



# **ETHNIC DRAG**

**Performing Race, Nation, Sexuality in West Germany**



**Katrin Sieg**

# Ethnic Drag

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# Ethnic Drag

*Performing Race, Nation,  
Sexuality in West Germany*

KATRIN SIEG

*Ann Arbor*

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I first formulated some of the ideas in this study in the article “Ethnic Drag and National Identity: Multicultural Crises, Crossings, and Interventions,” which appeared in *The Imperialist Imagination*, ed. Sara Friedrichsmeyer, Sara Lennox, and Susanne Zantop (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998).

# Introduction

In 1988, the French playwright Bernard-Marie Koltès attempted to stop a production of *Le Retour au Désert* (Return to the desert), a play about ethnic tensions in postcolonial France, at the Thalia Theater in Hamburg, because he objected to director Alexander Lang's decision to cast white German actors in the roles of a black African and an Arab. Koltès condemned the portrayal of the latter as an Arabian Nights–style Oriental and deplored the team's failure to cast a Turk in that role.<sup>1</sup> “What compels me to write plays is the desire to see Arabs and blacks on stage,” he said. By that he evidently did not mean German actors with dark shoe polish on their faces. The irate author aired his views in the newsweekly *Der Spiegel*, prompting *Theater heute* critic Michael Merschmeier to write a lengthy defense. Later that year, a panel discussion was organized during the annual convention of German dramaturgs in order to address the casting controversy and attempt conciliation. Author, director, and dramaturg were present, along with prominent members of the theatrical profession in West Germany, including many of the critics who regularly publish in *Theater heute*.<sup>2</sup> The ensuing debate, a transcript of which was published in

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1. In Koltès's view, Turks' experiences in West Germany in the late 1980s resemble those of Arabs in France during the 1960s; although he didn't specify the nature of that “experience,” the play describes it as the orientalist dynamic of social exclusion and exoticization. “I see no problem with a Turk playing [the part], because actually the experience of Turks in the Federal Republic resembles precisely that of Arabs in France during the 1960s” (Koltès 1990, 67). He reproached the production for not recognizing the social parallels and questioned the motives underlying the excuse that no qualified actors could be found to play black characters: “I do not accept the argument that you could not find any qualified actors for these roles. I would only need to cruise the discos for two days to bring you ten blacks who could play the black roles on the stage” (68).

2. Aside from Koltès and Lang, panelists included Brigitte Landes (the dramaturg); the critic Michael Merschmeier; the translator Simon Werle; Klaus Pierwoß, a director and critic; and Stefanie Hunzinger, the playwright's German publisher. In addition, anonymous

the conference proceedings, exposes deep national differences regarding the assembled artists' assessment of what I will call *ethnic drag*, which the French author deemed utterly offensive and the assembled Germans regarded as utterly unremarkable. Because of the normative status of this practice on the West German stage, artists or critics had rarely seen the need to defend it. Therefore, this confrontation offers a unique occasion to examine the political and aesthetic presuppositions that undergird it. Although the articulation of these principles is exceptional, the critics' views typify certain assumptions about racial representation in the Federal Republic. The arguments raised by both parties will sound familiar to U.S. readers aware of the debates around cross-racial casting on the American stage, but they also reveal political attitudes and aesthetic premises specific to West Germany. I will assemble from this discussion the basic elements of a discourse about ethnic drag, but before I do so, let me outline the general contours of this study.

Ethnic drag includes not only cross-racial casting on the stage, but, more generally, the performance of "race" as a masquerade. While many of the performances I examine occur in places that are less official than the state-subsidized theater, they are therefore no less ritualized. By analyzing the norms and rules organizing this "unremarked" practice in West Germany, I want to grasp how people lived, disavowed, and contested "Germanness" in its complex racial, national, and sexual dimensions.

This study is the first to map performances of "race" in a country whose history embodies racism's worst excesses and where, after the Holocaust, the very word *race* was excised from public language and political analysis. Ethnic drag reveals what this linguistic break conceals, namely the continuities, permutations, and contradictions of racial feelings in West German culture. As a figure of substitution, ethnic drag both exposes and disavows traumatic holes in the social fabric, and facilitates both historical denial and collective mourning. As a crossing of racial lines in performance, ethnic drag simultaneously erases and redraws boundaries posturing as ancient and immutable. As a pedagogy, it promises to reveal the dark inside of "Germanness" by taking up an outsider's perspective. As a technique of estrangement, drag denounces that which dominant ideology presents as natural, normal, and inescapable, without always offering another truth. As a ritual of inversion, it purports to master grave social contradictions, yet defers resolution through compulsive repetitions. As a symbolic contact zone between German bodies and other cultures, ethnic drag facilitates the

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audience members—presumably dramaturgs or other theater professionals—contributed to the discussion.

exercise and exchange of power. And as a simulacrum of “race,” it challenges the perceptions and privileges of those who would mistake appearances for essence.

Despite many historical overlaps, the book follows a roughly chronological order, beginning with an analysis of Jewish impersonation on the classical stage and ending with a discussion of a play about migrants in reunified Germany. The critical focus shifts from a consideration of those practices that were consonant with hegemonic racial discourses structuring the culture at large to an examination of those drag acts that self-consciously (if not always successfully) challenge essentialist notions of identity along with their emplotment in an Aristotelian, cathartic, socially affirmative dramaturgy. The texts I analyze cover a broad range of media, sites, genres, and styles. Ethnic drag is enacted in theater, radio, film, journalism, and leisure activities. It includes naturalistic and ethnologically accurate impersonations, as well as comic and campily artificial ones. It appears in high cultural, avant-garde, amateur, and mass cultural forms. I cannot pretend to give a comprehensive account of either the history of ethnic drag or its manifold manifestations in the present in this book. Rather, I want to chart what I regard as the most significant paradigms of ethnic drag, describing those instances that performed important ideological work in specific historical moments and political constellations.

While some chapters discuss drag in popular representations that are familiar to probably every German, such as Karl May’s noble Apache chief Winnetou, others reconstruct texts that have been left out of standard histories of German theater or are censored, such as the vicious anti-semitic caricatures in the *Judenpossen* (Jew farces) popular in the early nineteenth century, and the Nazi propaganda film *Jew Süß*. Some of the authors of drag are canonized and famous (or at least notorious), like Max Frisch and Rainer Werner Fassbinder, whereas others are known only to small communities of devotees, such as Hubert Fichte and Ulrike Ottinger, whose followers tend to be gays and lesbians fond of difficult avant-garde fiction and film. Yet others are appreciated only by fellow practitioners, as is the case for Indian hobbyists, who spend their free time reenacting Native American cultures. While some drag acts are a perennial staple of theatrical repertoires, like Lessing’s classic *Nathan the Wise*, others had a comparatively short life, including Fassbinder’s *Katzelmacher*, Kerstin Specht’s *Lila*, and Emine Sevgi Özdamar’s *Keloglan in Alamania*, which only reached the stage after a ten-year lag. To do important ideological work, drag acts may be especially consonant with the operations through which normative notions of identity purport to resolve social contradictions; I read *Nathan*, *Jew Süß*, and the *Winnetou*-adaptations as such exemplary, hegemonic texts in their respective historical and philo-

sophical environments of Enlightenment humanism, scientific racism, and postwar philosemitism. Other instances of drag typify the critical accomplishments and limitations of those social movements that launched the most sustained attack on past and present discourses of race: my analysis of drag in the work of leftist and feminist artists seeks to grapple with the precarious incorporation of “race” into antifascist critiques. Yet others, which I discuss in the last two chapters, illustrate such formally innovative and politically radical deployments of ethnic drag that, to my mind, the performances’ significance outweighs their difficulty, obscurity, or inaccessibility.

In my analysis, I stress both specificity and complexity. Disparate drag acts can illustrate a common logic, exemplified by my analysis of antifascist drag in film, theater, and journalism. Conversely, an in-depth focus on one site reveals multiple and contradictory drag practices that coexist there (exemplified by the Wild West amusement park, where plays are performed in the summer, and where Indian hobbyists conduct tours through a museum with Native American artifacts). Similarly, my account of Jewish impersonation over two centuries accentuates the conflicting ideological imperatives operating in this practice, rather than reducing it to a monolithic story of German racism. While postwar constructions of race and nationality in West Germany certainly contended with the legacy of Nazi eugenics and the Holocaust, not all ethnic drag can be reduced to a single referent, but mediates a range of social conflicts in modernity, from the contradiction of economic and ecological imperatives to the clash of capitalism and socialism after reunification.

Although ethnic cross-dressing has a long tradition in German culture, the taboo on “race” produced a critical deficit that has only recently begun to be redressed. It is therefore not surprising that this practice has not been the object of scholarly study or public discussion. Unlike blackface minstrelsy in the American theater, there is no critical terminology in German for racial masquerade or for the social resonances of this type of performance. In the last two decades, *masquerade*, *mimicry*, *drag*, and *simulacrum* have become key terms in diverse postmodern critiques of identity. The simultaneous appearance and shared centrality of this trope in feminist, postcolonial, ethnic, and queer studies is as amazing as the disciplinary differences in assessing the political implications and effects of drag are instructive.<sup>3</sup> By adapting

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3. Some recent publications explore the significance and applicability of the theoretical work of Judith Butler and Homi Bhabha to German representations of ethnicity. I want to point especially to the relatively recent anthology edited by Cathy S. Gelbin, Kader Konuk, and Peggy Piesche, *AufBrüche: Kulturelle Produktionen von Migrantinnen, Schwarzen und jüdischen Frauen in Deutschland*, whose authors adapt and critique primarily Butler’s notion of performativity and Bhabha’s concept of hybridity.

theoretical paradigms circulating in American cultural studies for an analysis of German texts, I hope to elucidate an undertheorized phenomenon for students and scholars of German culture, but also to contribute to a comparative analysis of racial identity and performance in the United States that is limited by specific national emphases, blind spots, and biases.

Let me return again to the panel discussion about the Koltès play. The debate throws into focus a set of three interrelated inquiries that will continue to circulate through the following chapters. The German critics asserted that the “biologically correct” casting choices and “folkloristic” production styles in France illustrate colonial-postcolonial continuities, and implied that the German style of antinaturalist masquerade breaks with the racial ideologies of the past. The question of *historical continuity versus change*, which has occupied historians, philosophers, and cultural critics throughout the past half-century, is intimately connected to the question of the *similarity versus singularity* of German social history, racial ideology, and attendant theatrical traditions vis-à-vis those of other Western societies. While the German critics contended that West Germany was not a postcolonial society and could therefore not identify with the racial conflicts depicted in the play, Koltès’s suggestion to cast a Turkish actor in the Arab role indicates that he was less interested in the provenance than in the existence of racialized structures in the present. To him, the similarity of these structures in West Germany with those shaped by colonialism in France overrode the historical specificity of German and French discourses of race. The disagreements concerning continuity versus change and similarity versus singularity intersected with the question of the relation of *symbolic practices* to *social reality*. A “naturalistic,” mimetic style of representation, the Germans contended, always reproduces the operations of racial ideology, whereas cross-racial masquerade contests or even transforms social relations organized around race. Certainly a critical discourse on cross-racial performance needs to account for the ideological operations and social effects of mimesis and masquerade, but also consider the dramaturgical forms in which masquerades are embedded and that connect the denaturalization of identity to a variety of political projects. The question of substitution (focused around the Turk as a German stand-in for the Arab), however, complicates any simple notion of drag’s referentiality. In the following discussion, I will show how these three axes structure the disagreements voiced during the debate, elaborate their larger political and theoretical implications, and from there read out into the distinct paradigms of ethnic drag explored in subsequent chapters.

### Continuity/Change

The panelists disagreed about the way in which ethnic drag constructs the relationship between present stage practices and historical systems of racial domination. From Koltès's perspective, cross-racial casting colonizes the bodies and voices of racial others, performing an act of representational violence that he condemned. To the Germans, too, casting was connected to colonization, albeit in a different sense. The authentication of exotic theatrical roles through "biologically correct" casting, in purporting to represent an accurate, mimetic relationship between body and role, in fact conscripted these bodies into the identitarian logic of racial science that bolstered colonial domination. To them, the unmooring of sign from referent (exemplified by the portrayal of Arabs as whimsical Orientals and black Africans as stage Moors) offered a remedy to the mimetic logic of racial identity that conflates anatomy and appearance into "racial character." The exaggerated disjunction of (white) actor and (black/Arab) role, which relieves colored bodies from the task of authenticating a white-authored fiction and confirming white audiences' folkloristic perceptions, thus suggests a radical break with the racial scientism of the past in a self-consciously antiracist gesture.

The director's choice to cast Germans in the roles of Arabs and Africans, but not actors of color to portray whites, casts doubt on his characterization of masquerade as an engine of racial deconstruction. Moreover, his comment that casting actors of color would have "eroded the homogeneity of the ensemble" reveals that the technical prerequisite for ensemble fitness (and the presumption of a different, un-German acting style?) cloaks an essentialist, exclusionary notion of social cohesion and cultural purity. Furthermore, if racial masquerade "proves" that Germans have learned from the past, why was this past not once mentioned and specified, but denied? One critic's assertion that Germans cannot understand colonialism or even contemporary multiculturalism, except as remote, alien phenomena, seems questionable in light of Germany's colonial rule in Africa earlier in the century, which white and Afro-German leftists and feminists had begun to painstakingly reconstruct in literature, critical analyses, and biographies in the 1980s (Mamozai 1982; Timm; Oguntoye, Opitz, and Schultz 1986).<sup>4</sup> Moreover,

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4. I reproduce Merschmeier's facetious comment in full, which followed Koltès declaration that he writes only to see blacks and Arabs and Turks onstage: "May I make a practical suggestion to avoid future misunderstandings: perhaps Koltès should include fewer white characters in his plays? Then again, if one considers the artistic and aesthetic aspirations of directors working in this country, that might impede the realization of his plays here when compared to France. Because the West German society is not as distinctly multicultural as the French one. Here one notes the absence of former colonies" (Koltès 1990, 69). He connects colonialism with multiculturalism and the presence of racialized bodies onstage.

the presence of migrant laborers from a number of southern European countries since the 1950s and the existence of ethnic communities in all large West German cities in the 1980s further contradict his remark. Given this situation, ethnic drag functions as the theatrical equivalent of historical denial and revisionism. To put German actors in exotic costumes might be seen as the theater's way of saying, see, we don't have the body—disavowing the past, rather than signaling a self-conscious break with it. Worse, white actors' appropriation of foreign bodies and voices might be seen (as Koltès appears to have done) to foreground the colonization of black and Arab subjectivity. Ethnic drag in this example, as in this study at large, allows for an investigation of ideological continuity and change, but also demands a rigorous assessment of the changes that were so vigorously asserted in this debate. The Germans' insistence on a historical break with a mimetic notion of racial identity evidences, at least in this case, not so much a conscientious insistence on the specificity of German racial structures than an effort to obscure and disavow these structures. The question of how drag constructs continuity versus change is especially foregrounded in chapters 2 and 3, which focus on the reconstruction period. In chapter 4 I examine leftist and feminist critiques of fascist legacies and their permutation into modern, "friendlier" regimes of race, through the formal conventions of the antifascist dramaturgies of the 1920s and 1930s.

### Similarity/Singularity

The Koltès controversy, by staging two national traditions of interpreting impersonation, raises the question whether the German usages of this trope are specific or comparable to other Western traditions of representing "race." The German critics rejected Koltès's suggestion to substitute a Turk for an Arab, since Turkey is not and has never been a German colony. Hence, a guest worker is not the same as a postcolonial underclass. Many historians would agree with them, noting the "belatedness" and brevity of Germany's colonial period in order to underscore national differences between Germany and other Western societies. Yet the production team's interpretation of the Arab as existential cipher rather than a character referencing a social reality also served to obscure the socioeconomic similarities between West Germany and other former imperialist powers in Europe. While it is debatable whether these similarities result from colonialism, Germany, like other Western countries, had built an array of social policies, citizenship laws, economic regulations, health provisions, punitive measures, but also cultural practices on a set of explicitly racial beliefs earlier in the century. The different assessments of racial impersonation, namely the Germans' unquestioning acceptance and the



French author's outrage about it, result perhaps less from the diverging living conditions of migrants, as distinguished from postcolonial subjects, than from the radically different circumstances under which the systems of legal, political, and theatrical representation, which in France had been forged through colonial rule and which in Germany had escalated into Nazism, were defeated. The circumstances of that defeat formed part of the antiracist, democratic consensus that replaced patently racist systems. Koltès viewed racial impersonation as simply wrong. While he did not articulate the reasons for this belief, the force of his conviction arguably registered the fierce struggles against racial injustice that had resulted in decolonization, and the pervasiveness of the national consensus about race relations in the sphere of politics as well as culture. Similarly, most contemporary Americans probably consider it unnecessary to explain why the minstrel show is demeaning to African Americans. This nineteenth-century form of popular entertainment, in which white actors blackened up to caricature Southern slaves, to many American scholars and spectators is inseparable from the social system of slavery and the ideology of black inferiority. The contemporary condemnation of the minstrel show, motivated by that association of symbolic and social practices, has become normalized as common sense. Yet the very social consensus that now condemns white supremacy also requires that the minstrel show must be remembered. That memory is part of the cultural struggle for recognizing and redressing past and present injustice, a struggle that involved both insurgent colonial or enslaved populations and the whites that dominated them. The absence of language about or memory of racial masquerade in Germany points to the insufficient integration of past experiences into a postwar national consensus.

The military surrender of the German Reich in May 1945 and the suicide, capture, and capitulation of its leaders provoked ambivalent responses among Germans, ranging from relief and liberation to disappointment and humiliation. Historian Jeffrey Herf shows that the ensuing efforts by Allied administrations to bring Nazi functionaries and sympathizers to justice and require former party members to undergo denazification procedures prioritized the commitment to justice and memory over the principle of democratization. The emphasis on remembering and redressing the Holocaust during what he terms the "Nuremberg Interregnum" entailed a minimum of democratic participation on the part of the Germans; Germans were not considered fit to judge the atrocities they had committed, because one could not assume that they had rejected the values that had allowed them to perpetrate them. German politicians reversed this equation, realizing that it was difficult to gain votes by con-

tinuing to focus on past injustices and individual responsibility.<sup>5</sup> Konrad Adenauer (1876–1967), who headed the Christian Democratic government in West Germany from 1949 to 1963, called for an end to the trials and investigations as early as 1946 and later issued an amnesty to convicted Nazis. Adenauer’s recipe for democratization focused on “integration,” by which he did not mean the integration of Jewish survivors of the Holocaust, none of whom were publicly invited back into the communities that had formerly expelled them. Instead, “integration” referred to the rehabilitation of former Nazis. Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich, two psychologists who served as expert witnesses in the Nuremberg trials, deplored Germans’ inability to accept responsibility for their actions and mourn their consequences. They also revealed in public interviews how the publication of their famous study *The Inability to Mourn* ostracized them within a medical community whose political allegiances were virtually unchanged.<sup>6</sup> Their comments point to personal and institutional continuities connecting the Third Reich with the nascent Federal Republic of Germany.

Likewise, the West German theater did not reconstruct itself or purge former Nazi functionaries, nor did the plays performed during the postwar seasons encourage German audiences to take on responsibility for past injustices. Popular, new plays like Carl Zuckmayer’s *The Devil’s General* and Wolfgang Borchert’s *The Man Outside* (both of which premiered in the FRG in 1947) invited West German spectators to identify with the victims of Nazism, rather than its agents or accomplices. This spectatorial dynamic points to a tendency among West Germans to feel unjustly persecuted for the crimes committed by Nazis, and to resent the accusing Allies, primarily the Americans, but also the Jews, whose cause the Americans were perceived to represent. As early as 1946, an American occupation official noted a “new formation of antisemitism,” and conjectured that “[a]s long as the Germans lack the moral courage to accept the consequences of the Nazi crimes against the Jews, they will seek to banish the

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5. Jeffrey Herf writes: “In November 1949 HICOG [High Commissioner of Germany] surveys found that only 30 percent of respondents rejected National socialism outright, and 59 percent thought it had been ‘a good idea badly carried out.’ In eight nationwide surveys conducted between May 1951 and December 1952, an average of 41 percent of respondents saw more good than evil in Nazi ideas, and only 36 percent of respondents saw more evil than good. Only 4 percent thought that all Germans ‘bore a certain guilt for Germany’s actions during the Third Reich,’ and only 21 percent felt ‘some responsibility for rectifying these wrongs’” (274). In this situation, politicians did not gain popularity by dwelling on past crimes.

6. According to the documentary *The Architecture of Doom*, the medical profession was the one with the highest percentage of Nazi party members.

accuser and they will denounce him as a disturber of the peace” (quoted in Stern 1996, 83). Postwar productions of *Nathan* reveal, however, that direct confrontation between Germans and Jews was at an impasse, and that symbolic gestures of reconciliation were substituted for material redress. Yet the desire to restore peace and punish the accuser was accommodated by the theater, albeit in indirect ways. In 1952, the noble Apache chief Winnetou, portrayed by a local actor in redface, first rode across the open-air stage in the small northern German town of Bad Segeberg, inaugurating the annual summer festival that continues to this day. The *Winnetou* saga, adapted from nineteenth-century adventure novels, offered another story of genocide and redemption, mourning and atonement that engaged spectatorial empathy and enthusiasm, racial fantasy, and contemporary fears in ways that *Nathan* arguably could not. The American West became a displaced theater for the racial imagination, whose auspicious surrogations reworked the dynamic of accuser and accused, victim and perpetrator, mourning and denial and thereby promised to purge the terms of historical trauma.

### **Symbolic/Social**

Neither Koltès nor the German critics accounted for such complex triangulation of referent, role, and actor. Both parties assumed a direct relationship between symbolic practices and social effects. Whereas the author suggested that impersonation both excludes and dishonors the people of color whom, he stated, he wants to see onstage, the critics implied that his avowed desire for these bodies objectifies them. More precisely, to the Germans, Koltès’s avowed desire to see black actors in African roles smacked of “biological correctness” (Koltès 1990, 78), tantamount to racism. “I would have had a hard time infusing the production with too much naturalism and casting these roles with blacks,” said Lang (68), and one critic elaborated by comparing a recent French production with the controversial German one. To him, the French staging was both more sociologically accurate and less political: while carefully locating the dramatic personnel in its social milieu, the French audience’s recognition of the characters resulted in a “boring one-on-one” representation that impeded rather than stimulated “deeper reflection” (78). He opined that the transposition of Arab into Turk would have been “folkloristic in the same manner as the Paris production with its pseudo-realism catered to prejudices” (79). Referentiality (the representation of clearly recognizable social and ethnic milieux), combined with “biologically” accurate casting, was seen to close down the process of identification that a white actor in brownface and exotic costume purportedly opened up to bourgeois audiences.

Several of the panelists' suppositions warrant unraveling here. The first concerns the distinction between naturalistic (mimetic) and nonnaturalistic (masquerading) styles of representation, and their respective capacity to reproduce or undermine dominant ideologies. I will question the Lang team's assumption that masquerade challenges the social prejudices that mimesis confirms, by historicizing masquerade on the German stage. Second, the "riddle of referentiality" (Adelson), which I have raised earlier, complicates the affirmation-versus-subversion schema that tends to circumscribe critical evaluations of mimesis versus masquerade. I draw on the notion of *surrogation* to account for the historical displacements, distortions, and reversals I have already hinted at in regard to Indian drag in postwar Wild West spectacles. I devote considerable space to considering how recent theories of representation and identity have grappled with drag's engagement with the social, and how they seek to identify transformative practices, players, and places. Finally, I will use the claim that a naturalistic style obviates "deeper reflection" as an occasion to consider the dramaturgical models that conjoin drag to a variety of oppositional projects.

By privileging distanciation and estrangement over authenticity, the German theater artists invoked a Brechtian, anti-Aristotelian dramaturgy in order to contest the racist lamination of appearance to essence. Yet Lang's conclusion that racial masquerade always resists or subverts these systems is contradicted by historical evidence. The reference to a dramaturgy that Brecht elaborated in exile from (and opposition to) Nazi Germany obscures the fact that Nazi culture had inherited a long stage tradition of racial masquerade and deployed it as part of its propaganda efforts. Indeed, masquerade has been an important theatrical trope through which Germans have imagined and expressed their difference from other, supposedly inferior, whites, and denounced them as usurpers threatening national cohesion and racial purity. The distinct traditions of Jewish impersonation I trace in chapter 1, whose emergence theater scholars locate around 1800, illustrate the longevity and pervasiveness of racial impersonation on the German stage, often in the service of ethnic segregation, social exclusion, and cultural hierarchy. Recalling those traditions complicates the German critics' reductive schema of affirmative mimesis and critical masquerade.

The first task tackled in this study is to historicize mimesis and masquerade as a conceptual pair in German aesthetics, theater, and performance. The conjoining of emerging discourses of race with a "German" aesthetic around 1800 arrogated the prerogative of mimesis to specific bodies while excluding others. The question whether a given performance would be read as masquerade, in the sense of proffering a poor, deficient

imitation, or as an accurate, authentic representation, was decided in advance by a discourse in which the cards were stacked in favor of Christian, male, heterosexual bodies. Despite the historical focus on postwar West Germany in this study, therefore, the first chapter will chart Jewish impersonation across the changing contexts of Enlightenment precepts of equality, scientific racism, fascism, and postwar philosemitism. I trace the theatrical derision of the masquerading Jew to its climax in Nazi propaganda, and from the stage to the new cultural technology of cinema, in order to explicate fascism's configuration of German dupes, Jewish interlopers, and an antisemitic state apparatus devoted to protecting the former and punishing the latter. In addition, I examine the responses of Jewish spectators, critics, and artists to these images, and consider their attempts to appropriate or deconstruct the stereotype of the noble Jew.

Masquerade thus forms part of two different discourses whose ideological aims are at odds. Whereas masquerade in the Brechtian sense aims to subvert, resist, and transform the social order, masquerade as the conceptual partner of mimesis serves precisely to affirm and naturalize social hierarchies. This latter tradition is exemplified by the diverse impersonations of Jews and women I trace in chapter 1. Despite Lang's allusions to a Brechtian aesthetic, I would place his production of the Koltès play in the tradition of mimesis/masquerade as well. One critic's remark that the German production, by focusing on such themes as "sibling rivalry, parent-child relations, and the master-servant dyad," depicted a "petit bourgeois carnival that could have been set in any part of the Western world" (Koltès 1990, 78), highlights the production's objective to dehistoricize and universalize that which Brecht would underscore as contingent and mutable. Masquerade's subversive potential is reified and contrasted positively to French "folklore." This operation is made possible by the repression of a dominant tradition of masquerade. The Germans' defense against the accusation of racism is based on "forgetting" that against which Brecht composed his theory of drag and denaturalization.

Chapters 2 and 3, which focus on the reconstruction period, foreground drag as a "technology of forgetting." Ethnic drag at the Karl May festival in Bad Segeberg reconfigures the dyad of white actor and Indian role into a semiotic triangle of actor, role, and referent. That triangulation opens the problematic of social affirmation versus contestation associated with mimesis/masquerade to a consideration of the operations of history and memory, and poses what Leslie Adelson calls the "riddle of referentiality" (2000, 100). While she associates the problematic status of referentiality with the Holocaust, which has often been claimed to be unrepresentable, Joseph Roach's notion of surrogation locates this problematic as central to the performative redress of historical trauma more generally. In

his study of theater, carnival, and music in New Orleans, Roach defines surrogation as follows:

In the life of a community, the process of surrogation does not begin or end but continues as actual or perceived vacancies occur in the network of relations that constitutes the social fabric. Into the cavities created by loss through death or other forms of departure, I hypothesize, survivors attempt to fit satisfactory alternates. Because collective memory works selectively, imaginatively, and often perversely, surrogation rarely if ever succeeds. The process requires many trials and at least as many errors. The fit cannot be exact. (1996a, 2)

Roach develops his concept of surrogation in part through an analysis of African Americans' impersonation of Indians during Mardi Gras, which, he argues, marks shared histories of colonial displacement and anticolonial resistance. Because surrogation is associated with the performative transactions of populations that the circumatlantic slave trade positioned differently but disenfranchised similarly, Roach's term will need to be modified for the German context. Rather than marking shared histories of persecution and struggle in performance, surrogation in postwar German theater primarily captures the ambivalence of memory and mourning, and denial and historical revisionism. In chapter 1, I show how after World War II, productions of *Nathan the Wise* served to commemorate the Holocaust, but their dramatic focus, casting, and blocking also illustrate the ambivalence of philosemitic discourse during the reconstruction period. Chapters 2 and 3 further investigate the ideological function of ethnic drag to "forget" historical violence, its victims, and prosecutors, and substitute fantasies of racial harmony that rework the terms of the trauma. I analyze postwar Germans' impersonation of American Indians as attempts to cope with the guilt of the Holocaust as well as the widespread shame and resentment provoked by the accusations brought against Germans in the international war crimes tribunals and denazification procedures. The substitution of Indian for Jewish victims facilitated not only a geographical and historical distancing of genocide, but also offered spectators different identifications in the story of racial aggression. Ethnic drag allowed Germans to align themselves with the victims and avengers of genocide, rather than its perpetrators and accomplices.

Chapter 4 examines texts that suggest the shared plight of subjects oppressed by class, gender, and race. They parade persecuted foreigners in West Germany as incarnations of a revolutionary subject at historical moments when the political base and revolutionary agency of the Left and of feminism were jeopardized. Racial difference functions as a visual

metaphor for oppression and insurgency, eliding the ways in which ethnic minorities experience class and gender differently from their white counterparts. Ethnic drag in these performances allows us to read the political investments, appropriations, and disavowals of leftist and feminist writers, who bring the critique of “race” under the political purview of antifascist activism, but whose postulation of “shared” struggles tends to assign the fight against racial inequalities and injustices second place.

Chapters 1 and 6, by contrast, examine ethnic drag in the work of those who are usually the objects of racial impersonation, and track their attempts to combat the kinds of surrogation I sketch above. Their efforts to restore the social referents repressed in such dehistoricized figures as the noble Jew, the tragic Oriental, the wise Indian (or the stage Moor paraded in the Lang production, one might add) resist the insertion of alternates into the cavities created by “death or other forms of departure.” Roach’s concept of surrogation opens performance and substitution to history but needs to account more carefully for the fact that historical memory is often managed by and serves the interests of those survivors of death and departure who have inflicted them on others. For this reason, surrogation captures the Winnetou adaptations, Indian hobbyism, and even antifascist drag, but it does not adequately describe those forms of ethnic drag that resist the community’s search for “acceptable alternates.” In order to modify surrogation in terms of its collective and subjective effects, I have found useful Leslie Adelson’s distinction between *proximate* historical narratives and a narrative *history by proxy*. She develops these terms through an analysis of how some contemporary German literature casts Turks (and other guest workers) as stand-ins for German Jews in order to suggest (and indict) violent continuities. The role of proxy inserts the Turk in a politically disempowering narrative of victimization. Adelson contrasts this substitution with the complex ways in which stories of Jews, Germans, and Turks “touch” (become proximate) in the literary imagination of some Turkish-German authors.<sup>7</sup> Her phrases insert a crucial difference between the triangulation of community, the dead and departed, and their “alternate” in surrogation, and a “trialogue” that could release victims, perpetrators, and proxies from their traumatic experiences.<sup>8</sup> The

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7. In her recent article “Touching Tales of Turks, Germans, and Jews” (2000), Adelson further elaborates her argument, although she does not use the two phrases that had oriented her earlier lecture around the distinction between texts authored by Germans and stories written by Turkish-German artists.

8. Adelson quotes from Zafer Şenocak’s novel *Gefährliche Verwandtschaft* (Dangerous relations, 1998) to articulate the (perhaps unrealistic) promise of triangulating the narrative relations of Germans, Jews, and Turks: “In the Germany of today Jews and Germans no longer stand and face each other alone. Rather, a situation has arisen that corresponds to my

texts discussed in chapter 5 hint at such triologic representations, since they might be seen to trace proximate histories of European, Third World, and queer subjects.

The suspicions voiced by Lang's production team about the ideological complicity of mimesis with social systems of domination are shared by many theater artists, performance theorists, and, more generally, scholars invested in developing critiques of ontological notions of identity. They understand the metaphysical underpinnings of mimesis, in which a cultural representation ought to faithfully represent an ideal, an act, or "nature" (to cite the Platonic, Aristotelian, and neoclassical definitions of mimesis) as homologous to essentialist ideas about the (gendered, sexual, or racial) nature of a person or group, in which their physical appearance and social behavior expresses an inner truth. This homology has produced the centrality of metaphors of performance and theatricality to identity politics.

Many contemporary critiques of identity, launched from the disciplinary locations of feminist, queer, postcolonial, and ethnic studies, draw on the oppositional strategies developed by Brecht. His theory of estrangement effects (which I discuss at length in chapter 1) reinterprets the "misfit" of actor and role, which is read as "proof" of social inferiority within mimetic systems of representation, as a defamiliarizing space for reflection and historicization. At this disjunction of performer and character, that which "ideology makes seem normal, acceptable, inescapable" is denaturalized and hence opened to questioning and transformation (Diamond 1988, 85). The critical, socially transformative potential of Brechtian drag underwrites feminist and postcolonial notions of mimicry, queer concepts of drag and performativity, and the recuperation of the simulacrum for a critique of race. These poststructuralist strategies all hinge on the severing of signifier and signified, act and essence, performer and mask, in order to contest the truth claims undergirding mimesis, identity, and the structuring of social orders around innate, supposedly "natural" differences. My analysis of the socially critical drag acts described in chapters 4, 5, and 6 builds on Brecht's theory of estrangement effects, explained in his essay "Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting." My close analysis of this essay in chapter 1 questions the assumption that Brechtian drag can be

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personal heritage and situation. In Germany a triologue is now emerging between Germans, Jews, and Turks, between Christians, Jews, and Muslims. The dissolution of the German-Jewish dichotomy could release both parties, Germans, and Jews, from their traumatic experiences. But for that they would have to take the Turks into their sphere." Conversely, "without the Jews the Turks stand in a dichotomous relationship to the Germans. They step into the footprints of the German Jews of yesteryear" (Şenocak 1998, 89–90, quoted in Adelson 2000, 124).



unproblematically marshaled for a historicizing deconstruction of racial identity. By carefully examining the ways in which racial presumptions haunted Brecht's writing in ways he might not have understood himself, I do not mean to discredit or dismiss his theory, but rather to clear the ground for appropriating his theory for my critical readings of ethnic drag in the second portion of this book.

Whereas Brecht had constructed his dramaturgy of estrangement in opposition to a capitalist class system and the bourgeois ideology that supports it, the critiques of identity elaborated in Britain, France, and the United States primarily challenge patriarchal systems of gender and sexuality, and colonial and postcolonial regimes of race. Within these critiques, drag has been accorded the task of unsettling the binaries of mimesis and masquerade, colonizer and colonized, black and white, male and female, heterosexual and homosexual. Luce Irigaray developed a notion of feminine *mimicry*, through which woman may "try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it" (1985, 76). Through the "playful repetition" of patriarchal images and ideas, she suggested, women could put those ideas under erasure, but also foreshadow an "'elsewhere' of feminine pleasure" (77). Postcolonial critic Homi K. Bhabha elaborated a concept of mimicry that exposes the ambiguity of colonial discourse, which exhorted colonized subjects to emulate the value system of the colonizers while also denying them the capacity to do so. Racial mimicry hence pinpoints and potentially aggravates the site of colonialism's greatest epistemological instability. Judith Butler contended that drag could undo the "expressive logic" of identity and show up the "performativity" of gender and sexuality. Her conceptualization of gender as a series of repeated acts posturing as expressions of a prior, inner truth reversed the traditional (mimetic) postulation of an anatomical or psychological essence determining the performance of gendered acts. By foregrounding the disjunction of sex and gender, drag operates as the exception that exposes the rule of performative gender constitution: "In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself—as well as its contingency," Butler argued (138). Her contention that in drag "we see sex and gender denaturalized by means of a performance which avows their distinctness and dramatizes the cultural mechanism of their fabricated unity" aligns her theory with Brecht's notion of estrangement effects in acting, along with his emphasis on cultural specificity and historical mutability (138).

Butler's evacuation of a subject that compels the repetitions, however, distinguishes her theory from Brecht's insistence on a referent that anchors performance. Elin Diamond, a feminist theater scholar, notes that "Brecht never denied referentiality; he aimed rather to expunge the psychologized ahistorical referent" (1993, 367). While many of the drag acts I

describe in this book launch their critiques of racial ideology through estrangement and denaturalization, few follow Butler's recipe for purchasing subversion at the cost of a subject position. To evacuate that position opens up promising possibilities of gender resignification, but also cedes an ontological ground from which oppressive systems can be denounced, alternative knowledges accumulated, truth claims made, and the social order reimagined. Diamond's claim that feminism "has a stake in truth—in contributing to the accumulation and organization of knowledge by which a culture values or forgets its past, attends to the divergences of the present" (1993, 364) extends as well to the oppositional antifascist, queer, and antiracist projects I describe in chapters 4, 5, and 6.

Amy Robinson's recuperation of the "simulacrum" for a critique of racial representation recalls Butler's celebration of gender as an "imitation without an origin" (138) but retains a notion of referentiality through her deliberate incorporation of Brechtian acting theory. Her theorization of two antagonistic spectatorial positions, from whose perspective racial appearance and behavior are interpreted, informs my readings in chapters 4 and 6. Whereas Plato decries the simulacrum as twice removed from the truth of the ideal, as an unreliable and deceitful representation that is all the more dangerous because of its superficial resemblance to the ideal, Robinson valorizes the simulacrum precisely for its capacity to wreak epistemological havoc. She locates the appearance of the simulacrum at the site of the pass, in the "triangular theater of identity" whose participants are the passer (a person of color whose appearance enables her to gain entrance into the world of white people), the in-group witness (someone who belongs to the same racial group as the passer, whose "true" identity she intimately knows, usually a family member), and the dupe (a white person who misreads the passer's skin color as mimetic sign of racial identity). When the in-group witness watches a member of the dominant group being duped by the passer's performance, she sees a claim to the real (i.e., the social privileges attached to whiteness) pass for racial truth in the eyes of the dupe. At this moment, the witness sees the simulacrum. And to *see* the simulacrum, as Baudrillard notes, is to see "the truth which conceals that there is none" (1). The passer's successful performance, from the witness's perspective, reveals "a calculated performance "that throws the cultural codes of race into relief (Robinson 1994, 726). While the dupe sees mimesis, the in-group witness sees drag: Robinson thus locates mimesis and drag not in the performance itself, but in the conflicting perceptions of it.<sup>9</sup> In the social sphere the successful pass requires the collaboration of the witness and hence inscribes the betrayal and defeat of an already disen-

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9. She also concedes that they "insinuate different ways of constituting the identity of the recipient of the spectator's gaze" (Robinson 1994, 727). In her example, taken from

franchised group. As a literary and theatrical trope, however, the pass as a “triangular theater of identity” (716) gleefully turns around the deadly triad rehearsed in fascist impersonation, in which the dupe’s inability to pierce through the veil of the masquerader’s deception issues a permission to the state to perform its work of detection, selection, and extermination. It stages a nonmimetic way of reading identity that reverses the relations of power and authority between dupe and the in-group witness, by privileging the “racial literacy” of the in-group over the dupe’s inability to read the codes governing racial performance. Although Robinson shows that the pass as a *social* strategy rests on the stability of the terms of racial difference as defined by the dominant culture, the pass as a *theatrical* trope demonstrates precisely the instability of these terms. Aligning audiences with the perspective of the in-group, the pass refutes the epistemological base of racial truth claims and confirms the cultural authority of the socially subordinate group.

Robinson’s exploration of the simulacrum is particularly useful for this study, because the “misreading” of identity within a visual schema of racial difference, which remains an exceptional occasion in the context of African American versus white relations, was the norm that compelled the elaboration of an antisemitic tradition of masquerade in Germany. The masquerade of Jews, but also that of the Greek guest worker paraded onscreen in Fassbinder’s *Katzelmacher*, turn on the impossibility of knowing “race” by sight. Robinson’s analysis of passing as a literary trope (which draws on the Brechtian concept of drag) can be productively adapted for the study of performance. Both antifascist drag and the ethnic travesties I examine in chapter 6 hinge on a derisive depiction of white German dupes, whose mimetic decodings of ethnic identity are denounced as false and violent. Minority artists have deployed Brechtian drag in the sense outlined by Robinson. In order to challenge Western fantasies about the Orient or the Wild West, to name two important theaters of the racial imagination, they parody the masks of the tragic Oriental and the noble Indian princess respectively. Staging a “hostile encounter between two ways of reading” identity (Robinson 1994, 716), they ridicule Germans’ mimetic perception of ethnic stereotypes for racial truth. Denouncing the dupe’s willful misreadings, they shore up cultural authority for Native Americans and Turkish migrants respectively. By enjoining spectators to read from the position of in-group witness, however, their plays value racial literacy and political alliances across ethnic boundaries at the risk of

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Jennie Livingston’s documentary *Paris Is Burning* (1992), the same sartorial display may be praised as artifice by the discerning audiences at the ball, but enable the actor to walk the streets safely if she escapes notice. While the in-group reads the performer as a drag queen, the dupe sees a woman.

appropriation. Cultural appropriation, multicultural chic, and ethnic commodification are the very problems thematized in their performances.

Next to mimesis, catharsis is the second pillar of the bourgeois dramaturgy whose ideological objective to naturalize and universalize an unjust social order Brecht sought to challenge in his anti-Aristotelian dramaturgy. Likewise, the feminist, antifascist, and antiracist ethnic drag acts I describe in this book contest the mimetic logic of race along with its socially affirmative, cathartic employment. Ethnic drag in the second part of book is embedded in a range of dramaturgical models that articulate critical, resistant relationships to the social world in an attempt to incite political transformation. Antifascist drag draws on the dramaturgy of the Critical *Volksstück* and the Artaudian “theater of cruelty” (chap. 4). Hubert Fichte stages the inversion of power relations through sado-masochistic rituals in a colonial “theater of conversion” (McClintock). Fichte’s later work, as well as Ulrike Ottinger’s film *Johanna d’Arc of Mongolia*, imagines colonial Columbia and the Mongolian steppes as cultural “contact zones” (Pratt) respectively. In those texts, ethnic drag figures not only interracial desire, but the decentering of white authority, the queer revision of the gaze, and the exchange of power through dialogue and collaboration.

Although Brecht’s emphasis on distancing and analytical reflection must be understood as political resistance to fascism’s appeal to the emotions, empathy, and racial destiny, not all antifascist theater shares Brecht’s faith in intellectual analysis as the motor for social critique and change. The critical *Volksstück*, which was developed during the 1920s and rediscovered during the 1960s, depends on spectatorial empathy for its dramatization of proto- or quasi-fascist processes of ostracization and violence. It intensifies the sensations of suffering and horror without offering audiences the relief of intellectual distancing. The genre assaults spectators by showing acts of extreme brutality, as Susan Cocalis has demonstrated, but defers catharsis in the hopes of sparking the resolution of contradictions in the social realm. Its dramaturgy is indebted to the Artaudian “theater of cruelty,” which aggravates the emotional pressure exerted by social contradictions in order to produce a counterimage or “double” in the form of wishes and utopian fantasies in the spectator’s mind.<sup>10</sup> These, Artaud hoped, would spark real, radical change in the social world. Fassbinder and Specht (chap. 4) adapt this model and incorporate ethnic drag in a dramaturgy that refuses to postulate a space for analytical reflection outside of ideology.

10. I have explored the similarity of the Artaudian model and the dramaturgy of the critical *Volksstück* in a chapter about Marieluise Fleißer in *Exiles, Eccentrics, Activists* (1994a).

Another dramaturgical model connecting ethnic drag to a socially transformative agenda derives from sadomasochism's rituals of inversion, which turn around, and transform, the signs and symbols of power. According to Anne McClintock, S-M scenes, props, and costumes not only reference and denaturalize specific social contradictions, but also suggest their historical contingency and mutability: "S/M presents social power as sanctioned, neither by nature, fate nor God, but by artifice and convention and thus as radically open to historical change" (144). Hubert Fichte, a gay novelist and ethnographer, borrows the whips and chains of colonial domination for his inversion of the master-slave relationship. The rituals he dramatizes between a white, Spanish missionary and his African slave convert top to bottom, dominant to subordinate, but also pain to pleasure, and symbolic abjection to social power. Yet he does not simply equate the consensual sharing of sexual pleasure with the exchange of social power among unequally positioned partners. McClintock's theorization of S-M likewise focuses on the ambiguous effects of this dramaturgy: while S-M can rehearse social recognition and empowerment, it can also serve to contain social contradictions (and substitute for their resolution by political means) by enacting them on the private and symbolic level.<sup>11</sup> Through this distinction, McClintock's account of cross-dressing is more attentive to its hermeneutic ambiguities, diverse historical circumstances, and social consequences than Butler's notion of drag as the parodic subversion of gender,<sup>12</sup> or Marjorie Garber's universalizing characterization of transvestism as "*a space of possibility structuring and confounding culture: the disruptive element that intervenes, not just a category crisis of male and female, but*

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11. For Hannah Cullwick, the working-class woman in Victorian London whose intricate sexual rituals McClintock analyzes in *Imperial Leather*, S-M fetishism offered "an arena of contestation and negotiation" that allowed her to exercise "a degree of power that would otherwise have been well-nigh impossible" (180). The scholar's estimation of the social effects S-M scripting had for Cullwick's partner Munby, a middle-class man, is more cautious. The symbolic, private abdication of power, she maintains, awarded an illusory mastery over "social contradictions that could not be resolved at a personal level" (146). The perpetual deferral of resolution does not translate into the individual or collective reconstruction of class, gender, or race relations, but impels the repetition of the scene: "compulsive repetition emerges as a fundamental structuring principle of S/M" (147). McClintock's assessment of the limits of sadomasochism as a political practice corresponds to Kaja Silverman's analysis of Lawrence of Arabia's cross-racial identification and desire. Silverman expresses her doubts about the consequences of the British colonial official's Arab masquerade, concluding that his private abnegation of imperial power in masochistic fantasies and rituals was commensurate with, perhaps even sustained his racial and national privilege.

12. Butler acknowledges that "parody by itself is not subversive," but within her theory cannot account for the distinction between those "parodic repetitions" that are "disruptive, truly troubling" and those that "become domesticated and recirculated as instruments of cultural hegemony" (139).

the crisis of category itself” (17).<sup>13</sup> Hubert Fichte, whose first play about the colonial missionary Saint Pedro Claver illustrates the predicament of power and its subversion, likewise emphasizes the different outcomes the colonial theater of conversion has for its white and black participants. He thereby dramatizes the limits of “inversion” as a strategy for white people to decenter racial privilege.

Ulrike Ottinger, a lesbian filmmaker known for her campy, surrealist early films, as well as for her ethnographic documentaries more recently, similarly explores the possibility of expending white racial fantasies. Like Fichte, she grounds this project in a collaborative method of artistic production that aims at power sharing between author and ethnographic subject. These artists’ exploration of cultural contact zones suggests the importance of integrating cross-cultural interaction, respect, and desire in the mode of production, rather than confining it to the symbolic level of impersonation. While Eric Lott and Philip Deloria have argued that impersonating practices, such as blackface minstrelsy and Indian hobbyism, can also constitute contact zones, where the objects of whites’ impersonation accrue cultural and political authority, I am less sure.<sup>14</sup> While it may be the case, albeit in very limited ways, for the Indian hobbyists whose practice I examine in chapter 3, the Jewish masquerades I discuss in chapter 1 suggest otherwise. Spiderwoman Theater, too, demonstrates how whites’ identification with Winnetou and other noble savages exacerbates the commodification and appropriation of Native American spirituality and culture (chap. 6).<sup>15</sup> Although I agree with Lott that impersonation is compelled by desire and fascination, not just by fear and hate

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13. Under “category crisis,” Garber includes not just the collapse of gender binaries, but also the erosion of racial, religious, class, and sexual distinctions (16). The appearance of the transvestite as a sign of gender crisis in a text may herald a category crisis in any of these other social dimensions (17); as McClintock has pointed out, Garber’s reliance on a single psychoanalytic, Lacanian model fails to explain the complexity and diversity of “transvestite logics” and “transvestite effects” she described in *Vested Interests*, and distinguish between “subversive, conservative or radical transvestite practices and fetishes” (McClintock, 175).

14. Eric Lott, who adapts Garber’s notion of transvestism for his study of the antebellum minstrel show, carefully traces out the ambivalent social effects of what he calls one of the earliest American culture industries (8). Notwithstanding whites’ disavowal of their fascination with black bodies through ridicule, blackface minstrelsy constituted a “contact zone” that neither of the participants would leave unchanged. The minstrel show’s “simultaneous drawing up and crossing of racial boundaries . . . worked for over a hundred years to facilitate safely an exchange of energies between two otherwise rigidly bounded and policed cultures, a shape-shifting middle term in racial conflict which began to disappear (in the 1920’s) once its historical function had been performed” (6).

15. Ward Churchill, a Native American activist, agrees with their view. He argues that hobbyists’ rehearsal of the contradictions of modernity fortifies the very boundaries of race, nation, and class that Indian imitators strive to transcend in their practice.

(emotions that are more commonly equated with racism), my analysis of the Nazi film *Jew Süss* shows how desire is perfectly recuperable to, and perhaps indispensable for, an antisemitic agenda. The self-criticism, even self-contempt, that sometimes inspires ethnic masquerades does not necessarily translate to changing one's own behavior, or engaging in collective, political action. It is therefore no coincidence that the artists who most forcefully question the "monologic" of impersonation have no access to well-endowed, state-subsidized stages or are only occasionally invited in.

For the Koltès casting controversy, this insight would mean that the inclusion of actors of color might be a first step toward "eroding the homogeneity of the ensemble" and foreclosing its reproduction of "universal" truths. On the one hand, their presence might have unpredictable outcomes and elicit untold estrangement effects that throw into relief national specificity and historical continuities in German constructions of race. On the other hand, I would agree that if these actors merely serve to authenticate Koltès's postcolonial fantasies, their appearance on stage achieves little. As long as the mode of cultural production remains monologic and its means in the hands of white men, ethnic privilege and ethnocentrism will be difficult to unsettle.

The critical matrix for my study of ethnic drag, culled from the theoretical toolbox of British and American scholars of theater, performance, and cultural studies, might lead some to inquire about the risks of transposing theoretical concepts from one national context to another one, whose historical implementation of racial ideology has been considered singular. I would argue that the very extremity of scientific racism in the German past, combined with the contradictory imperatives operating in the country's democratization, produced the taboo on investigating "race" and its legacies in official contexts, including academia and politics. Yet my study shows that a range of Germans, not just artists or intellectuals, continued to contend with "race" even in the absence of an official language about it. Reading these practices through the analytical means honed in other national contexts throws into relief cross-cultural similarities as well as differences in the constructions and critiques of race, nation, and sexuality.

Another question of transfer arises in respect to mobilizing gendered and racial discourses through the concept of ethnic drag. Although I reference at least two disciplinary formations within which identity and performance have been described, I do not want to postulate gender, sexuality, and race as analogous. In my overview of theoretical developments within feminist, queer, postcolonial, and ethnic studies, I have stressed the similarity of assessments regarding mimesis and masquerade among scholars who study race and those who study gender and sexuality. Likewise, I

have emphasized the elaboration of mimesis, mimicry, and the simulacrum as critical, subversive strategies across disciplines.<sup>16</sup> The tendency among British and American scholars to work at the intersection of gender, sexuality, and race in the last decade has contributed to the application of racial and gendered tropes across disciplinary boundaries, exemplified by Marjorie Garber's work on cross-dressing, Eric Lott's study of the minstrel show, and Anne McClintock's *Imperial Leather*. These studies both emphasize that "the central issues of race always appear historically in articulation, in a formation, with other categories and divisions" (Hall, 28), and recognize the *uneven* weight attached to these categories. They break with the critical habit of postulating identity categories as equivalent. That older paradigm stressed the structural similarity of binary opposites and aligned these opposites in endless equations of Self and Other, dominant and subordinate. Like Lott and McClintock, I have sought instead to trace the intricate ways in which race, nation, and sexuality are predicated on each other in ethnic drag, and to sound out the different valences attached to masculinity and Jewishness, whiteness and homosexuality, or Turkishness and femininity in a given performance.

**I**n the following chapters, I develop a series of distinct paradigms through a reading of selective examples. Chapter 1 focuses on Jewish impersonation to provide an introduction to the theoretical problems raised by ethnic drag, the theatrical conventions that encoded the diverging discourses of assimilation and racial difference, and the political uses of drag by Enlightenment thinkers, bourgeois antisemites, the Nazi state,

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16. The different social constructions of gender and race as the objects of disciplinary inquiry have also produced critical divergences. At the risk of gross generalization, I have found fewer critics of race that would be willing to expunge a social referent from a theory of agency to the degree that Butler's notion of gender performativity does. Conversely, theorists of race have more often considered impersonation as a cultural contact zone, where power can be symbolically exchanged between two unequal partners (Lott; Deloria). This is not a view entertained by most theorists who focus on gender and sexuality (with the exception of McClintock). These divergent theoretical emphases arguably reflect different tabulations of the benefits and costs of taking the risk of essentialism: perhaps women and homosexuals have more to gain from refusing the shackles of referentiality, while people of color would rather renegotiate power relations with a view to historical and present injustice. These divergent disciplinary accents should not lead one to confuse a given theoretical strategy with a social subject or an aesthetic object. Neither does the Turkish playwright Emine Özdamar grant spectators an epistemological or ontological ground from which the travesties of her "guest workers" can be decoded as true or false. Nor does the gay writer Hubert Fichte, by challenging the racial ideology underpinning the Spanish colonial mission in South America, thereby evacuate the historical truth of aggression and violence. While I do want to note theoretical differences, I do not want to juxtapose an ethnic politics of referentiality with an ostensibly more radical, queer politics of performativity.



oppressed Jews, and postwar advocates of reconciliation and restitution. The chapter focuses particularly on the modes of spectatorial address enacted by Jewish impersonation, which positioned the German spectator as racial detective, as innocent dupe, and as witness to the simulacrum of race, respectively. It also explores the possibility of reappropriating German stage-Jews for an antifascist agenda during and after the Third Reich. Finally, I investigate the critical potential and liabilities of Brecht's theory of estrangement techniques, which help performers and spectators to understand seemingly natural "identities" as historically specific and open to political intervention and revision.

In chapter 2, I examine the surrogations enacted in the stage adaptations of Karl May's Wild West sagas at the annual summer festival in Bad Segeberg, which abuts the "Indian Village" theme park. My discussion focuses on the 1950s and analyzes the way in which the festival facilitated the rehabilitation of German masculinity, nationalism, and whiteness by dramatizing their commensurability with democratic and family values during the reconstruction period. The Karl May adaptations provided a forum for imagining "restitution" for genocide, not in the sense of acknowledging responsibility or making reparations but restoring the goodness and honor of Germans. The triangular surrogation of German, Indian, and Jew hinged on the repression of the Jew, and the superimposition of a fantasy of racial harmony. A fictional Wild West emerged as a theater for the racial imagination in postwar West Germany, because that scene incorporated and revised German-American relations during the occupation period and after. I analyze casting choices at the festival, which had to contend with the denigration of white, heroic masculinity after Nazism; masculine strength was only recuperated when attached to a stereotypically American body. The shift of spectatorial identification away from the German and toward the Indian hero reflects the increasing racial exoticization and commodification that occurred in the context of "multiculturalism."

