. Format: 16 mm, 1:1.37.

*Barluschke*, 1997. Ö Filmproduktion Frank Löprich / Katrin Schlösser GmbH. Producer: Katrin Schlösser. Director: Thomas Heise. Screenplay: Thomas Heise. Cinematography: Peter Badel. Editing: Karin Schöning. Sound: Uve Haußig. Length: 90 min. Color. Format: 16 mm, 1:1.37.

*Große weite Welt*, 1997. A Jour Film. Producer: Marco Voß. Director: Andreas Voigt. Screenplay: Andreas Voigt. Cinematography: Sebastian Richter, Rainer M. Schulz. Editing: Angela Wendt. Sound: Patric Stanislawski. Length: 88 min. Color and b/w. Format: 35 mm, 1:1.37. International Distribution: A Jour Film, Straße 299 Nr. 23, 12559 Berlin.

*Im Namen der Unschuld*, 1997. Tele München Film- und Fernsehproduktion GmbH. Producer: Herbert Kloiber. Director: Andreas Kleinert. Screenplay: Torsten Schulz. Cinematography: Sebastian Richter. Editing: Gisela Zick. Sound: Vladimir Skomorowski. Music: Niki Reiser. Costumes: Regina Viertel. The Players: Barbara Sukowa (Anna Loeser), Matthias Habich (Norbert Michaelis), Udo Samel (Robert Kunze), Gudrun Gabriel (Karin Kunze), Ulrike Krumbiegel (Sandra Wegmann), Peter Zimmermann (Henry Wegmann), Jürgen Hentsch (Kurt Wolf). Length: 101 min. Color. Format: 35 mm, 1:1.85. National Distribution: Concorde—Castle Rock/Turner, Rosenheimer Str. 143b, 81671 München.

*Das Mambospiel*, 1997. Neue Deutsche Filmgesellschaft mbh, in cooperation with MDR (Dresden), SDR (Stuttgart), and Arte (Strasbourg). Producer: Hermann Florin. Director: Michael Gwisdek. Screenplay: Michael Gwisdek. Cinematography: Roland Dressel. Editing: Michael Gwisdek, Andreas Helm. Sound: Wolfgang Schuhkrafft. Music: Detlef Petersen. Costumes: Marion Greiner. The Players: Corinna Harfouch (Maria), Michael Gwisdek (Martin), Jürgen Vogel (Gregor), Franziska Petri (Julia), Uwe Kokisch (Winne), Henry Hübchen (Chris). Length: 106 min. Color. Format: 35 mm, 1:1.66. International Distribution: Progress Film-Verleih, Burgstr. 27, 10178 Berlin.

*Raus aus der Haut*, 1997. Ostdeutscher Rundfunk Babelsberg. Producer: Peter Hartwig. Director: Andreas Dresen. Screenplay: Torsten Schulz, Andreas Dresen. Cinematography: Andreas Höfer. Editing: Rita Reinhardt, Sabine Hermsdorf. Sound: Peter Schmidt, Michael Gehr. Music: Jürgen Ehle, Kulle Dziuk. Costumes: Sabine Greunig. The Players: Susanne Bormann (Anna), Fabian Busch (Marcus), Direktor Rottmann (Otto Mellies), Christel Peters (Oma), Matthias Walter (Randy). Length: 90 min. Color. Format: 35 mm, 1:1.85. International Distribution: Ostdeutscher Rundfunk Babelsberg, August-Bebel-Str. 26-53, 14482 Babelsberg.