The reenactment of Native American history and culture in German hobbyist clubs is the subject of chapter 3, which is based on interviews with practitioners. Indian impersonation, I argue, provided postwar Germans with a way to both mourn the vacancies left by the Holocaust and refuse the role of perpetrator in racial aggression. Hobbyism allowed Germans to explore alternative notions of ethnicity that supplanted prior concepts of Aryan supremacy. Postwar Germans' identification with the victims of foreign invasion reflected (and displaced) the historical experience of Allied occupation, but also constituted a form of historical denial. Hobbyism's surrogation of the memory of fascism, however, forms only one aspect of its more generally antimodern scenarios. Practitioners' critique

of modernity is diverse. Some groups impersonate Indians in order to symbolically oppose and master their sense of alienation in late capitalism and its social hierarchies and wish to recapture an organic community in harmony with nature. Some resent the very egalitarianism and pacifism engineered by the modern welfare state and dream of a tribal warrior past. Others see themselves as resisting the socialist bureaucracy and its politicization of social relations. Hobbyists' encounters with Native Americans pose the question how the former reconcile the common perception of their practice as imitative with their own aspirations to expertise and mastery. I examine how they navigate the relation between the symbolic and the social, if their emulations generate respect for and solidarity with present-day Native Americans, and whether these attitudes carry over into larger political belief systems and everyday behavior.

In chapter 4 I examine the antifascist dramaturgies developed by leftists and feminists since the 1960s. The texts I have chosen, Fassbinder's film *Katzelmacher* (1968), Kerstin Specht's play *Lila* (1990), and Gerhard Kromschröder's journalistic reportage *When I Was a Turk* (1983), combine Brechtian estrangement techniques, organized around the figure of the ostracized foreigner, with the confrontational plot of the critical *Volksstück*. Antifascist drag parades the Other as a blank screen, onto which a German community projects its fears and desires. It exposes the epistemic and physical violence of the racializing gaze, by turning the critical scrutiny from the object of the gaze to the subject that reads race mimetically off of the foreigner's body. The dupe's perceptual habits thus become the object of critique and transformation. The diffuse blankness of the foreigner's subjectivity, however, allows the German authors to construct a monolithic notion of oppression. They ventriloquize this ostensibly speechless, subaltern subject in order to further their underlying political agendas. While their interests are progressive in some respects, they are not primarily oriented toward changing interracial relations. As my analysis of Kromschröder's investigative reportage shows, antifascist drag systematically precludes intercultural dialogue: the knowledge that Germans glean from masquerading as Turks is privileged over that gleaned from speaking with Turks. In this paradigm of ethnic drag, the performance obviates rather than establishes communication between Germans and foreigners.

For a rigorous examination of such dialogue, I turn to Hubert Fichte and Ulrike Ottinger, who devised their own stylistic hybrids by mixing ethnographic and (homo)erotic strategies of representation. In their texts, discussed in chapter 5, they use drag to work through some of the tropes of racial domination, submission, and objectification that structure colonial and East-West relations. Both artists question the political efficacy of

the traditional documentary, because of its privileging of distanced analysis and the ostensible transparency of the author's perspective. Yet they also face the dilemma that to engage spectators' racial fantasies risks reproducing the binary of civilized and primitive. In his radio play *San Pedro Claver* (1975), about a Catholic saint who baptized African slaves in colonial Columbia, Fichte experimented with an Artaudian dramaturgy. By staging the Third World as a sadomasochist torture chamber where contemporary Europeans can relive and relish the horrors of colonialism, he aims at exposing the (neo)colonial erotics of masters and slaves, First World tourists and Third World natives. This dramaturgy accelerates and implodes the Christian rituals of pain and redemption and aims at foreshadowing cultural syncretism and economic equality between the races as theater's "double" in the social sphere. In the sequel, *Great Auto for Pedro Claver* (1980), Fichte developed instead a version of the Brechtian docudrama, revealing his doubts about the first play. Ottinger's film *Johanna d'Arc of Mongolia* (1989) combines both fictional and documentary modes of representation in an ironic narrative of lesbian seduction and abandonment in the Mongolian tundra. Here the story of a female warrior-lover is shared by three women divided by East/West differences. By rotating the positions of author, subject, and spectator of the transnational fantasy of Johanna d'Arc between an English ethnographer, a French tourist, and a Mongolian princess, Ottinger opens up the romance of encounter, courtship, and conquest across ethnic and cultural boundaries. For both Fichte and Ottinger, the engagement with interracial fantasy marked a turning point in their careers, after which they pursued collaborative working methods and developed what might be called critical ethnographic documentaries. That shift suggests that the deconstruction of Europeans' colonial fantasies and tropes offer only limited possibilities of transformation and may in fact reproduce modern/primitive binaries in the postcolonial context.

The plays examined in chapter 6 likewise insist on minority subjects' access to representation as a prerequisite for intercultural dialogue. Neither Spiderwoman Theater's *Winnetou Snake Oil Show in Wigwam City*, nor Emine Sevgi Özdamar's *Keloglan in Alamania*, however, offers a documentary mode as remedy to Western culture's misrepresentations of Native Americans and Turkish migrants respectively. Rather, they travesty the flagrantly self-serving racial fantasies that encode colonial history in contemporary whites' imagination and perpetuate the unequal access to cultural production. They lampoon *Winnetou* and *Madame Butterfly* as central icons of colonial myths about the Wild West and the Orient—myths that continue to shape the lives of minority subjects in the present. By caricaturing the caricatures, the artists deploy Brechtian estrangement

techniques for a counteranthropology of sorts. Yet by inserting Native Americans and Turks in these roles, they also risk authenticating the racial ideologies these figures embody. They take the risk of essentialism in order to foreground the material effects of representation on ethnic subjects, their bodies, subjectivities, and social possibilities, while refuting the truth claims of mimesis. The plays emphasize the ideological pressures bearing on the production of specific ethnic signs and behaviors. They denounce the dupe's misreadings of these signs as truthful expressions of racial character and train audiences to correctly decode the noble savage and the New Age sage, the tragic Oriental and the suicidal guest-worker as calculated performances. The representation of ethnicity as simulacrum serves to construct spectatorial communities around readerly expertise and political interest, rather than racial commonality. One does not have to be Native American to refuse the commodification of Indian spirituality; nor is the resistance to a Romantic notion of German nationality a Turkish prerogative. The tools of critical spectatorship that these texts offer launch a politically promising counterdiscourse to the apparatus of racial detection that the German stage developed in the nineteenth century.

By organizing my study around the concept of ethnic drag, I wish to contest the disciplinary division of canonized art and trivial practices, the class distinctions written into the privileging of aesthetic pleasure over the immoral humor of the plebs, and the sexist and homophobic suppositions about the kinds of people that practice and enjoy impersonation, all of which attend the separation of mimesis and drag.<sup>17</sup> The conceptual division of high and low, legitimate and offensive has served to exempt racial mimesis from inquiry while confirming class prejudices regarding the hateful pleasures of the rabble. After all, the distinction between mimesis and masquerade lies largely in the eyes of the beholder. When a bewigged Roman actor shrilly taunted a besotted suitor, Goethe saw Woman's wiles.<sup>18</sup> What he praised as an evocation of the eternal feminine might

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17. In renaming impersonation *drag*, I take my cue from Sue-Ellen Case, a feminist theater scholar. By polemically renaming the custom of female impersonation on the ancient Greek stage and in the Renaissance theater "classic drag," Case's feminist critique recovered the social resonances and consequences of female impersonation and reassessed its political meanings in the context of patriarchal, homosocial gender systems.

18. Despite the heavy ideological weight attached to the appellations *mimesis* and *masquerade*, a performance itself does not necessarily permit such conceptual distinctions. When Johann Wolfgang von Goethe watched male actors performing women's parts on the Roman stage in the late eighteenth century, his comments indicate that he never forgot that he was watching men, yet the double aesthetic pleasure he derived from impersonation results from his assertion that these actors had conveyed women's nature with a perfection unattainable by female actors. Although his perception of the disjunction of actor and role commonly

have been read as misogynist burlesque by other spectators attending the same performance, spectators who were perhaps less predisposed to applauding the impersonation as a form of revenge for the offenses men suffer at the hands of women. Indeed, “classic drag” might have produced a powerful estrangement effect for her, throwing into relief women’s exclusion from the bourgeois public sphere in modernity, and the circulation of Woman as a sign among men.<sup>19</sup> This study seeks to read ethnic drag from the view point of that other, hypothetical spectator. The separation of Jewish impersonation on the classic stage from the vicious caricatures of the Jew Farces and the “private” pleasures of antisemitic salon theatricals has exempted the former from inquiry and confirms the very social distinctions upheld by the conceptual hierarchy of mimesis and masquerade. Although Indian hobbyists set their putatively mimetic practice in opposition to Wild West theatricals, Spiderwoman denounces both Winnetou and hobbyists’ emulations as masquerades of primitive wholesomeness. While these impersonations paint a seemingly flattering view of Native Americans over and against the corruption of imperialist civilizations, the juxtaposition of primitivism and modernity upholds the very social contradiction they seek to transcend. The struggle to determine what is masquerade and what counts as mimesis thus emerges as a crucial site of contests about identity, authority, and power.

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defines drag, his recognition of women’s “nature” converts counterfeit into coin, masquerade into mimesis. Likewise, the misogynist glee that Goethe imagines to connect him with the performer as well as with other men in the audience is more often associated with the burlesque shenanigans of a drag show than with the venerable theater of classical antiquity, where, many scholars suppose, spectators simply suspended their disbelief and saw “women.”

19. In her seminal study *Die imaginierte Weiblichkeit*, Silvia Bovenschen traces the divergence of women’s shrinking social radius and the symbolic elevation of femininity in the late eighteenth century, around the time when Goethe professed his somewhat guilty pleasure in female impersonation on the Roman stage.

## CHAPTER 1

# A Prehistory: Jewish Impersonation

In 1779 Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–81) published his last play, the “dramatic poem” *Nathan the Wise*. It encapsulates Enlightenment thinking about the perils of orthodoxy and intolerance and holds out a vision of common humanity and loving acceptance predicated on respect for religious and cultural differences. Set in Jerusalem at the time of the Crusades, the play dramatizes the double predicament of Nathan, a wealthy Jewish merchant, who faces losing not only his money to Saladin, the Muslim ruler of Jerusalem, but also his beloved daughter Recha to fanatical Christians headed by Jerusalem’s patriarch.<sup>1</sup> Both money and children are shown to delineate differences defined by absolutist power and by blood, but they also potentially forge bonds of allegiance by circulating across cultural boundaries: the sultan Saladin, while tempted to appropriate Nathan’s money through a ruse, comes to treat him as a fellow citizen and business partner, while Recha, who learns of her mixed Christian-Muslim parentage, insists on calling the Jew Nathan her father. Both money and

1. The intrigue aimed at taking Recha away from Nathan is instigated by a trio of Christian characters: an infatuated young Templar who wants to marry Recha, Recha’s nurse Daja, a fanatic who sees that marriage as a way to return the young woman to Christendom and hopefully to Europe, and Jerusalem’s Christian patriarch, who wants to punish the Jew for raising the girl outside the Christian faith. A second intrigue is launched by the Muslim characters and aims at ridding the trader of his money. Jerusalem’s ruler, the sultan Saladin, is in perpetual financial trouble, not only because of the costly war against the crusaders, but because of his inability to budget. Saladin conspires with his reluctant finance minister, the dervish Al-Hafi—a friend of Nathan’s—and his sister Sittah, but rather than asking for a loan, they plan to entrap the Jew by asking him which of the three religions is superior to the other two. If he names the Jewish faith, Sittah speculates, he can be accused of chauvinism and hence be compelled to pay as punishment; if he names Islam or Christianity, he can be denounced as a hypocrite and equally compelled to hand over the money. Yet Nathan eludes the trap by answering Saladin’s question with a story, the famous “ring parable” that many critics and directors have deemed the drama’s centerpiece.

paternity thus double the discourse of affinity into an essentialist and an elective one; even as the former is associated with feudalism, fanaticism, and blood relations, and the latter with tradition, commerce, and adoption, they exist side-by-side. Through the famous “ring parable,” Nathan insists that no one can judge one religion superior to the others; he also demands that Saladin respect his loyalty to the Jewish religion and traditions.<sup>2</sup>

Yet while the “family of man” celebrated in the final tableau of the common embrace is united by chosen allegiance *and* blood bonds, Nathan is the only one who is not related to anyone else on stage.<sup>3</sup> The money Nathan had loaned Saladin is returned to him, and Recha will presumably move into the Sultan’s palace. Nathan’s integration hinges on his fellows’ goodwill, whereas Saladin can command love and loyalty from his newly discovered family members. Nathan’s inclusion in the human community appears less secure because he is excluded from the generative metaphor of the biological family.<sup>4</sup> Even as his integrity as a citizen is confirmed and his parenting praised, the common embrace cannot altogether hide his curious loneliness (Klüger, 225; Mayer, 294f.). The tensions contained in that moment have compelled generations of directors to fiddle with the blocking of that embrace. An engraving in the play’s first print edition (four years before its first production) shows Nathan standing humbly in the background, gazing wistfully upon the cross-cultural family he helped to bring together. Two of the most famous productions in the play’s long stage history—one performed in 1933 by an all-Jewish ensemble in the Nazi capital of Berlin, the other considered to emblemize West German

2. It tells of a magic ring that bestows on its wearer the power of being loved and respected, and is supposed to be passed on from father to favorite son. One father, however, loves his three sons equally, and secretly promises the ring to each of them. He has perfect copies made so that after his death neither his sons nor the judge they turn to are able to discern the “true” ring. Only if you are a wiser judge than that one, Nathan tells Saladin, you may claim to know which ring (or religion) is superior to the others. Saladin is shamed by Nathan’s demonstration of tolerance and refuses to arrogate the role of judge to himself.

3. Upon rushing to the sultan’s palace in search of Recha, Nathan joins the rest of the cast in solving the riddle of Recha’s and the young Templar’s parentage. In the final scene, when all the evidence is assembled, it turns out that Recha’s father was the sultan’s long-lost brother Assad, who married a Christian and followed her to Europe, where they had a son. After their return to his beloved homeland, they had another child (Recha) that Assad was forced to abandon after her mother died and he headed into battle, only to perish soon after. The child the couple left behind in Europe, where he was raised by his uncle, is, of course, the young Templar.

4. Although Susanne Zantop does not refer to relations between non-Jews and Jews in Germany in *Colonial Fantasies*, she demonstrates that the metaphor of the interracial family as emblem of peaceful and hierarchical coexistence peaked in the two decades before the slave uprising on St. Domingue (Haiti) in 1791. That discourse forms part of the context of Lessing’s play as well, which defines religious differences in terms of culture rather than anatomy, but is already haunted by the emerging discourse of biological racism.

philosemitism in the 1950s—close with Nathan standing apart from and quietly leaving the jubilant scene. Going where? The social resonances of his exit, at the threshold between symbolic and social space, bring into view the vicissitudes of German-Jewish relations over the past two centuries.

While plenty has been written about Lessing's drama, its casting has received little attention. Yet the question who performs what role is undoubtedly an important aspect of a play's meaning: what if nobody ever considered that Shakespeare had originally written his gender-bending female parts for boy actors, or that the sentimental, lewd, comic, and cruel antebellum "Negro" minstrel acts set on Southern plantations were first played by white actors in the industrial North? Critics have analyzed female impersonation in the classical theater in conjunction with the nascent modern gender system (Case 1985) and have described the minstrel show as consonant with slavery's investment in and exploitation of the black body (Lott). In this chapter, I want to discuss select instances of Jewish impersonation that stand in the stage tradition of classical humanism epitomized by Nathan, which has often been treated as the opposite of and remedy to the blatantly antisemitic one commonly identified with Shylock. The Shakespearean association obscures the existence of a home-grown, German antisemitic theater that can be traced through Nathan's precursors and travesties. As some critics have noted, the antisemitic stock figure of the lecherous, greedy, yet hapless Jew continued in the older, comic tradition of the itinerant players, constituting a kind of modern *Hanswurst* (harlequin) in Jewish clothing. J. G. Gottsched and his contemporaries had inveighed against this tradition and banned *Hanswurst* from the German stage, while Lessing predicated the construction of a reformed, morally elevating German national theater on the continued excision of this kind of comedy. The Jew thus figures as a linchpin of modern conceptions of the nation that German intellectuals imagined around 1800, epitomizing not only that which has no place in the moral institutions of the stage and the state but also that which points to the promise of the Enlightenment vision of human brotherhood through education. As a performance obsessively focused on the voice as the intersection of body and language, Germans' impersonations of Jews dramatized the conditions (and the double bind) of Jewish assimilation, the main strategy for attaining emancipation.<sup>5</sup>

This chapter sets the stage for the remainder of this study, by point-

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5. On the one hand, a half-hearted legal practice made their civil rights and social integration contingent on successful assimilation; on the other, Christian Germans increasingly regarded Jews' willingness to assimilate as evidence of their essential untrustworthiness, interpreted as a sign of their fickle and immoral racial character.



ing to the long history and diverse emplotments of ethnic drag in Germany. Unlike Lessing's *Nathan*, which has been part of German high school curricula since the early nineteenth century and enjoys undiminished popularity on the stage, much of this history, however, has been forgotten. Standard German theater histories and encyclopedias omit the *Judenpossen* (Jew farces) in early nineteenth-century Berlin, many musicologists continue to deny the antisemitic codes embedded in Richard Wagner's stage practice (as opposed to his theoretical writing), and the German government censors the most explicit documents of Nazi racism, like Veit Harlan's film *Jew Süß* (1940). The elision of these traditions has abetted *Nathan's* function to philosemitically invoke the "better Germany" after the war, suppressing the ways in which its production history ties it to a wider range of theatrical representations of and social interactions with Jews.

This chapter does not present a comprehensive, chronological history of Jewish impersonation extending from the Enlightenment to the 1990s, but addresses four main theoretical and political problematics. First, a comparison of the classical and the travestied Nathan, in addition to a close reading of one particular bourgeois salon entertainment allows me to elaborate the emergence of a racial mimesis. My analysis of the "Israelitic lady" parodied by the comedian Albert Wurm (1794–1834) allows me to trace the coding of mimesis as the prerogative of the German artist and of masquerade as the province of the Jewish impostor. The dramaturgy of his act not only predicates spectatorial pleasure on racial detection but also illustrates the German actor's conceit of *universal performability*, the white body's ability to transcend its gendered and racial coordinates. This mimetic capacity is radically irreversible, that is, reserved for some bodies and categorically denied to others.

Second, my examination of Jewish impersonation focuses on spectatorial address. The racist pleasures awarded by the Jew Farce and by Wurm's act hinge largely on the way it addresses the German spectator as racial detective who will not be duped by the Jew's dissimulations. This constellation climaxes in fascist drag, exemplified by the Nazi propaganda film *Jew Süß*, which positions German spectators as eminently gullible. By constructing a myth of German naïveté and innocence vis-à-vis the Jew's machinations, fascist drag serves to legitimate powerful, antisemitic institutions dedicated to protecting that innocence against those who would corrupt it. On the diegetic level and on the level of audience address, the film spells out a division of knowledge and labor between the state and the citizen. The individual might see through the Jew's deceitful masquerade, but is portrayed as too "good" to use the appropriate defense or pun-

ishment. Instead, the racial gaze powers up the camera as a cultural technology in the service of a violent, antisemitic state.

Third, I will consider in what ways “biologically correct” casting may abet a counterhegemonic agenda by examining the 1933 all-Jewish production of *Nathan* at the Jüdischer Kulturbund (Jewish Cultural Organization, 1933–42) in Berlin. How does the play’s meaning change through that casting and the institutional circumstances that surrounded it? For generations, Jewish critics had regarded the play as central to an emancipatory agenda;<sup>6</sup> in what ways did the Jewish authentication of *Nathan*, when performed by and for Jews in the Nazi racial state, enable an embattled community to yoke the rhetorical force of the classic to their own political interests—and in what ways did their performance risk inserting them into the assimilationist/antisemitic stage traditions of a classical or burlesque *Nathan*?

Finally, the Jewish production of *Nathan* opens up another discourse of ethnic drag that no longer hinges on the practice of cross-dressing but derives from Bertolt Brecht’s concept of estrangement techniques. Written in exile from Nazi Germany, “Verfremdungseffekte in der chinesischen Schauspielkunst” (Alienation effects in Chinese acting, 1936) stands as a counterpoint to fascist drag and its racial ontologies. It likewise revolves around the spectator’s ability to pierce through the social gestures (*Gestus*) held at a distance from the actor’s body, not to discern racial truth, as fascist discourse would have it, but to mark identity as a construction, to historicize it, and enjoin spectators to engage in the political labor of critique and transformation. I show that Brecht himself was not always successful in historicizing “race” in this essay, requiring later adjustments and revisions of the Brechtian paradigm (see chapters 4 and 6). Finally, I close with a brief look at *Nathan* in the decades following the Shoah, sketching its instrumentalization within postwar philosemitism, along with the efforts by some Jewish theater artists to work through the character of Nathan.

### Impersonators and Impostors

*Nathan the Wise* is undoubtedly the most famous German play about the conditions of religious tolerance, a term that was closely related in the political debates of the time to the concepts of assimilation, acculturation,

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6. Mendelssohn was one of Lessing’s earliest champions. See also Abraham Mey Goldschmidt’s speech in 1860, in which he praised Lessing’s *Nathan* as a supreme contribution to German literature, but also lauded the author for “presenting the German Jews with the German fatherland” (quoted in Göbel, 258).

and emancipation—issues that to this day remain pertinent to Germans' conceptions of cultural difference, national unity, and equal rights.<sup>7</sup> The configuration and meaning of these terms, however, underwent significant changes in the very decades following the play's publication, when Enlightenment precepts were supplanted by the nascent discourse of romanticism. While some critics have located the ambivalence of religious tolerance versus racial difference in the dramatic text itself (e.g., by pressing on the tension of the final scene), the divergence between assimilationist and antisemitic discourse is much more clearly visible in the stage practices that grew out of Lessing's drama on the one hand, and, on the other, the numerous sequels, variations, and travesties of *Nathan* that began to appear as soon as the play became part of the theatrical repertoire after 1801. Some of the latter used the figures and plots of the *Jew Farce*, a genre created by and for the amusement of Christian Germans. Through the practice of Jewish impersonation, Christians onstage and in the audience imagined themselves as Germans at a time when the referent of that term was purely cultural and primarily linguistic, rather than political. By lam-

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7. *Emancipation* denotes a political discourse of equality and enfranchisement; in revolutionary France, the equality of citizens was decreed by law. The Prussian version of emancipation, however, was less radical. The term *emancipation* was not used in German until 1817; the preferred phrase was *bürgerliche Verbesserung* (bourgeois improvement), after the famous essay "Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden" (Concerning the bourgeois improvement of the Jews, 1781) by Christian Wilhelm von Dohm, who also drafted the Prussian edict granting Jews civil rights in 1812. As the term indicates, it predicated legal equality on a demonstration of assimilation. Legal scholars from Heinrich Friedrich Diez to Wilhelm von Humboldt, in contrast, viewed the state not as an educational institution (committed to fostering assimilation), but a legal one, and called for a sudden, rather than a gradual, elimination of inequality patterned after the French notion of emancipation (Neubauer, 13). Successful assimilation—the turning away from Jewish tradition and religious customs—was usually signaled by conversion; many Jews accepted assimilation as the price of admission to the universal humanity envisioned by Enlightenment philosophers. David Friedländer, for instance, a Jewish city councilman in Berlin, proposed in 1799 to stage a mass baptism in order to demonstrate Jews' willingness to accept the terms of their participation in society.

Mendelssohn is an ambiguous figure in assessing whether he advocated emancipation or assimilation (which Hannah Arendt sets in opposition). On the one hand, he still saw loyalty to the Jewish faith as reconcilable with participation in the European intellectual community of the Enlightenment (and did not convert), yet his exhortations to his contemporaries to abandon the Yiddish language leads Sander Gilman to assert: "Mendelssohn's rejection of Yiddish was the most evident sign of his sacrifice of existing Jewish social values and their replacement by those found in the European intellectual community" (1991, 52). Assimilation, for Mendelssohn, meant primarily acculturation, that is, the embrace of the *Bildung* of the gentile world; he was not concerned with universal emancipation. The second generation of Maskilim conflated both; Rahel Levin, for example, in whose salon Germans and Jews, poets and politicians commingled, was known as the main instigator of the Goethe cult in Berlin, and converted to Christianity when she married Varnhagen.



Frontispiece of *Nathan der Weise: Eine Posse mit Gesang* by Julius von Voß, 1804.

pooning Jewish assimilation, they celebrated a sense of national unity impervious to usurpations. This kind of low comedy might have enabled Germans to symbolically fortify a sense of nationality that was under extreme duress in the first decade of the nineteenth century, when the Napoleonic armies invaded Prussia. The denigration of the Yiddish language and the invention of the “Jewish voice” as deceitful and ugly complemented philosophers’ assertions about the metaphysical qualities of the German language as truthful and beautiful, exemplified by Fichte’s “Reden an die Deutsche Nation” (Speeches to the German nation), which he gave in French-occupied Berlin in 1807–8. While the adoption of the Napoleonic Code in the occupied German regions legalized, for a brief time, political equality for Jews, its imposition by a foreign regime wedded German nationalism to antisemitism among the German intellectual class, as scholarship on the Romantics has well documented. The German bourgeoisie’s commitment to Enlightenment values and Jewish emancipation was superseded in the evolving climate of nationalism; in 1880 Theodor Fontane wrote that *Nathan’s* call for tolerance remained as distant from

social reality as ever, despite the play's hallowed status in the canon of German letters (Steinmetz, 382).

The twenty-year lag between *Nathan the Wise's* publication and its integration in the theatrical repertoire in the first decade of the nineteenth century coincided with the ascendancy of assimilation as the main strategy of attaining social acceptance embraced by the entire second generation of Maskilim, or enlightened Jews; the first, represented by Lessing's close friend Moses Mendelssohn, on whom many critics argue that Nathan is modeled, still viewed Prussian citizenship and loyalty to Jewish traditions as reconcilable. Critics have disagreed about the question whether the play follows an assimilationist logic: those who contest that claim often point to the ideal of *sittliches Handeln* (ethical practice) for which members of all three religions should strive, observing that one is not set up as a model for the other two to emulate; if anything, Nathan approximates this ideal more closely than do the Christian characters in the play. In contrast, the *stage practice* of the *Nathan* productions from 1801 onward, informed by the idealist style developed by Goethe and Schiller at the Weimar Court Theater, clearly downplayed the important tension between cultural specificity and universal humanity.<sup>8</sup> On the stages of Weimar, Magdeburg, Berlin, and Hamburg, which launched *Nathan* into the pantheon of German classical drama, the protagonist's nobility rested on the elimination of Jewish signifiers. The first Nathan was the Berlin principal Döbbelin, who, like Gottsched and Neuber, dedicated himself to the creation of a German national theater by turning against the bawdy traditions of the itinerant players. He was schooled in classical drama and emphasized Nathan's dignity and high moralism in a stilted presentation marked by "pretentious decorum and affected declamation" (Wessels, 248). When Germany's most lauded actor, August Wilhelm Iffland, performed the role in Berlin in 1802, his Nathan wore a beard but was attired in a classical

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8. The first successful production of *Nathan* was performed at the Weimar Court Theater under the direction of Johann Wolfgang Goethe and in the adaptation of Friedrich Schiller. Hans-Friedrich Wessels has described in detail Schiller's changes, who wished to adapt Lessing's "dramatic poem" in accordance with his own poetic theory on the strict distinction between tragic and comic genres. Wessels characterizes its main thrust as an increased emphasis on, and idealization and elevation of, the main character (272). Schiller shared the focus on formal coherence with Goethe, who saw his main challenge in Nathan's aesthetic-dramatic features, rather than its content (Wessels, 250). Wessels suggests that the presentational style in which Schiller's adaptation was performed invited an idealizing tendency, and cites one reviewer of the 1803 production in Hamburg: "The main actor has rendered Nathan 'with simplicity, humility, subtlety, and dignity'; his whole appearance was 'appropriate to the character and inspired awe'" (253). By 1840, critic Karl Gutzkow summarized a stage tradition aimed at "emphasizing the idealized character of Nathan and eliding his reality, his nationality as a Jew" (quoted in Wessels, 253).



88 Planché, lit.

*der rechte Ring war nicht  
Erweislich; — Fast so unerweislich, als  
Uns istzt — der rechte Glaube.*

*3<sup>te</sup> Act 7<sup>te</sup> Scene.*

**August Wilhelm Iffland as Nathan the Wise. The engraving is by the brothers Henschel, from the series *Iffland's mimetic art for actors and artists. Sketched during performances in Berlin 1808 to 1812*, vol. 14, nos. 222–227 (Institute für Theaterwissenschaft der Freien Universität Berlin, Inventory-no. 4500.)**

robe instead of a caftan, the traditional visual signifier of Jewishness on stage. Even more significantly, the classical Nathan speaks High German in the stylized cadences of verse drama, demonstrating the demand of Mendelssohn and his followers that the price Jews must pay for their access to universal humanity is the Yiddish language.

While Lessing imagined admitting the Jew *as Jew* to the human family, Hannah Arendt traces the divergence of emancipation and assimilation in “The Jew as Pariah: A Hidden Tradition” and frames the latter in the theatrical terms of “ap[ing] the gentiles or play[ing] the *parvenu*” (68). As Liliane Weisberg observes in an essay on Arendt, “the act of ‘aping’ reveals precisely the difference between the copy and the ‘original’ proper behavior and education that assimilation tries to emulate” (142). The assimilated, idealized stage-Nathan, who still echoes an emancipatory discourse, shared space with a growing army of Jewish parvenus caricatured in the increasingly popular Jew Farces that stage the drama of the Jew who imitates his betters but never quite succeeds, a drama that is increasingly defined in racial terms. The genre, which flourished in the early nineteenth century, lampoons the Jew as usurper, who attempts to buy and cheat his way into communal acceptance and respect, but is unfailingly exposed and cruelly punished. The lofty style of classical Nathan and the antisemitic code that emerged in the German popular theater around 1800 thus dramatize the predicament of assimilation as a neither-nor proposition.<sup>9</sup> Together, the classical and farcical Nathans issued two sides of the same message: only “non-Jewish” Jews can be tolerated; “Jewish” Jews cannot be German and will not be accepted by Germans.

On the classical stage, Lessing’s Nathan speaks Standard High German: when characters listen to him, they appreciate the wisdom of his words, rather than his command of the language.<sup>10</sup> Not so Nathan’s doubles in the more than thirteen plays that Heinrich Stümcke has categorized as “sequels, imitations, and travesties” of *Nathan*: at the opposite end of the high-low spectrum occupied by travesties like that by Julius Voß, a Berlin playwright, he speaks Yiddish, barbers, and cheats. His intonation, grammar, pronunciation, and word choice transparently reflect his contemptible Jewish “character”; Recha, in turn, clearly resembles the comic stock type of the salacious and ambitious “aesthetic Jewess” eager to assimilate (and

9. Although the term *anti-Semitism* did not appear until the 1860s (it was popularized in the writings of Wilhelm Marr in the 1870s), scholars now commonly acknowledge that the notion of racial difference predates the term and locate the emergence of racial antisemitism around the turn of the nineteenth century (see for instance the prefatory remarks in Gilman and Katz about their anachronistic usage of the term).

10. Wessels notes, however, that contemporary critics have pointed to certain linguistic habits, metaphors, dialectic patterns of thought and argumentation, and personality traits as Jewish (344).

convert to Christianity) through marriage—an obvious jibe at cultured Jewish *salomnières* like Henriette Hertz and Rahel Levin Varnhagen in Berlin. Voß's *Nathan* travesty, which conforms to the generic conventions of the Jew Farce, caricatures Nathan as pariah and his daughter as parvenu, thereby gendering generational differences regarding assimilation. The “aesthetic Jewess,” who, to the mind of contemporary Jewish critic Marcus Herz, epitomized the enormous cultural accomplishments achieved by her generation of Jews, also became a comic stock type derided by the Jew Farce and in such entertainments as Albert Wurm's act discussed below. The figure of the parvenu illustrates the construction of racial differences in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries around a variety of physical and cultural markers, most centrally language. Jewish impersonation at that time constitutes a performative site where the formation of racial feeling, national interest, and a bourgeois aesthetic splits between the Enlightenment discourse of equality and assimilation and the anthropological-linguistic discourse of difference and exclusion.

At the same time as linguists and philologists were at the vanguard of defining a German subject in racial terms and inventing new Aryan or Indo-German genealogies, the Jew Farces and other forms of antisemitic entertainment instructed spectators to read the physiological and linguistic codes of Jewish identity as inescapable racial proof. In the late eighteenth century, Jews and antisemites alike focused on “Jewish speech” (Yiddish) as the sign, even the cause, of Jews' moral inferiority. Antisemites remarked on its discordant sound, while Enlightenment advocates like Moses Mendelssohn counseled Jews to abandon their “accent.” Language became anchored in the anatomical fiction of the “Jewish voice,” which preceded other physiological markers thought to identify Jews in modernity (Neubauer, 140; see also Weiner 1995). The theater, an institution at the center of the emerging *Kultur*nation, became an important cultural arena instructing spectators in reading the physiological sign system that increasingly codified Jewish identity. While enlightened Jews and German nationalists such as Ernst Moritz Arndt (who wanted to predicate German citizenship on conversion to Christianity) advocated Jewish assimilation, that demand also produced an epistemological crisis precisely because Jewish identity was no longer purely a religious or cultural variant of a universal humanity (as Lessing's *Nathan* claimed). The enterprise of Jewish assimilation became wedded to the racial thematics of passing.<sup>11</sup> The exhortation to self-improvement turned into the anxiety about dissimulation, that is, disavowing one's very own essence, feigning what one is not,

11. Susanne Zantop mentions especially the Göttingen “professor for human wisdom” Christoph Meiners and his publications on gendered and racialized anthropology as early examples of scientific racism.



and usurping privileges to which one is not entitled by birth. This anxiety and the containment strategies it generated were paradigmatically enacted in one salon performance that is worth analyzing in some detail.

Albert Aloys Ferdinand Wurm was a popular German actor, who, according to one biographical lexicon, “excelled at the representation of ridiculous Jewish characters” (*Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, 44:325). Another specifies: “One of his fortes was the representation of Jews of that species that reveals itself through certain idiosyncratic mannerisms. He was a master at such characterizations, yet he was even more irresistible at copying *cultured* Jews who have learned to deny their nationality and only occasionally betray themselves” (*Rigaer Theater und Tonkünstler-Lexikon*, 1890). Wurm’s favored comic genre was the Jew Farce. He was hired in 1809 by Iffland at the Königliches Theater in Berlin, and in 1815 became involved in a public scandal surrounding the production of Sessa’s *Unser Verkehr* (Our acquaintances), a Jew Farce that the Jewish community in Berlin deemed so offensive that the chancellor censored the play and canceled the production. Wurm managed to turn this act of censorship into a springboard for his career as an antisemitic entertainer touring the informal salon circuit in Berlin. Due to clever advertising, the ban on the play was soon lifted, and the farce became the hit of the 1815–16 Berlin season, accompanied by the popular prints depicting scenes from it. *Our Acquaintances* was so successful it continued to be reprinted well into the Third Reich. Hans-Joachim Neubauer deems the play paradigmatic for the modern Jew Farce, because it presents its personnel no longer in terms of economic and religious stereotypes, but in terms of social aspiration and its (ethnic/racial) limits, showing the Jew as parvenu.

The Jew Farces derided the—generally futile—attempts of Jews to assimilate and pass as (Christian) Germans by deriding their racial mimicry and denying them the capability of proper mimesis. Neubauer’s excellent study *Judenfiguren* (Jewish figures, 1994) identifies lexical, syntactic, and phonological markers through which the genre denounced a passing character’s Jewishness: while the least assimilated Jewish characters (usually the old parents) would use Yiddish or Hebrew words, even their more assimilated children or grandchildren would occasionally use syntactical variation, especially the move of the verb from the end of a clause to the front, or betray their linguistic provenance through their intonation and pronunciation. Assimilation was commonly represented as a generational process that indexed aspirations to (and chances of) upward class mobility, commonly figured through an advantageous marriage with a Christian German. Neubauer demonstrates that these characteristics not only worked together to signal a character’s underlying Jewishness contrasted with the pretense of Germanness (staged as an either-or proposition), but also pro-

vided a subtle index, an archeology of sorts, of her or his degree of assimilation (Neubauer, 145). The voice, in turn, was codified within a moral-anthropological system of clear, pure, sonorous, and heroic sound opposed to the *nationale Mißlaut* (unpleasant national sound) of Jewish speech.<sup>12</sup>

Albert Wurm gained special notoriety for his portrayal of an “Israelitic lady.” The actor regaled spectators with his impersonation of a Jewish woman’s attempt at declaiming a classical German poem, her oratory undermined by her rising passion and loss of control over her voice. Intonation, pronunciation, and Hebraicisms expose her as a usurper (Neubauer, 125–30). One might read his cross-gender, cross-ethnic performance as a lesson in detection, for its purpose seems to have been to hone the spectators’ ear for the fictitious qualities of the “Jewish voice” and to reward them for recognizing it as evidence of what, he demonstrates, is already there and cannot be dissembled: the Jewish character. The parody functioned to unite the laughing Germans into a group, by collectively deriding the hapless usurper and her hopes of assimilation and emancipation. The Israelitic Lady mocked those Jewish women whose salons offered an alternative space of sociable commingling across religious, class, and gender barriers. For what was the use of shedding the Yiddish language en route to acculturation, as Mendelssohn had advocated, if the Jew’s voice would always betray her, and yoke her identity to an inescapable anatomical, moral, and metaphysical destiny?

Wurm’s act, the Israelitic lady, not only presents an exemplary, early case of ethnic drag in its lampooning of a Jew by and for non-Jewish Germans; it also delineates the difference between mimicry and mimesis as an ethnic and gendered one. Here is a description of Wurm’s number by his contemporary Julius Voß, the author of the *Nathan* travesty along with other Jew Farces and hence predisposed to being amused by the performance he witnessed:

His Jewish recital, which he called the “Jewish Declamation,” was unsurpassed. It was the custom in Berlin then—occasionally still observed today—for dinner guests to pass the time by having some of

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12. The art of declamation, Neubauer argues, put at the artist’s disposal a large array of vocal techniques and qualities that were morally and ethnically coded. Neubauer surveys the expert vocabulary about the voice culled from late-eighteenth-century handbooks on declamation and concludes, “The sound of the Other, noises like hissing, rattling, roaring, pollutions of the pure, the purified voice, faulty hearing, imitation, bumbling, poorly timed shifts of register—evidently the technique of ‘Jewish accentuation’ is precisely correlated to an aesthetic of vocal beauty that meticulously encoded as well any and all deviations and their putative physiological causes” (154). In the mid-nineteenth century, Wagner reviled the “shrill, humming, and mewling expression of Jewish speech” in order to disqualify Jews from authentic artistic creation (70).

the visitors recite poetry by Schiller, Göthe [*sic*], Schlegel etc. And who wouldn't prefer such entertainment to the gambling table.

Mister Wurm may have observed these performances in one or the other of the Israelitic houses that had aspirations to being thought cultivated. His sensitive ear could not help noticing those moments when Jewish accents clung to the aesthetic oration. And he then repeated what he had picked up and what his friends liked to hear.

"Alexis and Dora," "The Cranes of Ibikus," "The Way to the Smithy" and other such poems would be presented in the reported fashion. Of all these, Schiller's "The Diver" was his masterpiece. It was supposed that a Hebrew lady would recite this ballad, with prudent care not to have the linguistic habits of her nation slip in. At first it goes well, but not for long, and here and there a treacherous intonation creeps into her recital. The more her passion rises, the more difficult it is to avoid these signs, and finally, seduced by the imagination and emotion of the poem, she grows oblivious of herself, and not a word is left that doesn't evoke the bartering tones of a common Jewish salesgirl.

This "Diver" became famous and Mr. Wurm was often invited into elegant society to recite it. (1817, 293–94)

The Israelitic lady lacks the essential requisites for mimetic activity, namely to combine technical accomplishment with poetic intuition, intellect with passion. She tries too hard to demonstrate her technical knowledge of pronunciation and declamation and then is overwhelmed by her emotions rather than skillfully evoking them in her spectators. While her attempt at declamation is sabotaged by her own body's inability to transcend its ethnic and gendered givens, Albert Wurm's credentials as actor and non-Jew rest on his ability to impersonate a character of another gender and ethnicity successfully. The double-crossing of gender and ethnicity not only shores up male creative genius and its abstraction from the body but also bolsters an ethnically coded, German ability to master the subtle intricacies of the "Jewish voice." Ethnic difference here is presented in terms of mimetic register and proficiency: one impersonation fails, becomes recognizable as a superficial masquerade, and is hence coded Jewish (foreshadowing Wagner's denigration of Jewish culture as derivative and imitative). The other stays unmarked and cements the equation of "Germanness" with mimetic competence. Wurm's decision to impersonate a Jewish *woman* rather than a man orchestrated spectators' spite against the perceived gender transgression that attended Jewish acculturation, and reveals a misogynist signature in racial mimesis. In order to illustrate my point, let me turn to an essay written by Johann Wolfgang Goethe about

impersonation, which illustrates a parallel dynamic of spectatorial pleasure and indicates that the “unmarked” position, which secures racial mimesis, is subsidized by heterosexual masculinity.

Goethe’s essay “Frauenrollen auf dem römischen Theater, durch Männer gespielt” (Women’s parts played by men in the Roman theater), which he published in 1788, discusses the merits of the ancient tradition of female impersonation on the Roman stage. By the eighteenth century it was already an outdated practice, derided, the author hints, by those (perhaps women?) who would oppose the kinds of pleasure awarded by such travesties. Undaunted by the harpies of political correctness, Goethe argues that the evocation of femininity by a male actor *doubles* the performance’s aesthetic pleasure, because it transcends mere imitation and transports the spectator to the creative sphere of art: “What we found here was the enjoyment of seeing not the thing itself but its imitation, to be entertained not through nature but through art, to contemplate not an individuality but a result” (10). Despite the seeming reversibility of impersonation, which Goethe emphasizes at the outset by remarking on both men and women’s enjoyment of cross-dressing during carnival, the juxtaposition of “nature” and “art” (central to the construction of gender dichotomies in late-Enlightenment thought) suggests the unequal predisposition of actors and actresses to undertake that transformation successfully. The gender inscription in “aesthetic pleasure” and mimesis is confirmed by his essay’s curious misreading of the play he was watching, culminating in a vengeful fantasy of male bonding. The play Goethe attends, Carlo Goldoni’s *The Innkeeper*, ridicules misogyny: the female innkeeper tricks a confirmed woman-hater into falling in love with her in order to “cure” him from his misogyny. When the duped man eventually finds out her true feelings, he reverts to his old ways and leaves the stage swearing unmitigated contempt for womankind. Yet Goethe seems to identify with the misogynist and extends that identification to a collective male audience. The male impersonator awards pleasure because he avenges all men for the ignominies suffered at the hands of women: “We applauded the young man lightheartedly and were delighted that he was so well acquainted with the ensnaring wiles of the fair sex that through his successful imitation of feminine behavior he had avenged us for every such offense women had made us suffer” (50). Goethe’s peculiar reading of this play as a male-bashing text only makes sense from the point of view of the play’s most misogynist character. His experience of “aesthetic pleasure,” along with the practice of female impersonation that catalyzes it, is a masculine prerogative. The practice renders “woman” an in-joke shared by the all-male triad of author, performer, and spectator, yet he posits both mimesis and pleasure as universal and ungendered.

Goethe's commentary about female impersonation on the Roman stage contradicts the hypothesis that in the classical theater spectators would have simply suspended their disbelief and "seen" women portrayed by male actors. Cross-gender performance is shown to reverse the meaning suggested by the plot, along with the spectatorial dynamic of identification, emphasizing that an analysis of plot and character alone cannot account for the complex communicative process by which racial feelings are orchestrated. Through impersonation, the joke in the play is turned around, aligning spectatorial identification with that character and against the innkeeper. Moreover, the innkeeper's feminine masquerade, designed to ridicule the chauvinist (by parading an exaggerated image of womanhood), is applauded as the actor's truthful portrayal of female deception. The misogynistic pleasure derived from impersonation may be seen as homologous to that enjoyed by Wurm's spectators, who see Jewish "nature" when faced with an ethnic travesty, and who feel themselves avenged against usurpation when the Jewish *salonnières* had created a hospitable, performative culture.<sup>13</sup>

The naturalization of racial difference is constructed upon the same model of opposition and hierarchy that was already locked in place by the bourgeois discourse of gender difference. The prime importance of the performer's masculinity to his ability to produce a heightened aesthetic pleasure becomes even clearer at the moment his gender identity is called into doubt. When Albert Wurm, shortly after his triumph in the Jew Farce *Our Acquaintances*, was accused of sodomy, his career was over.<sup>14</sup> Engravings circulated by the Jewish printers Henschel and an ironic review of critic Ludwig Börne cast doubts on Wurm's ability to perform. Although he was acquitted at a trial, he was henceforth prohibited from working as an actor in Berlin theaters, forcing him to tour the antisemitic circuit in the provinces. Whereas his impersonation of a Jewish woman,

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13. Wurm's act also creates a misogynist dynamic that unites and avenges men as the injured parties in the Jewish woman's engagement with German high culture. Here one might note the parallels between this performance (and the genre of the Jew Farce to which it is related) and the rapidly misogynist stance of antebellum American minstrelsy. The lampooning of female emancipation was a staple of the minstrel show.

14. Paul Derks mentions Wurm's sodomy trial in the context of the changing legal situation concerning the crime of sodomy at the end of the eighteenth century (10). Until 1794, the penalty for sodomy was death in Prussia; afterward, it was punished by several years of prison and forced labor, flogging, and subsequent banishment from the offender's place of residence (Steakley, 171). In this context, James Steakley's essay on sodomy in Enlightenment Prussia is illuminating in that the discourse about homosexuality (*avant la lettre*, but in the modern sense of a psychological identity rather than defined as a particular sexual act) was troped through gender inversion (he cites Kleist's letter to a fellow officer from 1805, among other sources).

that is, the abstraction from the gendered givens of his body in performance, had previously demonstrated his Germanness, his acting is now read as expressive of that body's sexual deviance and hence unable to transcend the "merely individual," "nature," the "thing itself," into an aesthetic commodity that can elicit the variety of pleasures it could prior to Wurm's outing. The deviant body is deemed incapable of mimesis, for female impersonation now reads as effeminacy and has become referential; thus its ability to signify as female or Jewish is denied.<sup>15</sup> By the same token, "proper" mimesis is revealed to be the province and prerogative of heterosexual German men.

What is "Jewish" in Wurm's performance? The answer is not only a specific cataloging of linguistic attributes, but, fundamentally, the question of performability. It is the a priori refusal to grant performative competence to certain kinds of subjects that constitutes the *raison d'être* as well as the aesthetic, antisemitic, and antifeminist pleasure of entertainments like Wurm's. Conversely, what emerges as specifically "German" is not only the unique power of the language to reveal an inner truth (recalling Fichte) but also that it is defined through the ostensible absence of specific ethnic or gendered signs as the precondition of unlimited, unfettered performability. Female impersonation enables the male, German body to prove both its universality and its specialness, pointing to the conundrum of whiteness that Richard Dyer has described: its unmarked status becomes its ethnic marker.

The fact that Wurm's act and its failure permit critical insights into the performative production of race, gender, and heterosexuality should not lead one to lose sight of the fact that the performance's outcome, as well as the variety of aesthetic and other pleasure it affords, are determined in advance. Voß's description ("a Hebrew lady would recite this ballad, with prudent care not to have the linguistic habits of her nation slip in") reveals much about the spectators' stance and expectation: Wurm is invited so that the Jew can be lampooned; one can well imagine the snickering response to the "careful restraint" even before her first "slip up," and his first assumption of the Jewish mask occurs. Proficiency, success—these

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15. My reading focuses on effeminacy as that which militates against Wurm's transcendence of masculinity; one might also consider the discursive effects of the scandal surrounding Swiss historian Johannes Müller in 1806, which connected sodomy with a lack of patriotism in the minds of the Romantics that vilified him. As Simon Richter shows in his essay "Winckelmann's Progeny: Homosocial Networking in the Eighteenth Century," Müller's admiration for Napoleon and his acceptance of a ministerial post under the French statesman provoked the ire of his contemporaries, who also inveighed against his well-known love for men. The year 1806, Richter concludes, "marks the inception of the German closet" (45). In this context, one might surmise that Wurm's reputed homosexuality forfeited his claim to the identity category of German that underwrote his impersonation of a Jew.

are already granted in advance by the communicative situation of antisemitic, misogynist sociability in which they are embedded and to which they lend focus. While Wurm's salon drama of dissimulation and exposure implied that identitarian signs needed to be read off of the body in question by a detective-spectator, his own case ironically demonstrates the slippage between detection and attribution, between cause and effect. While his act suggests that the inability to perform properly is the outcome of physiological difference, Wurm's censorship reveals how much the ostensibly unmarked identity that underwrote his performative success was aided and abetted by legislated access to the stage in the first place.

What about spectators? Who was part of the "elegant society" that Wurm was so "often invited" to entertain? While by 1815 the antisemitic Romantic *Tischgesellschaften* (dinner clubs) had replaced the commingling of Jews and Germans in the Jewish salons and point to the social segregation that began to set in after 1806, the theater provided an arena of social interaction, albeit a contentious one, as the censorship scandal surrounding *Our Acquaintances* illustrates. Around the turn of the nineteenth century, Berlin Jews were avid theatergoers, who often made their views known collectively or individually. Perhaps one of the most vocal and influential Jewish critics was Rahel Levin Varnhagen, whose letters provide a running commentary on Berlin's theater, especially on Iffland, who continually provoked her ire (Paul, 81). Jews' attendance or lack thereof might have influenced the popularity and the length of run of a play (neither *Nathan the Wise* nor the German translation of *The Merchant of Venice* was an initial theatrical success in Berlin).<sup>16</sup> While Jewish-authored plays, written in the mid-1790s, remained, in Sander Gilman's words, a "theater of the mind" that never reached the stage, it is nevertheless significant that the Haskalah, the Jewish Enlightenment, produced its own satires of internal Jewish conflicts between generations, in Yiddish, and in dramatic form—satires that revolved around similar themes and figures as the antisemitic farces I discuss above (Gilman 1991, 54–55). In short, theater was part of a rich, complicated, and contentious social dialogue and unequal confrontation, in which Jews were not merely the objects of representation, but, beginning with the controversy generated by Lessing's comedy *Die Juden*, interlocu-

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16. Reportedly, Lessing and Mendelssohn prevailed on the principal of the Berlin National Theater, where *The Merchant of Venice* premiered in 1788, to preface the performance with an apology regarding the offensiveness of title character, which was printed and distributed among the audience and which was also spoken by the actor playing Shylock. This incident shows that Berlin Jews recognized very well the power of the theater to shape public perceptions, and attempted to exert influence on what was shown. The censorship of *Our Acquaintances* in 1815 likewise demonstrates that the Jewish community could and did appeal to the Prussian state to protect the religious freedom of its citizens.

tors.<sup>17</sup> This context not only throws into relief the cruelty of the plays and performances discussed here but also brings into view the psychological, social, and political effects that the German discourses on assimilation had on Jewish identity formation—a nexus that Gilman has analyzed in his study *Jewish Self-Hatred* (1986). While I merely want to note the imbrication of the symbolic, the social, and the subjective here, I will return to the question of a Jewish counterdiscourse below.

Wurm's act underscores the impossibility of maintaining the class distinctions between low culture as the site of racist drag and high cultural impersonations as innocent of antisemitic pleasures. In the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the theater continued to elaborate ever more subtle aural sign systems for detecting the Jew. Richard Wagner's theoretical writings and, as Marc Weiner and others have argued, his musical compositions, written in midcentury, assembled this discourse into a full-blown antisemitic aesthetic. The artist articulated racial differences between Germans and Jews in the aesthetic terms of mimesis and mimicry, and paraded the Jew in his treatises and music dramas as a creature bound up in the superficial realm of appearances without ever reaching the realm of the ideal that is the prerogative of the German master. The discourse of biological difference offered a foundation on which later fascist ideologies and state apparatuses could transform the ideology of Jewish deceitfulness and the paranoia of the German dupe into a massive state apparatus of detection, segregation, and extermination. Jewish impersonation in the Third Reich both continued and intensified the theatrical discourse I outlined above, shifting it from the individual level of skillful listening to that of a state-administered technology acting on behalf of the gullible German dupe, whose innocence requires protection.

### Fascist Drag

During the Third Reich, Jewish impersonation was yoked to a full-blown, state-administered discourse of racial supremacy and extermination. Veit Harlan's feature film *Jew Süss* (1940) exemplifies the symbolic operations

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17. Gunnar Och makes this point in reference to the controversy generated by *Die Juden*, in which Mendelssohn's letter to Aron Salomon Gumpertz intervenes in the quarrel between Lessing and the orientalist Johann David Michaelis (both reprinted in Steinmetz): "Through this [Mendelssohn's letter], the Jew, albeit inadvertently, has become not the object of discourse, but an equal interlocutor, whose virtuous and educated demeanor challenges prejudices" (Och, 61). He further supports his thesis in his discussion of Marcus Herz's criticism of contemporary theater and its depiction of Jews, which the young Jewish doctor (and husband of Henriette) writes in the form of a mock dialogue between three Jewish women spectators.



and social effects of masquerade; this notorious text, which remains censored in Germany, was purposely marshaled by the state to prepare spectators for genocide.<sup>18</sup> Because of this feature, Harlan was the only film director charged with crimes against humanity after the war.<sup>19</sup> While the film was condemned, the filmmaker, who insisted he was an artist, not a politician, was found not guilty by the Hamburg court that tried him (Rentschler, 166).<sup>20</sup> This propaganda film was also a blockbuster movie, attracting 20.3 million spectators during the 1939–40 season, and casting doubt on the assumption that propaganda is tedious and devoid of pleasure. The movie is set in the eighteenth century and tells the story of the wealthy and ambitious Jew Süß Oppenheimer, who gains influence and power in the state of Württemberg by manipulating its weak ruler, Duke Karl Alexander, but is ultimately defeated by the people of Württemberg led by city councilor Sturm. In the course of the film, Oppenheimer persuades Karl Alexander to open the city of Stuttgart, formerly closed to Jews, to his brethren. As the duke's finance minister and advisor, he subjects the inhabitants of Stuttgart to a rule of terror, which culminates in his rape of Dorothea, Councilor Sturm's daughter and recent bride of notary Faber, which drives her to suicide. The discovery of her body, followed by the duke's death, results in Oppenheimer's capture, trial, and public execution. Sturm announces in the film's final shot that the ban on Jews in Stuttgart is to be reinstated: "May posterity honor this law so that much suffering to their property, life, and the blood of their children and their children's children might be spared them." The film's two stories—of political corruption and private violation—converge in the figures of the antagonist (it is Oppenheimer who threatens both the political order and the sanctity of the family embodied by virtuous Dorothea) and his victim: in Dorothea, Oppenheimer also rapes Württemberg.

Harlan cast only two actors in all of the Jewish parts (excepting extras); neither Ferdinand Marian, described as a "rather oily matinee idol," who played Süß Oppenheimer, nor Werner Krauss, who played all

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18. One film lexicon notes: "Before 1945 it was shown to SS commandos before they carried out missions against Jews; after the war it was used in the Near East for anti-Israeli propaganda" (Krusche and Labenski, 287).

19. *Jew Süß* was only one of twenty-one movies, mostly melodramas, Harlan had directed during the Third Reich.

20. For a wonderfully astute reading of Harlan's *Jud Süß* and its changing reception, see Rentschler. Rentschler discusses the tendency among some revisionist German critics to describe the film's propagandistic, hate-filled, antisemitic cruelty only to characterize it as an anomaly, the exception to the rule of supposedly nonideological films produced during the German cinema's golden age purely for entertainment (150). Linda Schulte-Sasse emphasizes continuity in her analysis of *Jud Süß*, arguing that the film borrowed the structure and personnel of the bourgeois tragedy.

the other Jewish speaking parts, was Jewish (Hull, 65).<sup>21</sup> Krauss, known as “a man of a thousand faces” (Rentschler), plays the unassimilated, Yiddish-speaking ghetto Jew to Marian’s elegant, assimilated courtier, with parts ranging from rabbi and butcher to scribe. Eerily, his face appears in different guises whenever the camera pans Jewish crowds, creating a paranoid effect of déjà vu. In an interview, Harlan explained his reason for such multiple casting: “It was meant to show how all these different temperaments and characters—the pious patriarch, the wily swindler, the penny-pinching merchant, and so on—are ultimately derived from the same roots” (quoted in Welch, 287). While critics praised Krauss’s skill and versatility in assuming multiple parts as a brilliant gift for metamorphosis, the same qualities are demonized in the film’s title character. As many film critics have noted, Oppenheimer, once metamorphosed into a suave courtier, does not look or act recognizably “Jewish” according to antisemitic conventions. On the one hand, his indistinguishable appearance lends weight to the movie’s exhortation to vigilance. On the other, the praise he received, as an Aryan, for performing a Jew who is denounced for masquerading as an Aryan, points to the social divisions and hierarchies in the Nazi state that already decided in advance what counts as mimesis, and what must be denounced as masquerade. The legislated exclusion of Jews from cast and audience merely codified the antisemitic sociability that had already framed Albert Wurm’s act.

How does the film help spectators distinguish between Jewish dissembling and Aryan authenticity? Karsten Witte and Eric Rentschler have argued that the equation of Jewishness with masquerade is filmically articulated and denounced through the device of the dissolve. In the first of these, a close-up of Oppenheimer’s face atop a caftan, framed by long sidelocks, a straggly beard, and a cap recognizably code him as Jewish. Following his interaction with the duke’s envoy and their agreement that Oppenheimer will personally bring precious jewels to Stuttgart, his face dissolves into a shot showing him clean-shaven, wigged, and fashionably attired on his way to the city.<sup>22</sup> This dissolve is reversed after his capture near the end of the film, when his courtly self dissolves into the ragged, soiled, and bearded image of guilty Oppenheimer at trial. The film’s story of treachery punished is complemented structurally by the camera’s piercing of the Jew’s disguise through the dissolve, helping the German specta-

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21. While Fritz Hippler’s notorious film *The Eternal Jew* (1940) used real Jews in its ghetto scenes, Nazi regulations prohibited the employment of a Jewish actor in a main role in a feature film (Schulte-Sasse, 81).

22. Süß’s manipulation of sartorial codes is complemented by his competent and elegant demeanor, as well as his linguistic command of courtly language, exemplified by his use of French phrases.

tors perceive the duping of the duke. Only then can order be reinstated through Süß's execution and the concomitant banning of Jews from the city. The camera's penetration of Oppenheimer's true, "Jewish" self underneath the visage of the civilized courtier points to the benign, protective role of visual technologies in the service of a state whose citizens' guilelessness is their tragic flaw.

I propose that both Rentschler's and Witte's arguments about the dissolve as a device of unmasking, as well as Linda Schulte-Sasse's contention about the generic foundations for the film's antisemitic story, can be strengthened if the film's theatrical provenance in the Jew Farce is drawn into consideration. That tradition, with its aural cues to identitarian truth, is fully incorporated in the film and brings the Jew Farce's lampooning of assimilation into the twentieth century by adding a visual component to the vocal unmaskings demonstrated in the theater. Oppenheimer and the other Jewish characters played by Krauss, especially the minister's assistant Levy, not only provide a study in visual contrast but also in linguistic habits: whereas Levy uses Yiddish words, syntax, and intonation, Oppenheimer speaks mainly High German. Whenever the minister converses with other Jews or when he is moved by strong feelings (greed, lust, fear), his changed intonation and syntax immediately signal a slipping of his "mask." I would argue that these aural signals, which derive from the Jew Farce's performance conventions, serve as constant reminders of Oppenheimer's masquerade throughout the film. Moreover, the Jew Farce provides a tight generic fit for the film's narration of a Jew's assimilation and expulsion, usurpation and punishment, organized around the motifs of thwarted upward mobility and a failed marriage. While I find Schulte-Sasse's observation that *Jew Süß* adapts elements of the bourgeois tragedy persuasive, the Jew Farce provides an even more congenial dramatic model. Even the film's device of unmasking in the final scenes has its theatrical predecessor: the Jew Farce typically ended with a costume change in which the Jew steps out of his theatrical role and into the social stereotype, in order to "invite the transposition from theatrical to extra-theatrical reality" (111).<sup>23</sup> Süß's unmasking and execution and Sturm's exhortation to "honor the ban on Jews," delivered in direct address to the audience in the film and to the camera, adapt the Jew Farce's convention for film. The film appropriates the genre's plot elements, personnel, and performance conventions and updates them to fit the visual regime of modernity.

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23. Neubauer's study provides several examples of this convention and explains it as part of early antisemitic *Tendenzliteratur* (propaganda) (111). *Our Acquaintances*, too, shows the central character take off his coat, shoulder a large bag, and address the audience as a traveling merchant.

Fascist drag, exemplified by *Jew Süss*, aligns the visual claim to the “truth” of Jewish monstrosity with an array of *gleichgeschaltete* (synchronized) state apparatuses, including the Aryanized and censored film industry, the Nuremberg Laws, and the vast administration orchestrating the mass deportations to the concentration camps in Eastern Europe. Spectators are positioned as witnesses to deceit (the Jew’s masquerade as civilized), not as duped (like the duke who perishes as a result of his tragic error) but potentially dupable—a position coded as quintessentially German. After most of the film had granted Oppenheimer control of vision, the gaze that in the end penetrates the Jew’s disguise becomes aligned first with the look of the film’s Aryan males. His execution in front of their eyes restores to them, Schulte-Sasse claims, their visual power and “their potency overall” (67). But the vertical, upward move of the camera during Süss’s hanging also suggests that “the execution is staged for the eye of God,” mystifying his death as consonant with a natural, metaphysical order (88).

Many critics have noted the ideological ambiguities in the film and interpreted them as sites of subversion, as moments of ideological breakdown. The fact that Marian received scores of love letters after his performance in the film, for instance, which Harlan reveals in his memoirs, prompted Regine Mihal Friedman to speculate about female viewers’ “rebellion against the denial and sacrifice of the female self demanded of the regime” (132). Friedman concludes that the Nazi film industry failed to interpellate the consumer into Nazism and antisemitism, and that it might actually have catalyzed German women’s antifascist “desires.” Linda Schulte-Sasse wonders whether “what makes *Jew Süss* work as film, with its codified organization of desire, undermines it as anti-Semitism” (81).<sup>24</sup> Moreover, Eric Rentschler’s view of Harlan’s *Jew Süss* as “a fantastic construction who reflected German phantasms” (158) stands in a long interpretive tradition that reads the Jew as the pure image of Nazi culture’s Other, as “negativity incarnate” (159), a tradition that extends from Adorno and Horkheimer to Gilman, Weiner, and Žižek. They have pointed to the instability at the heart of such a projective, “codependent” discourse (Weiner 1996), calling into question whether Süss’s vibrancy and vitality, his subject status, do not in the end undermine the film’s antisemitic agenda of denying subject status to Jews.

Disagreeing with the assessment of ambiguity or contradiction as

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24. In a similar vein, Marc Weiner argues in an essay on Wagner that the need to embody mimicry in order to distinguish it from proper mimesis necessitated an intimacy that resulted in antisemitic art’s profound and inextricable investment in the Jewish body, voice, and aesthetic activity, resulting in “a social and aesthetic position of codependence” (1996, 83).

ideological failure, Marcia Klotz argues that Süß's allure did not undermine the film's antisemitic intent but indicates the epistemological gray area between knowing and not knowing about state violence that she deems a typical and successful strategy of viewers' interpellation. Central to her thesis is the scene in which Süß rapes Dorothea. Klotz contends that the seductive depiction of Süß's virility, contrasted with the portrayal of Aryan males as "milksofs (Faber) and charmless lechers (the duke)" (1998, 101), mobilizes, through female spectators' identification with the woman, desire for the Jewish villain. Even though Dorothea's submission to Süß's coercion is justified within the plot by her wish to save Faber from torture, that female desire is a guilty one that can only be recontained by Süß's eventual punishment. A male spectator as well is offered pleasurable possibilities of identification in this scene, with either Dorothea, Faber, or Süß. "Yet in all three instances," Klotz maintains, "any pleasure he takes from the scene is a guilty, unstable pleasure—one that can only be exorcized by the sadistic hanging of 'the Jew' at the film's conclusion" (122). Fantasies of seduction, submission, and revenge thus do not exist in contradiction, but enable "the fascist racial apparatus to maintain itself" (122).

I concur with Klotz's assessment but want to stress that the film's construction of a consent to genocide rests less on ambiguous half-knowledge than on its division of knowledge and violence, which prior, theatrical traditions of Jewish impersonation had linked. The character of Faber, who recognizes Süß as a Jew and understands his danger at first sight, is nevertheless powerless to prevent the corruption of either the state or of his fiancée. The camera's close-up of Süß's face during that first encounter aligns spectators with Faber's "x-ray vision" and his knowledge, but also with the "goodness" that makes him too powerless to act. The realignment of the gaze from an individual perspective to the disembodied, suprapersonal one in the execution scene, which I regard as the constitutive feature of fascist drag, serves to bolster a division of labor and responsibility between state and citizen. This division simultaneously manufactures consent to the state's genocidal policies and preserves individual Germans' "innocence" and "goodness." That very goodness thus underwrites the state's prerogative to perpetrate genocidal violence against a part of its own population, a prerogative that Klotz points out (via Foucault) is implicit in all modern nation-states' efforts to guarantee the healthy reproduction of their population (1998, 96). The film's orchestration of spectatorial pleasure provided a ready alibi not only to Harlan, who later claimed that his portrayal of Süß was not antisemitic, but also offered relief to spectators, who were thus excused from individual responsibility and the accusation of mass complicity with genocide.

The catharsis facilitated by *Jew Süß* yoked the restoration of individuals' emotional balance (by purging their illicit desires) to the restoration

of the social order (of Jews' exclusion from the German community), illustrating the ideological function of Aristotelian drama to contain social conflict and manufacture consent. The texts I turn to now illustrate the difficult conditions under which Jews and communists contested mimesis and catharsis under fascism. They attempted to refunction extant theatrical conventions, harness them to radicalized visions of humanism and an antifascist politics respectively, and elaborate a poetics aimed at the transformation, rather than the confirmation, of the prevailing social system.

### **Authentication and Appropriation: The Jewish *Nathan*, 1933**

Theater history offers a famous instance of Jews taking on the mask of Nathan in an all-Jewish performance presented to an (almost) all-Jewish audience. Opening the 1933–34 theater season put on by the Jüdischer Kulturbund in Berlin, this production of *Nathan* endeavored to reappropriate the philosemitic image of the noble Jew in a subcultural setting, and for an antifascist agenda. Can casting, then, on which the racial effects of ethnic drag hinge in part, also undo those effects? This instance of “biologically correct” casting of the title figure raises the question whether the coincidence of the actor’s racialized body and the social role s/he plays is read within a logic of mimetic expression that can be harnessed to a pro-Jewish agenda or whether this conjunction can be staged in such a way as to throw precisely the expressive logic of racial identity into doubt.

Although *Nathan* was banned from school curricula and the Aryanized stages during the Third Reich, Nazi scholars, critics, artists, and cultural functionaries expended a lot of energy and resources on reinterpreting the German classics, including Lessing, through the lens of National Socialism (Zeller and Bruggemann). The Kulturbund’s production might be seen to capitalize on that effort by appealing to the benign face of humanism directed at both the Nazi authorities, which granted permission for the production, and the Jewish community in the German capital. The Kulturbund’s all-Jewish production of *Nathan the Wise* in September 1933, which theater historian Rebecca Rovit has reconstructed from contemporary documents and reviews, highlights the ambivalence at the heart of *Nathan* and illustrates the difficulty of appropriating a philosemitic fantasy as a plea for Jewish acceptance in a deeply antisemitic climate. The tension between Nathan’s positivity (for being a Jew who transcends Jewish particularity) and his marginalization (within the “family of man,” to which he belongs but cannot contribute) was sharply amplified by the social context in which the Kulturbund worked. Formerly integrated Jews regenerated their sense of community largely in response to gentiles’ aloofness after the “synchronization” and severing of shared political agendas and social ties (Koonz, 357–58), reviving religious cus-

toms as a source of strength in the face of growing isolation. After Hitler's government began to pass anti-Jewish laws and regulations, Berlin Jews decided to promote Jewish self-affirmation and difference rather than "conformity and self-denial" (Rovit, 145), and the Kulturbund echoed this purpose in its choice of acting style, costume, and props. The production added the signs of Jewish identity that Döbbelin, Goethe, Iffland, and others had taken such pains to remove from their noble Jew: Nathan was shown humming Hassidic songs, speaking prayers and blessings in Hebrew, and displaying a menorah in his home (Rovit, 146). The image of a Jewified Nathan embraced by his non-Jewish neighbors offered a much more radical vision of religious tolerance than would ever have occurred to Lessing. Moreover, its ending was much less conciliatory than the stage directions indicate, pointing to the way in which the social world outside the theater worked against humanism's integrative vision.

The production acknowledged the consequences of its choice to "Jewify" Nathan when it closed with the title figure isolated and excluded from the embrace of the "family of man." The blocking not only issued a visual indictment of the way Germans were forsaking their Jewish friends and neighbors but also dramatized the risks of Jewish self-expression, exposing the ambivalence that Lessing's script veils by the common embrace. As a community organization, the Kulturbund was expected to reflect its audiences' social reality, in which public affirmations of Jewishness provoked harassment and punishment. Claudia Koonz reports in her historical study *Mothers in the Fatherland* that one Jewish women's magazine "advised its readers to maintain a 'non-Jewish' image. Simultaneously, contributors wrote of Jewish pride—inspiring them to preserve in private the stubborn courage that would have provoked antisemitism in public" (358). The Jewish press was attuned to the pressures of promoting an inconspicuous public appearance. The play illustrates the incommensurability, in the Berlin of 1933, of the demands for Jewish self-affirmation and difference, on the one hand, and for truthfulness to the historical moment, on the other. It shows the difficult conditions under which Jews attempted to intervene in the antisemitic discourses of the dominant culture and tried to refunction its images.

In hindsight, some of the participants and critics of the Kulturbund emphasize the futility of their undertaking.<sup>25</sup> In order to render characters

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25. Rovit's very nuanced reevaluation of the Kulturbund's work tries to come to terms with the question, posed at a 1990 reunion of former members in Berlin, why the organization's efforts to "instill Jewish awareness in audiences" failed (150). Some of the Kulturbund actors later conjectured that one of the organization's main functions was to advertise the benign nature of Nazi racial policy to foreign visitors and observers. One of the founders of the Kulturbund, director Kurt Baumann, contended that "the Nazis were using us as a counterpropaganda against the growing pressure of foreign public opinion" (Richarz, 383).

recognizable as Jews, actors drew on sources from Jewish history and culture that had long been instrumentalized by an antisemitic tradition: “The suggestions of how Jewish actors might learn to act ‘Jewish,’” states Rovit, “recall the distorted caricatures of Jews by Nazi propaganda” (148)—as well as prior antisemitic stage conventions, one might add. Jörg W. Gronius, one of the Kulturbund’s actors, later commented on the heavy ideological weight attached to costume, set, and prop choices: “One wanted to put on the ‘correct’ shirt and was already stuck in a straitjacket” (quoted in Rovit, 149). Under conditions of censorship, segregation, a discriminatory racial classification system, a rapidly shrinking range of social activity and expression, diminishing mobility across national borders, and the heightened peril associated with racial visibility—in short, with authorship of cultural expression divorced from any form of authority or self-determination—these voices suggest that the Kulturbund had little power to convert the accelerating, aggravating discourse of race into a self-affirming, public discourse of Jewish pride.<sup>26</sup> Actors’ comments and contemporary reviews note the uncomfortable, even painful fit between Jewish signifiers and actors whose assimilationist social practice—shared by the audience—refuted the ontological, racial difference these signs purported to represent. The menorahs, headdresses, and caftans they saw on stage had no intimate meaning to them.<sup>27</sup> Perhaps because Jews’ acceptance in Germany had long been contingent on the elision of visible difference, the company’s attempt to recover and publicly valorize these signs was read as a confirmation of antisemitic stereotypes. Yet not all audience members necessarily shared Gronius’s perception of Jewish iconography as entirely determined by Nazi and antisemitic discourses. Arguably, contestations around the signs of Jewishness did not merely pit Jews against antisemitic Aryans, but also registered generational (along with gender) differences among Jews. After all, the theater’s attempt to recast Jewish identity in positive terms by invoking ancient cultural traditions, symbols, and rites resonated with concomitant efforts to rediscover and celebrate previously neglected customs either in the private sphere, as Koonz’s historical study documents, or in activist organizations with a Zionist orien-

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26. Significantly, this production was not the only attempt by Jewish theater artists to appeal to humanist or Christian values, although it was the only one presented to a Jewish audience in Germany. Other plays authored by Jewish artists during the Third Reich invoked German classical traditions or Christian love for their sympathetic representation of Jewish suffering and resistance. Composed abroad, their visions reached the public much later if they were produced at all. See Weil; Lasker-Schüler.

27. Rovit remarks: “German Jewish audiences . . . preferred to see champagne bottles rather than menorahs on stage, tuxedos rather than caftans, and low-cut necklines instead of women’s head coverings” (146).



tation (see Beck; Schoppmann).<sup>28</sup> The Jewish Nathan, excluded from the closing, pan-cultural embrace, underscored that identifying as Jews could come only at the cost of a separatism that foreshadowed the ghetto and the concentration camp, but also referenced the Zionist camps in the Berlin hinterland that provided agrarian and military skills in preparing Jewish youngsters for emigration to Palestine. Even if only a minority was actively involved in reclaiming Jewish culture in a situation of great adversity, Koonz stresses the importance of the recuperation of religious traditions in the private sphere: “Jewish Germans who remained learned to live a double existence, to ‘disappear’ beneath an obsequious public persona, and yet preserve their psychological health by not internalizing Nazi stereotypes about skulking Jews who sneaked through Aryan society” (382). Rovit has documented performing’s positive psychological and spiritual effects on the Kulturbund’s actors. This theater was able to protect its participants, at least temporarily, against a state-instigated discourse of persecution and extermination, and most likely helped audiences fight off demoralization as well.

By authenticating Nathan’s drag act, the Kulturbund production invoked Jewish cultural traditions with which many of the assimilated adult Jews in the audience would have been unfamiliar and about which many felt quite ambivalent. Authenticating this figure also risked assenting to the very narrow terms of his acceptance, which predicate the philosemitic embrace of the exceptional Jew on the denigration of Jews in general. As a communal rallying strategy, therefore, this production’s efficacy would have been limited. The authentication of an isolated Nathan risked conflating the terms of Jews’ social reality with the truth that Nazi racial science ascribed to the Jewish body. For some (perhaps the majority of) spectators, therefore, the dramaturgy of authentication was arguably unable to intervene in Nazi racial science’s deadly claim to mimesis, namely, its assumption to deduce an inferior racial character from bodily appearance, behavior, and linguistic habits. Moreover, in view of the fact that the Nazi state allowed the Kulturbund to run a showcase theater in order to advertise to foreign visitors the benign effects of racial segregation, the hypothetical audience (their actual social determinants notwithstanding) was not Jewish. Caught in the narrative structures

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28. Gad Beck, born 1923 in Berlin, underwent his Hachschara (training for emigration to Palestine), which was organized by the Hechaluz, the Zionist Worker-Pioneers’ Movement for Palestine. This organization, which was founded in 1917, coordinated European Jews’ emigration to Palestine and ran training camps where Jews acquired agricultural skills along with Zionist ideas. In 1936, the Hechaluz ran around eighty Hachschara centers in Germany and neighboring countries. After 1938, the Hechaluz was integrated into the Palestine Bureau but continued its work. Until 1941, Beck writes, they organized the emigration of almost forty thousand young Zionists.

and mimetic trap of classical drama, the *Nathan* production could not vest either actor or spectator with the authority necessary to challenge the racist economy but rather reaffirmed the classifying power of the Nazi spectator who saw a mimetic representation of Jewish inferiority, not shared humanity, and ultimately “unfit life.”

While reviewers articulated the disjunction of actor and role in terms of inept, unconvincing acting, I want to use their perception of the misfit of actor and role as a point from which to launch an alternative reading, although I cannot support it with evidence from spectatorial or critical responses, or actors’ memoirs. The heightened sense of public versus private displays of Jewishness, along with the differences between assimilated Jews and militant youth, arguably undergirded a sense of Jewishness as a historically contingent performative practice, rather than an immutable, internal essence, as racial scientists saw it. During that auspicious moment in the play’s production history, when all three positions in the hermeneutic triangle of actor, character, and audience were occupied by Jews, spectators might have understood ethnic performance in a sense profoundly different from *Jew Süss*’s denouncement of Jewish dissembling. Feminist and postcolonial critics have termed that type of performance *mimicry*<sup>29</sup> and describe it as a parodic, deconstructive doubling back on hegemonic images without supplying another truth. Nathan’s donning of the culturally constructed signs of Jewishness might have been perceived as calculated mimicry of Germans’ fantasies about Jews, and thereby put these under erasure, in a process similar to Native Americans’ and Turks’ theatrical reappropriations of Indian and oriental images (chap. 6). Denouncing, in turn, the German philosemitic imagination, *Nathan* would have underscored the impossibility of performing Jewish difference and integration in a society organized around racial hierarchy and segregation.<sup>30</sup> Rather than confirming the rightfulness of Nathan’s

29. The concept of mimicry refused to pit a female-authored “truth” of authentic femininity against the well-worn patriarchal fictions, to replace one ontology with another. See the discussion of mimicry in the introduction.

30. Hypothetically, one might imagine a community of Jewish spectators being amused by Lessing’s *Nathan* as a drag act, by finding the drama so transparently spelling out the ungenerous conditions under which Germans welcomed Jews into their communities or their ensembles—and seeing that logic of marginality reflected in the legislated absence of Jewish bodies from Nazism’s main stages and screens. The tenuous pleasure tinged with rage shared by that hypothetical audience who would turn the antisemitic joke around could only be understood as the aggressive glee of travesty. It is difficult to find a real analogue to this hypothetical situation, since racial travesty is so deeply contingent on ostracization and exclusion. When the African American playwright Ntozake Shange instructed producers of her play *Spell #7* to build a minstrel mask as the proscenium, black communities responded with outrage, not with amusement. They saw the minstrel mask as a reminder of a shameful past and sign of present practices of exploitation still too powerful to be refunctorized for a critical purpose (see Cronacher).

exclusion, as the logic of mimesis would suggest, the Jewish spectators witnessing mimicry would have been uniquely positioned to see a claim to the real pass for the truth, that is, they saw Jewishness as simulacrum, a racialized act performed under duress, to adapt Judith Butler's phrase. And to see the simulacrum, as Baudrillard reminds us, is to see "the truth that conceals that there is none" (1). Reading Nathan through the lens of mimicry, they could have perceived the arbitrariness of signs taken for referents, and the social and political pressures (on the part of the Jewish community as well as Nazi authorities) bearing on referentiality. In view of the immediate, organized assault of the Nazi state against its Jewish citizens (soon to be demoted to subjects), the perception of Nathan as a drag act would have destabilized the ontological foundations of Nazi racial discourse and instilled in spectators a sense of the exigencies of performance. To apprehend ethnicity as a sophisticated, calculated performance in tune with the exigencies of location, political climate, and individual objectives might have bolstered a sense of tactical thinking and actorly accomplishment in Jews without their feeling overpowered by Nazi stereotypes of deceitful Jews.

In sum, the Kulturbund production of Nathan opened up several different readings: spectators interpreting the figure through the lens of mimesis possibly felt affirmed and strengthened in their positive sense of Jewishness at a time when public displays of ethnic difference incurred hostility, and when the tending of Jewish traditions was increasingly confined to the private sphere or marginalized, Zionist groups. Another spectator could have seen Nathan's ethnic difference as evidence of his racial inferiority and approved of his exclusion from the human community. Finally, a reading of Nathan through the lens of mimicry might have inspired spectators' questioning of the racial "truths" supposedly expressed through performance, and prompted them to see through philosemitic fantasies and conditions of acceptance and sharpened their tactical understanding of performing their own ethnicity.

The odds against such a resistant reading of Jewish difference attaining dominance among the beleaguered community of German Jews in the Nazi capital were stacked high. Nevertheless, the political heterogeneity and hence the diversity of spectatorial responses within that community throw into doubt Rovit and Gronius's depictions of a two-sided battle between assimilated Jews and Nazi antisemites, which was played out around the signs of Jewish identity. Let me now follow my hypothetical postulation of a resistant, deconstructive reading with an analysis of the full-blown theoretization that was elaborated soon after.

## Estrangement Techniques

In this section, I will consider the work of a German theater artist exiled from the Third Reich, who devised a theory of acting dedicated to defamiliarizing and historicizing social roles assumed to be natural and hence immutable. Bertolt Brecht's (1898–1956) concept of estrangement techniques wrenches open a critical space for the spectator to question the discourses that produce ostensibly mimetic images and acts. His epic theater, by foregrounding the disjunction of body and role, aimed to estrange the class ideologies that mimesis laminates onto bodies. It throws the truth-value of identitarian signs into question while pulling into view the social apparatuses that enforce and punish certain acts and scripts. Some feminist scholars have already suggested that the Brechtian defamiliarization effect lends itself to a critique of race.<sup>31</sup> Yet my close reading of Brecht's first essay on estrangement techniques from 1936 shows that the defamiliarization effect and a critique of race do not go hand in glove. This is not due to any transhistorical German racism, but because Brecht's writing is shaped by historically specific conceptualizations of race and their blind spots. His concept of estrangement, as I will show in subsequent chapters, is central to many postwar uses of ethnic drag. Yet an understanding of the shortcomings of his theory of estrangement will also sharpen our view of its problematic legacies and its revisions.

Brecht first described estrangement techniques, the cornerstone of a non-Aristotelian theater, along with historicization and the social gesture (*Gestus*), in an article entitled "Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting"<sup>32</sup> after watching the Chinese female impersonator Mei Lan-fang in Moscow in 1935.<sup>33</sup> *A Short Organum for the Theatre* (1948) synthesized these concepts into a poetics of antibourgeois theater. In the later text, Brecht distinguished between "old" and "new" estrangement techniques, the former originating in classical and medieval European theater and contemporary

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31. In "Brechtian Theory/Feminist Theory," Elin Diamond refigures Brechtian methodology within a feminist frame, to talk, among other things, about the colonial cross-dressing in Caryl Churchill's *Cloud 9*, in which a white actor plays the part of a black colonial African. Amy Robinson uses Brechtian methodology to describe racial (and sexual) passing as a "theater of identity" in which (white or heterosexual) identity is thrown into relief as constructed and performative rather than essential and mimetic.

32. John Willett translated the term as *alienation-effect*. The accurate terms are *estrangement technique* or *defamiliarization technique*.

33. Antony Tatlow has pointed out that Brecht recorded his first responses to Mei Lan-fang's performance in an unpublished piece entitled "Bemerkungen über die chinesische Schauspielkunst," which were much more critical about Chinese acting than the later essay "Verfremdungseffekte in der chinesischen Schauspielkunst" (Tatlow, 310–12).

Asian performance, the latter in socialist experiments (Brecht 1964, 192). The difference between them, in the *Short Organum*, seems to run along ideological, rather than geographic, national, or ethnic, lines. However, the early piece clearly shows his effort to posit a “new German” (rather than “socialist”) theater in contradistinction to Asian as well as bourgeois traditions. These distinctions, considering the time in which Brecht wrote this piece, were articulated in racialized terms.

Brecht describes the defamiliarization effect in relation to acting as well as spectatorial stance and argues that the actor and spectator coproduce it. The nonillusionist techniques he observes in Mei Lan-fang’s performance hinge on the separation of actor and role, as well as on the acknowledgment of the spectator’s presence. The actor masterfully cites characters, emotions, and actions, rather than merging with them. Brecht remarks particularly on the separation of facial versus physical gestures (*Mimik* versus *Gestik*), aligning the latter with the character or action, the former with the actor’s observation of it. “The artist has been using his countenance as a blank sheet, to be inscribed by the gest of the body”: their juxtaposition brings into view the ongoing process of construction, expressly refusing to merge psychological depth (legible in the face) with bodily actions, which could then be read in a causal or expressive relationship (Brecht 1964, 92). This critical distance prevents the spectator from completely merging or identifying with what is shown. The spectator identifies with the act of showing and the inquisitive and engaged manner in which the actor does it.

Aesthetic pleasure for Brecht consists in art’s propensity to render ordinary, natural, and familiar things strange, unique, and extraordinary, so that they may be questioned and changed. He objects to bourgeois realism as a style that constitutes the spectator as voyeur, whose passive, identificatory observation of events that unfold inexorably is eroticized, so that the (historical, ideological) forces shaping the action are obscured. Put another way, the spectator’s voyeurism affirms the world as it is mimetically represented, as well as its immutability. The bourgeois theater becomes a metaphor for the ideological reproduction of capitalist society, because it deploys an elaborate, illusionist machinery to hide the labor expended to produce (hi)story, and agency is either veiled (the theatrical apparatus) or denied (spectator).

Brecht contrasts Chinese acting favorably with Western acting, decrying the latter for its intuitive, illusionist style that expends enormous effort on bringing about the spectator’s identification with the character, which, in turn, hinges on the actor’s transformation into the character. That done, however, his or her art has exhausted itself. In comparison, Brecht explains, the Chinese performer

limits himself from the start to simply quoting the character played. But with what art he does this! . . . What Western actor of the old sort (apart from one or two comedians) could demonstrate the elements of his art like the Chinese actor Mei Lan-fang, without special lighting and wearing a dinner jacket in an ordinary room full of specialists? It would be like the magician at a fair giving away his tricks, so that nobody ever wanted to see the act again. (94)

Whereas the Western actor works his magic tricks from the unconscious, the Chinese actor's citational style, his control over his performance, and his concentration on what's essential all attest to a creative process that is superior "because it is raised to the conscious level" (95).

Yet these terms of comparison are suddenly reversed when, one page down, Brecht discusses the estrangement technique in relation to the (Western) spectator rather than the actor: now the Chinese seem strange to "us as Europeans," the Chinese performer is linked with conjuring, magic, mystery, primitivism, and nature.<sup>34</sup> In contrast, the Western critical spectator is associated with science and knowledge. The Chinese actor not only "conjures up an impression of mystery" for the spectator but also "seems uninterested in disclosing a mystery to us." Those inscrutable Chinese! Underneath the mask of Mei Lan-fang seems to lurk the impassive visage of Fu Manchu. So it is regrettable but perhaps unavoidable that Chinese actors perform their enigmatic acts without achieving a greater understanding of the "natural phenomena" they conjure up. However, it is their very veiling of the "mysteries of nature" that prompts the Western explorer-scientist, "with his anxiety to make nature's course intelligible, controllable and down-to-earth, [to] always start by adopting a standpoint from which it seems mysterious, incomprehensible and beyond control. He will take up the attitude of somebody wondering, will apply the A-effect" (96). The Brechtian spectator is thus firmly ensconced in the orientalist dichotomy of domination that empowers the Western subject with its colonial and racist underpinnings. Antony Tatlow has shown that Brecht's conclusion misinterprets the Chinese actor's use of symbolic gestural language, as well as the relationship between actor and audience: "What appeared to him as magic were signs in a language he did not fully understand," in contrast to highly literate Chinese spectators (312). To Brecht, who was not privy to the "special relationship between actor and

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34. Willett translates the passage as follows: "He makes his own mystery from the mysteries of nature (especially human nature): he allows nobody to examine how he produces the natural phenomenon, nor does nature allow him to understand as he produces it. We have here the artistic counterpart of a primitive technology, a rudimentary science. The Chinese performer gets his A-effect by association with magic" (Brecht 1964, 96).

audience” in Chinese theater (Tatlow, 312), the Chinese actor is too strange; he *befremdet* (causes the audience to be disconcerted) rather than *verfremdet* (defamiliarizes), because “nature does not allow [him] to understand as he produces [the estrangement technique]” (1994, 96). Later in the text, another racialized subject makes an appearance that further serves to demarcate the critical Brechtian spectator and sharpen his/her political and ethnic contours.

In a discussion of historicization as an intervention in the bourgeois theater’s naturalization of social inequalities later in the same essay, Brecht mentions a production by the “highly progressive” New York Yiddish Theater (98). In a dramatic adaptation of a novel by Samuel Ornitz (*Haunch, Paunch, and Jowl*), a young woman seeks out an attorney and shows him her leg, which had been injured in an accident. Her compensation has not been paid, and she desperately cries that her leg has started to heal up. “The theater could not perform this play,” Brecht argues, because it “was unable to make use of this exceptional scene to show the horror of a bloody epoch. . . . The actress spoke the cry as if it were perfectly natural” (98). The Yiddish theater is shown to make the typical mistake of bourgeois theater, namely of psychologizing actions and characters, rather than opening them to a social critique. In this essay, the Yiddish theater is the only representative of the bourgeoisie, who, despite their “highly progressive” politics, are nevertheless adversaries in the ideological struggle. This is especially ironic since much of the Yiddish culture flourishing in New York was secular and socialist.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, Edna Nahshon describes the theater where Brecht watched the Ornitz adaptation as a “genuine people’s theater,” whose patrons were working-class immigrants (xi). Rather than catering to bourgeois sensibilities, the *Arbeter Teater Farband* (Artef) “operated within the orbit of American Jewish communism” and was one of the cornerstones of the artistically innovative and socially critical theater of the 1930s (Nahshon, xii). Yet Brecht’s characterization of this theater as bourgeois helps him to demarcate the duo of actor and spectator, who together defamiliarize social realities, defined as the rational consciousness that neither takes accepted truths for granted nor fails to understand them (96), against the Jew and the Chinese respectively. Speaking himself from the position of exile, his recourse to racial discourses, especially the double distancing of the bourgeoisie as Jewish and American, can also be seen to bolster Brecht’s authority as the representative of the “new German theater” at a time when his claim to that nationality had been revoked (he was expatriated in 1935 and his books burned

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35. I thank Nina Warnke for this observation; she is currently writing a dissertation on the Yiddish theater in New York.

by the Nazis). After all, he could have conceptualized his methodology as socialist and internationalist, rather than German. While this appellation allowed him to strategically embody the “other (antifascist) Germany” of the exiles, its juxtaposition with the Yiddish stage echoed the Aryanzation of German nationality and marginalized Jewish emigrants politically as well as ethnically.

Given that this essay was written a year after the Nuremberg Race Laws were passed, when Brecht had already emigrated along with many of his Jewish friends and colleagues, the articulation of a critical theater in ethnic terms is surprising only when one doesn't take into account the failure of the Left, already apparent in Marx's own work and later in the colonial debates, to develop a critical discourse on race. In the essay on Chinese acting, Brecht appears to have misrecognized the racial discourse of his time, which becomes obvious in his ironic derision of bourgeois universalism through a reference to Eugene O'Neill's play *The Emperor Jones*: “a black man falls in love in the same way as a white man (in theory this formula works as well the other way round); and with that the sphere of art is attained” (1994, 97). In contrast, he suggests, the “new German theater” must emphasize the historical uniqueness and specificity of identities, emotions, social relations, and behaviors. Brecht reifies bourgeois ideology, however, when he attributes to it an unchanging universalism and fails to understand that to the German bourgeoisie in the late 1930s, a black man's love is unlikely to have transported eternal, human values. Race was neither universalized in the sense that racial differences were regarded as incidental rather than essential any longer; nor did Brecht seem to have realized that the Nazis' technologically advanced, illusionistic apparatus, which interpellated spectators en masse into a naturalized social hierarchy, was a much greater threat to socialist notions of historical specificity than the bourgeois theater of a small elite and its putative humanist universalism. The implication of his example, namely that a revolutionary theater would underscore differences between black and white men's love, shows up race as the point where Brecht's faculty of tactical thinking fails. In all three incidents, race is located outside the purview of historicization, and therefore of critical interrogation, figuring instead primitive nature and magic or ideological complicity. At the same time, it is the term that crucially enables the Western, critical subject to articulate notions like historicization, alienation, and revolutionary change. To turn one of Brecht's phrases against him: race is the “notion [that] may allow that such a thing as history exists, but it is none the less unhistorical” (97).

I have performed such a detailed reading of the racial inscriptions in Brecht's methodology (the racial politics of his plays are yet another matter), in order to emphasize the difficulties involved in appropriating a left-



ist methodology that is itself plagued by the anxiety of appropriation. Note Brecht's classically threefold denial in his assertions that the estrangement techniques he witnessed in Mei Lan-fang's performance did not originate in China, have no influence on German theater, and would be of no use to the Chinese at any rate. The fact that, for Brecht, race marked the limits of the social realm as that which can be changed, and was instead relegated to the natural realm, which could only be mastered, attests to the complex genealogy of his scientism—its affiliation with enlightenment anthropology, with Marx's antisemitism couched in class terms, and finally with his own contemporaries' casting of historical processes in crassly racial and eugenicist terms, across the ethnic, class, and political spectrum. The detachment of a critique of fascism from a critique of race continued to impede a large portion of leftist theory and activism in the Federal Republic. This analysis might then explain why many critical theater artists like Fassbinder and Kroetz in the 1960s turned away from Brechtian precepts for a critical account of ethnic nationalism. Nevertheless, that history wrote itself into Brecht's text in ways he may not have comprehended or intended, hopefully does not mean that the notions of defamiliarization and historicization are irreparably flawed. My attempt to read his argument back into a discursive context it leaves unexamined is meant as a step toward historicizing the very thing he deemed unhistorical. As my discussion of Max Frisch's play *Andorra* in chapter 4 shows, the early 1960s briefly opened a window for a Brechtian application of the estrangement effect to racial discourse.

### **Philosemitism's Economy of Substitution**

In divided postwar Berlin, the theater became one of the main institutions for showcasing competing notions of German nationality. The casting politics of *Nathan* productions reveal a great deal about both East and West Germans' endeavor to construct national identities in contradistinction to the Nazi past and to each other as the Cold War heated up. When theaters reopened after a brief hiatus at the end of the war, many began their first season with *Nathan the Wise*, signaling a renewed commitment to the Enlightenment values of tolerance, as well as a plea for forgiveness to German Jews. The 1945 production at the Deutsches Theater in the Soviet-occupied sector of Berlin, which was directed by Fritz Wisten, foreshadowed the prominent place the play would assume in the philosemitic discourse that peaked in the FRG in the 1950s. The hiring of the Jewish survivor Wisten, who had previously headed the Jewish Kulturbund and spent several years in a concentration camp, prefigured the casting practice of the 1950s and 1960s, when the most acclaimed productions in East and

West Germany featured actors in the main role who had suffered Nazi persecution. By including these artists, the postwar theaters in the two systems offered a symbolic gesture of reconciliation to colleagues who had been eliminated from ensembles.<sup>36</sup> The eradication of all visible signs of Jewishness from Wisten's *Nathan*, which reversed the choices of the Kulturbund's 1933 production, pointed the way toward socialist interpretations of the figure, which downplayed his ethnicity, that would become prevalent in the GDR.<sup>37</sup> Finally, the prominence of Allied personnel in the 1945 audience that literary critic Marcel Reich-Ranicki notes in his autobiography indicates the instrumentalization of positive depictions of Jews especially in the West German process of democratization and denazification, a process that was initially organized by and subsequently addressed to international observers.<sup>38</sup> In this final section, I will focus on

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36. Some critics, like Walter Wicclair and Henning Müller, have persuasively demonstrated the postwar theater's resistance to denazifying itself. Wicclair, a Jewish remigrant, was outraged to first find himself ostracized in the theater scene, and then have his restitution claims processed by a former Nazi official (Ludwig Körner, the author of the *Winnetou* adaptations discussed in chapter 2). Müller, a GDR scholar, describes the controversy provoked by the return of actor Werner Krauss, who had played the "ghetto Jews" in *Jew Süß*, to the West Berlin theater. He traces antisemitic continuities in West Berlin theater and politics. Protests organized by the Jewish community in West Berlin, along with leftist students, prompted the management of the Theater am Kurfürstendamm to screen "Jewish-looking" spectators and prevent them from entering (268). Despite these measures, conflict erupted in the auditorium and caused the show to be interrupted. These incidents, and the political continuities they illustrate, suggest that the gesture of reconciliation indicated by the casting choices in a variety of postwar *Nathan* productions was indeed primarily symbolic.

37. The contradiction between the message of respecting differences and a cultural politics dedicated to ideological partisanship became the central interpretive problem that would haunt *Nathan* productions in the GDR. In the context of the Cold War, the socialist theater reinterpreted the play's central conflict around religious tolerance as a conflict of state ideologies and concluded that "freedom from prejudice must not be equated with a refusal to pass judgment" (Dessau, 162). *Nathan* was portrayed as an intrepid fighter for the communist ideal of the classless society (Dessau, 167). Consequently, performers and directors downplayed *Nathan*'s Jewishness, because, as one reviewer commented in 1955, "the irrelevance of skin color or ritual, dogma or nose shape . . . that is Lessing's point" (quoted in Dessau, 159). Because *Nathan* stands for the ordinary citizen, actors who portrayed him, like Eduard von Winterstein in the 1950s, showed him free of pathos and refrained from oratorical flourish or affectation (Dessau, 160). By casting revered socialist veterans and antifascist resistance fighters like von Winterstein as *Nathan*, the GDR theater subsumed race under antifascism, the cornerstone of the socialist state's self-image in the matrix of the Cold War. At the same time, it continued the assimilationist tradition of classical theater, a strategy consonant with the mode of existence of Jews in the GDR, who were revered as the "persecuted of the Nazi regime" and living proof of the GDR's antifascist commitment (Ostow, 147) but for many of whom party membership (and hence identification with the SED [Socialist Unity Party] state) evidently precluded affiliation with the Jewish Community.

38. I thank Sören Sieg for this reference, which provides a firsthand account of this important production.

the philosemitic substitution of symbolic reconciliation for accountability and redress, which can be traced through the play's postwar stagings and critical adaptations. The large number of *Nathan* productions provides an index of psychic and political anxieties and defenses in the postwar era (Bettina Dessau counts ca. three hundred between 1945 and 1978), and the decreasing frequency of his stage appearance since the 1960s (a trend that wasn't reversed until the early 1990s) suggests the gradual erosion of the philosemitic paradigm. While the racial feelings that fueled the philosemitic economy were arguably expended by the late 1960s, the problem that philosemitism purported to redress was merely displaced. Arguably, it was the very failure of this discourse to remedy the past and presence of anti-semitism that impelled some of the performative displacements and surrogations I discuss in subsequent chapters.

Ernst Deutsch's interpretation of Nathan, a role he performed from 1954–65, shows the substitution of love for hate, symbolic restitution for legal or material redress, and imagined reconciliation for actual confrontation or integration that Frank Stern describes as the hallmarks of philosemitism. Good relations with Jews, Stern demonstrates, were instrumentalized in the early 1950s to "provide the society at large with a 'clean bill of historical health'" (1996, 85) and facilitate West Germany's integration in Western military and economic alliances. The Adenauer government's dedication to "reconciliation" and "restitution," however, operated on the largely symbolic level of public proclamation and not necessarily on the level of everyday interaction, legal redress, or financial compensation. The project of restitution, of "making good," was primarily aimed at restoring the honorable name of Germany. The Adenauer government's good relations with Jews in Germany and with the state of Israel played a central role in this endeavor. While philosemitism was represented as the opposite and remedy to antisemitism, the former actually mystified and facilitated the continued existence of the latter. "Philosemitic expressions," Stern claims, "remained eminently ambivalent; yet they functioned as a surrogate to block and supplant the real confrontation with Jewish past and contemporary history" (92).

Deutsch was a Jewish remigrant who impressed reviewers and audiences with his rhetorical elegance and presented his role as a tour de force of suffering, despair, and forgiveness.<sup>39</sup> His Nathan's body language and intonation, according to one director's memories, "typified the Jew," a role that frightened German spectators, but managed to neutralize that

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39. Bettina Dessau presents this argument in her comprehensive study *Nathan's Rückkehr* (Nathan's return), in which she examines reviews and program notes, in addition to interviewing theater artists involved with a large number of postwar productions (she documents around three hundred between 1945 and 1978).

fear.<sup>40</sup> His saintly Jew facilitated a philosemitic catharsis and satisfied spectators' wish for redemption and absolution.<sup>41</sup> Deutsch's authentication of the role arguably facilitated the production's ambassadorial function to demonstrate the West German commitment to restitution abroad.<sup>42</sup> At home, it confirmed the survival of the (exceptional) Jew, his reintegration into the theatrical ensemble and by extension the human community, and his forgiveness for atrocities committed in the past. Yet one production in which Deutsch starred closed with Nathan's quiet disappearance from the stage, while Muslims and Christians celebrate their common bonds.<sup>43</sup> The director attributes Nathan's early and inconspicuous exit, unnoticed by the other characters or the audience, to Deutsch himself. It eerily blocked the predication of love on absence, the wish to see the Jew alive and gone—of his own volition, no less—at the same time. This figuration emphasizes the ambivalence of philo- and antisemitism.

The pogrom narration was the centerpiece of the production, which toured through Europe and the Middle East.<sup>44</sup> Reviews and program

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40. Director Horst Gnekow explained: "He embodied the typical Jew. He neutralized a role that frightened everyone and played Nathan as a 100 percent Jew" (quoted in Dessau, 109). A reviewer remarked: "Although the peculiarities of the Jewish people were indicated through hand gestures and, occasionally, intonation, he never permitted the crass exaggeration of these traits" (quoted in Dessau, 82).

41. Set designer Eva Schwarz remembers: "In Ernst Deutsch one happily found the antitype to the demeaning Jewish ogre that antisemitism had created. He corresponded to the philosemitism through which postwar Germans repressed their guilt for the atrocities committed. Hence the *noble* Mr. Deutsch, the Jew, became *the* classical, tolerant Nathan. One must recognize that as a representative of prewar theater he embodied something that was newly treasured after 1945. Ernst Deutsch was a very noble human being, who treated others with great dignity . . . just like the aristocrats in Chekhov's plays: very human—that's how I remember Deutsch. In addition, he *was* the person he portrayed. He was one with the role" (quoted in Dessau, 101–2)

42. Among other places, Deutsch performed the role in Oslo, Norway, where the mayor had so far refused to receive Germans but granted an audience to the German Jew. Deutsch's widow also relates of the passionate responses to his performance in Jerusalem, where the ensemble presented the play in the same building where the Eichmann trial had taken place a short time before.

43. Horst Gnekow, the director of a 1965 *Nathan* production in Luzern, with Deutsch in the title role, revealed: "I've always had problems with the ending. . . . I think that even Lessing had forgotten Nathan—after the handing over of the book he's no longer needed. During one rehearsal with Deutsch he 'surreptitiously' snuck away. We kept that in, and in such a way that nobody notices his absence; that's why we focused the lighting on the group at stage front. This solution is profound, it's open, it avoids being kitschy" (quoted in Dessau, 115).

44. Fanatical Christians had slaughtered his wife and seven sons in a brutal pogrom; Nathan's painful memories of the pogrom and subsequent doubts in God's wisdom culminate in his acceptance of a new task—namely raising the newborn Recha entrusted to him by Assad—as a way of overcoming blind resignation and doubt.

notes emphasized Nathan's acceptance of his family's cruel "fate"; he overcomes his crisis of faith in his resolution to carry on without harboring any grudges against the perpetrators. Structured around the wish fantasy of being absolved of racial violence, the production served as a symbolic defense against the reality of accusations the open and militant accusations and demands that initially characterized the relations between Jewish spokespersons and critics who cherished hopes of rebuilding Jewish life in Germany on the one side, and German politicians and Allied administrations on the other. Y. Michal Bodemann dates this phase from 1945 to 1948.<sup>45</sup> The emptying of the so-called Displaced Persons' Camps and the emigration of vocal Jewish leaders to the newly founded state of Israel (1948), but also the concurrent International War Crimes Tribunal in Nuremberg (1945–46) mounted by the Allies, gave way to a new political constellation within which West Germans addressed their troublesome past and those who represented it. The Allies' prosecution of Nazi war criminals, and their political assessment of all those former Nazi officials and party members that were required to undergo denazification procedures, accorded the foreign occupying forces, especially the Americans, a central role in West Germans' legal, social, and imagined efforts to come to terms with their past.<sup>46</sup> Philosemitic representations were increasingly divorced from Germans' hostile attitudes toward living Jews, although antisemitism changed from the Nazis' biologically motivated discourse of difference, purification, and extermination to postwar Germans' resentment of Jewish accusers and "troublemakers" who would not leave the past alone. While such attitudes were not publicly voiced, their repression impelled the reversals and substitutions I discuss in the following chapter.

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45. Bodemann's periodization, which stresses the prominent role of the Sherit Hapletah ("the remnant of the saved") in the early reconstruction of the Jewish community in West Germany, differs from historian Jeffrey Herf's characterization of the immediate postwar years. By naming the 1945–49 period "the Nuremberg interregnum," Herf emphasizes the triangular structure of German-Jewish-Allied confrontations around the Nazi past and implicitly assigns Jews the role of witnesses and victims, rather than accusers and critics. The Sherit Hapletah, Bodemann writes, saw themselves as "having a particular national-Jewish mission as a remnant of European Jewry and as a symbol of the common fate of all Jews." The political culture that developed in the Displaced Persons Camps was marked by "ardent Zionism . . . and the extraordinarily blossoming of Jewish culture and debate there" (25). It came to an end once the majority of DPs realized the extent of persistent antisemitism in Germany and Eastern Europe, gave up hope of rebuilding Jewish life there, and oriented themselves toward emigration (Bodemann, 24f.).

46. Jeffrey Herf writes that the Western Allies interned two hundred thousand former Nazi officials and required almost sixteen million Germans to fill out questionnaires concerning their political activities (204), while commissions in the Soviet-occupied zone processed 850,000 denazification cases (72).

How did Jewish playwrights contend with Nathan's philosemitic instrumentalization?<sup>47</sup> The work of Hungarian-born writer-director George Tabori has most frequently offered a "locus of remembrance" to German and Austrian audiences (Feinberg, x). His work, which is translated from the English, is one of the few exceptions to the unequal access to cultural production that has characterized the contentious dialogue between German playwrights and actors on the one side of the proscenium and Jewish critics on the other.<sup>48</sup> In 1990, against the backdrop of surging hate crimes against foreigners and Jews, Tabori staged his *Nathan* adaptation, entitled *Nathans Tod* (Nathan's death), at the Lessing-Theater in Wolfenbüttel, where Lessing had written his last drama (Wille). The set showed a dark city whose streets are roamed by troops of frustrated and angry Christian and Muslim soldiers, and where ethnic hostilities are close to the boiling point. The sultan and the patriarch are cynical capitalists in pinstripe suits, who consort smugly over cocktails. Recha narrowly escapes a gang rape, and Nathan is robbed in broad daylight, before being subjected to prolonged harassment and torment at the hands of palace guards. The climax of the play comes when the back wall of the stage opens to reveal an enormous, burning cross, while Nathan's house goes up in flames and Recha is murdered by soldiers. The old, grief-stricken Jew dies after stammering the ring parable. The conflagration and the cocktail party figure reunification and the violence it unleashed, staging the failure of tolerance or reconciliation vis-à-vis the long history of German nationalism and xenophobia. *Nathan's Death* points to humanist idealism as an undelivered promise and refuses to cater to the philosemitic wish fantasy it nourished after the war.<sup>49</sup>

47. Few Jewish playwrights in West Germany apart from Tabori have addressed German-Jewish relations in the postwar period. Among them are Nelly Sachs and Peter Weiss.

48. Interestingly, a number of Jewish theater artists, from the revered actor Fritz Kortner (who refused to play Nathan, but delivered a famous Shylock), and Peter Zadek (who directed three deconstructive productions of *Merchant of Venice* in 1961, 1972, and 1988), to playwright-director George Tabori (who likewise directed *Merchant* three times in 1966, 1978, and 1989, and wrote a play titled *Nathan's Death*, 1990), seemed to have preferred the critical possibilities Shylock offers to the perhaps facile, conciliatory rush of catharsis provided by Nathan.

49. Tabori's play *Weisman und Rotgesicht* (Weisman and Copperface, 1990) is interesting in this context, because it dramatizes an encounter between a Native American, a Jewish Holocaust survivor, and the survivor's handicapped daughter in that most mythical of settings, the Wild West desert. The play's climax is a *High Noon*-style standoff in which the two compete for the position of most persecuted, revealing how the vying for victim status has nearly extinguished their capacity for forming bonds with other oppressed groups. Tabori implicitly criticizes the comparative approach to genocide, which diminishes the uniqueness of specific historic instances of oppression and extermination, but seems to reserve particular irony for the way in which members of minorities derive moral authority from historical victimization.

Jewish impersonation set up some of the perceptual habits (of piercing through another's masquerade) and aesthetic assumptions (about the allegedly universal performability of the white, male, Christian body) that can be traced in a variety of postwar plays and performances about other ethnic groups. Fascist drag's alignment of the mimetic prerogative and the derogation of masquerade with the racial hierarchies enforced by the state exaggerates and formalizes the antisemitic sociability and vengeful "aesthetic pleasures" generated by earlier plots and personnel. My analysis of *Nathan's* production history has also generated a deconstructive reading of ethnic identity, exemplified by the Kulturbund's 1933 staging. The counterhegemonic potential lodged in such an approach was elaborated and systematized into an acting theory by Bertolt Brecht. While his construction of the critical spectator echoes antisemitic drag's exhortation to audiences to "see through" the masquerade, the Brechtian spectator notes the disjunction of actor and role without attributing it to a racially motivated intention to deceive. Instead, s/he interprets it within a non-Aristotelian poetics not organized around catharsis (and hence ideological affirmation), but oriented toward the collective transformation of an unjust social order.

Finally, my discussion of Jewish impersonation has raised the question whether and how the subjects who find themselves lampooned in ethnic drag can or should reappropriate the figures whose repetition over time seemed to confirm their truthfulness. The Kulturbund's authentication of a Jewish role that famously emplotted the Enlightenment ambivalence toward "race" can be seen to insert Jewish actors in an ideological straitjacket. Yet the invocation of a tradition predating and persevering in spite of the dominant culture's antisemitism also recontextualized the play within Jewish history and culture at a moment when they were publicly devalued. The production's valorization fortified an aggrieved community, but the Kulturbund's effort was also instrumentalized by the Nazi state for propaganda purposes. The casting politics of postwar West German *Nathan* illustrate the risk of authentication to an even greater degree. Ernst Deutsch recuperated the noble Jew and thereby became the symbolic hostage of the Adenauer era's rather empty philosemitic professions.

The question what kind of a Jew Nathan is and how he relates to the rest of humanity demanded of actors and directors that they solve the problem of Nathan's exit and thereby make explicit the play's relationship to the social order. Its stage history therefore provides an index of changing attitudes regarding religious, cultural, and racial difference, and registers the continuing friction between utopian promise and social reality. It provided a site where Jews and Germans continued to engage in tense

struggles around the conditions of difference and acceptance. After the Shoah, Nathan's exit became so overdetermined by fear, guilt, and wish fantasies that the play could only effect a precarious catharsis. Although productions paraded a forgiving Jew, this figure could not but remind German spectators of horrific wrongs, shame, and complicity; other dramas were able to rework this scenario of stark antagonism into visions of harmony and redemption.





## CHAPTER 2

# Race and Reconstruction: *Winnetou* in Bad Segeberg

The Third Reich is Karl May's ultimate triumph, the ghastly realization of his dreams.

Klaus Mann

Kolportage hat . . . Wunschphantasien der Erfüllung in sich; und sie setzt den Glanz dieser Wunschphantasie nicht zur Ablenkung oder Berauschung, sondern zur *Aufreizung* und zum *Einbruch*.

Ernst Bloch

That *the so-called split of human subjectivity is an image of split humanity in toto*, is the insight of someone who came to understand collective unhappiness through the prism of his own misery, and only those will fully comprehend that sentence who realize the extent to which the narcissist neurosis subtends the diseases of our culture. Should this, finally, be the "secret of his success"? No writer has ever enthralled his readers so profoundly; nor has anyone been as deeply beloved as him, whose work is a single quest for lost love. Mass psychology would perhaps answer our question like this: Karl May's "I" became the ego-center for innumerable ego-impaired people, an echo chamber for collective anguish.

Hans Wollschläger

Picture this scene: a blond, blue-eyed man in leather shirt and leggings tied to a post, surrounded by howling, tomahawk-swinging Indians. Their chief raises his hand—a hushed silence falls, all eyes are riveted on the two figures facing each other. Cutting the white man's ties, his majestic counterpart, face covered by a thick layer of brown makeup, initiates the following exchange:

"Be my friend!"

"I already am."

“My brother.”

“With pleasure.”

The frenzied applause, the whistling and cheering that follow the solemn oath of blood brotherhood is only surpassed at the final curtain call, when a full ten-minute ovation greets Indian chief Winnetou, who, again and again, rides across the stage, his hands raised in a greeting that includes the entire audience in the red-white brotherhood (Grieser, 100–101). While journalist Dietmar Grieser described this scene in the late 1970s, I imagine that the ritual surrounding the oath of brotherhood has been similarly charged ever since *Winnetou* inaugurated the open-air festival at Bad Segeberg in 1952,<sup>1</sup> an annual event celebrating the work of Karl May (1842–1912), an immensely popular writer of travel and adventure novels.<sup>2</sup> *Winnetou*, the trilogy about the adventures of a proud Apache chief and his German consort Old Shatterhand, remains the most popular stage and film adaptation of a novelistic oeuvre that comprises between seventy-four and ninety-nine volumes, depending on the edition.<sup>3</sup> Since 1952, the festival has

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1. A comparison of photo-books about the Bad Segeberg festival shows that the oath evolved into the most frequently photographed scene of the play. Whereas *Plastische Indianerwelt*, published probably in 1954, only included one image of the oath scene (18), Rebhuhn's *Karl May lebt* (1962) focuses on close-ups of actors' faces, but also contains numerous peacemaking scenes (18–19, 75, 77, 78–79), as well as portraits of the heroic pair Winnetou and Old Shatterhand (59, 73, 82–83). *Der Wilde Westen Live* (1992) still includes only two “oath” and peacemaking photos (23, 68), but in Sparr's *Der Kalkberg* (1997) the oath appears to stand in for the respective productions (80–81, 84, 86–87, 95).

2. May's biography is the stuff of legend: born and raised in abject poverty, impaired by blindness during his early childhood probably due to malnutrition, May went to school and later was trained to become an elementary school teacher. Charged with petty theft, swindling, and imposturing, his teaching license was revoked, and he served a series of prison sentences during the 1860s and early 1870s. In prison, he began to write. Having contracted with the editor of a popular magazine in 1875, he wrote serialized novels on a heavy installment schedule. Popular and financial success came only in the early 1890s, when the publisher Friedrich Fehsenfeld approached him about a book edition of his travel fiction. In 1899–1900, May, who insisted on the authenticity of his first-person adventure novels although he had never left Germany, undertook a longer journey through the Middle East, North Africa, and India, which precipitated a marked change in his writing style and a turn toward mysticism. A second trip to the East Coast of the United States in 1908 likewise attempted to close the gap between pseudoautobiographical fiction and reality. Critics had meanwhile exposed, ridiculed, and denounced May's claims to firsthand experience of the Orient and the Wild West and publicized the author's criminal record. From the mid-1890s onward, May's life was marked by material success as well as by fear and resentment of his accusers. He spent much time and energy pleading his case to the public, sometimes writing defense pamphlets under a pseudonym. For biographical information on May, see Heermann; Loest; Wollschläger.

3. Karl May published the *Winnetou* trilogy in 1893; his publisher Friedrich E. Fehsenfeld had encouraged him to create a cohesive narrative frame for the many Winnetou and Old Shatterhand episodes that had come out in magazines during the 1870s and 1880s. May

revived this legendary friendship thirteen times.<sup>4</sup> Audiences have grown from nearly one hundred thousand the first year (while more watched the televised broadcast) to over three hundred thousand who showed up for *Winnetous letzter Kampf* (Winnetou's last battle) in 1990, swooning with the passionate, romantic affect of interracial encounters (*Der Wilde Westen Live*, 48–49). Remembering these moments from my childhood and adolescence, I have no doubt this is the whoosh of catharsis, but what are the exact contours of the subject that is thus purged of pity and fear? If we speculate that Winnetou's tragic flaw is perceived to be his "fate" as a Native American doomed by the onslaught of white civilization, then what are we cheering about? And who is that "we," or rather, how does Winnetou's greeting constitute "us," if not as white invaders?

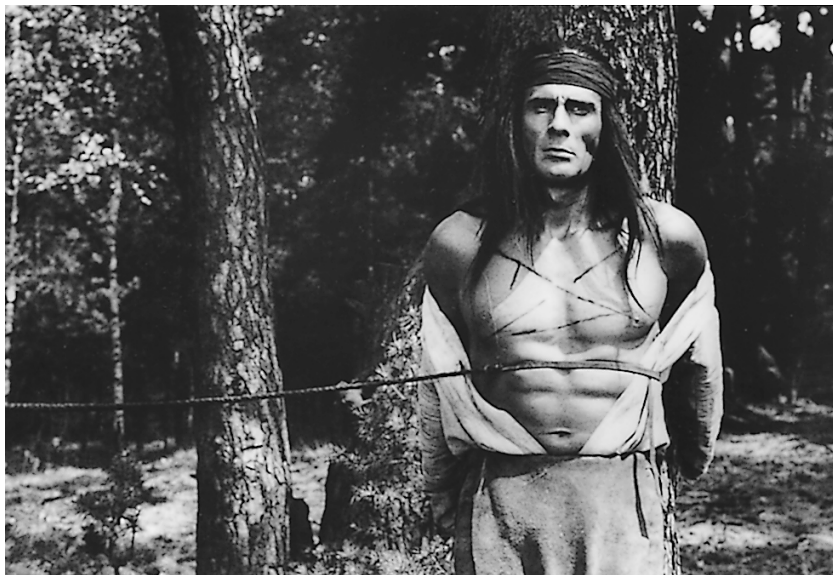
The interracial melodramas performed at Bad Segeberg reveal a great deal about postwar West Germany's phantasmatic self-representation and explain the eminent adaptability and undiminished success of Karl May's works, so removed from historical truth, contemporary reality, and the generic conventions of the American western. In the first portion of this chapter, I will argue that *Winnetou's* popularity arose out of very specific psychic and political needs and pressures in postwar West Germany that point to certain historical parallels between the time of writing (the 1890s) and the postwar years when stage adaptations of May's westerns surged in Austria and West Germany.<sup>5</sup> By tracing the trope of miscegenation over a

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wrote the first volume and part of the third for the book edition (see Sudhoff and Vollmer for the evolution of the Winnetou figure and the novel's publishing history). Toward the end of his life, May turned to a marked mysticism that influenced his writing style. He returned to the Winnetou legend, and published what he titled *Winnetou IV* in the *Augsburger Postzeitung*. In 1910, the book edition appeared under the same title. The Bamberg edition, however, changed that title to *Winnetous Erben* (Winnetou's heirs), presumably since that volume's style and message diverged drastically from the adventure-yarn tone of the first three. Even though present editions have returned to the original title, the four volumes are not generally considered a tetralogy.

4. In addition, local children's ensembles performed *Winnetou* adaptations in the years 1978–79, with a girl playing the title role.

5. Hansotto Hatzig's short survey "Dramatisierungen" in Ueding's *Karl-May-Handbuch* includes the following listing for the immediate postwar years: "Nach Kriegsende 1945 begann man zunächst nur in Österreich mit der Aufführung von Stücken nach Mays Büchern: 1946 am neuen Schauspielhaus in Wien, 1947 am Raimund-Theater in Wien und am Stadttheater in Urfahr bei Linz. . . . Körners *Winnetou* tauchte 1952 im Theater am Besenbinderhof in Hamburg wieder auf. . . . Gespielt wurde es auch 1947 in Wolfenbüttel und Hannover, 1950 von der Bühne der Jugend Berlin, dann im Stadttheater Bremerhaven, in Kassel, Stuttgart, Neuwied und Wiesbaden, 1951 in Mönchengladbach, 1952 in Karlsruhe und Mainz. . . . 1952 und 1964 brachte die Freilichtbühne Cuxhaven *Winnetou* . . . 1953 folgte Bentheim mit *Winnetou*" (1987, 652, 654). In view of this surge of adaptations, I suggest that May's *Winnetou* constituted the mass-cultural counterpart to Lessing's *Nathan der Weise*, which dominated the state theater seasons.



Gojko Mitic as Ulzana in *Apachen* (Apaches), 1976. (Photograph by Peter Dietrich.)

longer period of time and with special attention to the 1980s and 1990s, I want to underscore the longevity and continuity of the discourses on race, as the Wild West dramas emplot them, and their permutability. Analyzing the changing styles of embodying masculinity and race through a look at the succession of Winnetou and Old Shatterhand actors allows me to note the vacillation between ethnographic-romantic and erotically charged, rough styles of fetishizing racial difference. The May festival's status as a "low cultural" product invites such analysis, because it has resisted liberties by scriptwriters and directors even less than a classical drama like *Nathan the Wise*. The Karl May dramatizations, which have run continuously since 1952, allow a critical understanding of the way in which paradigm shifts in the culture at large contend with seemingly obsolete notions of human difference. The refunctioning of a racial trope like miscegenation into a symbol of multicultural harmony since the mid-1980s, for instance, raises the question whether multiculturalism reverses, cancels, or preserves older notions of race. Arguably the success of May's work and its postwar West German adaptations results from the way in which they integrate seemingly antagonistic discourses such as imperialism and anti-imperialism, racism and multiculturalism, antimaterialism and commodity fetishism.

There is a wealth of critical literature about Karl May and every aspect of his biography and his work, its sources, and its reception. I am here only concerned with the various performance genres that have grown up around May's works, rather than the novels themselves. Bad Segeberg offers a particularly rich site of interracial performance, yielding a paradigm of ethnic drag that has been more pervasive than any of the other instances of cross-racial performance discussed in subsequent chapters. This is a paradigm with which all others had to contend, for its hold over spectators' and practitioners' imagination is still largely unbroken. At the same time, it is important to note that ethnic drag in Bad Segeberg is not a unified, monolithic phenomenon, in which one kind of practice creates one meaning. The festival is spectacularly diverse in its deployment of drag, which might explain its appeal across generations, East-West differences, and political convictions. Transparently colonizing acts of ventriloquizing the subaltern's speech occur alongside openly anticolonial story-lines, the gesture of ethnographic authenticity exists side by side with that of carnivalesque fantasy, xenophilia alternates with xenophobia. Bad Segeberg illustrates the compound of chauvinism and tolerance, humility and grandeur, dispassionate observation and passionate identification that Susanne Zantop has already diagnosed in precolonial German culture. Zantop argues that one function of precolonial and colonial fiction was to write over the legend of "a specific German proneness for cruelty" (23).<sup>6</sup> Subsequent fictions of conquest and exploration, she maintains, evoked his condemnation only to refashion it into a series of cover-up fantasies, which included that of an explorer who innocently stands by as others despoil what he has discovered.

Writing during Germany's colonial era, May perpetuated and revised some of the tropes Zantop examines. Significantly, his novels are not set in the German colonies, whence reports about the habitual cruelties of adventurers like Carl Peters or the colonial administration in Africa reached the Reichstag, and where from 1904–7 German colonial troops waged a brutal war against the native Herero population.<sup>7</sup> Instead, his

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6. The "black legend" dates back to the Welser's colonizing venture in Venezuela in the sixteenth century, which had been so forcefully indicted by Bartolomé de Las Casas in his *Brevisima relación sobre la destrucción de las Indias* (Short report on the destruction of the Indies, 1545). Zantop notes that the term *black legend* has been used to describe the cruelty of the Spanish conquerors and colonizers, but she also applies it to Las Casas's denouncement of the atrocities of the "animales alemanes" (23).

7. Violence was often the subject of literary depictions of colonial life, e.g., Gustav Frenssen's novel *Peter Moors Fahrt nach Südwest* (1906) or Frieda von Bülow's colonial romance *Tropenkoller* (1895). See Marcia Klotz 1994; Eigler; and Wildenthal for a discussion of these authors and the subject of colonial violence. Although I have not found comments by May about the Herero uprising or the behavior of Germans in Africa, he did condemn German participation in the squashing of the Boxer uprising in China.

heroes roam primarily the Wild West and the Orient.<sup>8</sup> His Wild West novels indict the excesses of the imperialist project and even mourn its violent outcome, yet legitimate it as the doomed struggle of primitive, natural peoples against the inevitable encroachments of a more advanced civilization.<sup>9</sup> Most importantly, they construct the legend of the German explorer/emigrant as an impassioned yet fair arbiter of colonial atrocities. Where other whites have done nothing but wreak havoc, the German “westmen” try to repair the damage and punish the wrongdoers. While Indians often mistakenly presume the Germans to be greedy and immoral, May’s heroes always triumph by proving their impeccable motives: they are there to see justice done and help the red man in his plight, not to enrich themselves materially or make sexual conquests. *Wiedergutmachung* (restitution, lit: “to restore goodness”) is thus the central trope of May’s Wild West novels: Germans are “made good” again, their honor is restored after being suspected of white racism. In these repetitive tests of honor, one might see the accusation of German cruelty continually restaged and written over by the assertion of German innocence and peacefulness.<sup>10</sup> The supposition that some “races” possess leadership qualities while others don’t, but also the belief that not all whites are equally good, along with the dream of a natural, God-given, Christian order protected by honorable and just men shaped May’s fictions, which progressively diverged from the increasingly fraught colonial reality.

These same elements were powerfully reinvigorated by the political pressures and psychic needs of the early postwar years. While Lessing’s *Nathan the Wise* epitomized the official discourse of atonement and reconciliation of the reconstruction period, *Winnetou*, I argue, captured and cathartically purged the central ambivalences and conflicts of that time: the traumatic experience of shame along with the denial of collective responsibility, the resentment against the accusers and victims of genocide

8. In addition, several of his travel novels were set in other exotic locales. He also wrote in almost all of the popular genres of the time, trying his hand at detective, romance, and adventure fiction.

9. In the foreword to *Winnetou IV*, May declares his belief in all races’ duty to evolve beyond the childish habit of internecine fighting and the idealization of a warrior mentality. While these are stabs at Native American customs, he grants Indians the propensity to evolve “toward the creation of the one, only, great human nobility [Edelmenschen] that has cast off any animalistic traces” (*Winnetou IV*, 8). That *Über*-humanity is the result of the gradual “conjoining and merging” of “all tribes, peoples, nations, and races.”

10. By the time Karl May published the fourth, most utopian *Winnetou* volume (1909–10), that myth had become untenable. The extraordinary brutality with which the Herero uprising in the colony German South West Africa was squashed in 1905 (see Launer and Ustorf) makes it difficult to interpret May’s work as an appeal to Germans’ lofty ideals. Rather, it takes on the character of legitimating the violence perpetrated in the name of these ideals.

as well as grief and the wish for atonement. After World War II, the defense against charges of racial atrocities, the sense of national guilt and shame articulated by Allied administrators and prominent Germans like Theodor Heuss (later the first president of the Federal Republic), and the accounting of racial atrocities attained new urgency under the bright lights of the International Military Tribunal (November 1945 to October 1, 1946) and the twelve subsequent trials for war crimes and crimes against humanity that took place in Nuremberg (1946–49). As Nahum Goldmann, speaking “in the name of Jews around the world,” publicly reminded Germans of having inflicted unimaginable tortures and perpetrated a “unique, awful” crime “for which there are no analogies in history,”<sup>11</sup> the stage in Bad Segeberg provided an “echo chamber of collective anguish” (Wollschläger 1972–73, 84) to a much greater degree than earlier, prewar May adaptations. Moreover, the American frontier became an apt, symbolically charged locale for negotiating national responsibility and interracial relations, not just because the American western in the form of dime-store novels and Hollywood movies had provided postwar German consumers with new settings, costumes, and vocabularies for the timeless conflicts of good and evil, shame and honor.<sup>12</sup> The United States occupied a prominent role in Germans’ confrontations with the immediate past, as military occupation power, as prosecutors and judges in the war crimes tribunals, and as mediators between West German politicians and Jewish representatives demanding redress and, later, restitution and reparations. May’s dehistoricized Wild West offered the material for a very historically specific surrogation in a situation in which direct confrontation between Germans, and even more so between Germans and Jews, over

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11. With these words, Goldmann described the Holocaust at a memorial service in Bergen-Belsen in 1952. Herf notes that Goldmann’s speech was the first and most elaborate account of the Holocaust at a public, political event in the postwar decade (319). While Jewish survivors had gathered at concentration camps to commemorate the Holocaust since 1945, 1952 was the first year they were joined by West German officials, among them the president of the Federal Republic, Theodor Heuss. Heuss’s speech at that event became famous for the exclamation: “No one will lift this shame from us” [Diese Scham nimmt uns niemand ab!].

12. In her study *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany* (2000), historian Uta G. Poiger describes the enormous appetite by German readers and moviegoers for westerns and gangster stories after the war. These products were mass-distributed and consumed often against the protests of state and church authorities, as well as the American cultural centers dedicated to the dissemination of American high culture. Fully one-quarter of the ca. four hundred American movies distributed in West Germany were westerns (55). She also remarks that the Karl May novels were exempted from authorities’ allegations in the 1940s and 1950s that westerns glorify violence, elicit juvenile aggression and delinquency, and mix brutality with eroticism.



racial aggression was both painful and increasingly discouraged in public, political discourse.

The administration of West Germany's first chancellor, Konrad Adenauer (1876–1967), a Catholic conservative who stayed in power from 1949 to 1963, set the political course toward reconstruction. Adenauer's exasperation with the process of denazification, which he perceived as "a massive and indiscriminate purge" (Herf, 218) implemented by Allied authorities and compared to the injustices perpetrated by the Nazis, and his stump-speech demand that supposedly harmless Nazi "fellow travelers" should be left in peace (Herf, 221) elicited broad voter support by a population that increasingly resented what they perceived to be "victor's justice," and won him the election to chancellor in 1949.<sup>13</sup> The Holocaust was rarely addressed by politicians, and the memorial service at the former concentration camp Bergen-Belsen in 1952, where Nahum Goldmann, a prominent German Jew, remembered Nazi terror and Jewish suffering and pledged never to forget it, was the first event at which Theodor Heuss, the president of the Federal Republic, publicly acknowledged responsibility and expressed shame. Realizing that the price for inclusion in Western alliances was redress for past crimes, the Adenauer government, rather reluctantly, pursued a policy of monetary restitution to Jewish survivors and reparations to the state of Israel (outlined in the Luxembourg Agreement of 1952). Yet Goldmann, one of the negotiators of the agreement, demonstrated a stance of vigilance when he stressed that the loss of Jewish lives could "never be made good again," and pledged "never to forget these dead. . . . With the inextinguishable memory that is the characteristic of our people, we will forever keep reflection on the Jewish victims of Nazi terror in our history" (qtd. in Herf, 319). As the Adenauer government drew silence over the past, avoided a rigorous public reckoning with Nazi criminals, advocated the "integration" of Nazis into West German society and the amnesty of already convicted criminals, and defined atonement in terms of financial compensation to Jews, the displacement of the drama of genocide to the American frontier and the reassignment of roles within it duplicated the rhetorical reversals of conservative politicians who depicted West Germans as the victims of injustice and foreign occupation,

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13. The office of the American High Commissioner of Germany (HICOG) gathered polling data that indicated that the majority of West Germans agreed with Adenauer's proposal of "integration" and amnesty for Nazis. Herf describes the change of political mood in the immediate postwar years as follows: "From 1946 to 1949, the mood in West Germany had turned against denazification, the Nuremberg Trials, and new West German trials of those accused of crimes against humanity. Between 1946 and 1949, the proportion of respondents who thought the Nuremberg Trials had been unfair climbed from 6 percent to 30 percent. Furthermore, there was growing support for terminating all trials based on wartime actions. In mid-1952, only 10 percent of a national sample approved and 59 percent disapproved of the way the Western powers were handling the issue of war criminals" (274).

rather than perpetrators and accomplices of racial crimes. The dramas substituted guilt with pride and facilitated an imagined trading of places between the victors and the victimized. But the admiration and anguish that connect Germans and Indians in the fictional Wild West plays also attest to the incompleteness of the repression of the Holocaust from public memory and accounting, and to the failure of these substitutions to mend the unparalleled destruction of human lives, or imagine it undone.

In the century since the novels first appeared, Karl May has become a culture industry of marvelous generative power. There are few fictions that have proven to be of such enduring mass, popular, even critical appeal, and today, over a hundred years since May's novels were first published, his books still saturate the young adult (predominantly male) market. The number of editions and copies of books sold is phenomenal, with 80–100 million copies in twenty-eight languages in circulation (Augstein, 130).<sup>14</sup> To call May a culture industry, however, elides the most striking aspect of the May universe, namely that the mass-produced books (many of which first appeared in serialized form in magazines and calendars), films, radio and stage plays, as well as a plethora of Indian accessories, have generated and are in turn supported by, a large community of devoted fans. The extraordinarily creative and active ways in which they have engaged with the material calls into question the Frankfurt School's depiction of mass-cultural consumers as the passive dupes of the culture industries (Adorno and Horkheimer). May fans have become producers of texts including newsletters, journals, and books, but also performances, which they circulate among themselves through their own distribution networks, at conventions, club gatherings, and on the World Wide Web, and which in turn helps define them as a subculture with its own values, habits, and imagery.<sup>15</sup> Even Karl May scholarship was, until the 1960s, largely the

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14. May's depictions of the American frontier garnered him the status of most widely read, most translated, and most popular German author ever, and decisively shaped Germans' image of America. In the United States, however, Karl May and his heroes Winnetou and Old Shatterhand, household names in contemporary Germany, remain virtually unknown. Arguably, this discrepancy has to do with the progressive divergence between historical reality—namely, the genocide of Native Americans—and the contents of May's western novels, which culminated in the mystical utopia of a red-white brotherhood of love and peace. May, who only traveled to the United States long after the publication of his *Winnetou* saga, had little interest in an authentic depiction of the Old West, detailed maps and geographical accuracy notwithstanding.

15. In addition to fan commentary on May, there exists a genre of fan fiction that elaborates May's characters. Often fans pay for the publication of these fictions themselves and market them through the May network. The best known and most prolific of them is Reinhard Marheinecke, who has published his own writing and edited collections of fiction in the CBK-Verlag. Perhaps the most curious instance of fan writing is one author who, under the pseudonym Nscho-tsch, has published May-inspired Indian fiction from the perspective of "Winnetou's sister"—which is also the title of her two-volume work.

province of fans, with the Karl May Press exerting strict control over access to archival material.

May's novels were adapted for the stage beginning in 1919 and became popular at open-air theaters, especially during the National Socialist *Thingspiel* fad.<sup>16</sup> For the summer 1998 season, seven Karl May festivals were scheduled. The rugged backdrops at the stages in Rathen, Elspe, and Bad Segeberg, to name but the most well known ones, lent themselves more readily than a proscenium stage to the wide horizons and sensuously detailed landscapes familiar to May readers, to the rapidly changing vantage points of his roving heroes, and to the choreographed battle scenes between red and white warriors. The two theaters in Elspe and Bad Segeberg began to draw the largest audiences in postwar West Germany. Bad Segeberg created a theme park called "Indian Village" adjacent to the stage, which includes a museum and a reservation that hosts Native American visitors in a scenario reminiscent of the *Völkerschauen* (ethnic exhibitions, see chap. 3) in the nineteenth century, which had brought displays of people from many distant parts of the earth, including the colonies, to European cities. In addition, both theaters profited from the film and television adaptations of Karl May's stories in the 1960s and 1970s by hiring the stars of those popular movies, like Pierre Brice and Gojko Mitic, for their productions. Karl May imagined exotic worlds, which have not only enticed readers to identify with his German heroes, but have also spawned a diverse performative culture that sees itself as extending and elaborating, revising and correcting his vision. Most important among them are the many Indian and western clubs dating back before 1920, which today number in the hundreds. While I will address cross-racial performance in clubs more fully in chapter 3, I will briefly discuss the Indian club in Bad Segeberg at the end of this chapter.

In the GDR, Karl May's works fell into disrepute and remained unpublished until 1982. Until that time, the socialist state did not permit public stagings or film adaptations and regarded activities surrounding the author (such as exhibitions, clubs, and conventions) with suspicion. Nevertheless, a fiercely dedicated and tightly knit fan culture persisted despite the scarcity of available texts. The fans' tenacity and continued lobbying may have contributed to May's rehabilitation and the renewed publication

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16. In 1938–40, the open-air theater at Rathen (Saxony) produced *Winnetou*, among other Karl May adaptations. The 1938 festival was opened by the Saxonian governor (Reichsstatthalter and Gauleiter) Martin Mutschmann, a high Nazi functionary. The outdoor stage at Werder, near Berlin, also produced a Karl May adaptation in 1938. Construction of the Bad Segeberg theater was finished in 1937, and it was indeed intended to serve as a *Thingplatz*, a stage for Nordic communal rituals. Only at its postwar reopening was the theater dedicated as a forum for Karl May.

and filmic adaptation of his works in the 1980s. Christian Heermann's account of Karl May activity in the face of state censorship in the GDR in his book *Old Shatterhand ritt nicht im Auftrag der Arbeiterklasse* (Old Shatterhand did not ride forth on behalf of the working class, 1995) concludes with a chapter on the surveillance of Karl May fans, scholars, clubs, museums, conventions, and publications by the secret police. Heermann portrays a community under siege, a battle between opportunist, greedy, plainly villainous Stalinists, and selfless, heroic guardians of May's literary, moral, and political legacy.<sup>17</sup> This self-representation as endangered is perhaps extreme, but arguably characterizes fandom in general.<sup>18</sup> Karl May culture in the GDR, as in the FRG, exemplifies what John Fiske has described as "an intensification of popular culture which is formed outside and often against official culture. . . . it expropriates and reworks certain values and characteristics of that official culture to which it is opposed" (34). One prerequisite, he argues, is a "producerly" text, whose gaps and internal contradictions provide openings for fan interpretation, intervention, and imaginative production. Whereas Heermann's depiction of Karl May fandom in the GDR as resistant and imperiled fits Fiske's definition, such a reading of May activity in the FRG appears counterintuitive at first sight: the novels (and their fans) celebrate manliness and male bonding, Christian tolerance and compassion toward other cultures and races, and ostensibly German virtues including modesty, justice, industriousness, and self-restraint. It would be difficult to construe these values as oppositional to those of the official culture in postwar West Germany. Yet I wish to show that the fan activity after the war did point to certain gaps and contradictions not only in May's texts but in the official (legal, anthropological, cultural) discourses on nationality, masculinity, and race within which they resonated, which they intensified and revised. May's Wild West figures and scenarios, written during Germany's colonial era and indebted

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17. One chapter early in the book, entitled "Death Sentence and Prison for Saxonian Students," links May fandom to anti-Stalinist resistance via a May interest group turned resistance cell: after reading and discussing their favorite novels, a group of students "refuse[d] to silently accept terror and manipulation" and printed and distributed flyers against the Communist government (Heermann, 23). They received long prison sentences. Another student at a high school nearby received a death sentence for similar activities. Although that student had no connection to Karl May, the chapter insinuates that Karl May fandom and life-threatening persecution go hand in hand.

18. Writing from within a U.S. context, Fiske claims that "fandom is typically associated with cultural forms that the dominant value system denigrates—pop music, romance novels, comics, Hollywood mass-appeal stars (sport, probably because of its appeal to masculinity, is an exception). It is thus associated with the cultural tastes of subordinated formations of the people, particularly with those disempowered by any combination of gender, age, class and race" (30).

to a long-standing tradition of colonial fictions and fantasies, provided an affective outlet for sentiments that were discredited by the dominant culture: they construct a white, masculine subject wedged between European colonizers and a natural yet savage order, a subject that is at once minoritarian and elitist, authoritarian and self-effacing, aggressive and unjustly persecuted.

### **Ethnic Drag as a Technology of Forgetting**

In postwar Germany, few identity-discourses have been more stressed and strained than those of *race* and *nation*. Few identities have been more ideologically malleable within a two-hundred-year period while relying on notions of immutability, naturalness, and transhistorical certainty. Often used synonymously until 1945, the conflation of the two into the notion of a “German race” suggested an organic unity under the administration of the state. The sorting out of these three terms after the end of the Third Reich amounted to little more than the dropping of *race*—which is not the same as a deliberate debunking—from public discourse and the provisional political construction of the “two states—one nation” model.<sup>19</sup> While the idea of the nation was kept alive in politicians’ pledge to eventual reunification, the *state* in effect replaced nation (or race) as object of affiliation and identification.<sup>20</sup> After the Holocaust, *race* and *nation* were so notoriously fraught with terror and shame, so contentious, and hence so overdetermined that they required a sophisticated orchestration of “forgetting.” The work of forgetting, however, faces a conceptual dilemma: how to forget something you cannot acknowledge knowing, since that acknowledgment would consign matter to memory rather than

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19. Nevertheless, as Weingart, Kroll, and Bayertz show in their history of eugenics and “racial hygiene” in Germany, the disappearance of race in some institutional contexts was often little more than cosmetic. In their study they trace personal and ideological continuities from eugenics to postwar discourses on genetics, anthropology, and microbiology. Other studies, like Atina Grossmann’s *Reforming Sex*, de-emphasize the continuity between fascist and postfascist discourses on eugenics; in her introduction, Grossmann calls attention to the changing political investments in the continuity versus discontinuity paradigms of historical analysis. The fairly recent interest of historians in the postwar era has resulted in an unsettling of the binary between a (reactionary postulation of a) *Stunde Null* and the (leftist contention) of “fascistoid” continuities. Books like Robert Moeller’s *Protecting Motherhood* and Erica Carter’s *How German Is She?* carefully trace the scrambling and rearrangement of race, gender, and nationality after the war.

20. In addition, “German” identity was attached to a number of other discourses and institutions, most prominent among them the dedication to economic rebuilding and prosperity captured by the “economic miracle” (see Carter), and the idea of a discrete German cultural heritage—although the debates about the *Kulturerbe* during the 1950s showed that there was little agreement about what constituted that legacy and its ethnic specificity.

oblivion? Forgetting therefore requires the production of figures that simultaneously evoke and displace the historical matter in question.

Ethnic drag constitutes one such figuration of forgetting in the medium of performance. Drag's characteristic technique of doubling the referent of performance (anatomical given/social role) demonstrates the processes of remembering and forgetting, presence and absence, evoking and overwriting that construct history and identity. In comparison to realist acting, which strives to minimize the disjunction of actor and role, drag maximizes the demand on the spectatorial faculty of suspending disbelief if it is to be viewed as a plausible representation of reality. While the Karl May festival advertises the performances and the theme park as bringing the Wild West to life, that is, as an accurate representation of the frontier, it also deploys marketing strategies characteristic of a drag show, emphasizing for instance the whiteness of the *Winnetou* actors and boasting about the poundage of makeup used to transform North Germans into Indians. Close-up photographs of actors reveal the layers of thickly sculpted, brown paste that, from a distance, suggest a noble Indian visage.<sup>21</sup> Cross-racial impersonation at the Karl May festival issues contradictory claims to authenticity and artificiality, mimesis and masquerade, and that contradiction does not constitute a failure of this particular instance of semiosis but its constitutive feature.<sup>22</sup> Viewing the *Winnetou* adaptations as a drag show—which the festival management does not do—allows me to restore both the hegemonic and the subversive dimension of ethnic drag. Given that producers want *Winnetou* to be received as an idealized slice of frontier life rather than a travesty of it, I propose to read these drag acts as instructional devices that teach spectators, faced with two incompatible truths, what to see and what not to see, what to know and what not to acknowledge. The disproportionate effort drag requires of the spectator in order to suspend disbelief and read masquerade as mimesis indexes the perceptual labor expended in order to “forget.” Whereas fascist drag (chap. 1) postulates the dupe's conflation of appearance and essence as both false and “natural,” ethnic drag in Bad Segeberg underscores the ideological labor performed in the dupe's mimetic insistence. To keep the double referent of drag in view and disobey the call to

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21. These examples are taken from the picture book *Der Wilde Westen Live*, which is sold in souvenir booths at the festival site. According to that book, one unspecified season required 136 kilos of makeup (35). Some of the picture postcards of *Winnetou* that are sold in those booths likewise emphasize the actors' blue eyes, but poses, costume, and makeup in those photographs strive for a more “natural” effect.

22. In that respect, the management's presentation of the festival resembles the advertising strategies of the antebellum American minstrel show with its purportedly faithful rendering of Negro culture and its emphasis on performers' whiteness (see chap. 1).

suspend disbelief also means, on my part, to misread *Winnetou* as it has been understood and loved by generations of children and adolescents.

While the lens of ethnic drag creates a focus on the impersonated Indian characters in the May adaptations, let me note that ethnic drag's separation of actor and role, racially marked body and racial character, applies to the German figures as well: Old Shatterhand and his sidekicks continually prove they are not "white" in the sense defined by the European invaders of the Wild West. The lamination of outward, physical signs to an inner, racial truth was the hallmark of scientific racism during the nineteenth century. Could the severing of inner character and outer appearance, conversely, be seen as the undoing of that ideology? May even aggravates the sense of eroding categories by introducing gender-bending characters. Conspicuously, the notion of a national (German) character is the only category stable enough to anchor race and gender: the goodness of the Germans restores the badly damaged belief in white, male integrity, even if these men look like villains and wear dresses. The uncertainty of racial and gendered truths, rather than exploding these categories altogether, yokes their restoration to the nationalist project and fuels the paranoid, compulsive energy driving the Wild West sagas.<sup>23</sup>

Ethnic drag excludes the material bodies of cultural Others and appropriates or ventriloquizes their voices. That displacement, which reiterates the symbolics of colonial histories and attendant subject formations, instructs spectators how not to see the power and property relations that underwrite constructions of nationality even after *race* was elided from official discourses. It offers a critical vantage point from which the internal logic of nationality, race, and gender can be understood, as well as marking the locus of its most acute internal instability.

### **Postwar Stagings: Continuity and Change**

Bad Segeberg, located in the northern German province of Schleswig-Holstein, is overlooked by a small mountain, which provides the backdrop for the adjoining open-air theater, the largest outdoor stage in western Germany. Every year, one of May's adventure novels is produced there, involving a cast of professional actors and more than a hundred extras (including local schoolchildren), numerous horses, and many special effects. The adjacent theme park, Indian Village, is a commercial enter-

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23. The Karl May adaptations exemplify the internal instability of these discourses. While the productions cross racial and national lines in performance, they present racial and national "character" as expressions of innate, eternal truths. While acknowledging the evils of racism, these evils are not owned. While agreeing that race determines peoples' behavior and moral worth, that same claim is emphatically refuted for the Germans.

prise with ethnographic aspirations that features tawdry souvenir shops, a gold mine, a campfire, and a museum exhibiting Native American artifacts. The festival primarily attracts family audiences with small children, and the town often serves as a meeting place for Indian and western clubs in the region. The stage adaptations of May's novels in Bad Segeberg were neither the first nor the only ones after the war, but it was at that site that May's texts grew into the largest and most cohesive Wild West spectacle in West Germany. Despite its historical theme, the town and the festival are thoroughly modern, taking advantage of web-based technologies for advertising and selling tickets. In addition, the bright flags, vibrant costumes, and young faces in the streets give an impression of freshness. Only a closer look reveals the abraded traces of its beginnings, such as an inscription carved into the mountain, which notes that the theater was constructed in 1937 by local laborers as part of the Nazi workfare program—a chapter of its history that is fairly well documented in the photograph books on sale in local stores. By contrast, the festival administration has never acknowledged the troubling past of Ludwig Körner, who, along with Roland Schmid, adapted *Winnetou* for the stage and thereby turned the Bad Segeberg stage into a gold mine.<sup>24</sup> Körner became a high theater functionary during the Third Reich, when, according to emigrant Walter Wicclair, he was responsible for the expulsion of the politically undesirable and racially unfit from the centralized artists' union. By 1950, he was already fully rehabilitated, much to the chagrin of communist and Jewish theater artists returning from exile. While this instance of personal continuity connecting Nazi culture and theater in the fledgling democracy exemplifies some of the larger arcs in the German discourses of race cross-

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24. Körner had authored an earlier adaptation entitled *Winnetou der rote Gentleman* (1929), which was still in circulation and was in fact used by the 1952 production at the Theater am Besenbinderhof in Hamburg, not too far from Bad Segeberg. Körner himself had used Hermann Dimmler's play *Winnetou, der rote Gentleman*, which had been produced by the Deutsches Theater in Munich in 1919, as his model. In contrast to the book editions, which quickly cleaned up recognizably fascist language after the war, the stage adaptations display a larger degree of continuity across the great ideological divides, paralleled by personal continuities. Körner was a high functionary in Goebbels's Reichstheaterkammer, the organization for all theater workers; from 1938 to 1942, he served as its president, earning the title of highest theater functionary in the Nazi state. He was forced to resign due to charges of mismanagement. His career suffered scarcely a dent after 1945: he held several high-ranking offices in theater organizations and stage workers' unions until his death in 1968, and was even awarded the Bundesverdienstkreuz (Federal Cross of Honor) in 1953. Despite protests of theater artists returning from exile, Körner was responsible for the processing of compensation claims filed by remigrants in order to facilitate their reintegration. Theater scholar Henning Müller describes this situation as the fox guarding the henhouse (284). In 1989, Walter Wicclair, a remigrant, published an article detailing his grievances against Körner. Compare also Körner's biographies in different issues of *Deutsches Bühnen-Jahrbuch*.



ing the deep political divides of this century, let me hurry to say that the *Winnetou* adaptations in Bad Segeberg were by no means unreconstructedly or avowedly fascist. The unprecedented popularity of Körner and Schmid's adaptation, which far exceeded the success of Körner's earlier drama of 1929, arguably resulted from more than Schmid's input, but points instead to the specific conditions of the play's reception after the war. The context of West German reconstruction reactivated and energized May's stories, not just the careers of individuals connected to them.

The playwrights' technique of assembling parts of the *Winnetou* trilogy into one cohesive plot, mixing and matching villains from different parts of the narrative, and confronting them with a motley group of heroes cut and pasted from diverse parts of the story, resembled May's own writing process.<sup>25</sup> Before I analyze how the plays adapted the text to the post-war situation, let me briefly summarize the trilogy. In volume 1, the fledgling German westman, who undergoes his initiation into frontier life while working on a land-surveying team for a railroad company, receives his Wild West nom de guerre Old Shatterhand because of his ability to knock out enemies with one blow of his fist. He meets Winnetou, his father Intschu tschuna, and his teacher Klekih-petra (a German gone native), who confront the team and demand a stop to the work. They see the whites as trespassers on Apache territory and fear the encroaching railroad. The instant affection between Old Shatterhand and Winnetou is severely tested when one of Old Shatterhand's colleagues kills Klekih-petra, and the Apaches take Old Shatterhand and his team hostage. By siding with the red chiefs rather than the white surveyors, however, Old Shatterhand passes the test of loyalty and, at the invitation of Intschu tschuna, becomes Winnetou's blood brother and an honorary Apache chief. The next great calamity that befalls Winnetou, namely the murder of his father and his sister Nscho-tschu, welds the two men together in a quest to hunt down the white villains, the master criminal Santer and his cohorts. This quest ties together the more-or-less isolated episodes that compose volumes 2 and 3. In the third volume, Winnetou is killed defending the German settlement of Helldorf (lit. Light Village) against the rival Oglala tribe, which has been riled up by Santer. After giving his friend a Christian burial (accompanied by an "Ave Maria" hymn sung by the Helldorf men), Old Shatterhand continues their mission alone, pursuing Santer, who is eventually

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25. The Winnetou character made his first appearance in the early Wild West novel *Old Firehand* (1875–76), where he comes across as more savage than noble, attacks at the least provocation, and delights in scalping his enemies. May's travel fiction of the 1880s shows an increasing idealization of this figure, who, by the time *The Treasure in Silver Lake* was published (1890–91), had become an extraordinary, heroic embodiment of a great but misrecognized nation.

killed in an explosion while attempting to excavate the legendary gold treasure of the Apaches. This act of divine justice is typical of Karl May's writing: it relieves the hero of the task of exacting severe punishment himself yet aligns the protagonist with an absolute moral order.

The Körner-Schmid adaptation, which kept changing throughout the 1950s, combined parts of *Winnetou* volumes 1 and 3, splicing in scenes from *Der Ölprinz* (The oil prince, 1890) and creating character composites assembled from various parts of the trilogy.<sup>26</sup> In all three adaptations (1952, 1953, 1957), the plot is tightly focused on the friendship of Old Shatterhand and Winnetou, leaving out the miscellaneous adventures described in the second *Winnetou* volume: it opens with the pair's first test of friendship, leading to the oath of blood brotherhood; establishes their relationship and Nscho-tschis budding love for Old Shatterhand in act 2; dramatizes the murder of Intschu tschuna and Nscho-tschis in the third act, which motivates their common quest for justice; and closes with Winnetou's death in his friend's arms. The greatest variations occur in determining where and when to begin the action. While the first script opens in the Apache pueblo, with Old Shatterhand and his friends captured and awaiting their death, the second begins with Winnetou and his warriors captured by the hostile Kiowas—a tight spot from which they are saved by Old Shatterhand. The third version follows the novel most closely by opening in the surveyors' camp and showing the murder of Klekhi-petra—a plot element omitted in the other versions. The second edition of the script, which is still sold by the Karl-May-Verlag, returns to the first plot arrangement.<sup>27</sup>

The variety of openings notwithstanding, the play's first emotional high-point is the moment I quoted at the beginning of this chapter, when Old Shatterhand is transformed from prisoner to beloved blood brother and honorary chief, marking the reversal from danger and racial strife to peace and love. While the second postwar adaptation introduces Old Shatterhand as unmistakable hero and savior of the two captured Apaches, the first and the final stage versions open at the moment when the German is wounded and held captive in the Apache pueblo, awaiting a slow, painful

26. Peter Krauskopf has traced dialogue assigned to Old Shatterhand's westman-mentor Sam Hawkens to two other burlesque characters (Old Death and Walker) lifted from the second and third *Winnetou* and *Winnetou* volumes respectively (Krauskopf, 437).

27. These opening scenes illustrate the rapid alternation of attack and counterattack, winning and being vanquished, that characterize May's novel after the encounter of the central pair. Since the three scripts on which the productions of 1952, 1953, and 1957 were based are no longer available, I have reconstructed the plots from the summaries included in the 1953 and 1957 program notes, as well as from Krauskopf's description of the 1952 production. In addition, I have drawn on the second edition of the script (1959), which, according to Krauskopf, is similar to the 1952 adaptation.

death by martyring. Winnetou and his sister Nscho-tschi pronounce the death sentence on Old Shatterhand for his part in an attack on the Apaches. A wounded German warrior, facing capital punishment for racial atrocities committed by a few bad whites: that opening was extremely effective for offering the play as an antidote for postwar Germans' historical trauma. It situates interracial encounters in the intensely charged frame of a war tribunal and raises questions of shame and guilt. In a sense, the play picked up where the Nuremberg Trials had left off, but rewrote their outcome. Despite the exotic setting, therefore, the play strongly evoked the controversial notion of collective guilt with its contemporary postwar resonances.<sup>28</sup>

The playwrights' experimentation with "what works," which was evidently settled by presenting the 1959 script as the "definitive" version that provided the basis for later adaptations, sought to create the most suspenseful opening of the play. But the different variants also grapple with the ambiguity of the relationship between the two heroes, which wavers between equality and dominance/submission. The scripts foreground the love story between Old Shatterhand and Nscho-tschi and introduce other female love interests into a world that May and many of his fans imagined as almost exclusively male. What does the emphasis on heterosexual relationships reveal about gender politics during reconstruction? Moreover, how did the scripts address the changed consensus regarding the continuity of passionate friendship and homosociality that the blood brotherhood idealizes? Finally, what does the casting of the Old Shatterhand and Winnetou roles reveal about race and gender ideals? Can it explain the shifting spectatorial identification away from the German to the Indian hero that has arguably occurred in the productions and is quite pronounced in the Indian clubs?

### **Equality or Difference? Familial Metaphors and Interracial Relations**

The plays invoke a variety of familial metaphors to describe the relationship between Old Shatterhand and Winnetou: their erotically charged rituals of bondage rehearse a dynamic of dominance and submission; the roles of teacher and pupil spell out a paternalist hierarchy; and as blood brothers they embody the egalitarianism and mutuality of fraternal love. Winnetou's vacillation between brother and bride, son, equal, teacher, and student of Old Shatterhand attests to the ambiguity of Enlightenment dis-

28. It is worth noting that Adenauer's insinuation that Germans were being collectively persecuted lacked any factual basis. Indeed, the Nuremberg Trials, as Herf underscores, affirmed the principle of individual responsibility (208).



Hans Joachim Kilburger as Old Shatterhand in *Winnetou I*, 1957. (Photograph by Wilhelm Rebhuhn. Copyright Karl-May-Verlag, 1962.)

courses on human equality when faced with racial difference. On the one hand, the trope of brotherhood evokes the Enlightenment belief in a common humanity across ethnic lines—albeit framed by a clear notion of evolutionary stages and hierarchies of cultural achievement. On the other, May’s distinction between noble and savage Indians betrays a discourse of radical racial alterity that can only be contained within clear power hier-

archies.<sup>29</sup> The discourse of the noble savage never entirely resolves the ambiguity of equality and difference; the discourse of the racial Other that Intschu tschuna embodies, however, clearly demands the elimination of the native in order to install a parental relationship between German and Indian.

While Intschu tschuna's death appears to remove the lingering threat of racial strife, it also creates a deep rift between the "brothers." His father's murder enrages the young Apache to such an extent that he threatens to avenge it upon the entire white race. Only Old Shatterhand's appeal to the ideas of justice, reason, and peace prevents Winnetou from finishing his pledge to wage a war of the native nations against the whites. Winnetou's taking over of his father's role produces a crisis of brotherhood; the young chief's seeking consolation and protection in his friend's arms, however, recontains the threat in a gesture of surrender.<sup>30</sup> The young Apache, who earlier on had already begged his white friend to "be a friend and a teacher" to him (Körner and Schmid, 35), reconfirms Old Shatterhand's authority when he pleads with his friend to "be like a father to me," since "you are all I have left, only you!" (59). At that moment, at least, the ambiguity of their union is resolved in the native "brother's" filial surrender.

Nevertheless, the ideological distinctions between father and son, which the novel delineates starkly, are blurred in the stage adaptations. Indeed, the stage Winnetou utters some of the more hostile comments ascribed to Intschu tschuna in the book, including the young Apache's opening speech to his sister, in which he describes the white surveyors' aggression, treachery, and religious hypocrisy. The generational disagreement concerning the advisability of all-out racial war is displaced from father and son to Winnetou and Old Shatterhand. Consider the following dialogue, which assigns Karl May's foreword in the fourth *Winnetou* volume (whose mystical and pacifist tone diverges quite drastically from the trilogy) to Old Shatterhand. In that speech, Old Shatterhand embeds their bond in the larger context of racial relations. I will quote it here at length:

OLD SHATTERHAND: Winnetou may consider that no person, no people, and no race must remain a child, a boy. Every prairie, every mountain, and every valley, every country, and every continent

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29. Hohendahl regards the depiction of the Indians as both noble and savage as a reflection of May's ambivalence toward the revolutionary masses in Germany, as both historically in the right and as chaotically insurgent. Winnetou as the exceptional noble Indian is contrasted with the rival Kiowas and their treacherous chief Tangua, who are portrayed as incorrigibly hostile, brutal, and incapable of mercy or sincerity.

30. The stage directions describe Winnetou as "standing petrified for a moment, then throwing up his arms and burying himself on his friend's chest" (Körner and Schmid, 56).

were created by God to bear civilized people who must evolve ahead and upward, but not those incapable of developing beyond the age in which one does nothing but quarrel and beat each other up. Providence provides every individual and every nation with the time and the opportunity to grow beyond that boyish phase. Anyone who persists in standing still and refusing to move ahead loses the right to exist. The great Manitou is gracious, but he is also just. He wanted the Indian to be gracious, too, especially toward his own brethren. But when his red children would not stop fighting with each other, he sent them the paleface—

WINNETOU: To kill off his red children even faster!

OLD SHATTERHAND: No, to save them! But they couldn't hear him or wouldn't heed him. Even today, there would still be time for salvation if the childish Indian finally took it upon himself to become a man!

WINNETOU: A warrior?

OLD SHATTERHAND: Oh no! For even in that race, playing warrior is the surest sign of childish regression and must be replaced by humans with higher aspirations. To become a man does not mean becoming a warrior, but becoming a *person*. (Körner and Schmid, 32–33)

The stark, moral absolutism of this social Darwinist credo notwithstanding, the passage serves to contrast the ostensible neutrality of science and divine providence alike, which allow for the evolution of *all* races, with a more confrontational view of white domination and Indian resistance. While the white man gets to articulate a liberal dogma of evolution that ostensibly privileges not race but individuality (“becoming a *person*”), the Indian is shown to atavistically cling to notions of racial strife, superiority, and inferiority.

The continuation of this passage, which emphatically includes Indians in a vision of human progress that supposedly transcends race, predicates their salvation on sacrificial death by according Winnetou the role of red messiah. Even as Old Shatterhand exhorts his friend to bring about the spiritual rebirth of the Indian race, he addresses him as already dead: “I sense (*lausche*) the awakening of your people, and you—Winnetou—will rouse them! And once you've expired, you won't be dead. Your deeds will live!” (33). Neither the live body of Winnetou nor that of his father and his sister has a place in the history that is about to begin. The foreign bodies depicted on the Bad Segeberg stage are in various stages of dying. Old Shatterhand's eulogy to Winnetou, delivered while his friend sits facing him, eerily captures the predication of salvation on assimilation, of

redemption on sacrifice. Indian resisters have no part in the future. Their inexorable death is the result of evolutionary law, divine justice, and the consequence of bitter in-fighting, not white aggression.

In sum, the relationship between the two heroes registers the affective force of fraternal love, but cannot generate visions of a common future. Ultimately, the trope is subsumed under the relationship of owner and heir, with *Winnetou* bequeathing the Wild West to Old Shatterhand and his countrymen, although the dramas characterize that legacy as purely spiritual, rather than material.

### **Queer Westmen and Vulgar Feminists: Negotiating Gender Politics and Homosociality**

All *Winnetou* adaptations accord considerable importance to the romance between Nscho-tschì and Old Shatterhand, which the novel depicts as unrequited on the part of the German. In recent years, moreover, additional love interests for other members of the westmen cast have been introduced, some of whom get to ride off together into the sunset. While directors have presented these additions as a welcome “spicing up” of the “male fates” Carl Zuckmayer so admired in the preface to the printed script, the heterosexualization of the Wild West brings into view the changes in the postwar German gender order, which predicated male authority on men’s relationship to women and children rather than to other men, as well as the uneasy proximity of passionate male friendship and homosexuality during the reconstruction.

Robert G. Moeller, a feminist historian, notes that the public emphasis on men as husbands and fathers in the early 1950s served to assuage women’s anxiety about the brutishness of returning soldiers and proposed to domesticate and civilize these men within the family. He quotes Dorothea Groener-Geyer, head of an alliance of women’s organizations in Stuttgart, who in an address to parliament in 1949 proclaimed men’s failure to protect women during the war and deduced from that their subsequent loss of all claims to superiority or leadership: after “gambling away the sovereignty of our state, leaving our cities in ruins, destroying our homes, and leaving millions homeless and with no basis for their existence,” Groener-Geyer contended, men have to accept equality with women as the price (Moeller 1998b, 102). While bourgeois feminists tried thus to capitalize on men’s failure to “defend” them, the westerns staged in Bad Segeberg and broadcast on television dramatized the German “crisis of masculinity” with an eye to restoring what Groener-Geyer claimed men had forfeited forever: their role as protectors of women’s safety and honor. Discussions of the western genre in general provide an important public arena in which changing conceptions about masculinity and gender roles

can be traced. In her work on the postwar FRG, historian Uta Poiger has noted a change of public opinion about the western between the early and the late 1950s: the western quickly shed its association with American commodity culture, male aggression, and criminality and came to represent the new gender ideal of the strong, armed yet restrained man embodied by the sheriff, the man who protects the weak, punishes the bad, and enforces law and order. The powerful yet compassionate Old Shatterhand conforms to this pattern. Moreover, the project of containing masculine violence became tied to consumption. Men could learn how to restrain aggression by watching (i.e., consuming) westerns; that perception affirmed the instructional value of the western, as well as the social function of consumption, formerly associated with American culture and hence denigrated as foreign (Poiger 2000, 16).

The endeavor to restore male authority as benevolent and paternal, however, was extremely strained by the specter of gender equality as a punishment for men; I would suggest that this strain is what makes the “love interests” in the Karl May adaptations so ambiguous. The more female characters assume importance as stage presences, the more they also evoke attendant male fears about women’s “proper” role and place, since certain women may not be as worthy of protection as Nscho-tschi, whose death launches the heroes’ search for the villain, bolsters their role as protectors, and permits the dramatists to reframe a narrative of male militance as a quest for justice on behalf of the female victim.<sup>31</sup> The 1957

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31. The honorable quality of quest is underwritten by Nscho-tschi’s nobility. Yet in the earlier, prewar stage adaptations, her depiction is also ambivalent and her death somewhat of a relief, because of Old Shatterhand’s hedging about a future marriage. The 1929 play exhibits a queasiness about their love affair that in the novel is not only explicitly associated with the notion of an interracial marriage but also with Nscho-tschi’s transgression of the bourgeois gender ideal of demure womanliness. The ambiguity of the Nscho-tschi character is more pronounced in the novel and in Dimmler’s 1919 adaptation, where she exhibits certain gender “improprieties” that cause discomfort to Old Shatterhand. In the novel, she engages in arguments with Old Shatterhand, in which she admonishes him for his sexist attitudes, leaving him speechless. Dimmler’s script has Nscho-tschi first enter the stage as a hunter in pursuit of a grizzly bear, which Old Shatterhand proceeds to kill. Dressed in leggings and armed with bow and arrow, she evokes the Amazon, a personification of male anxieties about female gender inversion—even though it is the man who succeeds in the hunt. In the Körner-Schmid adaptation, she appears side by side with her brother and comports herself as his equal, challenging his judgment regarding the white men’s punishment. She also appears dressed in male attire when the trio ride out together. Her death relieves her would-be husband of the prospect of marriage as it restores a gender order put off-balance by her unwomanly behavior. By the time *Winnetou* was adapted for film in the 1960s, any traces of transgression were excised from the Nscho-tschi figure, and she and Old Shatterhand were unequivocally portrayed as a romantic couple. That revision was supported by casting actresses associated with romantic lead roles in the part (such as Karin Dor and Uschi Glas), as well as by having Old Shatterhand declare his love for her as she dies in his arms.



season introduced another character that captures the troublesome aspects of femininity in comic extreme: enter the strident, vulgarly feminist Frau Rosalie Ebersbach. The stout woman bullies her tiny, shy husband, speaks with a heavy Saxonian accent (a stock dialect for the fool in German and Austrian comedy), and repeatedly proclaims that she has come to America because women are “treated nicely” there (Körner and Schmid, 99). Frau Rosalie, who brandishes a gun and lifts her hat to reveal a short bob, the hallmark of liberated femininity during the 1920s, is an archfeminist fool. Her outrage at being told to shut up by an enemy scout and her self-righteous decision to send him off for his lack of civility (rather than keeping him tied up and under surveillance), delivers the entire group of settlers and westmen into the villains’ hands. Her insistence on the principle of gender equality—which she only revokes when she is told that Indians scalp women as well as men—exemplifies her overall poor judgment, which enables the villains to gain the upper hand.<sup>32</sup> Ultimately, Winnetou loses his life because of her mistake. While the main function of the other two women in *Winnetou* is to enable the male heroes to pursue their quests, Frau Rosalie illustrates the danger—and the ludicrousness—of women’s meddling in dramatic plots, masculine fates, and the “natural” hierarchy of the sexes.<sup>33</sup> What is particularly distasteful to the heroes is that women like Frau Rosalie both demand men to serve as provider and protector and challenge their exclusive right to that role.

The play’s hostility against female transgression—barely tempered by the burlesque register in which Frau Rosalie is presented—is surprising only when compared with the rather queer masculinity apparent in May’s *Wild West*. Male gender roles seem at first glance to be radically at odds with those practiced in the familial domestic sphere and public bourgeois life of nineteenth-century Germany. First of all, May’s masculinity extends far into what bourgeois society would consider feminine or effeminate domains. Not only do his self-made men cook, sew, and clean up after themselves, but certain members of the secondary comic cast of westmen surrounding the central duo are drawn with a flamboyance that owes

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32. Frau Rosalie’s specifically female foolishness is underscored by the comic habit of misquoting famous sayings, which she shares with other female characters in May’s novels. These characters’ wish to demonstrate their learnedness regularly provides occasion for humor (see also the two women in *Winnetou III* discussed in note 35 below).

33. The third female character in the play makes only a brief appearance and has only three lines (two of which are cries for help). Mary, the young daughter of a settler who is taken hostage by Santer (the murderer of Intschu tshuna and Nscho-tschu), is liberated by Winnetou, who shoots the villain. The girl thus becomes the unwitting instrument in the fulfillment of Winnetou’s quest to avenge the murders.

much to the element of transvestism.<sup>34</sup> Like the rest of the rather homely bunch of comic figures, the transvestites' attire, bodily characteristics, and personality quirks, combined with their bravery and cleverness, demonstrate that under the outrageous exterior beats a Ger/man's heart tried and true. Their masculinity is juxtaposed with the Wilhelminian gender codes, which yoked the Protestant work ethic to the male imperatives of supporting a family and accumulating wealth. In the depths of the prairie, by contrast, industriousness and restraint become virtues for their own sake rather than being subordinated to the spheres of family and business.<sup>35</sup> German masculinity is also set off against Indian masculinity, which, the narrator repeatedly remarks in the novels, awes by the appearance of strength and bravery, yet masks reprehensible laziness: while the men go out on the warpath, the tribe's livelihood actually depends on women's work. The German westmen hence evoke a sort of idealized bourgeois manliness that counters the perceived decadence of women's masculinization in European and urban American society, by reterritorializing the signs of femininity for an expanded sense of masculinity that can be both heroic and eccentric. That masculinity is contrasted with actually existing Wilhelminian gender roles and the Indian sex/gender system, both of which are portrayed as perverted.

Men's appropriation of feminine traits is predicated on women's marginalization in the narrative and driven by an intense misogyny. Queer masculinity neither results in a vision of the Wild West as a playground for transvestites of many genders nor accords female characters the same range of gendered expression granted to male characters. With the exception of the Indian princess Nscho-tschi, Indian women are characterized as the insignificant servants of their men in the pueblos, while white

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34. Most notorious among the queer westmen is Tante (Aunt) Droll, from the novel *Treasure in Silver Lake*, who dresses in a voluminous leather skirt and, when asked whether s/he wishes to be addressed as a man or woman, replies in a falsetto voice: "as a Tante!" (*Silver Lake* 33)—a highly resonant term in the "gay nineties." Droll's cousin, Hobble Frank, in the same novel sports a large lady's hat replete with an ostrich feather. The 1954 production of *Treasure in Silver Lake* included the queer cousins Tante Droll and Hobble Frank, but production photographs show that Droll's dress was transformed into a long coat, and Frank's hat lost its feather and feminine provenance. The 1994 production I saw omitted Tante Droll. Although I have not seen cast lists of all the *Silver Lake* productions, I would conjecture that the transvestite became a contentious figure around the burgeoning of gay pride and the revaluation of male effeminacy.

35. In addition, a notable proportion of female characters in the *Winnetou* trilogy are of Frau Rosalie's ilk; that is, they clamor for gender equality and usurp the male prerogatives of wearing arms, running businesses, and displaying scholarly learnedness. Doña Elvira de Gonzalez in *Winnetou III*, an unmarried businesswoman in San Francisco, and her sister Doña Eulalia epitomize these traits and are ridiculed accordingly.

women are associated with usurpation, decadence, and corruption.<sup>36</sup> Whereas men gleefully shuffle gender codes, women's association with the weak and contemptuous, the lewd, preposterous, gullible, stupid, and treacherous remains stable. In contrast to their male counterparts, women who cross-dress are depicted either as particularly devious criminals (as in *Winnetou und der Detektiv* [Winnetou and the detective]) or as doomed. When Nscho-ttschi enters in a male travel outfit, she only has one more day to live. Whereas Karl May expands masculinity beyond what bourgeois society regards as proper, he does not grant the same to female characters.

Although the stage adaptations of the 1950s dull the transvestic flamboyance of some of the male characters as well as the homoerotic undertones of the brotherly love between Winnetou and Old Shatterhand, they maintain the underlying structure of May's gender order by condemning women's gender transgression and cowardice and by valorizing homosociality and male bonding. The fact that Winnetou gives his life for the protection of the settler families underscores that male bonding does not oppose patriarchal values and institutions, but, to the contrary, supports them. While the romance of Old Shatterhand and Nscho-ttschi assuaged anxieties about both male militance and homosexuality in the context of the postwar West German gender order, Winnetou's death in

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36. In the novel, the notable exception to this rule is the Helldorf settlement, a farming community of German emigrants, which the stage adaptation recast as a trek headed by Karl Hellmann (lit. "Lightman") and plagued by the domineering Frau Rosalie. In Helldorf women quietly prepare the meals and then leave the menfolk alone to govern the settlement. Once in a while, they shed pious tears when listening to the chorales their men sing on the mountain. Through the cloying goodness of settlement society, May emphasizes that the antimaterialist, antimodern thrust of his novels is not meant to debunk the concepts of civilization, work, or commerce altogether—which are otherwise contrasted with pristine nature, freedom, and ostensibly nonalienated bartering. The German community's rescue by the combined efforts of Winnetou and the westmen highlights that neither Western civilization, nor commerce are condemned *tout court*, but only in their "corrupt," that is, non-German manifestation. Not only does the settlers' Germanness mark a positive difference from their gold-hungry, Indian-hating white American counterparts, but Winnetou ultimately gives his life for their survival and even tells them where they can find the semiprecious stones they are looking for. Their craft as gemsmiths, their industriousness and dedication to cultivating the land are carefully contrasted with the frenzied treasure-hunting of other whites, which is throughout associated with wanton destruction of life and land. Analogous to the westmen who punish the villains and repair the damage they leave in their path, the German settlers make up for the colonialist ravaging of the land by cultivating it. Their goodness is underscored by their religiosity and the deeply patriarchal gender order their community upholds. Still, that idyll is brutally attacked and its survival hinges on the strength and cleverness of the all-male interracial group of heroes. Male bonding and the nuclear family are hence not presented as alternatives, since the latter's survival and integrity depend on the blood brothers and their followers.

his blood brother's arms in an intensely emotional scene redeemed male bonding and underscored its social value by predicating the community's survival upon it.

Although both Winnetou and Old Shatterhand declare their love for each other numerous times in the play, their relationship onstage lacks the sensuousness palpable in the novels. The erotic undertones and transvestic pleasures, which I have called "queer" (and which postwar productions of the Wild West stories have elided), should not be read as signs of a counterhegemonic or antipatriarchal sexual politics. When postwar adaptations "closeted" the erotic passion between the central pair, this is not to say that May's heroes are "really" gay in the contemporary meaning of the term. The adaptations excised the continuity that some homosexual theorists in turn-of-the-century Germany postulated between male homoeroticism and patriarchal homosociality. The conjunction of same-sex passion and friendship in the Winnetou–Old Shatterhand relationship, which May narrated in the mid-1890s, predated the uncoupling of intimate, romantic friendship and homosexuality, which occurred alongside the medicalization of homosexuality in the 1890s and crystallized around the Eulenburg scandal (1907). But even after that date, one strand of the homosexual emancipation movement continued to hold fast to a notion of male bonding that resisted the increasing antagonism of friendship and love on the one hand, and deviant sexuality on the other. The *Gemeinschaft der Eigenen* (Community of the special ones) and its journal *Der Eigene* (The special one), which Adolf Brand began editing in 1896, are worth mentioning in this context, because of May's personal connection through his friend Sascha Schneider, a painter who published in the journal and provided the cover illustrations for a special edition of May's works in 1906. Moreover, the *Gemeinschaft's* ideology, which Harry Oosterhuis has characterized as a mix of "radical individualism" and "anarchism" with elitist, nationalist, and racist inflections, evidences some remarkable similarities with May's own worldview. In contrast to the mainstream of the homosexual emancipation movement headed by the leftist, profeminist sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld, Brand and his circle of artist-friends conceptualized male homosexuality in consonance with patriarchal norms and values, eroticizing generational, class, and ethnic differences following the Greek pederasty model and accepting one's national duty to reproduce heterosexually as commensurate with a "higher" erotics between men. They espoused a critique of modern bourgeois society with Nietzschean undertones and offered male bonding and same-sex passion as a panacea to a social decline marked by egalitarianism, materialism, and women's con-

trol over men in the family and in society.<sup>37</sup> Schneider's cover designs for May's books suggest a sexualized vision of male bonding that epitomized patriarchal and nationalist notions of manliness.<sup>38</sup> These paintings combine an ecstatic religiosity (witness *Winnetou's* "ascension" on the cover of *Winnetou's* third volume) with an erotically charged iconography of battle, pain, and bondage heightened by racial difference. While May's disciples would later struggle with the apparent eroticism between the protagonists (or simply deny it), because a sensual same-sex relationship was perceived as radically at odds with male bonding and patriarchal values at large, that division was only cemented after 1907, long after the publication of the first *Winnetou* volume. While homosexual undertones were removed from the Wild West, the male couple and their all-male entourage maintained their symbolic alignment with nationalism and elitist individualism, pitted against modernity, gender equality, and materialism. May's masculinism and Brand's notion of homosexuality overlap in the elitist ideology of "chosenness," which requires the heroes to undergo continual tests to demonstrate their difference from the ordinary mortals they superficially resemble. The aspirational structure of masculinity, which must prove itself against the suspicion of weakness and inexperience ("being a greenhorn," looking or speaking like a woman), parallels the aspirational and differentiating structure of whiteness, sorting good Germans from other European and Yankee riffraff. Within this structure, the anxiety of being misrecognized (as a bad man,

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37. Oosterhuis characterizes the position of one of the *Gemeinschaft's* spokespersons as follows: "It was clear to [Benedict Friedländer] that the German nation had to stop further feminization of Western civilization by making the *Männerbund* the core of the state, safeguarding the exalted goals of male friendship such as moral strength, self-sacrifice, and spirit" (Oosterhuis and Kennedy, 187).

38. I must note here that the queer population of May's Wild West novels registers two antagonistic contemporary discourses of homosexuality: while the heroic couple reflects the Brand circle's view of the "extraordinary individual" and their relationship evokes the S-M inflected tropes of man-boy love, the transvestites are placed squarely in the discourse of gender inversion, or intermediate sexuality that was being championed by the sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld, whose work shaped the homosexual emancipation movement in Germany from around the turn of the century to the early thirties. Hirschfeld developed the theory of the third sex that, briefly put, posited a female soul in a male body and vice versa. He published a study on transvestites. The concept of the "sexually intermediate type" privileged effeminacy (or mannishness on the part of lesbians), viewing the *Tunte* (fairy) and the mannish lesbian as the arch-homosexual types. In contrast, Brand's ideology of "manly love" (he was not concerned with lesbians) envisioned homosexuality as a kind of hypermasculinity. *Der Eigene* published a satirical issue entitled *Die Tante* in 1925, in which it ridiculed Hirschfeld's position (*Eldorado*, 26). In my view, the simultaneity of these discourses suggests May's distance from the subcultures vested in them.

a bad white) is contained by the triumphant moment of recognition and redemption.

The fan culture that flourished around the dramatic (and later, the filmic) adaptations of May's novels provides an index of submerged and (officially) unacknowledged desires and beliefs. May's ambivalent tales of humility and chauvinism, tolerance and punishment, pacifism and aggression, love and misogyny, offered "producerly" texts in Fiske's sense of providing openings, gaps, and contradictions in which fans' fantasies could take hold and grow, and which, in turn, reinforced a sense of paranoia and (wrongful) persecution mitigated by the assurance of catharsis and redemption. The fans' erotic investment in May's homosocial world interpellated them into a nationalist discourse that insisted on Germans' innate difference from and superiority to other whites and that envisioned them as the benevolent guardians of helpless women and inferior, persecuted, and doomed races. The wilderness, which the German man diligently and selflessly (if futilely) attempts to pacify, opposes his individualism to the vices of civilization defined as feminized, materialist, and racist, as he resists the allure of golden treasures and heterosexual gratification. The postwar West German fans' identification with Old Shatterhand enabled their assumption (and consumption, as Poiger notes) of a masculine subjectivity that arrogated to itself feminized codes of expression while denigrating women for their perceived usurpation of masculine prerogatives. During a time when returning soldiers and prisoners of war were depicted as a risk to the national order that could only be met through their domestication in the family, and when they also faced severe competition from women who had taken over many of the roles and functions previously reserved for men, May's Wild West offered a respite from and remedy for the profound tensions in the gender order. They provided a counterworld, in which boys could imagine themselves, their relationships, and their nationality as valorized rather than decried and in which they could fantasize themselves as knightly protectors of the (deserving, meek, and obedient) oppressed and of women's honor while disciplining those who would not recognize their "proper" place in a rigidly hierarchical social and moral order. Identifying with such a perspective was not only immediately rewarding, but all the more alluring because of the compromised status of masculine authoritarianism, nationalist pride, and racial arrogance so shortly after the end of the Third Reich. By ostensibly integrating these features into a framework of democratic, antiracist, and family values, May's plays offered German male spectators across generations ways of vicariously restoring and valorizing them.

Karl May scholars have disagreed about his novels' functions for

their readers, judging them to be protofascist, as Klaus Mann claimed, or utopian and pacifist, as Ernst Bloch contended.<sup>39</sup> Helmut Schmiedt has pointed to the way in which the dialectic of social opposition and affirmation, leftist critique and conservative reaction, is cemented into the generic conventions of May's fictions:

Man's proof of goodness demands battles and victories, but the hero's fights supposedly serve to bring about peace and hence a state in which that proof is no longer possible. Since May's tendential pacifism is embodied by an omnipotent ruler, it threatens to undermine the preconditions of adventure and must therefore continually denounce itself. (142)

While potentially such a release of affective energies could threaten the social order that produced them, both the novels and their postwar adaptations ultimately restore authority, metaphysical certainty, and individual agency. That reinvestment was not just affirmative but gained its force from an "against all odds" sensibility, which articulated hegemonic discourses in a minoritarian mode: in the face of racial atrocities, former "Aryans" could imagine their innocence; in the face of a bestialized mas-

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39. Some argue that by offering utopian counterimages to Wilhelminian class society, high capitalism, bourgeois moralism, and imperialist aggression—counterimages that prefigure a better, more just world—they constitute a progressive political force, especially since the hero of adventure stories actively fights for the realization of his dreams rather than just meekly waiting for them to come true (Bloch; Ueding-Waehner). Others, focusing on the novels' heroes and assuming the readers' identification with them, conclude that their effect is thoroughly conservative, reinforcing protofascist attitudes (e.g., Mann; Oel-Willenborg; Volker Klotz 1983). Some of the more differentiating studies of the 1970s and 1980s examine the dialectic of Bloch's "principle of hope" in May's novels, concluding that it is not realized. Schulte-Sasse writes about the "consoling function" of the surrogate adventures, which aggrandize individual agency for a mass readership while, in reality, the individual's possibilities of historically significant action became more and more constricted (119). Hohendahl similarly surmises that the aesthetic resolution of conflicts irresolvable in reality affords readers psychic relief. The contradiction between oppressors (embodied by the capitalist Yankees) and oppressed, for instance, is not resolved by the elimination of the profiteers, but by the transformation of both Indian and capitalist into a loving, peaceful community of *Edelmenschen* (ennobled humanity) in *Winnetou IV* (Hohendahl, 228, 230). Hohendahl, Schulte-Sasse, and Schmiedt are the most explicit about the dialectic of utopian fantasy and the society to which it persistently refers. They speculate that the lasting success of May's novels may be due to the manner in which they vent political discontent and genuine suffering during a time of rapid economic and social change, and transform them into tales in which conflicts are harmonized with an authoritarian order and mastered by an aggrandized German masculine subject. In other words, they offered imaginary spaces in which the bourgeois individual's pain, alienation, and powerlessness were released without assuming antisocial or revolutionary dimensions.

culinity, men could imagine themselves as chivalrous; and in the face of national shame, Germans could imagine their rehabilitation within a supranational Christian mission.

### **Red Princes, American Action Heroes, and the Dilemma of Embodying Whiteness: Casting and Costuming at the Festival**

In essence, the stage adaptations constructed a German hero as exceptional white, different from other whites and superior to them. As I have shown, May's depiction of "white" identity, embodied by his alter ego Old Shatterhand, catered to the simultaneous repression and preservation of the subject of race in West Germany. A closer look at the casting and costuming of the protagonists, *Winnetou* and Old Shatterhand, illustrates the changing interpretations of what racial exceptionality would look like as a bodily style, shifting from a quasi-aristocratic, elegant, and fay sensibility to the more brawny and fetishized style of representation epitomized by the American action hero.

The physical attributes of the actors playing Old Shatterhand on stage during the mid-1950s emphasized his difference from both the compact stockiness of the white villains and from the towering musclemen idealized in Nazi visual culture. The physical attributes of the actors playing that character on stage, as well as later in the popular *Winnetou* movies produced during the 1960s, provide a stereotypical index of idealized German manliness and heroism, being tall, athletic, blond, blue-eyed, often bearded.<sup>40</sup> While a photo of the 1953 production shows the lean and elegant-looking Klaus Hellmold in the part, later productions illustrate a progressive bulking up of actors considered ideal. Hans Joachim Kilburger, who played the role for many years, was middle-aged and much heftier than Hellmold. Harry Walther, a tousled-haired, youthful man, was even more brawny, and the "definitive" Old Shatterhand, played by Lex Barker in the film adaptations, was finally a towering, muscular giant with slicked-back, blond hair and incessantly flexing jaw muscles, previously known mainly for his scantily clad appearances in five *Tarzan* movies.<sup>41</sup> The American B-movie actor and muscleman, who was far better known in Germany than in the United States, played Old Shatterhand in the West German

40. The preface to the script instructed producers to mark the passage of time between the third and fourth acts of *Winnetou* by showing Old Shatterhand (who has aged about ten years) wearing a short beard (Körner and Schmid, iv).

41. The *Tarzan* connection played a role again in the casting debates surrounding Pierre Brice's serial *My Friend Winnetou* (1979); since Barker had died in the meantime, the actor May's fans favored for the Old Shatterhand role was Ron Ely, who had also played the "Lord of the Jungle" (Kastner, 287).



Karl May films produced between 1962 and 1968 and was seen as epitomizing the corporeal ideal of strong, clever, and honorable manliness.<sup>42</sup> Old Shatterhand's fringed leather shirt and leggings set him apart from the white villains outfitted in the dark cloth trousers, shirts, and dustcoats recalling the Hollywood western. Both Walther (on stage) and Barker (on film) were action-hero types, whose buckskin costumes permitted freedom of movement needed for fast gallops, fistfights, and agile maneuvering across difficult terrain. Their brawny (although not necessarily built) bodies have set the standard for actors in that role since the mid-1960s, when the stage shows began emulating the film adaptations.<sup>43</sup>

Likewise, the first stage-Winnetous looked rather ethereal. Hans Jürgen Stumpf, who played the part in 1952, Gerhard Lippert (1953), and Günther Hoffmann (1957) were slim and graceful. Krauskopf describes the physical appearance of the early Winnetous as "leptosomes," a term deriving from Kretschmer's characterological chart of four body-character types. Lippert, he jokes, would have been better cast in a comic role "with his long neck and hunched shoulders" (440). That actorly type retained currency until the early 1990s, and was in fact dominant during the career of Pierre Brice, who played Winnetou opposite Lex Barker's Old Shatterhand on the screen and later on the stage. Brice created Winnetou as the romantic ideal of the "red gentleman," portraying the chief as a pensive, peaceable, and elegant prince, enhanced by the pronounced French accent spectators noted when Brice retired from film to the theater in 1976.<sup>44</sup> Brice exerted unprecedented control over the role, demanding

42. For a discussion of the Karl May westerns in the context of the European western, and those films' influence on the emergence of the subgenre of the spaghetti western, see Christopher Frayling. Frayling also discusses the important role the Karl May film adaptations played as the kind of movie industry the new German cinema defined itself against. The author cites Wim Wenders's film *The American Friend* (1972) as an example of a more narrowly nationalist cinema that criticized international film companies like Rialto, which produced the May movies and was seen to orient itself too much toward American standards of entertainment.

43. This development was signaled by the hiring of professional film directors. Harald Reinl, who had directed the *Winnetou* films in the early 1960s, was hired in Elspe in 1977; Bad Segeberg employed the Romanian action movie director Serge Nicolaescu in the 1980s. In addition, the stage shows liberally use the music Martin Boettcher had composed for the Winnetou films. See my article "Wigwams on the Rhine" for a more detailed account of filmic styles of presentation in the stage adaptation of *Treasure in Silver Lake* in 1994.

44. Brice was hired to play Winnetou at the open-air theater in Elspe, West Germany. Producers had the option of piping in a dubbed German voice over the sound system, but decided to have him speak live. In the films, Brice's voice had always been dubbed in German. His strong French accent in the stage performances, Kastner notes, only enhanced his "exotic appeal" and even became somewhat of a trademark (286). In 1986, when the Elspe festival management deemed the then fifty-seven-year-old Brice too old for the part, Bad Segeberg hired him for another four seasons from 1988–92. Brice, however, is still doing Winnetou: in 1997, a new ZDF-miniseries featured him again in the role of the Apache chief.

increasingly authentic costumes, and decisively shaping the image of the Apache chief into a multicultural hero and plaintive critic of Western civilization.<sup>45</sup> Yet Brice's brand of Indian masculinity competed from the beginning with another, more aggressive type embodied by the first stage star in that role, Heinz Ingo Hilgers.

Hilgers, who played the Apache to Walther's Old Shatterhand from 1961 to 1970, reputedly lent his Winnetou "a dark, very virile air reminiscent of the sex-appeal of the first James Bond, Sean Connery" (Krauskopf, 440). Hilgers and Walther were regarded as a "star-crossed pair of heroes" (Kastner, 281). Hilgers emphasized Winnetou's warrior aspect, replete with sharply chiseled features, wooly chest hair curling out of his shirt collar, and a dimpled chin. Later actors in that tradition tended to play the part with exposed upper body, including the most recent Winnetou at Bad Segeberg, Gojko Mitic. Mitic, a veteran Winnetou actor in the GDR, who has taken on the part at the festival since Brice's retirement in 1991, epitomizes the racial fetishism attached to that role. A former athletics coach in Yugoslavia and current heartthrob on German soap operas like *Forbidden Love*, Miti's Winnetou is built, broad-chested, and fierce.<sup>46</sup> The coffee-table fan-book *Gojko Mitic, Mustangs, Marterpfähle* (Gojko Mitic, mustangs, martyr poles), which showcases his work for the East German film company DEFA (Deutsche Film Aktien Gesellschaft), features luscious spreads of Mitic in bondage, straining against the ropes, his pectorals gleaming and showing the welts of recent lashings (Habel, 100–101, see fig. 3).<sup>47</sup> Winnetou's skin has become not only more shiny and defined over time, but also darker. While early Winnetou actors appear almost luminous in contrast to their more savage, brown-skinned brethren and show no difference of complexion when posing next to Old Shatterhand, later photographs (including those of Brice) emphasize his brown skin. The more overtly erotic and fetishized mode of performing Winnetou is the currently dominant one.

The transformation of Old Shatterhand into brawny action hero, the emergence of two actorly types of the Winnetou role, and the drift toward historical accuracy and exotic virility embodied by Brice and Mitic respectively, not only exhibit changing bodily codes of masculinity and race, but also bespeak the imbrication of national "types" with gendered and racial styles. That the gentle ideal of the noble savage is epitomized by a French

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45. I have explored Brice's identification with the Winnetou character and later with Native Americans in "Wigwams on the Rhine."

46. Mitic's acting persona as valiant underdog often fighting for nascent national causes was created through such roles as Spartacus, one of the three Musketeers, Robin Hood, and Rinaldo Rinaldini (program notes *Unter Geiern*, Bad Segeberg, 1998).

47. Mitic starred in fourteen Indian movies produced by DEFA between 1966 and 1985.



Harry Walther as Old Shatterhand and Heinz Ingo Hilgers as Winnetou in *Der Ölprinz* (The oil magnate), 1961. (Photograph by Wilhelm Rebhuhn. Copyright Karl-May-Verlag, 1962.)

actor praised for his elegance and classical beauty, the ruggedly handsome figure of the lone warrior by a Yugoslav performer, and the blonde *Edelmensch* by an American, owes much to the international media of film and television in which these actors were first associated with their roles.<sup>48</sup> The personae of Brice and Mitic evoke national stereotypes of an erotically charged, swarthy, that is racially inflected manliness—one primarily elegant, the other more rough-edged.<sup>49</sup> They have established Winnetou as the main character of the May adaptations, upstaging the white protago-

48. While Lex Barker, who died in 1973, never played Old Shatterhand on stage, his star appeal sufficed to recommend his son Christopher for the role in *Bad Segeberg* (1992 and 1993) (Stamp, 98).

49. The decision to cast an American actor as the German Old Shatterhand in the *Winnetou* films of the 1960s also parallels in interesting ways the casting of American body-builders in Italian *peplum* movies during the same time, which film critic Richard Dyer discusses in terms of the Italian film industry's response to the fascist baggage attached to the "strongman" role (Dyer, 165–80). Before Vietnam, America could still unproblematically embody masculine strength and military dominance to German audiences.

nists, including Old Shatterhand, and realigning spectatorial perceptions of the Wild West with the vantage point of the native. This shift of focus to the red hero has been accompanied by a shift of directorial identification. Until the 1980s, the prominence of Old Shatterhand as the vantage point organizing perceptions of the Wild West was emphasized by producers' and directors' taking on of that role.<sup>50</sup> These auteurlike conditions produced a powerful alignment of authorial and directorial perspective with that of the German protagonist, arguably exerting a pull on spectatorial identifications as well. The 1980s, however, evidence a shift in that constellation. Klaus-Hagen Latwesen, who was hired as the artistic director at Bad Segeberg in 1981, played the part of Winnetou. When Brice was hired for the role in 1988, he stipulated that the festival use his scripts as well, which were only very loosely based on May's stories. Mitic has continued in Brice's footsteps, participating in the script writing and issuing public appeals to tolerance and peace that blur the line between actor and character.

I propose that the audience's initial identification with Old Shatterhand in the postwar years aided the psychopolitical project of historical revisionism, replacing the trauma of the black legend after the Holocaust with the fantasy of German innocence and beneficence. The immensely popular stage adaptations visually translated the dream of German exceptionality and exemption from the crimes of white racism into a bodily style that juxtaposed the German hero with his Nazi predecessors and other villainous whites. The wan, aristocratic appearance of early Old Shatterhands inserted a class difference between the hero and his muscular adversaries. In contrast, later Old Shatterhands embodied white heroism as virile and athletic, but allayed the Nazi memories evoked by casting Old Shatterhand as a blond, blue-eyed superman by emphasizing national differences and identifying the action-hero as quintessentially American. Winnetou's vacillation between willowy red prince and virile warrior and his increasing prominence in the dramas illustrate West Germans' views of racial others as either noble and forgiving victims of genocide or the fetishized objects of profitable multicultural industries. The gravitation of spectatorial empathy and identification toward the Indian hero reflects marketing trends of the festival at large, which since the mid-1980s has adopted a more ethnographic approach to the Wild West as part of a multicultural pedagogy. Let me contextualize the developments sketched above in the larger frame of the festival, the Indian Village theme park,

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50. For example, Harry Walther, who played Old Shatterhand in Bad Segeberg during the 1950s and 1960s, served as the festival's artistic director from 1975–80; Jochen Bludau, responsible for the immense popular success of the Karl May festival in Elspe from 1970 to the mid-1980s, had played Old Shatterhand since the late 1960s, as well as authoring the scripts.

and the “reservation” that provide the environment for the summer performances, all of which were unified under a common management in 1980, when the Kalkberg company was founded.<sup>51</sup>

### **Multiculturalism, Commerce’s Promise, and the Incitement to Perform**

Karl May’s stories, which addressed the central contradictions of imperial Germany, have proven to be astonishingly adaptable to the values and expectations of audiences in the late twentieth century. While some features of the Wild West sagas gained new topicality in the mid-1950s (e.g., the yearning for national unity May attributed to German emigrants in the 1860s American West resonated in the context of the Cold War division of Germany),<sup>52</sup> writers and directors drastically altered others in order to keep the plays in step with contemporary concerns and sensibilities. One of the most remarkable instances of such changes is the revision of the trope of miscegenation, which I briefly referred to above in relation to the aborted love affair between Nscho-tshi and Old Shatterhand. The Bamberg edition of *Winnetou* published during the Third Reich had made this motif explicit by having Old Shatterhand exclaim that he hadn’t come to the Wild West to enter a mixed marriage (*Mischehe*).<sup>53</sup> Later book editions again excised that sentence with its recognizably Nazi terminology, but the *Winnetou* adaptations in the 1950s emphasize the unrequitedness of Nscho-tshi’s love for the German and characterize a potential union between the two as a mismatch. In explaining this “fact” to Nscho-tshi, *Winnetou* concedes that for an Indian woman this may not be a nice thing

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51. In his historical overview of the Karl May festival, Michael Stamp notes that the city of Segeberg founded the new corporation in order to coordinate the management of the Karl May festival, the open-air stage, and the underground bat caves in the mountain overlooking the stage—which is also a nature preserve—according to the principles of commercial efficiency and profitability (Stamp, 91).

52. When Old Shatterhand meets the German emigrant Hellmann, the latter exclaims: “What a pleasure! I’m overjoyed to meet a good friend from the dear old Fatherland, after such a long time abroad! [Shakes Old Shatterhand’s hand] If only it were to finally become a single, unified people, despite all disagreements!” (Körner and Schmid, 86). The play’s jibe at current political conditions was complemented by the festival’s publicity stunt of sending telegrams to the FRG’s chancellor Adenauer and the GDR’s prime minister Grotewohl, which invited the two heads of state to “bury the hatchet” and “smoke the peace pipe together.” The telegrams, written in broken German, were signed with *Winnetou*’s name (“‘Winnetou’ lädt Adenauer und Grotewohl zu Friedenspfeife ein”).

53. About the different editions, see Wehnert. The notorious *Mischehe* statement was toned down and attributed to *Winnetou* in the stage adaptation: “He [Old Shatterhand] didn’t come to this country to wed an Indian wife” (Körner and Schmid, 38).

to hear, but it's the truth (Körner and Schmid, 38). Again, racist ideology is attributed to Winnetou, in this instance by reassigning dialogue from Old Shatterhand to his Indian counterpart. In addition, the play displaces any anxieties about interracial love and reproduction from the tragic romance of Old Shatterhand and Nscho-tshi to the affair between the comic sidekick Sam Hawkens and Kliuna-ai (Moon), his Indian love interest, addressing the issue in a burlesque register. Their courtship ends when Kliuna-ai sees Sam without his wig and runs off screaming. Old Shatterhand queries his companion, "But Sam, an Indian?" after the older man tells him about his romance, to which Sam replies: "So what? I would even marry a Negro if she weren't black!" (35). While Indians (like Winnetou) realize the unsurmountable obstacles facing interracial marriage, whites' acceptance thereof is portrayed as literally nonsensical.

Along with the addition of strong female characters, the insertion of interracial couples and biracial characters into the adaptations constitutes the most substantive and consistent intervention in May's stories. The positive reevaluation of miscegenation since the mid-1980s is indicative of the ways in which May's racial and national discourse is sublated, that is, both canceled and preserved, within the discourse of multiculturalism. May's treatment of miscegenation in the novels is uneven: while some of the most positive characters in his oeuvre, like the young Harry in the second *Winnetou* volume, derive from interracial unions, other "half-breeds" count among the most villainous. The title character from the story "Halbblut" (Half-breed), an earlier version of which was published under the title "The Black Mustang," is described as having inherited the best physical but the worst moral qualities of his parents' races. The 1977 stage adaptation *Black Mustang* still emphasized that combination: although the mestizo is graced with strength and agility, his personality combines exceptional greed and selfishness with exceptional deviousness. Accordingly, he suffers a gruesome and shameful death. In contrast, the stage adaptation *Half-Breed*, produced in 1986, revises the story of his betrayals of both whites and Comanches, has him break with his power-hungry Comanche grandfather and "promise to use his biracial heritage to work as a mediator between the races and bring about peace" (*Der Wilde Westen Live*, 80). That same year, the festival management signed a friendship pact with a group of Winnebago Indians, who took up residence in the Wild West theme park and attended the opening night festivities. The Winnebagos have been succeeded by members of various Indian nations over the years. Stage adaptations of May's work since then have consistently represented miscegenation as the epitome of cross-cultural mediation and love, embodying peace and harmony between the races in the figure of the "half-

breed.”<sup>54</sup> Like the friendship pact and similar symbolic acts, the revision of the miscegenation trope self-consciously heralded the festival’s new image as a pedagogical enterprise committed to bringing about “reconciliation and redress (*Versöhnung und Ausgleich*) between different races, religions, and cultures” (*Wilde Westen Live*, 22). The festival has become a multicultural industry; however, the choice of a racial trope as a symbol for *cultural* rapprochement points to the persistence of a discourse ostensibly supplanted by multiculturalism.

While the nightly performances are the centerpiece of the annual summer festival, they are embedded in the performative contexts of the Wild West theme park, which many visitors, especially children, attend in Indian drag. Since the early 1950s, when Bad Segeberg’s motto was “Eine Stadt spielt Indianer” (“A town plays Indian”), Indian drag has spilled over to the entire town, which thrives on Wild West decorating motifs, especially during the tourist season. One can scarcely find a shopwindow in which Indian artifacts don’t enhance the commodity appeal of clothes, glasses, cars, or food. The commercialized (professional and amateur) styles of drag contrast with the ethnologically accurate, expert performances practiced by the Plains Indians Interest Group. This hobbyist club is often invited to dance at the festival, transforming the site into a mock powwow.

Since 1986, Indian Village has also served as a “reservation” where Winnebago artifacts are exhibited and traditional music and dances are performed. Occasionally, “real” Indians are flown in from North America, invited to take up residence in the village’s Nebraska Haus (which also features exhibits of Indian artwork), and paid to offer workshops on Native American skills and crafts. At the park/reservation, the “authentic” masquerade of the Indian club and Karl May’s fantasy world intersect in their shared reference to pre-1860s Native Americans.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, the activities of Bad Segeberg’s Indian club are an integral part of the city’s Karl May

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54. The 1994 production of the perennial favorite *The Treasure in Silver Lake* closed with the young Indian chief Little Bear and his newfound love Paloma, introduced as the daughter of a Hamburg merchant and an Apache mother, riding off together into the sunset. The couple’s final dialogue, about overcoming the prejudices and hatreds of previous generations and working toward more loving relationships between peoples, is suggestive of Karl May’s late work and his mystical visions of interracial reconciliation. For a fuller account of that production, see Sieg 1995. The 1998 production *Unter Geiern* (Among vultures) added not only a tomboy character, who passes for a boy for much of the play, but paired her off with the romantic Indian lead. Transformed into a proper young lady, she walks off at the arm of the handsome Schiba-Bigk.

55. The fictional time in May’s Winnetou novels was not the present (the 1890s), but the 1860s, a period when the persecution and displacement of the native population, a fait accompli at the time of writing, was at its apex.

festivities. The festival management invites them to dance before the show begins, and the Indian club participates in communal parades. Since I will address Indian club culture more fully in chapter 3, I shall restrict myself here to the function of Bad Segeberg's local Indian club within the festival.

Although the Indian club participates in the Karl May revels, it presents its performances as correctives—or even challenges—to the kind of Indian drag performed on the stage and in the town. The Plains Indians Interest Group grew out of—then outgrew—May's Wild West fantasies. While their choice of impersonation as epistemological practice appears to be inspired by Karl May, their identifications lead them in a different direction. May identified with Old Shatterhand, used that name on his business cards, decorated his house in Radebeul as "Villa Shatterhand," and had himself photographed in the westman's costume, holding the rifles he had mythologized in the novels. Club Indians perceive this identification with a fictional character as frivolous and contrast it with the "serious" historical research that informs their own impersonations. Moreover, their sympathies belong to Native Americans, rather than the white westmen.

In the context of the festival and the theme park–reservation, Indian drag is presented as a model of intercultural communication that fixes its object in an ahistorical, ethnic pose, preserving it as a valuable set of skills and traditions that have unfortunately been corrupted by the influence of white culture. The park-reservation and the museum are uncritically offered as institutions that "best" accomplish the task of restoring and preserving an imaginary cultural purity. When a contingent of Native Americans from the Winnebago nation was invited to Bad Segeberg for the summer of 1986, they were presented as the proud representatives of Indian language, music, and other cultural traditions, which remained intact due to the seclusion of their Nebraska reservation. The reservation was naively depicted as a haven where native traditions and identities are transmitted and protected from outside influences (*Der Wilde Westen Live*, 57). The Indian club, in its insistence on specific skills, education, and practice, subscribes to a notion of identity and cross-cultural understanding that ostensibly opposes that of the souvenir shops, where tourists and spectators are invited to express their admiration for Winnetou and Old Shatterhand by purchasing Wild West accessories. Although positioning themselves outside of and opposed to the commercialization of "Indian culture" by the festival and the theme park, the Indian club is also commodified within it.

The contradiction between the commodification of Indian culture and its indictment (explicitly in the plays, and implicitly by the club and museum) does not seem to cause spectators any great crises of conscience



or inhibit consumption.<sup>56</sup> After perusing the authentic artifacts exhibited in Nebraska Haus, visitors flock to the souvenir shops next door to acquire cheap pocket knives, T-shirts, and tomahawks inscribed with the legend “I ♥ Winnetou.” Perhaps even more incongruously, kids in feathered headdresses amuse themselves at the gold mine, which is part of Indian Village, and then run on to sit around the campfire tended by cowboys (or westmen, as May would have called them). This constitutes not only a gleeful crossing of high and low cultural practices, genres, and sites, but proclaims the sublation of grave ideological contradictions through commerce. Indian drag, an activity profoundly tied to consumption, is figured as the antidote to the misrepresentation, expropriation, and exploitation of the Indians that the plays and the club condemn. Ultimately, “Indian” subjectivity is delivered over to the spectator/drag artist—who can imagine him or herself either as the arbiter of ethnological correctness or cross-cultural compassion in ever-proliferating performative acts and sites. Drag marks the transformation of the spectator into another preserver and guardian of Indian culture, an act through which others’ historical violence is momentarily repaired. The denial of German racial atrocities shaped in the colonial context and reinvigorated in the aftermath of the Nuremberg Trials and public struggles around memory, justice, and democratization, hence proves to be intact and seductive as ever, by allowing for the rewriting of consumption as a transformative force that did not impel the Indians’ destruction, but can, on the contrary, transcend the tragedy of their displacement and murder and, temporarily, resurrect them.

Ethnic drag at the Karl May festival in Bad Segeberg reveals the triangulation of Germans, Jews, and (Native) Americans. The diverse acts of substitution and displacement I examine allowed West Germans to cathartically purge profoundly ambivalent emotions about race, nation, and gender in the early 1950s. The theatrical transfer of genocide from Eastern Europe to the American frontier removed the horror and shame of the recent past to a remote location and another century. Initially inviting identification with the German hero Old Shatterhand, the plays allowed spectators to imagine themselves as protectors of the weak and punishers of the villains, relieving the shame and dishonor of more recent, incontrovertible evidence of massive, horrendous brutality perpetrated by Germans during their aggressive war of expansion, their enslavement of Eastern Europeans, and their extermination of Jews and Gypsies. The

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56. In *Winnetou IV*, Karl May indicts the commodification of Winnetou’s memory after two of the Apache’s friends build a monumental statue and theme park in the hopes of making a profit. Predictably, their endeavor fails through the intervention of fate itself: the statue is destroyed when it tumbles into a natural cave underneath.

romance between Old Shatterhand and Winnetou and the increasing centrality of the Winnetou figure in the dramas also attest to the intense emotional and erotic investment in the racialized body of the Other and allows for the expression of grief over mass murder, even as that death is presented as unavoidable. Yet the division of Native Americans into good, noble Indians and bloodthirsty, vengeful savages betrays the ambivalence of Enlightenment visions of human brotherhood and the belief in essential racial difference that continued after the official debunking of racial ideology. The displacement of the drama of genocide to the Wild West arguably also turned the tables on white Americans, who confronted West Germans in the roles of administrators, judges, and mediators, and allowed spectators to fantasize a reversal of roles from accused to accuser and arbiter. The plays' celebration of restrained manliness and Christian morality (which required heavy editing of the original story lines) echoed the conservative, patriarchal ideologies guiding the reconstruction efforts of Adenauer's government. The Bad Segeberg festival also illustrates the increasingly central place America occupied in postwar Germans' racial imagination and the eventual organization of citizenship around discourses of consumption that were crucial to Cold War discourse. The surrogation of Indians and Jews facilitated the catharsis of racial feelings that were almost never given public expression in the postwar decade. By mourning, over and over, a crime they simultaneously disavowed, the Winnetou dramas marked and covered over the terrible rip in the social fabric and historical memory. Through ethnic drag, they rehearsed a sophisticated technology of forgetting whose perpetual failure compelled both constant repetitions and diverse "multicultural" revisions, as well as ethnographic counterdiscourses at that site over the last half-century.



## CHAPTER 3

# Winnetou's Grandchildren: Indian Identification, Ethnic Expertise, White Embodiment

In the early 1990s, Indian activist and writer Ward Churchill traveled through Germany on a lecture tour and was astonished to find there large numbers of people attending his lectures in Native American garb who, he discovered, consider themselves to be Indians:<sup>1</sup> “These ‘Indians of Europe,’” Churchill observed,

were uniformly quite candid as to why they felt this way. Bluntly put—and the majority were precisely this harsh in their own articulations—they absolutely *hate* the idea of being Europeans, especially Germans. Abundant mention was made of their collective revulsion to the European heritage of colonization and genocide, particularly the ravages of nazism. Some went deeper, addressing what they felt to be the intrinsically unacceptable character of European civilization's relationship to the natural order in its entirety. Their response, as a group, was to try and disassociate themselves from what it was/is they object to by announcing their personal identities in terms as diametrically opposed to it as they could conceive. “Becoming” American Indians in their own minds apparently fulfilled this deep-seated need in the most gratifying fashion. (1992, 224)

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1. A word on terminology: I will use the term *Indian* throughout this chapter, not only because the word *Indianer* has incomparably more currency in German than *amerikanische Ureinwohner* as the equivalent of *Native American*, a term that grew out of the Native American movement in the 1960s and is little used among Indians today. To my mind, *Indian*, that famous misnomer, stresses the fictional nature of the personae performed in the Indian clubs, but also underscores the weight of the patterns of perception shaped by the literary imagination of writers like Gerstäcker, May, Steuben, and others.

He goes on to ridicule this “weekend warrior” endeavor, scolds hobbyists for replacing political activism with cultural escapism, and concludes that, in fact, their leisure activity allows them more effectively to fulfill the social roles they symbolically reject. The heated arguments between Churchill’s group and the hobbyists that he describes typify the struggle for cultural authority and ownership that ensues every time contemporary Indians face the power of metaphorical Indianness: while the Germans underscore their distance from a European history of colonization, Churchill interprets hobbyism as its postcolonial continuation by cultural and spiritual means. While hobbyists are quick to cite a long history of German-Indian contact as the foundation of Germans’ interest in and knowledge about Native American cultures, Churchill’s insistence on the ideological function of contemporary Germans’ identification with Indians seems justified. I hope to show, however, that hobbyist styles are more disparate than he allows, and should not be collapsed into a single meaning.<sup>2</sup>

Similar to Philip Deloria, who underscores the changing meanings of the Indian in the American imagination in the course of the twentieth century, I perceive great differences between German hobbyists’ attitudes toward Native Americans. These differences are generational, underscoring the changes in hobbyism over time; they are regional, pointing to a number of local performance traditions with which hobbyism has shared space; and they are ideological, in the sense that the antimodernism Churchill stresses in his description challenges Nazi racism and imperialism in some instances, while in others it is directed against social features specific to socialism, democracy, and capitalism. Even within the small sample of hobbyists on whose testimony this chapter is based, these differences resulted in very different views of their practice and interpretations of its social and political meanings. Some (primarily within the younger

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2. Unfortunately, Churchill does not speculate about the motivations of other Western and Eastern European hobbyists. Indian clubs exist in many European countries that quite obviously have a different relationship to fascism and where the kinds of enacted historical revisionism I discuss in this article would play no part in practitioners’ identification with Native Americans. In his keynote address at the conference *Deutsche und Indianer—Indianer und Deutsche: Cultural Encounters over Three Centuries*, which took place at Dartmouth College, May 1999, Christian Feest pointed to the preoccupation with Indians on the part of Europeans from Portugal to the Ukraine, challenging many Germans’ cherished assumption of a privileged affinity between Germans and Indians and embedding it in a larger European context of fantasizing about the New World and its Noble Savages during and since colonial times. Although I have no firsthand evidence of this, I would speculate that the motivations of many hobbyists in other European countries are informed by the generally antimodern, “green,” and pacifist impulses that also characterize the practice of younger German hobbyists. An excellent discussion of the changing meanings of “playing Indian” across the generations in North America can be found in Deloria; some of his suppositions, I believe, also pertain to the European context.

generation) identify with American Indians as a way of practicing an alternative, “green” lifestyle marked by ecological awareness and a rejection of the trappings of consumer culture and the class distinctions it fosters. By contrast, others (who first took up hobbyism in the postwar years) appear to have been impelled by a sense of victimization, national defeat, and emasculation—feelings they were able to symbolically redress through the ritual of ethnic masquerade. While Germans’ choice of the Indian as a model of heroic manliness and anti-imperialist defiance was probably due to the popularity of Karl May’s Wild West novels, such cross-cultural identification was complicated by the Cold War. Some of the West German men, who joined or founded hobbyist clubs after the war, who shaped these clubs’ direction and now occupy leadership positions within the national umbrella organizations, felt that they, like Indians, were oppressed by white Americans—but they also met Native Americans, who served as soldiers in the occupying forces and attended hobbyist meetings in U.S. army uniforms. In order to research Native American history, they had to learn English, enter army base stores to purchase hobbyist periodicals like *American Indian Hobbyist*, and visit libraries maintained by the American forces. Hobbyists in the German Democratic Republic (who called themselves “Indianists”) were encouraged by the socialist state to develop an understanding of and solidarity with Indians as emblems of anti-imperialist oppression and resistance; as Birgit Turski shows, however, some East German Indianists perceived themselves as antisocialist resisters instead, rejecting Communism as a form of alien domination. Did hobbyism in East and West Germany fit within the ideological identifications and enmities set up by the Cold War, or did it subvert them? Is all German hobbyism fueled by antifascism, as Ward Churchill suggests? And if so, does Indian impersonation correlate with progressive, antiracist endeavors in general, expressing solidarity with all oppressed, as Yolanda Broyles Gonzales maintains in one of the few extant scholarly essays about hobbyism? Or does the merely symbolic rejection of “European civilization,” as opposed to activist opposition, in fact bolster the very ideological structures hobbyists lament, as Churchill contends? Finally, can hobbyism be a model for imagining the sharing of power and authority by Germans and Native Americans? Is the hobbyists’ revision of biological concepts of “race” (based on impermeable and unbridgeable boundaries between people) in favor of what I call “ethnic competence” (based on knowledge and performance) a welcome step toward overcoming racism? Or does the transformation of Native American identities into cultural roles that can be donned by white Europeans continue the history of cultural theft and ethnic chauvinism?

In placing this chapter as a sequel to my reading of the Karl May fes-

tival, I want to draw attention to the ways in which people creatively interact with mass-cultural texts. Although most hobbyists confess to first conceiving their passion for Indians by reading Karl May, this contact did not constitute an unambiguous colonization of their minds, but occasioned a great variety of performances that eschew the notion of passive consumer of dominant discourses. Answering the incitement to perform issued at such venues as the Karl May festival, they offer correctives to these mass-produced fantasies, crafting for themselves positions of competence and authority that encompass the roles of spectator, actor, author, and critic, which are kept separate in traditional theater. They insist emphatically on doing more than act out stock parts in prefabricated scripts, but describe the formation of their personae as a process of self-creation and individuation, evolving from masquerade to mimesis. The narratives of their practice, on which this chapter is based, thus offer important insights into the ways in which individuals insert themselves into discourses of nationality, race/ethnicity, and gender.

Because my attention, as a theater scholar, was trained on the way in which specific cultural venues, genres, and styles shaped Germans' imagined and actual interaction with other ethnic subjects, my research about hobbyist clubs was initially determined by the performance genres that, I speculated, had given rise to it, namely the circus, the *Völkerschau* (ethnic show), the carnival, and the Karl May theatricals. After I had already met the hobbyists in Bad Segeberg (the site of the largest Karl May festival in western Germany), I therefore sought out clubs in Cologne, which had been featured in a book of photographs entitled *Kölner Stämme* (Cologne tribes) as avid participants in the carnival, a custom prevalent in the Catholic regions of Germany. In addition, I was curious whether Yolanda Broyles Gonzales's thesis about hobbyism as a way of coping with modernization processes and the loss of local, rural, oral traditions would also be confirmed by urban hobbyists; since I usually stay in Berlin when I visit Germany, I contacted two groups, one in the western and the other in the eastern part of the formerly divided city. In the summers of 1998 and 1999 I conducted interviews with members of four different Indian clubs in Germany: the Interessengruppe der Plains Indianer in Bad Segeberg,<sup>3</sup> the

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3. The English translation of their name is Plains Indians Interest Group. I conducted a group interview with them in Bad Segeberg on April 23, 1998; members present were Ekkehard Bartsch, Ingeborg Bartsch, Ingrid Bartsch, and Conni Scharborski. The interest group leases grounds that are used, especially in the summer, to build and live in teepees and "go Indian" for a weekend. They spend most of their club time in costume and occupy themselves with maintaining and repairing costumes, sewing, embroidering, and painting pieces of clothing, jewelry, and other accessories or artifacts. In addition, they engage in group activities like cooking and chatting together. They seemed to be a very sociable group with long-term,

Präriefreunde Köln,<sup>4</sup> the Interessengruppe Nordamerikanische Völkerkunde from West Berlin,<sup>5</sup> and Indianer heute from East Berlin.<sup>6</sup> In addition, I draw on Birgit Turski's study *Die Indianistikgruppen der DDR* (The Indianist groups of the GDR), a sociological study written by a practi-

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close-knit friendships. There are slightly more women than men in the membership. The bulk of the club (around twenty-five to thirty people) consists of members in their twenties and thirties, but many children and adolescents participate as well. Reduced membership fees for members under sixteen years of age makes this an affordable pastime. One method of recruitment seems to consist of children bringing friends along for the weekends.

4. Trans. Friends of the Prairie. I interviewed Wolfgang Wettstein and Harro Hesse on their club grounds (on the outskirts of Cologne) on April 26, 1998. Their wives and grandchildren were present as well, but did not participate much in the interview. The Friends of the Prairie hold a long-term lease on the club grounds on the Cologne outskirts, where they meet during the weekends. They occupy themselves mostly with the maintenance of the grounds and spend little time in teepees or in Indian costume. In order to immerse himself in Indian life, Wolfgang "Larry" Wettstein attends camps organized by other clubs. The club, which has about thirty-five members, was founded in 1951 and is one of the most established Indian clubs, evidenced by the fact that it has hosted four national councils. Wettstein and his wife Patricia are also officers of the Western Association. The club grounds have several log cabins on them, one of which flies the flag of the Hudson Bay Trading Company. The last time teepees were built, Wettstein and his friend Harro Hesse reflected, was during an open day for Cologne schoolchildren.

5. Trans. North American Ethnology Interest Group. I spoke with Kurt Dietrich "Ted" Asten in his West Berlin apartment on May 6, 1998. We were joined later by his wife, who accompanies him to the annual councils but is not an Indian hobbyist. The interest group has a fairly academic orientation, an adult membership of eleven, and no club grounds. Members consist of experts from such far-flung regions as Tallin (France), Kettenes and Plombiere (Belgium), Dresden, and Offerath, a small town outside of Cologne. They hold double affiliation with both the Western Association and the Indianist Union, making Asten the only interviewee who had attended both East and West German summer camps and could compare the different styles of hobbyism practiced there. The club meets only three times a year, at the council, the week, and at an annual club meeting, which not even all members attend. Asten publishes and distributes a newsletter that contains translations of scholarly articles originally published in English, as well as pieces of original research and commentary.

6. Trans. Indians Today. I met Dieter Kubat and Steffi Rühmann for an interview on July 18, 1998. The conversation took place in their apartment in Berlin. I also conducted a follow-up interview with them on May 24, 1999. Indians Today was established in 1973 and is run by Dieter Kubat and his partner Steffi Rühmann out of their East Berlin apartment. Their organization is an anomaly in the context of this study, since its members' rejection of impersonation, focus on contemporary Indians and their political struggle, and efforts at repatriation of artifacts lead them to see themselves as anti-Indianists. However, their interest in Indian material culture (Kubat's apartment resembles an ethnological museum), their close, long-term contacts with American Indian Movement (AIM) activists, and their educational activities in the GDR would still qualify them as "object hobbyists" according to Deloria's categories. The American scholar distinguishes "object hobbyism" from "people hobbyism" (135).



tioner,<sup>7</sup> and Broyles Gonzales's essay "Cheyennes in the Black Forest: A Social Drama," which is based on twelve years of participant-observation of one club in the Black Forest region in southwestern Germany. In the following discussion, I will first outline in greater detail the generational, regional, and ideological differences among practitioners, before proceeding to assess the social meanings of hobbyism in the crucible of the Cold War. Finally, I will consider its political consequences for intercultural relations, both between Native Americans and Germans, and between Germans and other ethnic minorities.

In the course of my research, I discovered that the differences resulting from regional performance traditions were less significant than those created by age and by political leanings. My sample is too small to be representative of even the main variants of hobbyism—for instance, I was unable to interview any of the so-called *Öko-Indianer* (eco-Indians), for whom hobbyism is an integral part of ecological activism, or any of the East German groups affiliated with the Indianistikbund (see below). Several of the people who shared their experiences, memories, and insights with me happened to be men between fifty and sixty years of age; hence my focus on the postwar years, when these particular men first became interested in Indians. During our meetings, I encouraged them to tell me about their fascination with Native American culture in their own words, describe the orientation and composition of their club, and speculate about the reasons for Germans' love of Indians in general. I was fortunate in that three of my interlocutors acted as lay club historians and had collated thick volumes of photographs, commentary, correspondence, newsletters, and other records of their clubs and of others. They had composed detailed and opinionated amateur histories of hobbyism. My work consists of a close reading of the stories they told me, which meant listening to both what they said and what they kept silent about; sometimes I

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7. The book is based on her thesis in cultural sciences at the University of Leipzig. As a scholarly work, even with an opening chapter that promises a "personal narrative" of the author's experience as founder and leader of an Indianist youth club, the book does not include the kind of biographical detail offered by my interlocutors and provides few insights into the members' motivations. The club Turski headed was called Jugendclub für Indianistik "Pedro Bissonette" (Youth Club for Indianism "Pedro Bissonette") in Cottbus. It changed its orientation from a text-based study of Indian cultures to an increased emphasis on re-creating Indian lifeways at the camps, a shift that Turski describes as typical of Indianist clubs in the GDR. From 1980 to 1989 her group also published the newsletter *Wampum*, which was in high demand among Indianists in the GDR. The club was sponsored by the local zoo, which took over the costs of caring for the club's growing number of horses. While Turski notes that other groups perceived their lack of affiliation as freedom from control—and sometimes inappropriate expectations—by the sponsoring agencies, her study focuses on the host of problems created by the uncertain legal status of many Indianist groups.

call attention to contradictions and disagreements between speakers, and sometimes I elaborate on what they say by placing their remarks in historical context. Although it is important to me to faithfully convey speakers' intentions and the flavor of their statements, on occasion reproducing lengthy passages, I also want to distance myself from their views rather than subordinate myself to them. I am not a hobbyist delivering an insider's account, but a scholar, who has to balance her respect for these individuals with her commitment to a critical analysis of their controversial practice. I am as dedicated to revealing what Germans find appealing in hobbyism as I am to clarifying why many aspects of it are painful and objectionable to Native Americans. Although many clubs have documented their own development, a comprehensive, historical overview of this subculture remains to be written. I hope that this project, despite its limitations, can help readers understand through specific examples how cultural "exchange" in a context defined by unequal power and authority can potentially renegotiate social hierarchies—or why it fails to do so.

### **Institutional Genealogies, Personal Biographies: "Origins"**

Hobbyists trace the birth of Indian clubs from the spirit of Karl May through three narratives of origin. These three narratives track the process by which the carnival, the circus (including the Wild West shows by Buffalo Bill, Billy Jenkins, and a train of successors), and the ethnic show created widespread interest in and fascination with Indians,<sup>8</sup> and produced groups of amateur and specialist performers for whom casual interest or professional training increasingly turned into a serious commitment, even a lifestyle.<sup>9</sup> While some clubs had existed before 1920, club foundings rose steeply after World War II.<sup>10</sup> The largest cluster of clubs can be found in the southern or southwestern states of North-Rhine-Westfalia and Baden-Württemberg, and in East Germany in the cities of Dresden (twelve clubs) and Leipzig (six clubs), locations associated with the carnival, the *Völkerschau*, and Karl May respectively.<sup>11</sup> Despite the perception of shared

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8. Asten stated that the first Indian clubs in Leipzig and Dresden were founded in direct response to the ethnic shows in Leipzig that Hagenbeck had organized.

9. Wettstein, for instance, told me that his entire apartment is a museum, in which he exhibits his collection of self-made and Indian-made artifacts. See also the brief article on his club in *Kölner Stämme*, 65–69.

10. In 1968, Curt-Dietrich Asten, one of my interlocutors, had written his thesis in social work about German Indian clubs. Unfortunately, there are no extant copies. In it, he had included a timeline about club foundings, as well as another chart which divided clubs by state.

11. Turski counted fifty clubs in 1991, a slight decline from the forty-seven East German clubs Asten had on his list in 1998.

roots, hobbyism developed quite differently in East and West Germany. Today, two umbrella organizations exist, one in each part of the formerly divided Germany: the Westernbund (Western Association) in the old Federal Republic and the Indianistikbund (Indianist Union) in the erstwhile German Democratic Republic. In 1998, the Western Association had a membership of 156 clubs, while 53 clubs were affiliated with the Indianist Union. The main difference between the Western Association and the Indianist Union is the exclusive focus on Indian cultures in the latter, whereas the former comprises a wide range of identifications with anything western—including scouts, mountainmen, military (both Union and Confederate soldiers), and cowboys.<sup>12</sup>

Another reason why there is so little overlap between the two organizations may be the fiercely competitive atmosphere prevailing at the annual meetings. While the emphasis is on the affirmation of shared interests, the members I interviewed are also intensely critical of the many errors in accuracy they perceive among their fellow practitioners. The Bad Segeberg group criticized the tyranny of authenticity prevailing at the annual meeting, because it upholds class hierarchies along with ethnic divisions.<sup>13</sup> Several interviewees commented on the fact that GDR hobby-

12. As the association's name indicates, East German Indian clubs are devoted exclusively to Indian culture; Turski as well as some West German hobbyists interpret the shrinking and splitting of clubs since reunification in the context of the changing leisure culture in the new states, specifically the fact that the white frontier characters listed above had been unavailable for performative identification under socialism, whereas Indian culture, fostered by the GDR Kulturbund, enjoyed the status of an oppressed people and fit well within the anti-American agenda of the socialist state. Turski notes that those western fans interested in emulating cowboys failed to legitimate their interest vis-à-vis state agencies, by portraying cowboys as "the poorest sector of the rural proletariat" (27). Moreover, increasing identification with the political plight of Native Americans led younger Indianists to vilify cowboys as the imperialist racial enemy, making it even more difficult for cowboy-hobbyists to pursue their interest.

13. Inge Bartsch offered a materialist critique of authenticity as fetish, which highlighted its racist, class-specific, and imperialist dimensions and effects: "There are clubs where the members are 250 percent correct, they are better than the Indians themselves. I am always worried that if you identify too much with the whole thing, then as a white person you go, 'I can do this better than anyone else.' And when the Indians were here, the Winnebago . . . were looking around and walked through the museum, and one Herr Marken had these terrific sheaths for the guns and they said, well, that's better than what any Indian could make. And that made a horrible impression on me, this attitude of being better-than-thou. That's something we don't want *at all!* That's the biggest problem, and the more I learn about the whole background, the humbler I become. They [Indians] make everything out of plastic, synthetic material. And if I take hairpipes, for instance [an elongated type of bead], for one dollar I get one genuine hairpipe in this size, but for the same money I get twenty made of plastic. And because [the Indians] are . . . well, let's say, not well off, they live quite near the poverty line, of course they take the ones made of plastic. For them it's a symbolic value, it doesn't matter if it's genuine or synthetic. Here, they look at you askance if you don't have

ists were disadvantaged because they had fewer resources and less access to purveyors of authentic materials.<sup>14</sup> Both umbrella organizations hold annual meetings of seven to fourteen days, when individuals, clubs, and associations immerse themselves in the western/Indian experience, dress up, and participate in a diverse program of activities for children and adults, which includes singing, dancing, storytelling, and handicrafts. More ethnologically oriented clubs use the annual meetings to offer slide presentations or display and discuss their collections of artifacts. The first Indian Council took place in West Germany in 1951. In the mid-1980s, the Western Association purchased grounds in the Westerwald forest near Koblenz that were large enough to accommodate all attendees (two to three thousand) and provide storage space for their 250 to 350 teepees between meetings. In contrast, the location of the annual meeting changed from year to year in the former East Germany and continues to do so today. In sum, western hobbyism emphasizes private ownership and fosters a highly commercialized culture that creates competitive conditions few East German Indianists can or want to meet. Perhaps for these reasons, the East-West separation continues to hold. At their meetings, the German clubs are joined by practitioners from almost every other European country. Apart from these summer meetings, there are numerous western or Indian camps organized throughout the year by individual or regional associations, where members have the opportunity to live in teepees, dress in authentic costumes, and participate in a host of activities.

The narrative of West and East German hobbyism's evolution from "low" entertainment to quasi-scientific endeavor is repeated on the individual level by the practitioner's development from enthusiast to expert. The teleological narrative of each hobbyist career constructs a development from superficial fascination to scholarly earnestness, and from playful mimicking to creative, respectful, and historically correct emulation. Curt-Dietrich Asten, a West Berlin hobbyist, maintains that many, if not all, of the old clubs were founded and shaped by circus artistes, including the Cowboy Club Old Texas (established in 1950), which he first joined.

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the real thing, right? And the Indians who come here and would like to participate, in their polyester shirts, they, too, would prefer to have cotton outfits, or leather. But that's hard to get and incredibly expensive. And the dealers tend to be white people. The whites buy and the whites sell. Sometimes I feel that the European clubs, including the ones from France, Spain, and Holland, that they buy up everything over there. Right? And that the one who has the money, he gets it. So the Indians are left with the rest, and then they are looked at askance. I regret that deeply."

14. Patrizia Wettstein, who is an officer in the Western Association, calls hobbyism an "expensive pastime," even though few participants would buy a complete outfit, whose cost she estimates around five thousand deutsche marks. Rather, participants are expected to buy the materials and sew their own basic costume of moccasins, shirt, and leggings.

Members of that club had worked in the Billy Jenkins circus show in the 1920s, pointing to a large degree of historical and personal continuity between circus artistes and Indian-western clubs. Asten's separation from that club and founding of what he self-consciously called an ethnologically oriented interest group in 1964, signaled an important turn in his hobbyist career. Likewise, the Bad Segeberg group's evolution from extras to experts, and one Cologne hobbyist's transformation from carnivalesc Winnetou fan to Lakota emulator exemplify rhetorical strategies of demonstrating expertise, seriousness, and mimetic competence.<sup>15</sup>

All four (groups of) individuals that I interviewed repeatedly used the term *serious* to underscore their ethnological aspirations and expertise. Seriousness has a range of connotations concerning the hobbyists' self-characterization: it signals respect for Native Americans, as opposed to the "foolery" of carnival Indians, artistes, or Karl May fans. Moreover, seriousness connotes scholarly accuracy, as opposed to the casual, often faulty reproductions of many hobbyists. It means hard work, as opposed to the laziness of those who would buy their gear rather than make it with their own hands. Finally, "seriousness" indicates a commitment to "substance" rather than surface, an important though difficult distinction given the preoccupation with the material culture of the Indians. For most hobbyists, seriousness has both an aspirational function, illuminating the long, unremitting effort, the exertion, and the obstacles overcome in their striving for expertise; and a differentiating function in setting the serious expert apart from the majority of "casual" Indian hobbyists.<sup>16</sup> Even when an expert has, in his own view, reached the pinnacles of expertdom, he is still caught in a nerve-racking battle against the ignorance and indifference of his own brethren, who give in all too easily to the temptations of relaxation, laziness, and commercialization. The continued necessity of distinguishing "serious" mimesis from inauthentic masquerade constitutes a central dimension of the hobbyists' struggle for expertise.

These narratives of evolution oppose low-cultural forms of entertainment and science, commerce and a disinterested pursuit of ethnological truth, and measure progress by the hobbyists' distance from the former in favor of the latter. A brief look at the historical ethnic show, however, reveals that these oppositional pairs are actually deeply enmeshed; more-

15. Wettstein and Asten in particular spent extraordinary effort and time demonstrating their ethnological knowledge, explaining particular techniques and describing artifacts during the interviews. They also engaged in repeated list-making, enumerating names of tribes, regions, Indian individuals, artifacts, and raw materials. These lists suggested boundless, exhaustive knowledge.

16. Asten and Wettstein both displayed great exasperation at the unwillingness of the great majority of hobbyists to get better at what they do, at their contentment to play without deepening their knowledge, their resistance to criticism and self-improvement, and their resentment toward the experts.

over, the genre allows me to restore what I want to call the economics of enchantment, namely the material conditions of intercultural collaboration.<sup>17</sup> Ethnic shows provided the first large-scale face-to-face contacts between Germans and Indians between the 1870s and the 1920s. While explorers and conquerers, beginning with Columbus, had brought back natives from the regions they discovered, who were then displayed at European courts, ethnic shows became a profitable business for large audiences during the nineteenth century. Many Germans in the later nineteenth and the early twentieth century had read literary, ethnological, or journalistic depictions of the American West, but few had the means to go there as tourists. The ethnic shows advertised their offerings as the equivalent of a journey to faraway locales, inviting visitors to enjoy all the pleasures of traveling to foreign lands without the trouble and expense of the trip. The main organizers of ethnic shows in Germany were Carl Hagenbeck, who owned the Hamburg zoo, and the circus director Sarrasani, a P. T. Barnum-like character. In addition, Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Show with its equestrian displays had toured Germany twice—as well as other European countries—with great popular success.<sup>18</sup> A show could comprise as few as three and as many as one hundred people; recruiters were also responsible for collecting and bringing along costumes and artifacts, which afterward were often donated to museums. After Hagenbeck built the zoological garden in Hamburg-Stellingen (where it is still located), notable among European zoos because of its early attempt to recreate the natural environments of wild animals, the spaciousness of the locale allowed for large shows. Its most important components were cultural, military, and equestrian displays, the Wild West plot of attack, retreat, and revenge, and primitive family life. Hilke Thode-Arora's study of Hagenbeck's ethnic shows underscores their popular as well as critical success, as evidenced by the number of visitors, the profit made by the organizers, and the positive, frequent reviews of shows in newspapers.<sup>19</sup> Although colonialism provided the historical context for this form of

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17. For a detailed analysis of the ethnic show, consult Benninghoff-Luehl, Goldmann, Haberland, Rothfels, and Staehelin. See also the dissertations by Sierra Bruckner and Eric Ames.

18. See Blackstone for a detailed description, history, and analysis of the Buffalo Bill show, which also includes an account of the European tours. For the European reception of the show, see Fiorentino, Conrad, and Bolz.

19. Thode-Arora notes that she found only a single critic who objected to the idea of exhibiting people in a zoo. The profound fascination Germans felt for the ethnic show participants was at least partly erotic, resulting in fervent love affairs and romances that typically accompanied stationary as well as traveling shows and that were regularly reported in the press (see Jacobsen's unpublished memoirs, quoted in Thode-Arora, 117). Kubat's and Rühmann's memories of GDR Indianists' first encounter with American Indian delegates in 1973 echoed that phenomenon.

entertainment, Thode-Arora maintains that relatively few of the ethnic shows exhibited people from the German colonies; after 1901, moreover, the public display of colonial subjects was proscribed by law.

By far the most successful of these shows was the Sioux show, which Hagenbeck brought to Hamburg in 1910. Forty-two Oglala Sioux and ten cowboys were hired, and during their six-month stay they drew 1.1 million visitors to the zoo, the largest number ever achieved by an ethnic show. The participants, recruited from the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota, lived in teepees fenced off and surrounded by rostrums, so that visitors could walk around what was arranged to look like an Indian village and sit down to watch the performances offered at regular intervals during an eight-hour workday. One reporter described the show, documenting one spectatorial response to strolling through the parklike grounds and being suddenly immersed in a strange, yet uncannily familiar scene:

a piercing, shrill, gurgling sound, like the call of an owl, swooped down on us from the air, and upon gazing up, visitors saw the figure of an Indian warrior in full gear atop a large rock. The picturesque silhouette was sharply outlined against the red evening sky, but the Indian scout vanished as quickly as he had appeared. A rumbling noise arose, the stomping and whinnying of horses, gun shots, seemingly inarticulate calls, an unfamiliar *mélange* of sounds. And standing on the top of the bridge, where the view of the park is unencumbered, visitors were suddenly enveloped by magic. (Thode-Arora, 9)

The show that unfolded alternated between scenes displaying Indian culture (artifacts, architecture, music, dancing) and others dramatizing the epic battle between white settlers and red warriors in the Wild West. The visitor is transported into a world of childhood dreams and fictions: “Enchanted, the palefaces stride past the tents, and old childhood dreams are buoyed up in their souls. . . . Nothing breaks the spell that simulates a different reality” (Thode-Arora, 10). The narrative’s vacillation between present and past tense, between being enveloped by the drama and standing outside watching others watching, are the hallmarks of fantasy: a colonial fantasy, which turns obsessively on the themes of pursuit and capture, savagery and domestication. The “palefaces” are drawn into a timeless world in which the cyclical pattern of ambush and revenge has repeated “a thousand times in reality”—or was it onstage, in books, and at the movies? This spectator experienced a sophisticatedly choreographed performance as an authentic depiction of frontier life. In 1910, this passage shows,

impresarios and performers had perfected the combination of outdoor *mise-en-scène* and trained cast that created a perfect feedback loop between ethnological truth and “childhood dreams,” confirming the spectator’s belief in the authenticity of fabricated characters and scenarios. It had taken a whole generation of actors, directors, and impresarios, but also ethnologists, historians, linguists, and physical anthropologists to engineer such a close fit. Hagenbeck laid great emphasis on ethnological correctness and regularly cooperated with ethnologists (unlike shows by Sarrasani and other ethnic show impresarios). Scientists at the ethnological museum in Hamburg had a standing invitation to new shows, prominent medical scientists like Rudolf Virchow frequently used ethnic show participants as subjects for building an anthropometric database, and linguists likewise used participants for the collection of data supporting racial categorization. The ethnographic artifacts that Hagenbeck’s recruiters collected to supplement the human exhibits were often donated to German museums. In short, the development of ethnology and anthropology as academic disciplines was closely entwined with the history of the ethnic show in Germany, creating the scientific foundation to the “reality” portrayed in the shows. Conversely, amateur impersonators adopted the scientific methodologies and ethnographic techniques as the basis for their performance practice.

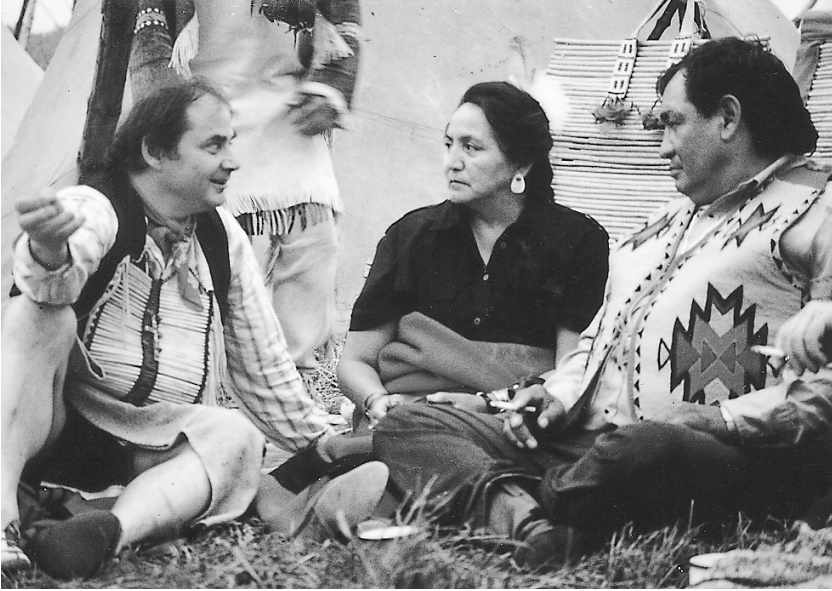
While scholars of the ethnic show tend to favor Hagenbeck’s “scientific” enterprise over Sarrasani’s crude commercialism, such distinctions are difficult to maintain in practice. For instance, Hagenbeck’s Sioux troupe, who were professional ethnic show performers, also worked for Buffalo Bill’s show and, after that show went bankrupt, were hired by the Sarrasani circus. World War I put an end to hiring Indians or other non-Europeans for Wild West shows, which prompted Sarrasani to hire German artistes, who performed their numbers in Indian drag (Thode-Arora, 29). Indians were not hired again for ethnic shows until 1926, leaving them without much-needed income. Even though some Sioux were again recruited in the late 1920s, the break in employment opportunities had resulted in a generation of native performers lacking in professional expertise at “playing Indian.” One recruiter’s comments are particularly revealing as to the pressures bearing on the Native Americans’ performance of authenticity:

Of course, Mr. Miller had to bring the props that, according to Karl May, are essential for a real Indian, which are feathers, beaded embroidery, leather leggings, tomahawks, bow and arrows, teepees, campfires. Because our original redskins had no clue about all of that,



they were just as harmless and unromantic as any other American. When they finally get here, they have names like Mr. Smith or Brown or Miller in their passports, and we have to start by giving them real Indian names. The one that looked the oldest was made chief and called “White Eagle” or “Big Snake” or “Black Horse.” He had to be at least eighty years old, and his eightieth or ninetieth birthday was solemnly celebrated in every town on our tour. They soon got used to their teepees, small pointy tents, which we struck up in the backyard. But it was not so easy to teach them Indian behavior. The men had to be instructed in the use of bow and arrows, the squaws in making embroidery with beads, and the children had to be dissuaded from playing with our cars instead of participating in primitive family life. The director and the clown Magrini had them practice warrior dances, comportment at the martyr pole, and ambush on a stage-coach. The clown usually ended up being taken for the realest Indian in the Wild West pantomime. (August Heinrich Kober, quoted in Thode-Arora, 29–30)

The economics of Wild West enchantment are thrown into sharp relief in this passage, which underlines the hierarchical power relations structuring a “collaborative” theatrical ensemble, and highlights Germans’ ownership of props, identities (names, biographies), and scripts. The insistence on Magrini’s expertise and pedagogical role prefigure stock tropes of contemporary hobbyism, but locate them in the context of commerce and entertainment. Moreover, the reference to Karl May unabashedly reveals racial “realness” as a set of calculated codes and conventions. The passage raises the question why impresarios hired Native Americans at all if Germans could outdo them in Wild West artistry. Perhaps it was only the racial notion of an authenticity located in the body that could assign commodity value to the Sioux. The suppression of that anatomy-oriented notion of race after the war also paved the way for the disappearance of the “real” Indian from the scene of performance. The passage illustrates native performers’ loss of cultural authority and their demotion to understudy, foreshadowing drag as a performance technique that, by making Native Americans obsolete, would cut the costs of travel, training, and supervision, and raise quality. After this brief historical excursus, let me now return to Magrini’s progeny and note the ways in which hobbyist practice remains structured by the predication of cultural authority on economic privilege, but also attend to the manner in which hobbyists have come to terms with such privilege and, sometimes, endeavored to critique and decenter white authority, expertise, and authenticity.



Curt-Dietrich “Ted” Asten with Venora and Gordon Big Plume, June 1992.

### Mimesis, Masquerade, and Mastery in the Contact Zone

Hobbyists’ insistence on the “truthfulness” of their performance, their claim to mimesis, predictably creates crises of authority in the encounter with real Indians. John Paskievich’s documentary *If Only I Were an Indian* (1995), which records a visit by a trio of Native Americans to a Czechoslovakian hobbyist camp, superbly dramatizes the hopes and anxieties that attend especially the hobbyists’ first encounter with the living objects of their admiration. Whereas that particular group was enormously relieved that they apparently passed muster in the eyes of their guests, some of my interlocutors’ encounter stories revealed an abiding ambivalence, since facing the “originals” would logically require hobbyists to demur to the subordinate status of imitators—something that conflicted with their sense of expertise and mastery. All hobbyists I interviewed narrated stories of encounter as epiphanies, moments when they gained sudden, deep insights into their own identity and role and their relationship to Indians, which prompted them to revise or modify their representational practice. Out of a particular view of German-Indian history, narrators

constructed quasi-familial relationships between the two peoples, epitomized by the trope of interracial adoption, which would literally insert German sons into Indian families and tribes. As I will argue, the harmonizing intent of the filial metaphor in some cases cloaks a deep ambiguity in the adopted sons' relationship to their Indian fathers, whose position they want to both emulate and usurp.

The hobbyists I interviewed were acutely aware of the oppression, persecution, and near-genocide of indigenous North Americans. The Cologne group and the hobbyist from West Berlin especially stressed that Native Americans' forced relocation to reservations, the loss of their possessions, and the separation of children from their families all contributed to a situation in which Indians were cut off from their home, their material culture, and linguistic-oral traditions. Yet in their stories, these hobbyists depicted Germans as bystanders, arbitrators, and avengers of white aggression, rather than its perpetrators—much like Karl May's *Old Shatterhand*.<sup>20</sup> They regarded the activity of nineteenth-century travelers and collectors such as the Prince Maximilian zu Wied as fortunate, because due to the vicissitudes of Indian history, these collections now provide some of the most complete, accurate, and well-preserved links to the past from which Indians have been cut off. While hobbyists respond to the Indians' loss with sympathy and regret, their construction of the history of German-Indian relations illuminates the rhetorical functions of competence/expertise in relation to cultural authority. The interruption of a history that could no longer be passed down through family and bloodlines created, to their minds, a sort of "equal opportunity" for Indians and German hobbyists, both of whom had to (re)learn Indian culture. Wolfgang Wettstein, a practitioner from Cologne, claims that "the Indian does not have the answers to the hobbyist's questions. Because the Indian doesn't write down things." In short, Indians are not necessarily experts. In view of this lacuna, the Germans' vast collections of Indian artifacts and their dedication to re-creating the past constitute a repository of historical memory. Several accounts stress the admiration of real Indians when first confronted with the Germans' expertise. Wettstein describes the moment when a Blackfoot Indian from Canada first participated in a German council:

He was astonished. Sure, he's an Indian, and suddenly he sees his culture, which for him is over and done with. It's mostly lost. It's history.

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20. Asten remarked that German settlers were probably as hostile or friendly with Indians as other whites, but like Wettstein, he did not comment on the circumstances under which the sizable German "collections" were amassed or entertain the possibility of returning these collections to Indians, as Kubat demands.

And there he could see it all again just the way he himself—he's over seventy—the way he himself had remembered it in part, or at least how his parents and grandparents had told him about it, buffalo hunts, and so on, and so on, and so on. Sure, we don't hunt buffalo, that's true, but we all live in teepees, and he walked into a teepee and was astonished. Today in the USA, if you go to a powwow you can walk into a teepee, but it's not furnished the way it was 150 years back. But that's what we try to do.

Scenes like this, in which Indians are supposedly awed by German recreations of their own past, are important in establishing the Germans' expertise, as well as conferring on them a valid function *for* the Indians. The Blackfoot Indian can only remember "in part," his past is lost, and suddenly it is brought to life again "just the way" it had been, now wrested from oblivion. The German reenactments provide the missing link in an interrupted history, literally restoring the experience of the grandfathers, whose knowledge had been lost to the Anglicized, bereft Indian child. The hobbyists cast themselves as ethnographers, salvagers of a culture the Indians had thought they had lost and which the Germans now generously share with them. To this gift they can only respond with admiration and gratitude. Although I would not impute such motives to all hobbyists, I want to point out that such a reconfiguration of cultural access can potentially reassign the roles of model and copy, teacher and student, amateur and expert in a way that privileges the knowledgeable and generous German hobbyist over the dispossessed (and ignorant) Indian.

The following anecdote Asten related about his encounter with a Blackfoot performer illustrates how the trope of the knowledgeable German safe-keeper can mask the struggle for authority between Indians and Germans, even though authority is no longer based on race but on expertise. While nonwhites are not viewed as racially inferior, they may nevertheless lack the ability to represent their own culture. Asten had a heated public argument with a Blackfoot Indian at a powwow, whose narration of his history provoked the German's scorn. When Asten told the Native American that the Blackfoot elders (whose names he listed) would turn in their graves and kick him out of the tribe if they could hear his story, his counterpart exploded and told him in no uncertain terms that no white man would tell him what his own history was: Asten only shook his head in exasperation at the Indian's "racism." The German hobbyist views of Indian history, which I noted above, explain how in this particular encounter a German could perceive himself as having special access to Indian culture. In this instance, the evacuation of an organic notion of race, usually regarded as an ideologically progressive move, undermines

Indian cultural authority and ownership. Asten's accusation of racism against the furious Indian is interesting for the contrasting notions of cultural authority and ownership it reveals: one (which he attributes to the Indian) based on entitlement by blood, the other one on familiarity, effort, and expertise.<sup>21</sup> For a man born in 1933, whom the nomenclature of the Nazi race laws labeled a "half-Jew," it is not surprising that he would object to bloodline-definitions of race, and his concept of ethnic competence might indeed be interpreted as a welcome alternative to biological racism. Asten bolstered his own authority by asserting that "many Indians don't know their own history any longer." The condescending tone of his story suggests that ethnic competence does not preclude cultural arrogance.

Asten described his sense of profound affinity with Indians as a religious or spiritual affirmation of a mutual bond. Significantly, he articulated this feeling after I had asked him about his Jewish background and family history of ostracization and punishment, which, he surmised, "might have opened a door in my soul to the Indian." Asten's father, and his father's side of the family, were all killed in the Nazi concentration camps of Theresienstadt, Auschwitz, and Bergen-Belsen. This childhood experience was compounded with the memory of the horror of "Operation Gomorrha," when Hamburg was attacked by Allied bombers from July 23 to August 3, 1943. Asten was ten years old at the time.<sup>22</sup> He asserted a mystical, cross-cultural kinship based on his general "openness" to the Indians, as well as their special openness to him. To be called "brother" by one Indian, and one he scarcely knew, was, to his mind, equally significant as a formal adoption, or even superior to a formal and hence external rite of acceptance.<sup>23</sup> The sacredness of that connection led him to question the

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21. On the issue of race, Asten performed dialectical somersaults, however, and it would be impossible to construct a cohesive, noncontradictory stance in this matter. On the one hand, he claimed that there were incontrovertible "racial characteristics" such as the cruelty of Asian peoples; on the other, recent European, German, and even Berlin history showed him that under the thin veneer of civilization there lurked a savage beast in all of humanity.

22. One can only speculate if his lifelong mistrust of and contempt for "really existing" German culture and institutions, combined with his strong commitment to an abstract ideal of German nationality, is in some way related to his sense of having been doubly punished, as a Jew by the Germans and as a German by the Allies.

23. In answer to my question about the phenomenon of adoption, he told the story of meeting the son of an Indian woman who was dying of cancer and in whose healing ceremony he participated, "one of the most sacred ceremonies the Blackfoot still perform." It might seem odd that he, a stranger to this family, was invited to this ceremony in which allegedly only close friends are asked to take part, but his point was precisely that he was intuitively recognized as kin even though he had just met the family. In the course of the day, he helped the son repair his car, which had broken down on the way to the sacred sweat-lodge, and

masquerade-character of Indian club culture as caught up in externals, so that he considered giving up Indian dress altogether. He resolved this crisis by integrating his sense of inner kinship as a category of differentiation in the hobbyist hierarchy, affording him a sense of mastery within it, rather than opposing his practice to hobbyism per se. As his standoff with the Blackfoot Indian illustrates, however, his self-representation as the Indians' "brother" appears less able to insure Indian authority and cultural ownership against appropriation—on the contrary, he rejects such efforts as racist.

The ritual of white hobbyists' adoption into Indian families and tribes makes literal the trope of familial insertion by which Germans insinuate themselves into Indian history and traditions. Moreover, these adopted sons (I heard of only one female adoptee) potentially take up an oedipal relationship to their new families. Such a filial position accounts for the vacillation between respect and servitude on the one hand, and authority and mastery on the other. Adoption ceremonies are initiated either by a family or by a tribe, are celebrated with elaborate rites, and confer on the adoptee visiting and residency rights on a reservation. Among the interviewees, Wettstein was the only one who had been adopted by a Blackfoot family. Wettstein, who often used the term *originalgetreu* (authentic) in his description of the hobby, nevertheless developed a complex notion of *emulation* that allowed him to conceptualize the relationship between himself and Indians as one exceeding copying and imitating, striving instead for creative autonomy and artistic maturity. Clearly, he and his group see themselves as artists in their own right, inspired by rather than duplicating another people's art. This notion of emulation, which allows both for cultural distance, difference, and respect and for expertise and mastery across cultural lines, goes right to the heart of the problem of appropriation. Wettstein himself delivered an eloquent analysis of this problem and phrased it at the same time as a collective epiphany. His narration of that epiphany came at the end of the interview, after I had asked him if I could use a photograph of him in a rare, antique bear mask:

(*Groans.*) It could be that Indians object—not that they haven't seen it [my bear mask] before, I've shown it to them. In the beginning, when we first came in contact with Indians and showed them pictures from Germany, they had very different reactions. They were very suspicious and objected right away. They said, "Look, what kind of

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when the Indian laughingly praised Asten for getting the car going again although he (the Indian) was a mechanic, Asten replied that "somebody else had had a hand in this," pointing heavenward.



Wolfgang Wettstein, 1992

teepee decoration is this? That's the teepee decoration of my grandfather. That's the teepee decoration of my uncle. How can you copy that, you don't have the right. Who gave you the right?" . . . In the meantime we've completely rethought that. For instance, let's take my teepee. I used a design that doesn't exist in Indian society. It's inspired by Blackfoot design, but otherwise it's an ornament that I designed. I've never seen a picture or anything else where I could say: "I copied that." I made my own teepee decoration, right?—the way

the Indians did it, through dreams, through visions and so on. In the meantime, more of our hobbyists go and say, wait a minute, either you ask an Indian, "May I?" or they don't use it anymore, because they realize it has a significance, a religious, mythical significance: "I may not use that because he hasn't given me the right, it's not my property." That's what happened. In the old days, the first years, one saw the book—copied it. That's idiotic, if you think about it, it's idiotic. We had to go through this learning process.

The slippage between the refusal to cross the boundary marked by religion and myth on the one hand, and the reference to the spiritual process (dream, vision quest) that precedes the hobbyist's creative practice on the other, indicates a deep-seated ambiguity between emulation and usurpation. The passage is remarkable because it articulates rather than represses this slippage, spelling out the crucial distinction between expertise as a thorough, rigorous, and scrupulous emulation of Indian material culture and a notion of identification based on inner, spiritual sameness. Apparently, Wettstein's recognition of Indian spirituality as an inalienable, untranslatable cultural good that should not be appropriated enabled him to shift his entire perception of his hobby. By referring to specific designs belonging to Indian grandfathers and uncles, he questions the trope of familial commonality and articulates a materialist critique that clearly denounces cultural copying as theft. This is indeed an important insight. It throws into sharp relief the commonalities as well as the differences of Indian and hobbyist and establishes a conceptual and pragmatic boundary against appropriation while conceding the possibility of achieving mastery at certain crafts. In short, it combines (albeit unstably) the notion of authority with that of distance and respect. What emerges is a "middle ground," in which hobbyists are no longer "simply" German whites, nor Blackfoot, but something else: friends of the prairie.

Contacts with real Indians, while often inspiring awe and romantic admiration, create a predicament for hobbyists, who must reconcile their claims to authenticity and mastery with a practice perceived as imitative. While some resolve this dilemma by constructing hierarchical intercultural relations modeled on the patriarchal family, others strive for collaboration, aiming to disperse talent, expertise, and authority across ethnic lines. The fantasy of the German safe-keeper of the Indian past inverts the Platonic taxonomy of original and copy, teacher and student, in order to grant Germans authority, but also subverts it through such notions as emulation. In the context of postwar efforts to change racial ideologies and interactions, some hobbyists' revision of ethnic or cultural identity in terms of competence rather than biology might still be seen as an impor-



tant corrective to what Nazi teachers had taught them when they were young boys. Still, the question persists whether a hobbyist who identifies with Indians necessarily feels her- or himself to be in solidarity with other marginalized groups as well, specifically Germany's resident minorities. In other words, are there any political, moral, or social imperatives that grow out of hobbyism?

### **Counteracting Modernity**

To most hobbyists, Indians embody an intact social order in harmony with nature—an essentially antimodern fantasy. Yolanda Broyles Gonzalez's study of the Black Forest Cheyenne, a hobbyist club in southern Germany, argues that Indian impersonation allowed club members to express fear of modernization, grief over geographical and social displacement, and mourning of lost indigenous traditions, but also to validate and celebrate a past marked by rural artisan lifeways and a primarily oral culture. What interests me here is her conclusion that club members translate their feeling of alienation into a felt commonality with other groups who "share" their "underdog position" such as "so-called 'Gastarbeiter' (foreign workers) or the Sinti, or so-called 'gypsies'" (74–75). Likewise, the organization *Indianer heute*, whose focus on endangered peoples is not limited to indigenous populations in faraway places, actively supports the struggles of Vietnamese asylum seekers or of the Sinti and Roma in Germany. Yet they were the only group in my sample whose practice translated into a more generally applicable ethos of solidarity with marginalized people, including ethnic minorities living in Germany. Given that hobbyists often imagine German-Indian relations as unique and exceptional, I doubted whether the stance of either Broyles Gonzalez's hobbyists, or of *Indianer heute*, was exemplary of hobbyism overall. To begin with, I found that "modernity" means very different things to different groups and individuals: while for some, the opposition to modernity entails a quest for nonalienated, communal lifeways approximating an alternative "green" philosophy, others associate modernity with the democratic erosion of social hierarchies and contrast it with the stability of a patriarchal order in which women, foreigners, and ethnic minorities still "knew their place." Many GDR Indianists identified modernity with the "technoscientific" socialist state that regimented their practice, and later, around reunification, with the unsettling modernization processes launched by Western capitalism's eastward expansion. How does hobbyists' understanding of modernity shape their antimodern surrogations, and what are the political consequences of such views?

The Plains Indians Interest Group in Bad Segeberg articulated their critique of modernity as a felt distance to commodity culture, which alienates humans from nature and creates artificial social hierarchies. Their hobby entails a temporary renunciation of civilization's amenities (which Turski also notes in her analysis of East German groups, particularly younger ones). When I raised this topic, the otherwise rather quiet interview partners in the group, the nineteen-year-old Ingrid Bartsch and Conny Schamborski, sixty-three, suddenly jumped into the discussion. The older woman explained: "When we go to our grounds for the weekend, the moment we get there, we are no longer . . ." Ingrid interjected, "We have no telephone, no television, no radio, just like the Indians." Schamborski nodded and Inge Bartsch, Ingrid's mother, concluded: "One leaves everything behind and is outside, in nature, for the weekend." They stressed their admiration for the Indians as people who do not buy ready-made objects but make what they need from the natural resources around them, without producing a lot of waste or creating inessential items. With this view, they approximate a "green" perspective on Indians as environmentally conscious people, although they distance themselves from what they perceive as the "public hullabaloo" created by groups such as Greenpeace or the Green party: "We prefer to withdraw into the private sphere." All club members experienced the club grounds as an extended private sphere offering a refuge from the anxieties, hierarchies, and rivalries that mark "civilized" human interaction. They praised the camaraderie in the club, the sense of neighborliness, support, and respect epitomized in the collective preparation and consumption of meals, to which everyone contributed according to her or his abilities and received according to her or his needs. Their vision of community and its utopian potential for whites and Indians crystallized in the story of a backyard barbecue. It illustrates Inge Bartsch's insights into the imperialist history framing and constraining intercultural relations:

Once when Gordon Byrd and his people [from the Winnebago tribe] came the first time, we invited them over. We had a regular barbecue party, set up everything, and put things on the grill. Then I said, "Just go ahead and help yourself."<sup>24</sup> And [Byrd] looked at me and [I reiterated], "Yes, you are our guest, please go ahead." And then he and his companion went to a table and helped themselves. Then the other guests, the three daughters and the son-in-law and the girlfriend, all sat with them, and only then did we fill our plates. And we struck up

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24. This and the next quoted passage were in English.

a conversation, I was translating the whole time, was always running around everywhere. The evening before we had told the neighbors, we'll have a group of Indian guests, we'll have music, we'll have drums, not tapes, and we'll sing. And I said, please will you bring your drum. And we had said to the neighbors we'll be a bit noisy, I hope you won't be disturbed. And after we were done eating, they sang for us. And the later the evening, the more they got in the mood. And then they showed us a lot of things no white person had ever seen before. And I thought that was great, and afterward, Gordon Byrd said to me, he's never been to a white group that sat at the same table and ate with him with such unself-conscious ease. He thanked us for that. And I was very shaken, to be honest; that gave me a lot to think about for quite a while.

Even as the sharing of food evokes the multicultural food fair, that arch cliché of capitalist pluralism, the significance of the party for Bartsch resides not in the food consumed, but in the manner that its serving creates hospitality and sociability. What she appreciates is the suspension of racial, class, and cultural hierarchies in collective activities (eating, chatting, singing, drumming) as a way of creating new levels of familiarity and intimacy. Notice also the way in which her role as translator and mediator affords her an expert position in this group, which is not interpreted in terms of hierarchy and differentiation, but in terms of a special commitment to the group, to the process of communication, and to sociability. Moreover, the mutual appreciation created by that evening is not reserved to the party of revelers but was claimed to extend to the neighbors, who first tolerated and later joined in the celebration. One might object that this anecdote evokes the cliché of multiculturalism as a smorgasboard of cultural differences; the question it raises is whether such utopian communing in the privacy of the backyard or the campgrounds can be seen as a rehearsal for social transformation, or whether the segregation of the private sphere from the social divisions in the public realm upholds the very hierarchies the hobbyists privately subvert.

Asten's view of the perils of modernity is almost diametrically opposed to the antimodernism of the Bad Segeberg "Plains Indians." Whereas they associate "civilization" with the erection of artificial boundaries of class, ability, and ethnicity, he objects precisely to the blurring of the division between natives and foreigners, men and women, competent and incompetent that he sees as characteristic of modern democracy. He articulates his antimodernism as a fear of foreign domination and social alienation:

Germany, or the territory where the German-speaking peoples lived, has for centuries been the battlefield of many, many . . . let's call them foreign rulers. There were the English, there were the Swedes, there were the Russians, there were the French, there were the Italians, there was the pope, and so on, and so on, and so on. And over and over again he [the German] had to obey foreign rule. Over and over again he was put under the yoke. But somewhere in these stories about the Indians, there was a hint of freedom, there was a hint of pride, of indestructible pride and self-confidence. No German was conscious of that while he read [the Wild West novels]. And then [the Indians] were the last ones who tried to the end to defend their lives, their culture, everything that made them special, although they had never been a nation, had never been a state, against the evil immigrants . . . who defended themselves against all of that, but in the end were vanquished, had to adapt, and still persist! Isn't that exactly the same as what has happened in Germany ever since the first occupation by the Romans?! Or the Slavs, or whoever else ravaged this country?

He portrays Germans as the victims not only of outside invaders, but also of their own rulers, whose machinations threaten to extinguish German culture—just like white invaders destroyed Indian cultures. In contrast to the alienated, self-destructive, and emasculated Germans of today, historical Indian society, Asten claims, was healthy (if somewhat brutal),<sup>25</sup> without *Randgruppen* (marginal groups) or the kind of gender crisis typical of a degenerate civilization. Impersonating Indians, then, appears as a form of surrogated German patriotism. The hobbyist who identifies with the Indian warrior gains a temporary respite from and compensation for the “wrongness” of things as they presently are in Germany.<sup>26</sup> Although

25. On the topic of “marginal social groups” he related, for instance, the Indian practice of leaving the old and infirm behind in the wilderness, so that they either faced a slow death, killed themselves, or had a close relative kill them. This was tough but necessary “because the survival of the group came before that of the individual,” and it epitomized a healthy society in his view.

26. Richard Dyer points to a similar dynamic in reference to American musclemen war-movies, e.g. Sylvester Stallone's *Rambo* cycle, which illustrate the compensatory fantasies of disaffected, white working-class masculinity. Asten's elaborations on the western similarly stress the combination of white men's disaffection after a lost war and the fantasmatic identification with a hero who is ennobled by his suffering and whose extermination has already become myth. Asten's perception of Germany's continual invasion, however, constructs a narrative of victimization over two millennia. It not only conflates Allied occupation forces with so-called guest workers (recruited by West German companies), as well as political refugees, but also elides Germany's invasion and colonization of other European (and non-European) countries. See also Poiger on postwar masculinity and the western in West and East Germany.

Asten's narrative of German victimization spanned two millennia, he interpreted current conditions within this frame as well, reserving special criticism for Turkish residents' refusal to forswear their Islamic faith as the prerequisite for assimilation into German society. As a German who feels dejected in the face of foreign "domination" and abandoned by his own government, Asten's identification with Indians serves to ennoble his sense of defeat and isolation by fantasizing himself as the last warrior of his race. Moreover, Asten connects the fear of *Überfremdung* (lit. "saturation with foreigners") with that of classic *Entfremdung* (alienation):

I think the pride of the Indians, whether actually true or idealized by the novels (and hence even more effective because it works subliminally) resonates with something in the reader, against the hegemony that threatens to break me, whether that is my country or my life, if that's so instrumentalized that I have to work at the assembly line and have to perform the same gesture all day long. Or I am an important guy in the company and things fall apart the minute I'm sick, but nobody thanks me! I'm not promoted and I won't get more money—I'm always the little guy, and the one up there in the big office who does nothing, really, he gets ten thousand marks a month more. . . . So that deep down I say: these [Indians] are still real men! And when I get into my loincloth with only my stone ax in my hand and a feather in my hair, then I'm a real man too!

Getting into drag helps him to recover his masculinity: the fantasy of getting into a loincloth, gripping a stone ax, and adorning himself with a feather allows him symbolic mastery over modernity's perils. Asten's image of the lonely warrior reveals the Indian as a kind of idealized (Ger)man, allowing him to act out what Germans could be if only they stood up to the tyranny of foreigners and incompetents. His extended lamentation about Turkish residents, asylum seekers, and other foreigners demonstrates that the perception of victimization, which elsewhere or earlier might have produced the solidarity with other oppressed groups (as Broyles Gonzales contends), can also fuel white rage and xenophobia as an increasingly acceptable public sentiment and political discourse in the mid-1990s.<sup>27</sup>

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27. The state elections in Sachsen-Anhalt on April 26, 1998, resulted in a 13 percent instant success for the right-wing extremist Deutsche Volks Union (German People's Union), a party that had campaigned for a restriction of immigration and that had blamed social problems such as high unemployment, shortages of affordable housing, and high crime rates on foreigners.

Asten furthermore contrasts an “intact” social order, in which “everyone knows their place and is honored for their natural role,” with a confusing blurring of gender roles today. The fact that men have not honored women in their role as mothers and rebuilders of the nation has caused women to “run around like men” in a misguided effort toward liberation. Conversely, men are so effeminized that “you walk down the street and see someone from behind, you think, man, what a sexy woman, then he turns around and has a long beard!” The specter of inversion, with its attendant threat of homosexual seduction, appears in its traditional role as a figure of degeneracy and decline. Even as hobbyism requires its practitioners to transgress and reassemble German gender codes in their emulation of Indian masculinity—all men sew and embroider their own costumes, for example—Asten conceptualizes the variability of culturally specific (historical and fictional) gender systems as a decline from “natural” to degenerate.<sup>28</sup> Nor does men’s proficiency in traditionally female skills result in egalitarian gender relations in the German clubs. In Asten’s estimation, most women hobbyists join clubs to oblige their husbands or partners and were, until fairly recently, rarely if ever elected into leadership positions in the West German clubs.<sup>29</sup>

The Indian woman belongs in the teepee and does the domestic work.  
 . . . If I want to portray the Indian around 1850 with historical accuracy, then the woman who lives in my teepee would have to make sure

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28. As the composition of the photographs in the coffee-table book *Kölner Stämme* (Cologne tribes) shows, the “natural” order conspicuously resembles nineteenth-century bourgeois patriarchy. Here a wigged warrior gazes sternly into the camera, one hand grabbing his spear, the other placed possessively on the shoulder of his wife, seated beside or kneeling in front of him, eyes demurely lowered to the ground or resting fondly on the child cradled in her lap. Group portraits are arranged to spell out the social hierarchy with a precise articulation of gender and generational status. The composition typically describes a pyramid topped by the alpha male, posture rigid and erect, surrounded by his men, his family, or his tribe. To me, the ideological intent of amplifying the sense of “healthy” and “natural” tribal life by blocking it through the iconography of the family seemed so exaggerated, however, that the effect was a comic defamiliarization of the patriarchal gender system caricatured in stone-age dress, a kind of Flintstones effect. I saw these photographs not as representations of ethnological truth, but as choreographies of transvestic desire. I should add, however, that Wettstein and Hesse, who are portrayed in this book, responded much differently: they were proud at seeing themselves depicted with respect and dignity, and treasured the photographs.

29. Although Turski provides no information about the gender of the membership in East German clubs, her reference to “groups in which women and children participate but are not allowed to vote in membership meetings” indicates that gender indeed determined membership status and rights. Thus the thirty-five groups that participated in a census had 544 “full members” out of 776 participants (Turski, 31).

that there is food . . . in the pot at all times. That this is no longer possible today is a different matter.

Can the roles of emancipated (German) woman and Indian woman be reconciled? “Not at all,” Asten maintained. Yet the modern gender order of self-confident female breadwinners also prevails in his household, and he appeared eminently comfortable with being a househusband. While his hobby allows him to express nostalgia for the days when men were warriors and women the nurturers of the people as well as obedient servants, he seemed to welcome the benefits of having a working wife who is also a critical interlocutor and appeared untroubled by performing domestic tasks. While the views he expressed in reference to his hobby would suggest the demeanor of a blustering patriarch, the divergence between his Indian fantasy and his social role points to the compensatory, stabilizing function of hobbyist reenactments. To be sure, Asten provided the most puzzling instance of a man whose patriarchal symbolic practice, while seemingly opposed to democratic principles, did not prevent him from welcoming its everyday benefits. Nor did it cause this highly articulate man to experience the divergence between the symbolic and the social in his own life as a contradiction—women’s changing social status is simply “a different matter.” Yet are we to conclude from Asten’s case, to phrase it pointedly, that patriarchal fantasies make men fit for feminism? Perhaps even that, analogously, racist reenactments prepare whites for multiculturalism? The GDR, where Indianism was couched in the explicitly political terms of international solidarity, offers a privileged example for further examining the connection of symbolic and social practices in hobbyism.

The official language Indianists used to legitimate themselves in the eyes of the socialist state appealed to the GDR state because it seemed to share its anti-imperialist vision, its international solidarity with the oppressed, and its adversarial stance toward the United States. These rhetorical appeals are exemplified by the statement of purpose adopted in the early 1980s by individual clubs in order to ensure municipal toleration and support. Local bureaucrats sometimes mistrusted Indian clubs, possibly because of their American (class enemy) orientation, and subjected them to *Unbedenklichkeitsprüfungen* (tests of ideological correctness). The Indianists’ official statement promised to connect groups’ interest in Native American history with “contemporary Indians’ fight for their human rights. Thus they contribute to the intensification of the humanist idea of friendship between peoples, and hence to the keeping of lasting peace on earth” (quoted in Turski, 75). Their professed dedication to the “creation and development of well-rounded socialist personalities” rested



**Curt-Dietrich “Ted” Asten with Johannes Hüttner, week at Seddinsee, August 1997.**



on the integration of past and present, culture and politics, the symbolic and the social (Turski, 75).

The document drew on a socialist tradition of reinterpreting the Indians' plight as the epitome of Communist, anti-imperialist struggle. The popular and highly readable novels by Liselotte Welskopf-Henrich, an East Berlin classical scholar and amateur ethnologist who had self-consciously created a socialist tradition of Indian literature, span adventure fiction designed as a sophisticated, suspenseful, and ethnologically sound alternative to Karl May, as well as stories about contemporary Indian life and struggles on the reservations. These novels, which had prompted Steffi Rühmann's fascination for Indians, occasionally make the connection between the "red man" and the "red revolution" explicit and are generally guided by an anticapitalist, anti-imperialist impulse.<sup>30</sup> Likewise, the popular Indian movies produced by the DEFA film production company appropriated the western genre for an anti-imperialist critique.<sup>31</sup> In addition, Christian Heermann, who discusses the long ostracization of Karl May in the GDR, calls attention to a number of comic strips that caricatured inter-German relations in the Cold War in the guise of Indian and American characters.<sup>32</sup> The socialist appropriation of the Indian as political icon, a tradition dating even to the immediate postwar years, may explain why the socialist state proved fairly tolerant toward Indianist clubs.

Turski's book demonstrates how the antimodern critique split into an

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30. Please see especially the two pentalogies *Die Söhne der großen Bärin* (The sons of the Great Bear Mother), which traces the flight of a Lakota Sioux tribe across the Canadian border, and *Das Blut des Adlers* (The blood of the eagle), which is set on contemporary reservations. *The Sons of the Great Bear Mother* was successfully marketed to adolescents in West Germany as well.

31. Although Turski mentions the founding of an Indian club in Leningrad in response to these extraordinary socialist westerns made between 1966 and 1985, she does not speculate about their impact among East German Indianists.

32. In one of these comics, which were published by the socialist youth organization FDJ (Freie Deutsche Jugend) and therefore had a large readership, two tribal leaders that resemble Adenauer and Ulbricht (the West German chancellor and the East German head of state) meet for a "chief palaver," in which they decide to set all intertribal differences aside and join forces. They are overheard by a spy named Old Schweißfuß (Old Sweatfoot, a stab at Old Shatterhand), who sneaks off to write a letter to the Great White Hunter McKäse (McCheese, alluding to McCarthy) to prevent this peace accord. The witty allusion to the red hunts of Senator McCarthy, the accusation that it is the political interest of the class enemy in Washington that keeps the two German states apart, and the ridiculing of Karl May as an imperialist writer in cahoots with the prevailing powers are here assembled in a short, one-page strip that was fully intelligible within the political rhetoric of the Cold War. See Heermann 1995.

official discourse about Indianism, and a covert, in-group discourse about it. In contrast to the manifest content of the Indianists' statement of purpose, the main portion of her study denies the consonance of the (Cold War–inspired) socialist mission and Indianist self-definition, instead casting the socialist bureaucracy itself as the feature of modern life that Indianists opposed in a form of cultural resistance. Turski describes one incident around the time of reunification that illustrates a change in the symbols practitioners used to signal their relationship to dominant ideology, a change that nonetheless illustrates an underlying continuity regarding the Indianists' antimodernist stance. She relates how in the past the emissaries to the annual chiefs' meeting<sup>33</sup> would appear wearing Indian jewelry and a Stetson hat, a piece of clothing that, in her view, signaled their commonality and “expressed a certain playful opposition to everyday life around them,” namely the socialist state's habitual denigration and suppression of all things American (63–64). However, in March 1990, at the first chiefs' meeting after the opening of the Berlin Wall only one member appeared in a Stetson hat, whereas others, especially young people, appeared wearing Palestinian scarves. “Without prior agreement, this sign [of opposition] changed as soon as social transformations caused the Stetson hat to lose its propensity for provocation, while the Palestinian headdress came from a different social context, was not specific to the hobby, and did not symbolize their commonality” (64). Turski hints that the GDR youths' symbolic identification with an ethnic minority struggling for recognition, autonomy, and statehood reflected their own situation as citizens of a vanishing state. Her interpretation of the Palestinian scarf suggests that the Indianists' self-perception as persecuted yet defiant is the common denominator of their practice before and after the fall of the Wall, despite a change in props and despite the fact that their dramatization of the GDR as a colonized state presupposes an identification they had previously rejected. It appears that the unofficial practice of GDR Indianism did not correspond to the ideological prescription of a “red brotherhood” uniting Indians and socialists, despite the official mandate of political solidarity. On the contrary, Indianists viewed the state's politi-

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33. Annual meetings in clubs affiliated with the Indianist Union were hosted in rotation by individual clubs. With rising membership and attendance, this caused growing logistical problems: one had to find grounds large enough to accommodate all, and, under a system of centralist planning, it was not easy to provide sufficient food for the hundreds of people attending sites in remote rural areas. This required an extra planning session called the *Chief-Treffen* (chiefs' meeting) attended by emissaries of all member clubs. This body also discussed the structure, status, and purpose of the clubs and drafted the statement of purpose adopted by individual clubs (see discussion below).

cization of social relations as a symptom of the modernity they rejected in their practice.

Turski relates a second incident, however, that exemplifies a more problematic continuity of self-minoritizing images before and during reunification. The author explains that for a long time, a small group of Indianists had secretly sympathized with the Confederate states, and suggests that this had been due to the “mystique of rebelliousness that had been falsely woven around the southern states in the USA” (65). The socialist state’s official condemnation of the slaveholding states possibly exacerbated the romantic appeal of the confederacy to GDR citizens but had, in any case, led to the strict prohibition of displaying Confederate flags, uniforms, and similar items during the camps, which would have caused problems with the bureaucracy. At the first summer meeting after reunification, the lifting of these prohibitions led to an open display of Confederate flags and costumes on the part of some young Indianists, who explained that to them, “the Confederate flag was a sign of rebellion, it was the flag of a state that had been vanquished but not forgotten, just like the GDR flag, which could also no longer be flown” (66). Their display infuriated many other participants, especially when some young warriors dragged a Union Jack through the mud and heaped horse manure on it. Their pranks provoked quarrels and hostile discussions throughout the camp. The American Civil War provided an arena for the dramatization of the tensions that erupted among East Germans and precipitated the splitting and reconfiguration of many Indian clubs in the new German states. Although the theater of war was historically displaced, the identification with or against the United States as icon of the West was also at the heart of the sudden adjustment to capitalist values that East Germans confronted in 1990. Turski’s telling emphasizes the marginal status of the confederacy fans and attempts to challenge the depiction of East Germans as racist and susceptible to right-wing extremism in the West German media.

Dieter Kubat and Steffi Rühmann from *Indianer heute* severely criticized GDR Indianists like Turski for their self-representation as cultural resisters, a stance that wants to have it both ways. *Indianer heute* refutes the claim that Indianists “resisted” state socialism and is angered by present-day Indianists’ capitalizing on a GDR “mystique.” In their eyes, the decentering of white authority in German-Indian relations has pragmatic consequences: they have long advocated the repatriation of Native American artifacts, in addition to supporting Native American institutions and causes materially and politically. They maintain close relationships with the leaders of the American Indian Movement, protest the U.S. government’s punitive actions against them, and host Native American delegates

traveling in Europe.<sup>34</sup> Their involvement in repatriation efforts has prompted them to understand colonialism not only as the literal appropriation of non-European resources and artifacts, but also as a set of representational codes shaping, for instance, the way museums display “exotic” objects for spectators’ visual consumption. They deem the exhibition of Native American artifacts particularly offensive because of the sacred significance of many of these objects. Hence, in order to call attention to the alignment of visual consumption with colonial possession, they suggest a museum pedagogy in which the placement of scrimms would impede or partially block sight, signaling to museum visitors the need to question Germans’ visual and material access to artifacts. Those artifacts not yet returned to their rightful owners would thus be put “under erasure,” marking a history of theft and a commitment to restitution. They view Native American spirituality as the cultural good most in need of protection; although their American visitors had on occasion invited Kubat and Rühmann to join them in traditional Native American rituals, their search for community and spiritual fulfillment did not confine them in the past, nor did it preclude their tenacious struggle with state bureaucrats in the GDR or the reunified Germany.

I find it significant that *Indianer heute* does not take up an antimodernist stance and resists the nostalgic reenactment of a “golden age” prior to white people’s domination of the North American continent. Their focus on the present and dedication to practical intervention along with, but not confined to, symbolic redress refuses two central elements of hobbyism. On the one hand, they reject white people’s romantic identification with the victims of white aggression, which leaves the equation of whiteness with domination itself intact. On the other, their refusal to separate symbolic and political practice stems from the recognition that primitivist rituals stabilize, rather than transform, modern society. Can *Indianer heute* be called “hobbyists” at all? Their focus on the material culture of indigenous populations would warrant the label of “object hobbyism,” according to Philip Deloria, in contrast to the “people hobbyism” practiced in the other groups discussed here. *Indianer heute* does not uphold the symbolic opposition of oppressive European modernity versus wholesome non-European primitivism that prevents Europeans from exploring remedies to alienation from within modern societies while also continuing

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34. In the 1980s, many tribes sent emissaries to enlist European support and publicity for their grievances against the U.S. government; to many of them, hobbyists appeared as logical allies, until they realized the subculture’s limited political clout. As one delegate, Russell Barsh, told me in a conversation at Dartmouth on May 14, 1999, Native Americans realized in the 1990s that the UN would offer a more appropriate forum for appeal, and consequently shifted their efforts in that direction.

to exclude non-Europeans from the benefits of modernity. In my estimation, they offer a promising prospect of connecting an intense, lifelong engagement for ethnic minorities, indigenous cultures, and spiritual wholeness with the endeavor to transform European whiteness in a practice that is both symbolic *and* explicitly political.

Let me raise one final question regarding the utopia of intercultural exchange and the problem of white mastery in hobbyist performance, namely the question of reversibility. The dream of a “level playing field,” where people of all social and ethnic provenances can create an infinite number of cultural roles, and where performance is assessed purely in terms of artistic talent and skill, is a seductive one. I found indications, however, that what I earlier named *universal performability* (chap. 1), the prerogative of the unmarked white actor, shows up the limit of that fantasy. Asten mentioned a performer on German television who is well known for his yodeling, a folk style of singing in Austria and Bavaria:

A while ago I saw a Japanese boy on TV, dressed in lederhosen, a *Hüatla* [Bavarian hat], and then he started to yodel! I was laughing so hard I keeled over, tears were rolling down my face, my stomach was aching! But one thing I said to my wife: what a yodeler! Until I found out that he’s the son of a Japanese woman and a German (*laughs*) who was born in Bavaria (*laughs harder*). He can’t even speak Japanese! (*Doubles over with laughter, can hardly speak*) But a guy like that, he stands up there in Seppel pants, in short pants, knee socks up to here, like an old Bavarian. I fell over. I said, this is not possible, this can’t be true! Then my wife says, real cold, “Well, and you play Indian!” Yes, I said, where you’re right, you’re right. . . . But he was a damn good yodeler.

Asten’s hilarity mirrors the fear of exposure and ridicule that haunts all impersonators and becomes especially acute in stories of encounter; hobbyists’ insistence on seriousness as expertise and affect serves to transform laughter (and potential ridicule) into admiration, awe, and gratitude. Expertise is something Asten willingly grants the Japanese-looking yodeler as well, but concedes it as though faced with a paradox. The marked disjunction of Asian features and yodeling in one performing body evidently undermines mimesis, while the reverse goes unremarked. The refusal of reversibility, which Asten’s wife notices, reveals the racial inscription of mimesis. Even though the boy is German by birth and upbringing, Asten views him as a comic impostor. Would he have been even more ludicrous had he been born and raised in Japan? His vocal proficiency cannot certify his mimetic competence, “belied” by his appear-

ance as foreign. The yodeler is an expert, but he is apparently not serious. He is ridiculous, but Bavarian customs are not.

The desire to be other than white and German, for short periods of time, is an acceptable expression of the variability of whiteness, of a race of subjects “without properties,” whose beauty, as Goethe had remarked in 1810, resides in their neutrality of hue and whose surface “least inclines to any particular and positive colour” (*Farbenlehre*, quoted in Dyer, 70). This lack of specificity and particularity enables whites to take up the position of the unmarked, universally human and to represent mankind. This position is denied any other race, accounting for the irreversibility of cross-racial mimesis that emerges so strongly in the anecdote above. The boy's yodeling cannot stretch the narrow limits of German identity through a competent reproduction of its folk forms; more likely, it is interpreted as either a fraudulent appropriation of foreign cultural property, or as a sad, self-hating attempt at feigning whiteness.

**I**n my discussion, I have emphasized the historical specificity of hobbyism in order to assess its social meanings and political implications. My emphasis on the historical and biographical determinants of hobbyist styles questions practitioners' assertions of transhistorical, mystical bonds between Indians and Germans. I underscore instead the uniqueness of hobbyists' response to the end of the Third Reich, postwar reconstruction, the Allied occupation, and the division of Germany into a socialist and a capitalist state. To two of the older men in my sample, who recalled the terror of Allied bombing raids, Indian impersonation seems to have provided the symbolic means to cope with their sense of national humiliation, shame, and emasculation, producing in one case an identification with antidemocratic overtones. The recuperation of a warrior-like masculinity through Indian drag, too, appears reactionary when compared to official discourses, which encouraged a demilitarized, paternal masculinity during the reconstruction period (Moeller 1998). Yet hobbyism should by no means be equated with submerged fascist tendencies in general. Even the acting out of bellicose, patriarchal fantasies does not automatically translate into a misogynist social practice. Moreover, the notion of “ethnic competence” appears progressive when compared to the racial ideologies to which these practitioners were exposed in Nazi schools. One might even see hobbyism as a popular, theatrical equivalent to antiracist anthropological insights into the social construction of ethnicity. Although fascist ideologies of race and Germany's defeat and reeducation by Allied forces form the crucible of meaning in which many postwar hobbyists forged their practice (and which continues to impel some of its aspects, as Ward Churchill found in the early 1990s), Nazism should not be seen as the only

or the chief determining force against which hobbyists define themselves. German hobbyism predates the Third Reich, although, unfortunately, the motives and customs of earlier practitioners can no longer be ascertained because they are no longer alive to offer accounts of their activity. Nor should modernity be equated with late capitalism: in East Germany, Indians created a refuge from the bureaucratic reach of the socialist state, resisting its command to politicize intercultural relations. A small minority developed a critique of real existing socialism but embraced Communist appeals to international solidarity with the oppressed. For many among the younger generation of hobbyists East and West, hobbyism offers a zone outside and opposed to capitalist commodity culture and the materialist mentality with which some grew up, but which others see as imposed by the Western victors of the Cold War. To some, such an exploration of a nonalienated, simple life is also connected with the search for spiritual fulfillment left unsatisfied by organized Christian religions or political ideologies.

Further research is needed to ascertain whether some of the features I have discussed here also apply to other hobbyist communities in Europe. John Paskievich's documentary and Christian Feest's comparative research on representations of Indians in other European literatures indicate that the myth of the noble savage, which continues to inspire romanticized views of Indians today, is shared across European cultures. The yearning for a nonalienated, pre- or antimodern world hobbyists express appears to be eminently adaptable to local conditions, whether they are Communist or post-Communist, urban-capitalist or rural. In addition, future scholarship might take its cue from the documentary *Das Pow-wow* by Native American anthropologist Marta Carlson,<sup>35</sup> who, like the performance artist Guillermo Gomez-Peña with his "counteranthropology," turns the anthropological gaze around to investigate those who have historically held the power to describe, catalog, and interpret their "exotic" subjects.<sup>36</sup> The dialogue that Carlson initiates from behind the camera stages the anxiety around referentiality that continues to haunt hobbyists in every encounter with "real Indians," requiring them to negotiate their desire for recognition as kindred spirits and their fear of being exposed as imitators, or worse, as modern-day cultural colonizers.

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35. Her documentary makes an important contribution to a comparative analysis of East and West German hobbyism, limited in my discussion by my inability to contact East German "people hobbyists."

36. His counteranthropology is exemplified by the play *Border 2000: The New World Order* (1998) and his book *The New World Border* (San Francisco: City Lights, 1996). Please also see his interactive work in cyberspace <<http://www.telefonica.es/fat/egomez.html#paper2>>.

## CHAPTER 4

# The Violent White Gaze: Drag and the Critique of Fascism

In the 1960s, postwar West Germans' dedication to keeping silent about the Nazi past during the Adenauer era gave way to a younger generation's inquisitive and confrontational insistence on coming to terms with the horrors of the Holocaust, as well as the parent generation's "second guilt" of forgetting, denying, and repressing the past.<sup>1</sup> The trials of Adolf Eichmann, the main Nazi administrator of the "Final Solution," in Jerusalem (1961–62), and the Auschwitz trial in Frankfurt (December 1963 to August 1965) drove home the point that the Nazi past was not past. They coincided with the return of Erwin Piscator, the director who in the 1920s had invented the techniques of epic theater that Brecht assembled into a political theory of the stage, to the West German stage. Piscator influenced a new generation of playwrights and directors and contributed to the rediscovery and ascendancy of the docudrama as a vehicle of coming to terms with the past. The detection of historical and ideological continuities with fascism, the commitment to remembering and redressing Nazi and contemporary injustice, and vigilance, protest, and opposition on behalf of the victims of oppression became central tenets of the student movement, the New Left, and the political theater associated with these movements.

The New Left's opposition to the politics of the restoration period also entailed questioning Adenauer's belief that Western democracies, especially the United States, would provide guidance in West Germany's democratization process; the protests against the Vietnam War crystallized the widespread perception of the United States as an aggressive imperialist power that brutally enforced its economic interests in the Third

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1. Ralph Giordano coined these terms in his book *Die zweite Schuld oder Von der Last Deutscher zu sein* (1987).



World and violently squashed the Civil Rights movement at home. While the vigilance regarding fascist continuities in the FRG led young leftists to take over the Jewish community's traditional watchdog role (Bodemann, 36–37), their break with the Adenauer era's philosemitic consensus, according to Frank Stern, also “left a social-psychological void, which, under the circumstances of rising nationalism, could slowly be filled with antisemitic attitudes, both old and new” (1996, 96). Many Jews in West Germany perceived Rainer Werner Fassbinder's play *The City, Garbage, and Death* (1981), which included the stereotypical figure of a “Rich Jew,” as such an indication of leftist anti-Semitism, and organized protests against the play in Frankfurt. Stern asserts that the New Left's antifascism did not include a serious “effort to come to fundamental grips with the history of German antisemitism” (1996, 97), pointing to the neglect of “race” as analytical category and subject of historical research in the antifascist discourses of the New Left, but also arguably within feminist and gay antifascism.<sup>2</sup> Whereas the Marxist Left, which was theoretically informed by the work of Adorno, Horkheimer, and Marcuse, pointed to fascist continuities primarily through critiques of capitalism, the mass media, and First World imperialism, West German feminists in the 1970s and 1980s noted parallels between the Nazis' treatment of women and the patriarchal ideology they diagnosed in contemporary gender arrangements. Women's disempowerment under the Nazis could thus serve to ignite contemporary feminist resistance to women's exclusion and marginalization in the realms of politics, work, and academia. Similarly, gay writers from the 1970s onward tied the project of gay liberation to a reconstruction of homosexual persecution and victimization by the Nazis, associating homophobia with fascist legacies and thereby challenging contemporary sexual mores and laws, including Section 175 of the Criminal Code, which punished homosexual acts. The texts examined in this chapter illustrate the multiple meanings and political traditions around the term “antifascist,” and exam-

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2. Ingrid Strobl, a former member of the radical Left, explained the drift toward antisemitism in her political circles with their identification with the plight of the Palestinians. Conflating Israel with Jews in general, young leftists' condemnation of the repressive actions taken by the state of Israel against the Palestinian minority obviated their questioning of antisemitic continuities in their political rhetoric; their opposition to the pro-Israel, philosemitic stance of the ruling conservatives prevented them from perceiving the coexistence of antisemitism and philosemitism in conservative politics. While Strobl's earnest and personal grappling with leftist antisemitism offers interesting insights into ideological continuities in the Left, her lumping together of Christian antisemitism, Nazi antisemitism, and leftist antisemitism—while failing to realize the specific nature of postwar antisemitism as Germans' resentment against Jews as the troublesome accusers of past crimes—involuntarily illustrates her thesis of the conceptual shallowness and lack of intellectual nuance with which leftists approached antisemitism, and arguably questions of race and racism in general.

ine how they addressed the question of racist continuities in postwar Germany. With the exception of the first play I discuss, *Andorra* (1961), which presented a schematic etiology of anti-Semitism through the formal devices of the docudrama, the texts I have selected, composed between 1969 and 1990, examine race and ethnicity through depictions of foreigners who have come to West Germany as workers and spouses. Although their authors relate the treatment of these figures to the Nazi discourse of eugenic racism, they want to demonstrate the adaptability of that discourse both to new groups of victims and to changed formations of German nationality, no longer primarily organized around ethnicity but around economic prowess (for which Jürgen Habermas has coined the term “DM-nationalism”). Fassbinder’s film *Katzelmacher* (1968), Gerhard Kromschöder’s journalistic report *Als ich ein Türke war* (When I was a Turk, 1983), and Kerstin Specht’s play *Lila* (1990) analyze and critique racial continuities in the respective historical contexts of the economic miracle and the rapid modernization processes associated with “globalization” that almost coincided with German reunification. These texts represent the treatment of foreigners and people of different races as evidence of the feebleness of West Germany’s democratization efforts, and the hollowness of its claims to have overcome Nazi legacies.

The closing of the Iron Curtain in August 1961, which marked the heating up of the Cold War, had the effect of halting the steady flow of cheap labor from Eastern Europe and East Germany and required the West German government to recruit workers abroad. So-called guest workers from Italy, Spain, Portugal, Turkey, and other southern European countries received one-year contracts and fueled the economic boom of the young republic. Housed in barracks, sometimes in former concentration and labor camps, and initially called *Fremdarbeiter*, like the slave and forced laborers the Nazis had imported into the Reich, these laborers were viewed as an expedient means of maintaining and increasing productivity and prosperity, until the economic crisis and subsequent recruitment stop of 1972. While West Germany established itself as one of the most affluent European countries, its noncitizen workforce enjoyed few of the privileges to which German citizens of a prosperous welfare state were entitled, such as worker protection, humane accommodations, mobility, or social benefits, much less political representation. Those who rebelled against their wretched living and working conditions, by forming or joining trade unions and organizing strikes, were subject to retribution and often swiftly deported. *Katzelmacher* dramatizes the eroding of workers’ rights among both Germans and guest workers and shows that the “economic miracle” benefited only a few. Similarly, *Lila* demonstrates the deepening class rifts in the new global economy, while also calling atten-

tion to the further marginalization and exploitation of women within it. In addition, *When I Was a Turk* points to the exclusion of those from the sphere of consumption who had largely made the joys of consumerism possible. The texts examined here unequivocally indict such racial continuities, siding squarely with their Greek, Filipina, and Turkish protagonists. As I will show, however, the leftist and feminist critiques of German racial discourse I discuss here require a more subtle historicization than this brief sketch of political identifications might suggest.

My argument focuses on those moments that betray a deep ambivalence within leftist and feminist antifascism (already indicated by Stern's remark above); despite their advocacy for the underdog, some are also haunted by the fear of that underdog as violent and frightening. Perhaps the clearest sign of antifascist ambivalence is the way in which the critique of race is organized around Christian tropes of suffering and redemption, which arrogate the prerogative of converting abjection into spiritual triumph to the white body modeled on the crucified Jesus (see also my discussion of Christianity and whiteness in chapter 5). Antifascist drag, I argue, emblemizes the leftist/feminist identification with victimized, oppressed, and insurgent people, while also representing those people as devoid of subjectivity, mute, incapable of representing themselves, and potentially hostile. It is finally less about minority advocacy than it is about antifascist writers' search for a revolutionary subject at precisely those historical moments when that revolutionary subject, whether constituted as the working class or as women, seemed more divided and resistant to intellectuals' administrations than ever. Ethnic drag in the discourse of antifascism ventriloquizes the oppression and opposition of racialized and Third World subjects but contributes little to improved collaboration or solidarity with the exploitation of foreign workers or spouses; the substitutions I trace in *Katzelmacher*, *Lila*, and *When I Was a Turk* render literal the dynamic Gayatri Spivak has described in her seminal essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988). Spivak observes how the import of notions of desire (via the work of Wilhelm Reich on the mass psychology of fascism) into French poststructuralist theories of power figured a crisis in the role of the intellectual in social struggles, but also led to a loss of analytical nuance in understanding and combatting alienation, ideological mystification, and indoctrination through mass culture.<sup>3</sup>

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3. Spivak argued that the shift from a discourse of ideology and interest to one of desire signals a crisis in the role of the Western intellectual, who purports to transparently represent that desire. French theorists like Deleuze and Foucault assimilated desire into their theories of power via Reich, who in his study of fascism had contended that the German masses had wanted Hitler (rather than being duped by him), and that Nazism seized on that desire. This move constituted an important turn in the development of the post-Marxist critique, which,

The split between a discourse of coercion, oppression, and class interest, and a discourse of (an inherently masochistic) desire for subjection to the normative is mirrored by the two divergent dramaturgical patterns antifascists had available for their articulation of an antifacist critique in the theater but also in such “undercover performances” as Kromschöder’s one-week experiment of passing as a Turkish streetsweeper, a one-man “teaching play” that some readers of his book endeavored to duplicate collectively. Frisch’s *Andorra*, structured around the device of the tribunal, in which the murder of a Jew is investigated, typifies a Brechtian dramaturgy, which dominated leftist playwrights’ and directors’ efforts at confronting the Nazi past (e.g., Peter Weiss’s *The Investigation* and Rolf Hochhuth’s *The Deputy*), as well as issues of imperialism and race (e.g., Weiss’s *Vietnam Discourse*; see also my discussion Hubert Fichte’s *Great Act for Saint Pedro Claver*, 1980, in chapter 5). In contrast, Fassbinder’s *Katzelmacher* and Specht’s *Lila* adapt the tradition of the critical *Volksstück* created by Brecht’s contemporaries Ödön von Horvath and Marieluise Fleißer. As I will show, however, both plays incorporate elements from Brechtian dramaturgy in their presentation of the central figure of the foreigner, by either choosing a deliberate masquerade that sets that figure apart from the rest of the dramatic personnel and is readily recognizable by the spectators (*Andorra*, *Katzelmacher*), by textually foregrounding the masquerade (*When I Was a Turk*), or by making the character mute, thereby refusing to confirm other characters’ perceptions and prejudices and hence interrupting the expressive, mimetic logic of race. In antifacist drag, the lonely foreigners are marked as drag acts, stressing the disjunction of social role and racial essence. This technique might be seen to directly contradict the lamination of outer appearance to inner truth exemplified by *Jew Süß* (chap. 1). It also challenges the positioning of the German masses as dupes of Jewish masquerade and deception: from *Andorra* to *Lila*, the texts denounce the process of detecting and pronouncing racial difference in the body of the Other as a violent, collective process, debunking both the Nazi’s claim to pierce through the masquerade on behalf of the hapless *Volk*, and the later generation’s thesis that the German people had been seduced and coerced by a pernicious Nazi elite.

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as Spivak shows through her reading of Marx’s *Eighteenth Brumaire*, had previously postulated a noncoincidence between the similarity of conditions of suffering and deprivation shared by a group of people thus constituted as a “class,” and the active achievement of “class consciousness” (in the sense of recognizing one’s collective interests) that is systematically impeded by culture and ideology. The insight that under capitalism, workers are not identical with their interests requires a more complex account of the operations of class, interest, and culture, Spivak claims, than the postulation of a collective agent (the working class, women) at one with their “desire.”

Instead, the assertion of Germans' innocence and victimization is replaced with an analysis of violence and complicity. Yet I intend to show that the grafting of the Brechtian estrangement effect (discussed in chapter 1) onto the plot structure of the critical *Volksstück* also produced certain problems. The artists discussed here use ethnic drag to organize a dynamic of identification and distance that bars spectatorial empathy with the victim/outsider and denounces the German community that purports to read difference off of the outsider's body. If "the Germans" appear primarily as racists, what alternative identification do these texts suggest?

The texts I discuss in this chapter adapt antifascist critiques and attendant dramaturgical models to the representation of interracial relations. While I mention or footnote several other texts that deploy similar techniques and display similar conceptual and political problems, I find the dearth of plays, films, and performances devoted to the critical conjunction of antifascism and race much more noteworthy. While I see these texts as representative of certain systematic blind-spots and failures in antifascist thought, their dedication to antiracism is also a rare endeavor that sets them apart from the overall neglect, marginalization, and subsumption of "race" in diverse antifascist discourses.

I begin my analysis of antifascist drag with a discussion of Max Frisch's play *Andorra*, even though Frisch belongs to an earlier generation of leftists and deploys a purely Brechtian approach to his deconstruction of antisemitism. Nevertheless, I see this play as laying important dramaturgical foundations for antifascist critiques of race, from which later authors departed but which also, by comparison, highlight what is lost in later works that are formal composites between a Brechtian paradigm of estrangement and the critical *Volksstück*'s paradigm of empathy. In some ways, *Andorra* serves as the political yardstick by which the other texts are measured. The play, which premiered to great success in Zurich and soon after in several West German theaters in 1961, was the first systematic analysis of the social psychology of racism in the postwar German-speaking theater.<sup>4</sup> It turned the fascist gaze, which had scrutinized the objects of racial violence, back against the perpetrators, exemplifying a new generation's dedication to coming to terms with the past. *Andorra* is still regarded as "one of the most important plays of German postwar theater," canonized, and securely ensconced in high-school curricula.<sup>5</sup> It traces the fabri-

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4. Although there had been other plays that had represented the Holocaust naturalistically, the "model" *Andorra* was the first to schematically represent its cause on the postwar German-speaking stage (see note 11 below).

5. Thus the cover blurb on a 1984 anthology of materials about *Andorra*, edited by Wendt and Schmidt.

cation of a “Jewish character” through the story of the twenty-year-old Andri, whom everyone, including himself, believes to be Jewish. Since the audience early on becomes privy to Andri’s actual, non-Jewish identity, it is able to perceive the young man’s taking on of speech patterns, body language, and habits that the Andorrans perceive as “typically” Jewish, in terms of the coerced psychological and physical incorporation of predefined traits.<sup>6</sup> The famous *Judenschau*<sup>7</sup> scene at the end of the play, in which a trained “racial detective” sorts Andorrans from Jews, exposes race as performative, that is, as both false and real. The refusal of the expressive logic of race was undoubtedly a great achievement after the Holocaust and deservedly garnered critical accolades.<sup>8</sup>

The play debunks the racial “truth” that legitimates Andri’s ostracization and murder and focuses instead on the community’s psychological need for ostracizing someone it perceives as different.<sup>9</sup> Although the play is set in the minuscule Mediterranean state of Andorra, Andorrans also stand in for German audiences. Frisch, along with other leftist playwrights in the 1960s, broke with conservative explanations of fascism, which had rested on the demonization of Hitler and his circle. Instead, he

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6. The biblical exhortation that the priest speaks in the play, “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image of the Lord, thy God, nor of men who are his creatures” (46) is also Frisch’s “great theme,” which, according to legend, the young writer found through his work on *Andorra*. Some critics therefore charged Frisch with instrumentalizing the Holocaust for the fretful ponderings on the exigencies of identity that are his signature as a writer (Demetz, 146).

7. Literally, this invented term means “Jewish show.” Perhaps Frisch chose it to recall the ethnic shows discussed in chapter 3.

8. Some scholars and reviewers have also criticized the play, noting that its abstract, universalizing psychologism robs the Holocaust of its historical specificity and that its focus on the perpetrators elides Jewish history, cultural and religious traditions, and capacity for self-definition. Frisch defended his preference for an “abstract model” over historical specificity in an interview: “Ultimately, the play is not about antisemitism. Antisemitism only serves as an example. Why I used the ‘Jew’ as an example? His fate is closest to ours, underscores the theme of guilt. Moreover, it is high time to face things as they are, to start normalizing the word *Jew*. Tomorrow it can be somebody else who is persecuted” (quoted in Frühwald and Schmitz, 20). Critics debated the advantages of specificity versus abstraction also in relation to other texts. Adorno’s comment, after viewing the stage adaptation of *The Diary of Anne Frank*, is illuminating in this context. He remarked that “one spectator was moved to say, yes, but they should have saved that girl. Certainly that was good, a first step toward reconsideration. But the individual case, which is meant to illuminate the awful whole, at the same time became an alibi for the whole, which the spectator forgot over its individualization” (Frühwald and Schmitz, 28).

9. *Andorra* constructs a psychologized model of antisemitism, by portraying it as a process of projection: anything that threatens the ideal self-image is repressed in the self, split off, projected onto the Jew, and made into an object of derision and violence—or, in a philosemitic variant, of adoration. The soldier represses fear and derides the Jew’s cowardice (17); the doctor represses his own professional failure and hates the Jew’s ambition (29); the

invited audience identification with the “ordinary people,” who, he noted, “do not kill their Jew, they only turn him into a Jew in a world where that means the death sentence” (Schmitz and Wendt, 53).<sup>10</sup> While the audience’s alignment with the perpetrators called them to historical responsibility, the play also allowed for distanced reflection by borrowing the docudrama-device of the tribunal: Andorran witnesses’ accounts of their participation in the events leading to Andri’s murder are presented in direct address to the audience. Identification and judgment alternate in a dialectic aiming at self-transformation. Contemporary spectators are thus expected to see through and unlearn the psychology of racism: most importantly, the play instructs them to question and resist the Andorrans’ perception that appearance, voice, behavior, dress, and so on, mimetically reflect a racial essence—a task that becomes increasingly difficult in the course of the play, as Andri is shown to adopt the very personality traits others have attributed to him on the basis of anti-Semitic prejudice. The Jew in Frisch’s play is only a symptom of the Andorrans’ psychic repressions and projections: he is the embodiment of their prejudices, which become the real object of critique.<sup>11</sup> “Race” is thus defamiliarized; in addi-

carpenter, who overcharges the teacher, scoffs at the Jew for only thinking of money (25); the priest, who will not confront the community, commends Andri for his difference and superior intelligence (45); and the dishonest innkeeper believes Jews are greedy (11). When the Jew is expunged from the community, it is (temporarily) purged of such psychic components—although the logic of scapegoating suggests that the process of repression is never complete or final and thus demands the continued availability of enemy-figures.

10. The orchestration of empathy is illustrated by the blocking of the “witness stand” scenes. While initially, the witnesses had faced the audience full front, addressing them implicitly as judges in lofty remove from the processes shown, the Zurich production rotated the witnesses to deliver their speeches parallel to the stage lip.

11. Perhaps that shift of focus was also a factor in the play’s immediate popularity at a time when the public had grown “tired of plays concerning the ‘unprocessed past’” (Frühwald and Schmitz, 75), that is, plays that took spectators to the historical scenes of persecution and confronted them with the victims of torture and genocide. For instance, the 1956 stage adaptation of *The Diary of Anne Frank* by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett is set in a Dutch attic, the hiding place of the Frank family. Erwin Sylvanus’s *Korczak und die Kinder* (Korczak and the children, 1957) plays in the Warsaw ghetto and the extermination camp Majdanek. The fifth act of Rolf Hochhuth’s *Der Stellvertreter* (The deputy, 1963) is set in Auschwitz. Hansjörg Schmitthenner’s little-known play *Ein Jeder von Uns* (Any one of us, 1947) grappled with atrocities committed in Poland during the war, and the comedy *Jakobowski und der Oberst* (Jakobowski and the colonel, 1947, by Franz Werfel), which had but a short run, dealt with Jewish emigrants in France. Although both the Anne Frank adaptation and Sylvanus’s play garnered enough critical and popular attention to be recorded in most theater histories of the postwar years, one must consider their success (and the professed “saturation” of audiences with Holocaust themes) against the immense popularity of those *Zeitstücke* (topical plays) that conveyed the perspective of the German population on the front and at home: a call for topical plays by the editor of the newly founded *Theater der Zeit* in the Soviet-occupied zone in 1947 showed that about half of the dramas addressed the

tion, the geographical displacement of antisemitic violence to Andorra, along with the drama's alternation between reenactment of and reflection on the past, clearly point to Brecht's influence on the Swiss playwright, which Frisch readily acknowledged (Schmitz and Wendt, 18–19). He successfully historicized that which in Brecht's theoretical essay on the defamiliarization effect eludes historicization (chap. 1); *Andorra's* critique of racism thus fills an important gap in Brechtian theater.

Given the immense critical and popular success of *Andorra*, it is surprising that the play stands alone as a dramatization of the racial underpinnings of Nazism, even though in the 1960s the docudrama became a popular vehicle through which young German leftists endeavored to work through national guilt and responsibility for fascism and the Holocaust.<sup>12</sup> Yet not all leftists shared the political optimism inherent in Brecht's dramaturgy; some turned to the critical *Volksstück* for a much darker vision of racist continuities in postwar West Germany. This model of political theater stages the violent confrontation between outsider figures and communal norms, usually ending in the expulsion or subordination of the outsider. From its inception in the 1920s, playwrights used this model to investigate protofascist tendencies: Ödön von Horváth dissected the class mentality of the petite bourgeoisie, and Marieluise Fleißer focused on gender conformity as central to the formation of the fascist *Volksgemeinschaft* (folk community). This legacy made the genre a congenial vehicle for those writers who wanted to expose unacknowledged political continuities connecting West Germany with the Third Reich. While most of the play-

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stories of returning soldiers, and the other half was divided among antiwar vehicles, stories of Germans evacuated from the bombed cities, and the underground resistance (Rolf Schneider, 64). This corresponds roughly to the themes covered by the postwar "hits": the veteran's experience was dramatized by Borchert's *Draußen vor der Tür* (The man outside, 1947); Günter Weisenborn's *Die Illegalen* (The illegals, 1946) dealt with the antifascist underground; and *Des Teufels General* (The Devil's general) by Carl Zuckmayer (German premiere in 1947) raised the question of moral accountability through the story of a military officer who does not realize the implications of doing a good job in the service of an unjust regime. The play was banned in the Soviet-occupied zone but immensely popular in the three western zones, although many critics called attention to the drama's troublesome message. See Schneider, 81–90.

12. In the 1960s, the uncovering of fascist continuities broke with prior assumptions about the German *Sonderweg* (path of aberration), which had allowed politicians, artists, and historians to represent Nazism and the Holocaust as unique and unprecedented. That paradigm also contained historical and ideological phenomena within a tightly circumscribed time and place and curtailed the analysis of lingering or latent fascist structures in democratic societies and in the present and was thus seen to facilitate political denial. Yet neither the docudramas about fascism nor the more lyrical drama that grew out of new subjectivity include race as a central dimension of life under Nazism.



wrights who rediscovered the critical *Volksstück* in the 1960s and 1970s defined their outsider figures in class or sexual terms, a few also dramatized the violent clash between a foreigner and the native German community. The confrontation unleashes racial discourses that had lain dormant in the social backwaters that are the preferred setting of the critical *Volksstück*. These plays intervene in the postwar generation's myth of a "new beginning," stressing instead that Nazi ideology was merely (and barely) submerged in the repressive restoration period. Significantly, the dramas show not only the full-blown recurrence of racial violence, but also trace the absorption of the foreigner and the reconfiguration of the fascist ideology s/he catalyzes into a new, "friendlier" regime of economic nationalism. The generic pessimism of the critical *Volksstück* marks that process as negative, rather than hopeful or progressive. By shifting xenophobic violence from the individual level, where its brutal physical enactment can still incite spectatorial outrage and the desire for change, to the systemic level of economic inequality, the texts register a threatening sense of dwindling political agency and resistance. Despite its pessimistic ending, critics have considered the critical *Volksstück*'s "politics of brutality" as a radical call for fundamental social change, even though the dramatic plot denies any hope for change (Cocalis; Hofmeister; Sieg 1994a).

The playwrights whose critical *Volksstücke* I will examine in this chapter adopt the same racial estrangement techniques familiar from *Andorra* for the representation of their foreigner figures, grafting a Brechtian device onto a dramaturgical model commonly understood as anti-Brechtian. Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Katzelmacher* (1969), which he dedicated to Fleißer, stages the conflicts following the arrival of the Greek guest-worker Jorgos in a small Bavarian town, and Kerstin Specht's more recent play *Lila* (1990) dramatizes the violence ensuing after a young villager in Upper Franconia brings home a Filipina bride. As I will show, the plays' insertion of ethnic or racial Others into the generic formula of the critical *Volksstück* goes along with (or effects?) a shift of focus from the subjectivity of the outsider to the behavior and motivations of the community. Whereas other critical *Volksstücke* (but also Frisch's *Andorra*) are centrally concerned with the outsider's thoughts, feelings, and behavior, *Katzelmacher* and *Lila* leave the subjectivity of their foreigners blank. These figures scarcely speak, so that spectators find out nothing about the emotions or motivations that are otherwise so crucial to dramatizing the mental processes of the ostracized, who masochistically accept the social norms that contribute to their suffering. They are depicted as mysterious and opaque, offering the community nothing but a bodily surface on which the German mobs project their racial fears and desires. The defa-

miliarization of the social construction of race is applied exclusively to the Germans' ascription of racial difference onto the foreigners' bodies.<sup>13</sup>

Jorgos and Lila thus mark a unique conjunction of Brechtian and anti-Brechtian dramaturgies and their attendant politics. Brecht's epic theater sets up antagonistic forces moving through a dialectic toward social change, whereas the critical *Volksstück* depicts the elision or absorption of oppositional impulses; epic dramaturgy invites analytical distance, whereas the critical *Volksstück* disallows a spectatorial perspective outside of dominant ideology; Brecht's theater shows power to operate through coercion, in contrast to the critical *Volksstück*'s Foucauldian understanding of power as normative. While Brecht wants to make transparent the ideologies mystifying economic exploitation, so that the poor may recognize their true class interests and fight for social justice, the authors of critical *Volksstücke* see no easy way to dispel "false consciousness," since mass culture has powerfully wedded individual desires to social norms and insidiously prevents consumer-subjects from extricating themselves from its ideological reach. Fassbinder's and Specht's dramatic hybrids, by grafting two dramaturgies many critics have described as incommensurable, might be seen to recuperate the sense of social transformation otherwise missing from the critical *Volksstück*. However, Brechtian theater predicates political agency on the dialectic of identification and distanced analysis, constructing a critical consciousness outside of the operations of dominant ideology. Where then do the dramatic hybrids of Fassbinder and Specht locate the spectator, and how do they imagine social change?

### **Ethnicity, Gender, and the Economic Miracle in Fassbinder's *Katzelmacher***

In 1968, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, then head of the infamous *antitheater* in Munich, dedicated his film *Katzelmacher* to Marieluise Fleißer.<sup>14</sup> The filmmaker himself plays Jorgos, a Greek guest-worker who is recruited to work in a small town in Bavaria, becomes sexually involved with one of the local girls, and is beaten up by a pack of male youth. In the end, he announces his decision to leave, but only because he doesn't want to work alongside a newly hired Turkish guest-worker. The film highlights the ethnic underpinnings of German nationality, by showing the construction of

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13. See Teraoka 1989 and Adelson 2000 for a discussion of the figure of the silent Turk.

14. Although the film was based on a play of the same title, I will focus on the former in this discussion, because the author-filmmaker's assumption of the title role provides an apt illustration of ethnic drag. The film's title is a derogatory Bavarian term for southern Europeans.

Germanness in opposition to a foreign Other who is imagined as mythically potent, bestial, and immoral.<sup>15</sup> The youth circulate rumors that Jorgos might be a communist, that he stinks, and that he is not a Christian, thus reproducing the fascist discourse of locating political, religious, and anatomical difference in the Greek's body. This discourse becomes full-blown when the Germans brutally attack Jorgos in the marketplace. Rather than repeating the historical script of expelling the outsider from the community, however, the attack is followed by his integration—at least for a while. As I noted before, neither his integration nor his eventual departure (presumably for another job more to his liking) constitute a happy ending.

*Katzelmacher* contextualizes the confrontation between Jorgos and the village youth within the economic miracle as well as the change in gender roles. The town's hierarchy of breadwinning men and dependent women is already in crisis before the guest worker's arrival, because the unskilled and underemployed German males must compete with women on whose material and sexual dependency they can no longer count. The successful Elisabeth, Jorgos's employer and one of the film's main characters, is rumored to have acquired the necessary capital for establishing her own business through an affair with Burger, an "old man" and one of the local "bigwigs." Her upward mobility and self-confidence elicit half-con-

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15. Given the prominence of religious discourse especially in the play (the film omits two particularly ominous recitals of prayers in church that echo Fleißer's Ingolstadt plays), that last allegation is especially foreboding. The two prayers foreshadow the violence against Jorgos, who is thereby cast as a sacrificial lamb: "Everyone: The victim is killed / A lamb in our place / It's death thou hast willed / And we witness thy grace . . . Our door is marked with blood. / He is our true Paschal lamb / Roast for us in his fierce love" (86, 87). The two choric passages generally evoke a foreboding contrast between lamb and butcher, blood and love, yet it is also worth considering more closely the appropriation of biblical imagery. While the "lamb," especially the "Paschal lamb" refers to Jesus Christ, whose story is told in the New Testament, the association with butchering, blood, and sacrifice resonates with sacrificial practices described in the Old Testament, or Hebrew Scriptures. The line "our door is marked with blood" refers to the story of the Jews' escape from slave labor in Egypt after God sent ten scourges. The Jews protected themselves by painting their doors with blood. In this passage, the German youth align themselves with the "chosen people" while their enemies suffer divine wrath, which mystifies the violence they are about to perpetrate as an act of God. Their identification with the Jewish slaves is also interesting, because Jorgos is often referred to as a *Fremdarbeiter* (alien worker), the Nazi designation for Eastern European slave laborers. The play (not the film) thus appears to point to a historical source for the trauma that produces the psychic process of denial resulting in the disavowal and reversal of historical relations of domination and victimization. Catholic liturgy provides the German youth with a language in which they imagine themselves throughout the play as being under attack and having to defend order and stability. In the church scenes, the play points to organized religion as a site of ideological surveillance and pack terror.

temptuous, half-jealous remarks on the part of the other women. Another young woman, Ingrid, prepares for a career as a singer, rather than opting for marriage or love. Their peers accept as normal both women's sexual exploitation in their climb up the social ladder, but resent the women's choice to market their sexuality for their own career rather than that of a husband or boyfriend. Elisabeth's success, moreover, has put her into a position where she no longer has to sell sexual services for advancement or security but can command them from dependent men, including Jorgos, but also her German employee Bruno. The female boss and the male sexual servant thus embody an economic order turned upside down.

While women are shown to profit from sexual commodification, men are shown to lose—both in terms of the value of their labor power and in dignity. Bruno, Elisabeth's employee and lover, is emasculated by his role. He deploys a wheedling rhetoric of "love" that shows his plea for loyalty to be inspired by economic dependence and fear of competition. Typical of the critical *Volksstück*, *Katzelmacher* shows women scorning the possibility of greater equality between the sexes. They value Jorgos precisely for possessing the "genuine" masculinity that the Germans only feign, and several of them proposition the Greek after Jorgos is rumored to have raped one of them. The German men's macho posturing and their jealousy of the hypersexualized Jorgos relate the production of Germanness to gender reorganization and crisis. Fassbinder's drag performance harnesses the ascribed potency of a racialized, southern European sexuality to a masculinity that is portrayed as jeopardized and failing due to female competition and professionalization during a period of economic growth.

Jorgos's economic and sexual integration into the group reveals an integration of the category of race/ethnicity into the German economy that both exacerbates and stabilizes social differences. The presence of an underclass of foreign nationals and the emerging self-perception of the youth as "German" and hence privileged, neutralizes the political volatility that might otherwise accompany the further impoverishment of the already exploited. Jorgos embodies not only the stabilizing consequences of racialized economic stratification; it is noteworthy that the film focuses on his effects on the German community but omits the attendant harsh effects of a modern capitalist economy on the Greek himself. While we see the spartan room Jorgos shares with Bruno, there is no sense of a class difference between them; indeed, Bruno is portrayed as the suffering party, since he must now share his accommodations with his new coworker and is robbed of all privacy.

While the open brutality of the villagers is shaped by fascist notions of ethnic purity and homogeneity, modern racism wears a feminine, friendly

face, inflicting bodily harm in the form of austere working conditions rather than through brass knuckles.<sup>16</sup> Elisabeth, who profits most from Jorgos, is the one who rebukes the townspeople for their racist brutality, as well as their use of the Nazi term *Fremdarbeiter* (alien worker), and teaches them the more “hospitable” word *guest worker*. Jorgos’s acceptance by the group, which follows the mob attack against him, marks the threshold to the new racial order. Whereas the youth had earlier regarded both Jorgos and Elisabeth as outsiders and fantasized about expunging both, they come to admire her business savvy: “Not bad,” says Erich when he finds out how much she deducts from Jorgos’s salary for room and board, and Bruno agrees: “That’s what the man from the foreign labor department in Munich told her. You have to do it that way because then it’s more productive because they’re here and the money stays in the country. . . . It’s a trick. For Germany’s sake” (92). Even though he will probably not benefit personally from the windfall for the fatherland, Germany becomes available for positive identification to workers like Bruno through the ethnic stratification of the workforce. The fact that Jorgos earns even less reconciles the German workers with their own exploitation. Since Elisabeth’s calculating attitude becomes the accepted norm at the end of the film (accepted even by Jorgos himself), and that norm is coded feminine, the film associates the perfidy of modern racism with the modern gender order that gives rise to it.

Jorgos’s function in the film is to highlight economic and social shifts in postwar Germany; he serves as a catalyst, rather than performing a role that is itself socially, psychologically, or sexually elaborated. We know nothing of the character’s motivations for taking this job, the work itself, his past, or his desires. His body provides little more than a blank screen on which communal tensions and antagonisms are played out. Significantly, Fassbinder chose not to represent Jorgos’s ethnicity visually (such as makeup, hairstyle, costume), but exclusively through his linguistic habits: Jorgos speaks broken German. Fassbinder’s performance

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16. Hans-Bernhard Schlumm points to the “sociotechnological” orientation of “guest worker” studies in the early 1960s, which recognized the difficulties that workers from predominantly traditional, agrarian societies experienced in highly industrialized countries. Social scientists studied the adjustment problems of southern European workers primarily as factors diminishing productivity, and aimed at providing employers with pragmatic strategies to enhance workers’ well-being and output. In 1964 one such study recommended: “It is important to meet the foreign worker with friendliness and encouraging facial expressions; you will win over the linguistically isolated southerner more easily with a smile than with regulations, objective explanations, or threats” (quoted in Schlumm, 15–16). The calculating smile, which first Elisabeth and later the village men flash at Jorgos, signals the changed mode and style of racism, which Fassbinder dramatizes in this text as well as the later film *Ali: Angst essen Seele auf* (1973).

estranges the social role from the body of the actor who is (extraperformatively) known to be German. He cites Jorgos, rather than realistically or mimetically representing him, because the actor resists vanishing into the role, instead holding the ongoing construction of that role up for inspection. That process poses particular challenges, because of the ambiguous status of Greek ethnicity: while contemporary Greek laborers were grouped with other “swarthy” southern Europeans, the association of Greece with classical antiquity, marble statues, and physical perfection in German culture also carries connotations of idealized whiteness. This special representational status of Greek nationality renders the German dupes’ attempts at reading a putative (racial? ethnic? national?) truth off of his body particularly ambivalent: Fassbinder’s infamously doughy body, pasty face, and greasy hair conform neither to the stereotype of the Latin lover nor of the athletic beauties depicted in Leni Riefenstahl’s film *Olympia*. Moreover, Fassbinder’s juxtaposition of his own white body with the Greek role uses the estrangement effect to mark whiteness as racialized in this film, eschewing the familiar presumption of universal performativity.

When Jorgos’s girlfriend Maria (played by Hanna Schygulla) projects her desire for escaping from the suffocating narrowness of her hometown on the man from a—for her—mythically warm, sensual, and free South, her monologue both reveals the staleness of this cliché and hints at the acts, relations, and pleasures that are impossible under present conditions. Brecht had called this moment the “Not, But,” which requires the actor to not only show how specific behaviors are socially determined, but also to “discover, specify, imply” those that are presently not possible, but must be evoked and made available to the political imagination (Brecht 1964, 137). Put differently, the Not, But puts a political utopia under erasure. Fassbinder’s body thus serves as a screen for Maria’s deprivations and longings; Jorgos stands for that which a German subject must excise to qualify for proper national membership—a process of splitting off and projection that *Andorra* had diagnosed as the hallmark of racialization. Jorgos allows Maria to reveal the price German nationality exacts on its subjects, not just on the outsiders excluded from it. That moment also summons spectators to imagine German nationality differently than in its current ethnoeconomic formation, as a place that might welcome less competitive, alienating, and violent relations between people.

The Brechtian moment of the “Not, But” reveals Maria’s racial alienation, not Jorgos’s. Does *Katzelmacher* duplicate Brecht’s ethnic bias in marking the defamiliarization effect as the prerogative of the German spectator who reads it off of the Other’s body? Then why does the film caricature the ethnic German spectator as misreading, violent dupe? By

reversing the focus of the masquerade for the purpose of national self-inspection, the film insists that racial difference does not reside in the body of the Other but is produced in the psyche of the German collective, where it must be uncovered, indicted, and undone. It thus assigned the problem of racism and the obligation to change to the majority culture. Unlike Frisch, however, who in the early 1960s addressed spectators as both like and unlike Andorrans and thereby expressed confidence in people's capacity for historical and ideological progress, Fassbinder's refusal to permit German viewers to distance themselves from the pack's violence registers his despair over fascist continuities at the end of the decade. Indeed, his depiction of economic nationalism suggests that things have gotten worse. Typical of the critical *Volksstück*, *Katzelmacher* condenses and accelerates racial discourse, a technique that Donna Hofmeister credits with the genre's ability to force spectators to "ask the largest possible questions" about social justice. In contrast to other critical *Volksstücke*, which concentrate the horror of normativity and the impossibility of resistance in the figure of the outsider, however, *Katzelmacher* establishes Jorgos's own ethnic chauvinism by his disparaging remarks about a prospective Turkish coworker, but otherwise excludes his subjectivity from representation. While he catalyzes a critique of race and nationalism, an alternative vision of social justice is not organized around his perspective, as if it did not really concern him.<sup>17</sup> The question of nationality and race is thus severed from that of immigration and interracial relations. The story is not really about him at all.

The film owes its sense of political urgency not only to the economic changes of the boom years, which were drawing to a close when Fassbinder made his film, but arguably points to the sense of stasis faced by leftist intellectuals in the late 1960s, when the two large political parties had entered into a "Great Coalition" that drove oppositional voices outside of the parliamentary system (in the Außerpolitische Opposition, APO), and when the student movement itself fragmented into a myriad infighting factions. At the same time, German leftists perceived a stark contrast between their own powerlessness and marginalization, and the epochal First and Third World conflicts that had first unified the student movement in the Vietnam War protests. *Katzelmacher*'s Brechtian citation might be seen to import an optimistic sense of social dialectic otherwise absent from the critical *Volksstück*'s suffocatingly closed universe. Fassbinder's assumption of Jorgos's role figures the intellectual's "real" experi-

17. By comparison, Fleisser, to whom Fassbinder dedicated his film, also did not embody a feminist critique of patriarchal structures; but the squelching of her female protagonist's dream of independence and acceptance organizes spectator's desire for change around that lack.

ence of oppression as opposed to the people's false consciousness. One could thus see Jorgos as reinstating the vanguardism that some radical factions of the Left adopted at that time, which presumed that revolutionary desire must be instilled in people through agitation. Yet Frisch's play underscores that the reenactment of racism in its diverse manifestations can only be made productive for self-critique and transformation by providing a space for analysis and reflection—a space that is absent from *Katzelmacher*. The foreigner, who marks the conjunction of two antagonistic dramaturgical and political models, thus figures race as the most frightening aspect of Nazi continuities, and the most promising way of reigniting a social dialectic young leftists believed to be stalled by the power of modern capitalism to manufacture consent. Moreover, Fassbinder's choice of a Greek man as the object of impersonation, while owing to his ostensible concern with guest workers (Greeks constituted the fourth largest national group among the two million foreign workers residing in Germany at that time)<sup>18</sup> is interesting in terms of the sexual connotations of Greek nationality. Since "Greek love," the bone of contention in the story, also connotes homosexuality, the film might be seen to reveal the gay filmmaker's personal stakes in this exploration of Germans' construction of difference. By inserting a homosexual body into a racialized role, Fassbinder plays on the denotative and connotative meanings of the Greek body in German culture and highlights the structurally similar function of racial and sexual difference in the fascist imagination (see Marshall).

Fassbinder's ethnic drag act illustrates his political and erotic investment in the role of outsider and might be seen to perform an alliance between racial and sexual outsiders in the context of antifascism, an alliance he further explored in his later work, from the films *Whity* (1969) and *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* (1973) to the controversial play *The City, Garbage, and Death*, (1981). His artistic control as scriptwriter, director, and main character in *Katzelmacher* ensured that what could be seen as the film's flaw, its barring of identification with either the victims or the per-

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18. Greece was one of West Germany's earliest treaty partners providing short-term laborers. Formalized recruitment contracts were signed with eight Mediterranean countries, including Italy (1955), Spain and Greece (1960), Turkey (1961), Portugal (1964) and Yugoslavia (1968), as well as Tunisia (1965) and Morocco (1963) (McRae, 11). At the time the play was set, about two million migrants lived in West Germany, 12.4 percent of whom came from Greece. Greek laborers constituted the fourth largest group of foreign workers, outranked by Yugoslavs, Italians, and Turks. These lived mainly in the FRG's urban centers. Until 1960, the proportion of foreign workers from all six recruitment countries was below 1 percent of the West German population. Recruitment (initially for one-year contracts) only began to increase in the 1960s, when the Iron Curtain cut off the flow of labor from Eastern Europe.



petrators of violence, holds out a direct challenge to the German spectator. Repelled by violent and chauvinistic Germans on the one side, and an inscrutable yet faintly opportunistic guest-worker on the other, audiences are implicitly asked not to accept racist processes such as those shown on screen; yet they are also denied the analytical distance required to work through racism according to the Brechtian model. That impasse clearly cannot be resolved within the terms of the film but issued a political provocation at a time when the Left was marginalized and dispersed.

### **The Impasse of Agency and the Resurrection of the Exceptional German**

Kerstin Specht's play *Lila* was written during the tumultuous period 1989–90 and first produced at the Nuremberg Municipal Theater in 1991. Like Fassbinder, Specht (born in 1956) lives in Munich and has worked both in film and in theater, as a playwright and a director. *Lila* was her first play. Like her better-known drama, *Das Glühend Männle* (The red hot little man, 1988), which secured her reputation as a noteworthy new playwright in Germany, it uses elements of the critical *Volksstück* and is set in Upper Franconia, where Specht grew up.<sup>19</sup> That remote forest region provides not only a congenial provincial backdrop for Specht's explorations of patriarchal gender arrangements recalling Fleißer's Ingolstadt plays, but proves particularly apposite for an investigation of racial continuities and reconfigurations in the tradition of Fassbinder. Franconia, located in the southern German state of Bavaria and known as a stronghold of *völkisch*-nationalist ideologies since 1871, caught the attention of political analysts again in the late 1980s, when the far-right Republican party, which centered its campaign around xenophobic demands like the "repatriation" of foreigners, gained around 60 percent of the vote.<sup>20</sup> By drama-

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19. I have analyzed *The Red-Hot Little Man* in *Exiles, Eccentrics, Activists* (1994a, 45–49) and discussed Specht in the context of a feminist tradition of critical *Volksstücke* inaugurated by Marieluise Fleißer.

20. In their book *Rechtsruck: Rassismus im neuen Deutschland*, which early on addressed racism and right-wing extremism as the most pressing social problem in reunified Germany, leftist journalists Klaus Farin and Eberhard Seidel-Pielen, both of whom are active in immigration politics, narrate a "journey through the German hinterland" that begins in rural Franconia. Their report seeks to balance the depiction of the new German states as especially prone to racist violence in the popular news media by pointing to the ubiquity of racist sentiments and violence East and West, as well as demonstrating the continuity of fascist thought in the far-right party programs of the Nationale Partei Deutschlands (NPD) in the 1960s, and the Republikaner in the 1980s and 1990s. The Republikaner, or Reps, campaigned not only for foreigner's repatriation, but also for curtailing women's access to positions of authority and power, and for the restitution of the German borders of 1937, and a rejection of German national guilt.

tizing an interracial marriage, *Lila* offers a critique of quasi-fascist gender and race relations. It investigates the reconfiguration of fascist discourses of race around German reunification and the accelerated modernization that followed it. Upper Franconia's proximity to the former East German border compounded geographical with social and economic marginality. The play shows how after reunification, the region's proximity to the new capital, Berlin, suddenly conferred on the Franconian forest the function of tourist destination for Berlin day-trippers, contributing to the rapid transformation of an archaic, rural world into the cosmopolitan metropolis's hinterland. Moreover, these upheavals coincide with capitalism's epochal shift into the information age. As a data processor, the Filipina wife brings into view the division of feminized and racialized labor and masculinized leisure pursuits generated by new communication technologies. Her position is appropriated for a critical perspective from which these changes are thrown into stark relief, and from which the possibility of opposition is considered most emphatically and threateningly.

Like *Katzelmacher's* Jorgos, the Filipina Lila who gives the play its title is mute and therefore unknowable, even though she nonverbally (and somewhat ambiguously) expresses emotions like fear, anger, and happiness. Whereas Jorgos's terseness had contributed to a stylized depiction of his character and facilitated the defamiliarization of ethnicity, Lila's lack of speech appears in more naturalistic terms as an aspect of her lack of proficiency in German. The Nuremberg production supported this naturalistic interpretation of Lila by casting an actor of color in the role. I will show how the choice of "ethnically correct" casting exacerbates the split I have already noted in *Katzelmacher* between the critique of German whiteness and the critique of interracial relations. In addition, the play duplicates the political impasse between a Brechtian dialectic and the critical *Volksstück's* vision of systemic violence. As we shall see, Specht transcends this impasse by invoking a universal notion of humanism that erases rather than includes marginalized voices.

Lila's arrival in the Franconian village elicits two seemingly incompatible responses: while some villagers revile Siegfried's bride Lila and equate foreign origin with a disease threatening to infect the healthy social body, others pragmatically note the material and sexual advantages the German husband will reap from his marriage, the infusion of "fresh blood" into the family, and Lila's perceived submissiveness. In this remote forest region, racist attitudes have survived apparently unchanged from the fascist past; unbridled hostility is tinged with lust, racial difference is figured as sexual difference. While Jorgos had possessed hypermasculine allure, Lila is perceived as hyperfeminine by male and female villagers, arousing their desire as well as their jealousy.

Sex tourism to Southeast Asian destinations such as Bangkok and

Manila has long been available to middle-class, West German men, and more recently, the business of mail-order brides, as well as recruitment of Southeast Asian women into sex work, has profited from the desperate poverty of large postcolonial populations, creating an international sexual traffic in women who are prized in Germany for their beauty and putative demureness. The play stages the international sexual traffic as a clash between patriarchal and racist discourses: despite their macho posturing at the inn, the village farmers know that with their small parcels of land, they are not attractive marriage partners for German women: “with an *Aussiedlerhof* . . . no future. I hear they [Asian mail-order brides] cost 4,000 Deutschmark, and if you don’t like them you can return them,” says one savvy customer (11).<sup>21</sup> If they hope to continue the patriarchal farming families that depend on hardworking, obedient, and child-bearing wives, these men must, for economic reasons but also because German women have other life options available to them, curb their racist rejection of foreign wives. Given the physical hardships as well as low social esteem such a life entails for women (in the opening scene, one farmer describes his wife as a brood-mare [9]), it is not surprising that some young German women would rather strike out for the city and material independence. Despite the men’s initial taunts that Siegfried’s Filipina bride comes from the “jungle” (10), that she might be a prostitute because she worked as a maid in a port city (11), and that all foreigners are “bad people” and carry diseases (11), their racist objections to the marriage are mitigated by economic prerogatives and the primacy of patriarchal needs: “[The women] from around here don’t want to become farmers,” concedes one villager, and another adds, “and you can’t return them either” (11). From a patriarchal-misogynist perspective, a Filipina wife is simply preferable to no wife at all.

To the married women in the village, Lila means sexual competition and commodification, and the disintegration of a social fabric that had accorded them inferior status but also security and a modest outcome. Sex in this rural community is reserved for premarital techniques of procuring a husband and for professionals in the big city, while the married woman is “merely” expected to procreate. The village women regard Lila as a foreigner who with her youth, beauty, and legal dependency “undersells” them in the marriage market and simultaneously ups the ante in regard to sexual services. The collapse of the separation of sexual activity and

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21. *Aussiedler* (resettlers) were ethnic German refugees from the former eastern provinces migrating to West Germany after the war, where they received small parcels of farmland from the government. The point here is not only that the inferiority of the land impedes the men in procuring German wives, but that they themselves were not born in the geographic region they now want to protect against newcomers.

respectability between married and unmarried women culminates in the marital quarrel at the end of the first act, which precipitates the symbolic destruction of the village's archaic sexual order. The mother's jealous accusation that the father had indecently touched Lila, and his retort that he would now visit the Frankfurt bordellos rather than stay faithful to her, signals the erosion of the division of sexual labor between "decent" and "indecent" women, and heralds the mother's transformation from protector to destroyer of the home.

Where *Katzelmacher* had used femininity as metaphor for the perfidious "friendly racism" operating in modern capitalism, *Lila* depicts women as marshaling the fascist discourse of racial purity and foreign contamination in order to bolster their dwindling gender privileges. In contrast, men of all classes are shown to be the proponents and beneficiaries of a new world order characterized by a racialized, global sexual market. Like the Italian espresso-maker the couple received as a wedding gift and the Scottish milk cows the farmers now prefer over their Holsteins, Lila is a commodity that men value for its exoticism as well as its higher quality and productivity.

The Filipina represents to the villagers the epochal changes brought on by the opening of the borders and the subsequent, dizzying rearrangement of the German map, as well as the country's positioning in the global market. While their previously peripheral location had translated into economic atrophy and social backwardness, their now central location not too far from the new capital, Berlin, suddenly catapults them into modernity, confronting them with international travel and trade, women's professionalization, and economic competition with technologically advanced, as well as Third World nations. Siegfried's mother balks at these changes, preferring the familiar horrors of tradition that afford her a modicum of authority to the unfamiliar ones she associates with Lila. To the mother, tolerance and integration into the family and community are predicated on Lila's unconditional surrender to a rigid regime of local German customs, including housework. The compound of German culture and female subservience is epitomized by a scene in which the mother teaches Lila to cook traditional potato dumplings. While her handicapped daughter Hannah points out that Siegfried, who is a cook by profession, could probably prepare his own food, the mother scoffs at her and proceeds to instruct Lila:

Remember how it goes? Now you boil them. *She pours boiling water over the dumpling dough. Steam shoots up. Lila jumps back in fear. And now make dump-lings, litt-le balls. She quickly forms a dumpling. Now it's your turn! She takes Lila's hands and submerges them in the*

*hot dough. Lila shrinks back, weeping. Oh Lordy, what a wuss. Oh Lordy. Gotta get used to this. A bit of heat, you won't die from it.*<sup>22</sup>

The mother's response to Lila illustrates one of the critical *Volkstück's* central tenets, that those most oppressed within an ideological system nevertheless have strong subjective investments in it. Despite the mother's brutal attempts to "Germanize" her daughter-in-law, Lila also represents that which the mother lost in her own gendered and national socialization. Listening to Lila sing, the mother remembers her own father's refusal to let her play the guitar, because "this won't do for a girl" (24), and for a moment her bitterness and her longing create a connection between them. When she realizes, however, that her daughter Hannah is growing fond of Lila and threatens to slip out of her control, she furiously reasserts her authority by telling Lila that "all of Asia is a whorehouse" (24). The mother invokes race to reinstall hierarchy where gender identification and solidarity would have thrown the mother's habitual dedication to protecting men's interests into question. However, this strategy backfires as her continued harassment of Lila prompts the young couple to move to the city. Aggrieved, the father announces his decision to sell the house and move away, because he no longer sees the point of working. The disintegration of her family, in turn, drives the mother into madness, leading her to set fire to the house and causing her daughter's death.

Of the play's four female characters, only two survive the first act. The play's division into two parts underscores the profound changes reunification has brought: where the first act shows the villagers' world to be as yet unaffected by the recent opening of the border, the second act opens in an utterly changed landscape. The ragged, derelict father guards the field of ashes where his house once stood, a desolate island untouched by the wave of modernization and prosperity that has swept over the village. Its location in the Berlin hinterland has offered profitable opportunities for many, and a supermarket chain is interested in buying up the father's land. The male villagers are shown to have profited from reunification in various ways: the local rifle club can afford a trip to the Munich Oktoberfest, a realtor is showing off his newly buffed and surgically improved body as well as his expensive leisure equipment, and another man boasts about his affluence since renting out rooms to Berlin tourists. The play seems to celebrate the arrival of modernity by indicating a linear progression from poverty and stagnation toward affluence, leisure, and instant gratification. A look at gender relations in this paradise belies this pretty picture, however. Gender is dramatized as the bat-

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22. The dialogue is written in a stylized regional dialect.

tlefield on which class and racial conflicts are fought and on which the epochal antagonisms are inscribed most violently. One rifle club member refers to his “daily war with his old woman” (36), a visitor tells the father of one woman’s setting fire to her husband when he cheated on her, and Lila physically attacks Siegfried. Moreover, after the first part focused on relationships among women, their near absence in the second part of the play is all the more noticeable. The field of ashes that the father watches over serves as a memorial for his dead daughter, and through his binoculars he can see the sanitarium where the mad mother is first kept and later taken away to be buried.

Specht’s play portrays women as paying the price for modernization in the wake of reunification, with their lives, their health, and their moral integrity. On their backs, German men achieve upward mobility, affluence, and First World status. Written in 1989–90, Specht’s play illustrates a feminist critique of reunification that, in pointing out that women were the “losers of the *Wende*,” obscures the ways in which women in a “multicultural” Germany are divided along multiple axes. According to Specht, gender differences replaced the East-West dichotomy as the main social fault-line in unified Germany. *Lila* dramatizes the sexual division of labor and deploys race as a metaphor for the underclassing of all women, whose internal differences are blurred. Whereas the first act emphasizes the division of unpaid workhorse-wives, whose reproductive labor is desexualized, from the paid providers of recreational sex in faraway, urban Frankfurt, the second act dramatizes a new sexual economy marked by the suburbanization of prostitution and the sexualization of the modern marriage.

Siegfried’s previous girlfriend Vroni, a former barmaid and now self-employed prostitute, embodies the sexual effects of reunification. Through this character, Specht ironizes the notion of progress and liberation for women. Vroni’s hopes for marriage, the reward for services already rendered, were destroyed by Lila’s arrival. Like other rural women before her, Vroni had walked the perilous path of meting out sexual favors to attract a husband without compromising her respectability and hence marriageability.<sup>23</sup> In the second act, Vroni comes to visit the father regularly, leaving him money for food but also using him as a confessor. The young woman, described in the stage directions as “plumper and more done up” than in the first act, now markets the commodity she had formerly been expected to provide free of charge: her sexuality. Vroni, who scoffs at love or marriage, is now an emancipated woman, business owner, holder of a

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23. The precariousness of this balancing act is illustrated by the mother’s sister, who had a child out of wedlock and had been shamed and sent away (23).

driver's license, and tourist on her way to Lake Garda in northern Italy—far surpassing everything that her mother, a poor farmer's wife, had ever achieved or desired: "I've had it as a barmaid. They paw me, as usual. But now my name is Veronique and anyone who touches me pays for it. That's much more decent" (39). Her (reasonable) definition of decency as based on fair, consensual trade, however, is belied by an apparent sense of shame about her work, which manifests in the need to confess (her sin?) to the father, even as she professes to resent his "sermons." In a feminist text, the moralistic condemnation of sex work, which allows it to function as a negative metaphor of human commodification, is troublesome. Guilt-plagued Vroni, who discretely slips the old man food and money, veers dangerously close to the cliché of the whore with the golden heart. And Lila?

When she reappears near the end of the second act, she still doesn't speak, but apparently she has learned to comprehend German, since she can follow the orders Siegfried issues. She wears glasses, because her work as data processor has taken its toll on her eyes. Her job, which she performs at home, allows her to simultaneously care for their rambunctious son Oliver. The home cum workplace collapses the traditional divisions between public and private spheres, paid and unpaid work, labor and leisure that have served to protect recreative, regenerative zones still available to both male workers and to German women like Vroni who can leave to go on vacation. Lila, however, serves her husband and her son even on the day trip that brings them back to the father, as she helps Siegfried to feed the boy and change the tire.

While women who are old or handicapped (like Siegfried's deaf sister Hannah) have no place at all in late capitalism, and entrepreneurs like Vroni are still plagued by guilt about the way in which they earn money, Lila is the ideal woman-worker within that system: a sexual commodity *and* married, mother *and* worker, with no downtime or leisure requirements *and* little deterioration or wear; her productivity resembles that of the computer with which she works. While her situation is certainly evocative of many poor women's working conditions around the globe, Lila's ethnic marking is used merely as metaphor for all women's subaltern position in transnational capitalism, which is indicted from a feminist perspective. By comparing the different yet somehow "equally" damaging careers of Vroni and Lila, the play elides ethnic, national, class, and other differences among women, victims all in the "new world order."

Siegfried's visit to his father, after many years of absence, is motivated by his wish to sell his father's land so that he can send the boy to a boarding school and treat Lila to a vacation: "you know how women are," he winks at the old man (48). At that moment, in a singular, insurgent act, Lila kills Siegfried by bashing in his head with a rock. She refuses to be

spoken for or to justify Siegfried's ruthlessness and greed. The odd threesome that camps out on the field of ashes—the derelict father, Lila, and her son—embodies the refuse of modernization, those who will not or cannot participate in global capitalism's promise of affluence and happiness. The end of the play slips into a melodramatic sentimentality, with the saintly father and insurgent Filipina drowning in the din of technological progress.<sup>24</sup>

The second act revolves around old father Kratzke as its moral center. He is an innocent whose authority rests on his suffering, sincerity, and social abjection. These traits mirror those of the title figure, but in comparison to Lila, who mainly appears as silent observer if she is not absent entirely, the father's guileless if verbose self-expressions take center stage. His gray hair unkempt and long, his clothes dirty and full of holes, begging unabashedly for money and food, he provides the visual counterpoint to the glitzy world of consumption in which the villagers partake. He memorializes the past everyone would like to forget but also cherishes a vision of the future beyond the accumulation of expensive objects: when he sees his brown-skinned grandson Oliver, he happily exclaims that the boy “carries two worlds within himself, he will understand the world better than we have. He will put things right” (47). The entire last scene consists of his dying monologue, his head resting on Lila's breast. The multicultural piety places questions of modernization, race, and gender squarely in the terms of Christian morality. The image also fixes woman in the role of sacrificial motherhood. In her one-dimensionality, the beautiful Filipina struck one reviewer as being “as noble, pure and dark-skinned as Winnetou's sister, not a very gratifying role for the actor Trixy Mahalia-Zänger” (D. Bruckner, 12). How is it possible that the play presents a Western stereotype of primitive and noble goodness as a feminist icon?

In having her react violently against Siegfried's speaking for her, Lila embodies a feminist revolutionary fantasy; her name (which means “purple” or “lavender” in German) is, after all, the color symbolizing the modern women's liberation movement. The name of her slain husband evokes the youthful hero of the Nibelung epic, which Richard Wagner's Ring Cycle elevated into a founding national myth. The dialect pronunciation “Siechfried,” however, substitutes the adjective *siech* (ailing, withering away) for the noun *Sieg* (victory), suggesting that the nationalist vision of virile, militaristic vigor is already sick and debased. In killing Siegfried (from behind, as in the Nibelung epic), Lila stands in for all women oppressed, marginalized, and misrepresented by the masculinist ideal of

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24. The father's final monologue is drowned out by traffic noises and the sound of approaching threshers (50).



German nationality. Whereas in the epic, Siegfried is killed by his false friend Hagen in order to avenge a woman Siegfried had wronged, Lila's action could be interpreted as an act of female empowerment: by putting the degenerate, moribund state of German masculinity out of its misery, she might be seen to usher in a syncretist utopia embodied by Lila's mixed-race son, Oliver. Yet her assault also perpetuates the paranoid myth of German victimization by false friends and vengeful females (who hides behind the mask of the seemingly docile and grateful immigrant wife), which has served to recast misogynist and racist aggression as national self-preservation. While this scene appears to rewrite Germanness as feminist and transnational, it also points to the presence of racial paranoia within certain parts of German feminism. Whereas the first act reflects the insights of feminist critiques of fascism after Claudia Koonz, namely that Nazism's racial practices interpellated the majority of German women in a misogynist regime, the second act, perhaps unwittingly, reveals Specht's allegiance to a white, Eurocentric order she imagines as masculine yet benign and whose passing she bemoans.

The play contains the very ambiguity and threat of Lila's action by a peculiar transfer of political agency from the insurgent woman to the father. The prerogative of speech, of remembering the past and anticipating a better future, falls to the old man whose ruminations close the play, a figure curiously untouched by the historical forces to which the playwright otherwise pays such meticulous attention. In his disinterested love for Lila, his belief in a harmonious future encompassing many cultures, and his respect for a vanishing past, his voice seems to come from outside of ideology or history but is tinged with the overtones of Christian martyrdom.<sup>25</sup> The unironic, uncritical use of Christian imagery in the final scene shows that this substitution mobilizes religious notions of sacrifice, martyrdom, and redemption. This is all the more peculiar given the play's earlier attention to the way in which the villagers' racism is articulated in the language of religion (villagers call Lila a "witch" and refuse to share wine and bread during the wedding service for fear of contamination).<sup>26</sup>

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25. Reviewer Manuel Brug calls him a "hermit doing penance" (37), and nearly all reviewers point to the biblical overtones: to Kai Voigtländer, the father mutated into a "Shakespeare-Beckett-Fassbinder-esque Christ figure"; F. J. Bröde notes that the character bears "apocalyptic traits"; Cornelia Ueding-Waehner sees him "herald a new Deluge"; and Annemarie Buschmann calls him a latter-day Job.

26. Gail Wise also calls attention to the Christian rhetoric operating in Wallraff's *At the Bottom*. In her excellent chapter on the book she writes: "Wallraff's willingness to bear the physical injury resulting from this confrontation and his voluntary association with members of a marginalized minority helped create a new persona for him: Wallraff as modern-day Christ. . . . Wallraff's two years undercover took on the significance of a martyrdom, his injuries, the stigmata. The text explicitly encourages associations with Christ in an epigraph

The text reconstitutes the very discourse it purports to challenge. The father approximates the universalized, humanist subject that is empowered to articulate a critique of race, class, and gender in a manner that renders Lila, a disquietingly unpredictable, confoundingly unruly, and alarmingly violent Other, obsolete. A Western wish-fantasy of representing the dispossessed, which Gayatri Spivak has diagnosed in regard to European leftist intellectuals, is here shown to be shared by a West German feminist.

The allegorical figure of Lila thus serves to dramatize the predicament of Western feminists rather than that faced by South Asian wives. Reunification did not merely precipitate a crisis among German leftist intellectuals, as Andreas Huyssen argued in his well-known essay, but also followed on the heels of a crisis among German feminists. As the Orlanda anthology *Entfernte Verbindungen* (1993) documents, white feminist activists since the mid-1980s faced increasing criticism by immigrant, Afro-German, and Jewish women, who called on their white allies to acknowledge class, sexual, and ethnic privileges dividing women, and to share scarce feminist resources. In academic circles, the dismantling of the woman-as-victim paradigm had been precipitated by the historical scholarship on fascism (e.g., Koonz, Schoppmann) and colonialism (e.g., Mamozai). *Lila* can thus be seen to reflect a moment in German feminism when the confrontations around racial oppression and of white women's complicity with it produced not just adjusted notions of positionality, but also a kind of envy of "real" oppression to which white women no longer had full access.<sup>27</sup> Reunification provided feminists like Specht with a brief opportunity to recenter gender again; the production team retained dark skin as the mark of oppression, but detached it from the Filipina's body to shore up white nostalgia and abjection.

The first production of the play took place in 1991 at the Nuremberg municipal theater; it was subsequently staged at the Pfalztheater Kaiserslautern and the Viennese Volkstheater. While the first two cast an actor of color in the role of Lila, the last one had a white ensemble member play the Filipina. The last one fits most obviously my definition of ethnic drag, yet the Nuremberg production under the direction of Hansjörg Utzerath illus-

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to the episode in which Ali/Wallraff tries to convert to Catholicism: 'Whatever you do the least of my brothers, that you do unto me.' . . . Wallraff, as the German who is present yet not present, becomes aligned with Christ, whereas 'Ali' is equated with the 'least' of his brothers. In this way, this episode also serves to reinforce the hierarchy between Germans and foreigners" (194).

27. The title figure's name also cites Alice Walker's well-known novel *The Color Purple*, which appeared in German under the title *Die Farbe Lila* in 1984. Its black protagonist is sexually victimized and racially oppressed. Lila might be seen to appropriate the sense of multiple oppressions into an abject and abstract image of Woman that had been debunked by the feminist discourse of coalition.

trates with particular poignancy the peculiar displacement of an ethnically marked outsider-position from Lila to the old father Kratzke. In contrast to the stage directions, which note his ragged cardigan, the production had him appear “naked, his body covered with color as brown as the soil” on the field of ashes, as one reviewer described the scene (Brug, 38). Specht’s focus on the economic, social, and psychological deformations of white Germans leads her to deflect attention from Lila, yet the urgency of articulating a critique from the position of profound oppression, emblemized by brown skin, produces the visual transferal of Lila’s perspective to that of the father, who has been carefully set up as her German equivalent, a social outcast, someone without blame, suffering, and innocent. Unlike Lila, who finally erupts in a violent act, he is supremely merciful and forgiving of his tormentors. This transferal is not only prepared by the father’s depiction as an “exceptional German,” at odds with his materialistic and heartless countrymen, but also by the withholding of a racialized subjectivity from the Filipina character. The father’s “browning-up” in the Nuremberg staging symbolizes his abjection but contains the attendant fear of insurgence by the visual citation of Christian martyrdom and redemption. Ironically, this feminist text resurrects the figure of the exceptional German, typical of the fantasy of restitution that Ruth Klüger analyzed in postwar German literature about the Holocaust, assigning him the mission of providing a way out of the racist impasse of drag. The very racism that is being combatted comes back to haunt this production through the racial coding/coating of the father.

Lila’s murderous attack on the ailing embodiment of the German nation signals both a feminist wish for revolt against the patriarchal order and a white fear of the toppling of the new world order. The book I will turn to now, produced for a mass audience and proposing ethnic drag as a national pedagogy, exhibits even greater ambivalence vis-à-vis the foreigner. I have argued that the split between the antifascist critique of whiteness catalyzed by the foreigner, and the project of imagining social justice as multiracial and transnational, is predicated largely on the elision of the foreigner’s subjectivity in two of the plays. The journalistic report I will address below also promises privileged insights into the German racial psyche, but it does so from a first-person, Turkish perspective.

### **Impersonation as National Pedagogy**

That guy you’re looking at, black moustache and all—  
 What if that Turk’s no real Turk at all?!  
 Don’t be too sure of who that person really is  
 Maybe he is, as in my song, a German journalist.

Ekkes Frank, “Der getürkte Türke,” 1983

In German, to call something *getürkt* means it's fake(d), forged, or fabricated. The participle references the stereotype of the lying, cheating Oriental, yet transforms the subject into an object (that which is turked).<sup>28</sup> Within this grammatical logic, the Turk may be both the one who conjures such tricks and the outcome of trickery: the phony image, fakeness incarnate. To meet the Turk is to be deceived; so it might seem surprising that in the mid-1980s the dramatized encounters with fake Turks, like the one described in Ekkes Frank's song, became a spectacular, national pedagogy, through which West Germans could learn "what's really going on" in the FRG.<sup>29</sup> The mask of the Turk allowed German investigators like Gerhard Kromschröder, Günter Wallraff, and Marlene Schulz to learn and disseminate privileged insights into Germans' mentality. Journalist Günter Wallraff, who lived as a Turkish laborer for a year, formulated his purpose as a paradox: "One must put on a disguise in order to unmask society, one must dissimulate and deceive in order to find the truth" (12). Is that because the doubled falseness, the turked Turk, makes one truth?

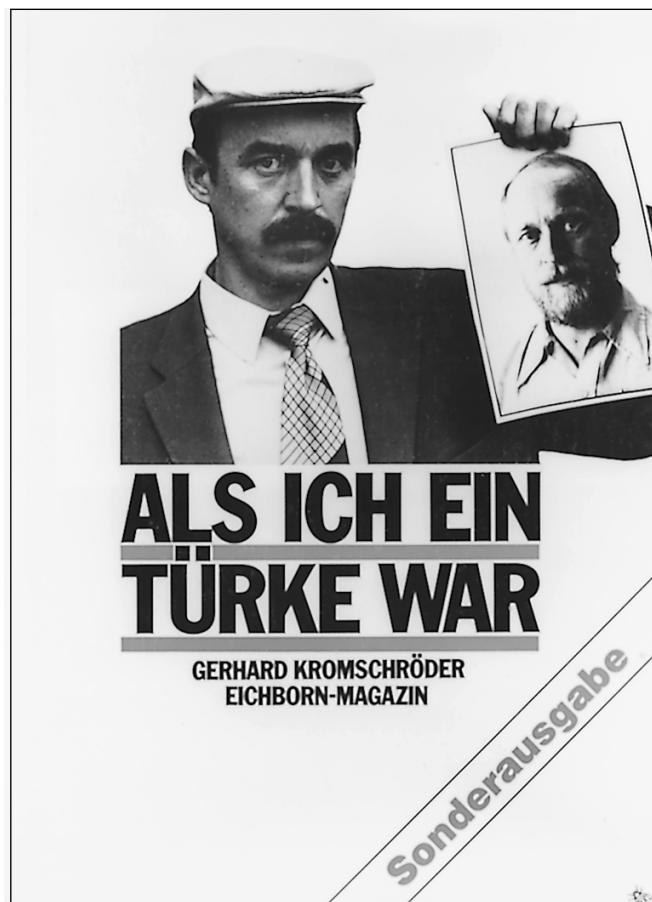
In 1982, Gerhard Kromschröder published a report in the popular news magazine *Stern* under the headline "Als ich ein Türke war" (When I was a Turk), which predated Günter Wallraff's best-seller *Ganz Unten* (At the bottom, 1985).<sup>30</sup> The Brechtian reference in the subtitle "A Teaching Play about Xenophobia" embedded the author's adventure of passing as a Turk in a didactic project of considerable scope.<sup>31</sup> A subsequent book that appeared in 1983 under the same title as the original magazine article supplements the seven pages of text, in which Kromschröder somberly docu-

28. Note the near absence of subjects in the first stanza, the pervasive and excessive use of the passive voice: yes, there is a German who experiences "what's really going on," but nobody seems to purposefully commit the acts he witnesses helplessly.

29. Frank reportedly composed the lyrics for "Der getürkte Türke" immediately after reading Kromschröder's report in the magazine *Stern*.

30. Kromschröder modeled his investigative method on Günter Wallraff's earlier controversial work, who had gathered the material for his critical exposés by going undercover. However, one might also trace the genealogy of Kromschröder's essay back to John Howard Griffin's *Black Like Me* (1961), a long-time best-seller and still in print in a special thirty-fifth anniversary edition. That book was similarly premised on a white man's cross-racial masquerade and was followed by Grace Halsell's *Soul Sister* (1969), the female complement to *Black Like Me*. In Germany, the "woman's view" of migrants' existence was furnished by Marlene Schulz, whose impersonation of a Turkish woman informed her book *Mein Name Keskin* (1984; see Wise, 163–64). It would also be interesting to analyze novels like Alfred Andersch's *Efraim*, which created a Jewish narrative voice to absolve Germans from guilt of the Holocaust, but also the more recent novels *Kismet* (1992), *Feran* (1993), and *Fatum* (1993) by Michael Mamitza (who writes from the perspective of a Turkish woman), as literary analogues to the more literal use of drag in the genre of the investigative report. For an excellent discussion of *Efraim*, see Klüger.

31. Although Brecht's term *Lehrstück* has commonly been translated as "learning play," the more accurate rendering is, or course, "teaching play."



Gerhard Kromschöder, *Als ich ein Türke war* (Frankfurt am Main: Eichborn Verlag, 1983), front cover.

ments his one-week experiment of living as a Turkish guest-worker in Germany, with twenty-three pages of photographs, as well as three additional chapters that track political and pedagogical “echoes and impulses” provided by the journalist’s essay, offer “materials and documents” on the history and sociology of guest workers and political refugees in the FRG, and present a one-week chronicle of xenophobic violence. In *When I Was a Turk*, the contradictions inherent in the well-meaning intention to give voice to the supposedly voiceless become glaringly apparent. Professing sympathy with the “foreign fellow-citizens” (the common euphemism for

migrants), Kromschöder's narrative is nevertheless riddled with paranoia, fear, and suspicion. Attempting to convey their experience, he puts words in the Turk's mouth. An ostensibly selfless and self-endangering undertaking, it is redolent with heroic, self-aggrandizing gestures. A supposedly sincere contribution to *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming to terms with the past), the burdens of that past are facetiously assigned to villains, short-circuiting any responsible confrontation with his own exercise of German nationality and ethnic privilege. While indicting social injustice, the book exhibits a strong class bias by singling out workers in the sales and service sector, but also prostitutes and homeless people as the worst racist offenders. Rather than improving communication between Germans and foreign residents, his teaching play forecloses it.

Kromschöder's report immediately launches into a first-person account that conflates his own vantage point with the experience of the oppressed Turk, blithely ventriloquizing his voice. Sitting in an outdoor café in Frankfurt and waiting in vain to be served, he notes his physical responses to the waiters' studied indifference: "My heart beats in my throat, I breathe fast. I tremble. 'Me no coffee because Turk,' I say loudly" (13). For twenty minutes, the waiters continue to ignore him and other customers look away, until his pain and rage boil over in the following internal monologue:

I am a man of glass. One that everybody sees through. The invisible man. The seat on which I sit is empty. I don't exist, I'm air. And I register in me the wish to prove my existence. To shout, to hurl a chair against the mirrored walls, to topple the table in front of me. (14)

These twenty minutes are enough to align the narrator with the "invisible man," whom Ralph Ellison described in his 1952 novel of the same title, conflating the nameless Turk with oppressed African Americans. The passage equates the anger of the spurned customer with the rage provoked by profound and long-lasting historical disempowerment and consumer advocacy with rioting or revolution—the overthrow of the social order foreshadowed by the imagined toppling of the bistro table. By imagining the Turk as potentially violent, this ventriloquy betrays its paranoid underpinning in the affluent customer's fear of looting and destruction—spontaneous eruptions of pent-up frustration which Ellison had portrayed with compassion but also deep despair.<sup>32</sup> To his invisible man, looting

32. Ellison's novel describes scenes of destruction and looting after an African American uprising in Harlem, recording the narrator's distress at the looting in which severe humiliation and deprivation vents itself rather than bringing about long-term social and political change.

meant that the uprising he had hoped and worked for had failed, foreclosing the possibility of fundamental social and economic change. The fantasy of the violent, looting insurgent that surfaces in Kromschröder's coffeehouse scene blames "society" for the Turk's imagined aggression, yet implicitly confirms the need for control and regimentation.

The coffee shop melodrama of the frustrated customer develops over several sections: the introduction sets the scene with a strongly phrased exposition (see above); a double-page photograph depicts the first obstacle: the hero's defeat at the hands of the bigoted villain Udo, head waiter at the Operncafé (subsequently shown to eagerly serve Kromschröder after the author has shed his disguise [32–33]); and two double-page photographs in the chapter "echoes and impulses" that show the dramatic climax in a "Go-in" staged by Turks and their friends at the Operncafé (56–57), and the tragic end when evil Udo triumphs, throwing out the protesters with the help of the police (58–59). The melodramatic plot provokes the impression that if only Udo were punished, poetic/social justice would be restored.

By representing the author as a "good" (nonracist) German, the book poses the ethical problem of legitimacy and the danger of substituting, falsifying, and instrumentalizing the Turkish perspective it constructs. Kromschröder is therefore at pains to demonstrate his friendship and solidarity with Turkish colleagues in the form of group photographs sans drag (76–79) and to solicit written testimony to his integrity on the part of a "real Turk." His book includes a short article by journalist Ali Sirmen, called "An Important Guest." Sirmen is the only other *named* contributor to *When I Was a Turk*. His piece is placed in the section "When I Was a Guest of State," preceded by a short piece by Kromschröder and several pages of photographs depicting his interactions with officials and dissidents in Turkey. The German's new status as Turkish advocate garnered him an invitation to travel to Turkey and uncover the truth of oppression, torture, censorship, and fear in the military dictatorship there. Describing his experience, Kromschröder reports that in the streets, Turks recognize, congratulate, and hug him; in shops, they do not permit him to pay and shower him with presents. Occasionally, they call him a "national hero" (75). Curiously written in the third person, the piece, saturated with sentimental affect, reads as an exaggerated, blatant wish-fulfilling fantasy. Sirmen's piece, which follows this piece, continues in this vein by asserting: "Our friend, the journalist Kromschröder, has won our affection and friendship by courageously confronting our countrymen's problems and taking care of them with great consideration and love" (85). Sirmen's essay (a note in the margin declares that this article was the first Sirmen published after his seven-month imprisonment under the fascist regime in Turkey) functions to affirm the verisimilitude of Kromschröder's self-

aggrandizing description of his visit, by offering an “insider’s” perspective on Kromschröder’s heroism. Sirmen thus gives credence to Kromschröder’s (hallucinated?) status as avenger of and spokesperson for the oppressed in quasi-fascist West Germany and fascist Turkey, although the extravagance of his language suggests a portion of irony.

The didactic centerpiece of the book is a photo-essay about one high school class’s collective cross-dressing as Turkish children. According to the preface, this was one of several attempts to re-create Kromschröder’s “teaching play.”<sup>33</sup> In Cologne, where the annual carnival has spawned a long and rich history of ethnic drag, seventh-graders who had “long talked about the problems of foreigners in Germany,” decided to follow theory with practice. Although the class of thirty included six foreign nationals, “none of the [German] children,” the caption to one photograph explains, “could quite imagine how it really is to live as a stranger (*Fremder*) among Germans” (63). The six students (four Turks, one Italian, and one Yugoslavian) were apparently unable to convey their experiences to their classmates, nor could they provide the necessary information for the successful masquerade: the class wrote to Kromschröder to ask him for costume and makeup tips in order to impersonate Turks.<sup>34</sup>

Their letter, allegedly one of many addressed to Kromschröder (72), raises a number of issues worth considering. The students’ wish to “test the Germans’ behavior toward the Turks” (72) begs the question of their own national identification. Although in a multinational class only the German students participated in the masquerade, “Germanness” is something they

33. The preface states that the book is intended as an “activist handbook for citizens’ initiatives and schools and for anyone wanting to work toward overcoming xenophobia” (8).

34. This was Kromschröder’s response to their request:

About the language: the German that Germans identify as the German spoken by Turks consists of sentences whose nouns are in the nominative case with infinitive verbs. Stress on the wrong syllables, for instance add an *e* to the *Ich*. Don’t say: “Ich bin ein Türke,” but “Iche Türk.” With some practice you’ll get the hang of it soon. About your demeanor: don’t jump around noisily as one might when going out during carnival as a pirate or a cowboy. About your appearance: Turks have black hair, of course. First tint eyebrows and lashes with the usual products. It’s more difficult when it comes to the hair on your head. Normal hair-dyes are permanent and will take a long time to grow out. But there are dyes you can rinse out when you’re done. These are theater or carnival dyes, which are applied with a sponge.

About your clothes: If you face Germans as a Turk, the main thing is to fulfill the cliché Germans have of a “typical” Turk—they are people who wear old clothes without fashionable accessories. Therefore: take old rags, wide pants, long coats in garish colors. It’s easiest for the girls. Keep in mind: tie the scarf tightly across the forehead, right above the eyebrows, pull it back sharply and fold it down at the temples, then tie the end of the scarf under the chin. You have to practice a few times until you’ve got the knack, but the effect is astonishing, because such a headscarf is seen as “typically Turkish.” (73)



wish to uncover in the salespeople they encounter but which is ostensibly inaccessible to or in themselves; like Kromschröder, the students seem to be at once German and not German.

Impersonation, marketed as a pedagogical tool, displaces not only suspect “abstract” forms of gaining knowledge, such as the interview, but also the interview-partner. It is therefore not surprising that “real Turks” only figure as a potential problem and threat to the masqueraders: “Will there be problems if we meet Turks while in Turkish disguise?” (72), the students anxiously inquire. Kromschröder never answers that question. While the students’ investigation of ethnic/national privilege and discrimination is certainly valuable, the unreflected positionality from which they undertake their investigation renders the analytical benefits of their performance doubtful. “The Germans” whom they intend to unmask are, like Udo, storybook villains whose actions are triumphantly indicted but not contextualized within the economic frame of the sales and service sector, personnel training, and customer management and manipulation. The continued vilification of petit bourgeois and *Lumpenproletariat* antagonists (homeless men and sex workers are decried as bigoted tyrants), articulates a critique of racism at the expense of class. The separation of these categories, along with the book’s focus on the sphere of consumption (in contrast to Günter Wallraff’s investigation of racialized production processes), obscures the imbrication of race and class in the economy of the mid-1980s. Kromschröder portrays racism exclusively in terms of denied consumption: in Turkish drag, the author is refused by sex workers, insulted by homeless drunks, isolated in a beer garden, denied admission to bars, restaurants, and discotheques, and physically attacked at a bus stop. The possibility that a streetcleaner (the nameless Turk’s supposed occupation) might actually not be able to afford any of the services he is here shown to request, is completely elided by such an approach. The facile outcome of his analysis is not only that “the Germans” (who are only ever the “other Germans” that do not include Kromschröder, his acolytes, or his readers) are flatly racist because of unreconstructed Nazi attitudes, as the “materials” chapter hints. Such a view also insinuates that consumer advocacy is the privileged locus of antiracist activism, which is questionable as long as the limited access of foreign workers to the sphere of consumption is elided and the commodification of “exotic” subjects in the sphere of consumption is left unexamined—from dark-skinned models and television talk show hosts to “multicultural” ads in fashion magazines.

**T**he texts I have examined here build on the antifascist traditions of Brechtian theater and the critical *Volksstück*, and their attendant critiques of power and strategies of envisioning change. They deconstruct

current formations of German whiteness—identified with the ascendancy of economic nationalism during the 1960s and again after 1990—by excavating the latent racial/ethnic traces of modern production and consumption processes, and by portraying racial continuities in a critical light. The figure of the foreigner catalyzes both the manifestation of a submerged Nazi ideology of whiteness and its modern reconfiguration. Yet the texts' focus on the pack mentality (derived from the critical *Volksstück*), along with its “blinking out” of the foreigner figure (to produce a Brechtian estrangement effect), reifies a sense of ethnic antagonism. The adding on of “race” to other categories of social difference, such as class and gender, does not move toward a social dialectic, but stalls it.

The theater artists defamiliarize race and nationality as constructed by the native community's violent gaze. In contrast to Frisch's *Andorra*, the dramatic hybrids of Fassbinder and Specht turn their attention from the racialization of the outsider to the violent racial ascription performed by the Germans. They defamiliarize modern German whiteness, but fail to connect that critique with the project of considering interracial and cross-cultural relations. While Fassbinder and Specht mark their personal and political investment in the outsider figure, they also instrumentalize race to reinstate nostalgic, vanguard notions of political activism. The “blankness” of the foreigner's subjectivity facilitates that instrumentalization and casts the foreigner as at best unrepresentable and irrelevant within antifascist, leftist, or feminist concerns, at worst as threatening to them. The specter of the dark-skinned insurgent haunts Specht's text, and Kromschröder's progeny indeed perceive real Turks as a threat to their project of national self-inspection. Despite the reference to the teaching play, Kromschröder's drag show falls short of the Brechtian imperative of collective transformation, by imagining racism as a melodrama of bigoted villains and heroic victims/avengers.

These texts indict older and current formations of whiteness by exposing its Nazi legacy of associating the foreign with disease and contamination, conflating racial with sexual difference, and “purifying” the national body through violence. Germans ascribe racial difference to the foreigner's body, and thereby constitute themselves as Germans. Frisch underscores the performativity of race, including that of the Andorrans, in his famous “Jew show”; yet subsequent artists tend to again confine the analysis of race to those whom white Germans perceive as different, and elide the way in which whiteness is constructed as well. Fassbinder's masquerade foregrounds the juxtaposition of white body and foreign ethnicity to produce the estrangement effect, but the production team of *Lila*, who browned up the old German father to symbolize his abjection, resorted to the uncritical, unmarked notion of whiteness that I have earlier called uni-

versal performability (chap. 1). While Frisch, Fassbinder, and Specht tied the process of reading racial difference mimetically off the body to a critique of ethnic nationalism, and thereby positioned readers as both like and unlike the mimetic readers whose violence on stage and screen they indict, Kromschröder and his pupils depict those who read masquerade as mimesis as evil, obscuring the social determinants of their violence. With the exception of Frisch's play, the texts discussed here infuse the masqueraded outsider with the urgency of their authors' own sense of marginalization in political contexts they perceive as quasi-fascist; yet they tend to conflate different discourses of power into an abject, dominated victim and fail to account for their own national and racial positioning. Moreover, many migrants were very well able to publicly and militantly articulate their interests, calling into question their stereotypical depiction as mute. Gail Wise's remark about Wallraff applies to them as well, who "assumed the position of spokesperson for 'speechless' foreigners at a time when many were expressing themselves clearly" (163). These authors' fantasy of serving as spokespersons for the oppressed, their lack of reflection on their access to the subaltern position, and their indifference to immigrants' self-expression or political objectives register not so much the living conditions of foreign residents in Germany as the self-perception of some West German leftists as marginalized, silenced, and stalled.

I do not want to dismiss leftist and feminist antifascism as racist; nor do I want to presume that racism cannot be present in a feminist or leftist text because of its "good intentions." The evacuation of the racialized subject position, while importing an otherwise lacking sense of a social dialectic, cements ethnic conflict and denies political agency to the foreigner. Although I would attribute the authors' refusal to ascribe any psychological truth or depth to racial/ethnic subjects to their rejection of scientific racism and its close mapping of character and appearance, the silence of the foreigner figures begs the question of how to argue for minority rights. The fairly recent success of some of these texts (*Lila* in 1991; the theatrical revival of *Katzelmacher* in 1998) suggests that some German artistic directors and critics still regard plays that use antifascist drag as apposite vehicles for addressing the problem of racism today. One might also see these attempts at imagining foreign residents as silent "subalterns"—so evidently out of touch with minority culture and activism—as attempts by some German artists to shore up political significance as advocates of the oppressed at a time when the end of the Cold War, the wholesale discrediting of socialism, and social democratic politicians' turn away from labor rights and the welfare system insistently raise the question, "What's left?"

## CHAPTER 5

# Queer Colonialism: Ethnographic Authority and Homosexual Desire

In the light of this task of making “whiteness” visible as a problem for cultural theory, I want to suggest that the positioning of gay (white) people in the margins of Western culture may serve as a perversely privileged place from which to reexamine the political unconscious of modernity.

Kobena Mercer

One of the persistent questions running through these chapters is how to navigate the pitfalls of cross-racial attraction and material appropriation, and how to challenge the internal logic that connects the symbolic elevation and adoration of racial others with their economic, social, and political disempowerment. The texts I examine here explore this predicament through the generic conventions of ethnography and erotic fantasy. Thereby they bring into play generically specific problems of sexual and ethnic objectification and domination, but also draw on the strategies of decentering white authority and exchanging power between unequal partners developed within critical ethnography and erotic subcultures respectively. The works examined in this chapter investigate cultural encounters through the tropes of colonial conquest and Third World tourism. But rather than doubling inequalities across race and gender (as Specht does in *Lila*, chapter 4), they juxtapose racial asymmetries with same-sex desire. They raise a question many queer scholars have debated during the 1980s and 1990s, namely whether a sexually marginalized perspective and the force of homoerotic desire can forge political affinities between white and nonwhite people (Aldrich; Martin and Mohanty; Mercer 1991). The phrase *queer colonialism* in the chapter title asks the question whether the former term modifies the latter, adding a homosexual dimension to what has often been figured heterosexually as the rape of virgin territories, or whether queer desire can thwart colonial domination, as Edward Said has

said about Jean Genet. Given that historically, the regulation of race relations in the colonial context always hinged on regimenting heterosexual relations, as Stoler, McClintock, Marcia Klotz, and Young have argued, does homosexual, cross-racial love always contest colonial relations and ideology? Does the shifting of race and desire out of alignment with a politics of heterosexuality accord white, homosexual authors a privileged place from which to interrogate the modernist binaries of civilized and primitive, rationality and sensuality, alienation and authenticity, as Mercer suggests? How does queer artists' fraught relationship to gendered technologies of representation, such as the cinematic gaze, position them in the contact zone between cultures? What strategies do they develop to expend, rather than exercise, white authority in these interactions?

The works by Hubert Fichte, a gay writer, and Ulrike Ottinger, a lesbian filmmaker, that are the subject of this chapter reside in a border zone between ethnography and erotic fantasy. They rigorously address epistemological questions, problems, and responsibilities in ethnography, the discipline of writing about (foreign) cultures. The texts contend with ethnography's colonial legacy, attempting to render other cultures intelligible without subsuming them under Western categories of knowledge and authority. As artists, Fichte and Ottinger also confront literary and cinematic traditions that thrive on the enigma of the exotic and the sexual pleasure generated by racial difference and domination. The history of erotic or pornographic literature is rich in harem fantasies, seraglios full of willing, veiled women, and casbahs cruised by hot-blooded Arab boys. Yet certain gay and lesbian subcultures also provide strategies of negotiating and exchanging power across deep social divides: Fichte deploys the discourse of sadomasochism to dramatize racial domination in colonial and contemporary Columbia, and Ottinger brings the flavor of lesbian camp humor to her representation of cultural encounter in the Mongolian steppe.

Fichte's radio plays, *San Pedro Claver* (1975, produced in 1976) and *Großes Auto für San Pedro Claver* (Great act for Saint Pedro Claver, 1980, produced in 1981) about colonial Columbia, and Ottinger's film *Johanna d'Arc of Mongolia* (1989), about female Mongolian nomads, combine studying another culture by long-term immersion with the recognition that cultural contact is framed and mediated by the psychosocial dimension of fantasy and desire. The works discussed below make explicit the desire between author and object of representation and how that relationship is constructed through specific representational technologies. Paralleling feminist ethnography, which asserted itself from the mid-1980s onward, the works by Fichte and Ottinger question the masculinist, het-

erosexual bias of traditional and critical ethnography.<sup>1</sup> As artistic rather than scientific texts, they offer rich accounts of the role of the cultural imaginary and its institutions (film, radio) in the representation of cultural contact. Through avant-garde techniques, these artists intervene in the dramaturgy of empathy and catharsis and in cinematic conventions of the colonial gaze that uphold the fictions of unlimited, unmediated aural and visual access to exotic spaces and subjectivities. Moreover, the artists' distance from the conventions of heterosexual romance results in a debunking of the myth of love and its capacity to transcend social differences. Rather, these works show how homosexual desire complicates, but does not escape, colonial and postcolonial power relations. While inventing a poetics of "dialogism" that attempts to unsettle colonial and neocolonial hierarchies, these texts also confront the possibility that the white queer fantasy of reciprocity is itself colonialist.

It is noteworthy that the texts show Germans' participation in neocolonial endeavors like Third World tourism, but do not situate the colonial tropes of encounter, domination, and insurgence in reference to the German colonial past. The resulting gap, which suggests that for Germans, a postcolonial critique must proceed in reference to other national traditions, highlights the difficulty of defining or constructing a German postcolonial critique (see introduction). Critics like Leslie Adelson and Susanne Zantop have remarked on the difference between the German situation and other national contexts, where artists from the former colonial subject populations have carried out the reconstruction of the colonial past and the critique of power relations between First and Third World subjects in the present. Although Afro-Germans in the 1980s began to excavate and assemble their history, German colonialism is not the common denominator in this diverse community. Turks, who constitute the largest ethnic minority in Germany, do not see themselves in a colonial or postcolonial relationship to Germans, who recruited them as guest workers during the 1950s and 1960s. Some critics have described the leftist preoccupation with the Third World during the 1960s and after in terms of a postcolonial critique, even though I think it is important to distinguish between writers focusing on the German colonial past (e.g., Uwe Timm's novel *Morenga*, 1985) and those artists who indict other nations' colonial aggression and its aftermath, including, for instance, Günter Grass's wistful Indian travelogue, but also Werner Herzog's anticolonial films *Fitzcarraldo* (1982) and *Aguirre* (1985). The dialogue and confrontation between

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1. See Wolf; Cole and Phillips; Behar and Gordon; Leonardo; Henrietta Moore; and Rayna Reiter. The introduction to Cole and Phillips contains a concise overview of the development of feminist ethnographic discourse.

former colonial subjects and the erstwhile masters, which has propelled the postcolonial critique in Britain, France, and the United States, however, is noticeably absent as the motor of a critique of present interracial/intercultural relations in Germany. The German texts I will discuss in this chapter are therefore marked by and thematize a largely monologic discourse about race, desire, and authority.

On the one hand, that monologic situation has produced texts that exhibit the flaws and liabilities that came under such scrutiny in the U.S. context. On the other hand, the isolation from a systematic critique of race generated by resident racialized and/or postcolonial subjects in West Germany also afforded German artists greater latitude in exploring the racialization of desire. In the United States, such explorations tend to be fraught with anxiety.<sup>2</sup> Mau's photograph of Hubert Fichte peeking out from a "primitive" mask illustrates, to some, the blatantly appropriative impulse impelling Fichte's erotic and ethnographic pursuits in the African diaspora, while others might interpret the image in terms of a dialogue around ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. Likewise, some U.S. feminists decried Ottinger's Mongolian romance as an arch-orientalist fantasy, whereas others, including this critic, appreciate the way in which the film works through orientalist tropes. The discussion below will explore the liabilities and benefits that accrue from this constellation, showing how the lack of polemic and political pressure generated by the presence of diverse subjects of enunciation opened up certain possibilities of self-critique, although one might also object that they allowed a white subject to merely recycle its own ambivalence. The two artists I am concerned with here engage with racial discourses from the inside, as it were, through an agitation of the aesthetic forms that subtend constructions of white authority (ethnography, pornography, romance). Finally, Ottinger's film permits perhaps a first account of the conjunction of lesbian fantasy and racial desire. In comparison to the attention gay interracial desire has received, lesbian interracial desire and subjectivity are much less fully addressed and remain undertheorized within queer theory.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, I find Teresa de

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2. See for instance the discourse about Chicana lesbians and their theatrical and critical accounts for the racialization of their desire by and since the conquest (Moraga; Anzaldúa). B. Ruby Rich discusses lesbian films from the 1980s and notes the paucity of interracial relationships. In 1991, Teresa de Lauretis remarked on the manner in which some lesbian films cast women of color as partners in interracial relationships while refraining from confronting racial difference as part of their relationship.

3. For example, when Teresa de Lauretis presented her groundbreaking essay "Film and the Visible" at a queer film and video conference in 1990, her decision to bracket race in her discussion, motivated by her recognition that "if you are going to articulate these large questions [of lesbian sexuality and race] as structurally related, they have to first be analyzed conceptually one at a time," was not only persistently attacked, but led to a disturbing lack of attention to the ideas she did advance in her presentation (270).



Hubert Fichte. (Photograph by Leonore Mau.)

Lauretis's groundbreaking essay "Film and the Visible," which theorizes lesbian fantasy and filmic spectatorship, a provocative point of departure for my reading of Ottinger's *Johanna d'Arc*. The film's campy celebration of a woman warrior eschews the binaries of subject and object, author and material, performer and spectator. By rotating a cross-cultural, intergenerational threesome in the roles of author, addressee, and figure of fantasy, the film suggests the possibility of a lesbian subject position that the triad inhabits together.

### **Estrangement Technique I: A Colonial Theater of Conversion**

Fichte's multivolume work published posthumously under the title *Die Geschichte der Empfindlichkeit* (The history of sensitivity) maneuvers between sexual subcultures like the denizens of red-light districts, leather-



men, and beat poets on the one hand, and the African, South American, and Caribbean communities where he immersed himself in black diasporic cultures on the other. Woven into this massive work are the life stories of Fichte's alter egos, the young Detlev and the adult Jäcki. He developed a style of writing he called *Ethnopoese*, the German translation of *ethnopoetics*, a concept discussed among American artists and anthropologists in the late 1960s and 1970s.<sup>4</sup> By this term, Fichte wanted to mark his distrust of "scientific," ostensibly transparent and rationalist modes of ethnographic writing, the I/eyes that see while remaining unseen, stressing the process of self-analysis and self-transformation induced by cultural contact, as well as the stylistic, poetic forms he deemed more appropriate to conveying his experience of foreign cultures.<sup>5</sup> Although I will briefly situate the two Pedro Claver radio plays in the context of Fichte's biography and describe their relationship to the rest of his work, I will not offer a

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4. Jerome Rothenberg, a poet and literary scholar, coined the term in 1968 and was instrumental in creating a discourse around the intersection between poetry, anthropology, and folklore. In one collection of ethnopoetic writing coedited by Jerome and Diane Rothenberg, he defined *ethnopoetics* as "a redefinition of poetry in terms of cultural specifics, with an emphasis on those alternative traditions to which the West gave names like 'pagan,' 'gentile,' 'tribal,' 'oral' and 'ethnic.' In its developed form, it moves toward an exploration of creativity over the fullest human range, pursued with a regard for particularized practice as much as unified theory" (xi). The title of the collection in which this definition appears, *Symposium of the Whole*, is programmatic in the editors' envisioning of ethnopoetics as "total art—and of a life made whole," as Robert Duncan, one contributor, described it (328). Ethnopoetics, to many poets, anthropologists, and performance scholars during the 1970s, tried to restore to Western styles of artistic creation all that had been excluded: "The female, the proletariat, the foreign; the animal and vegetative; the unconscious and the unknown; the criminal and failure—all that has been outcast and vagabond must return to be admitted in the creation of what we consider we are" (Duncan, 328). Ethnopoetics, in recuperating specifically the oral, corporeal, performative dimension of language, invented new methods of transcription (Rothenberg, xiii). In this, as in some of the philosophical, antimodern aspects indicated above, I see the strongest parallels between Fichte's writing and the American-defined discourse of ethnopoetics, which, Rothenberg concedes, lacks uniformity or a strong sense of cohesion among practitioners. While much of the secondary literature on Fichte emphasizes parallels between him and other anthropologists such as Michel Leiris, the connection to the art-oriented discourse of ethnopoetics has not been elaborated, despite his borrowing of an extant term.

5. In his analysis of Fichte's *Xango*, Herbert Uerlings contrasts the author's ethnopoetic style to ethnographic writing conventions aiming at a comprehensive, seamless portrait of a given culture that would gloss over the "Grenzen und die Spuren der Entstehung" [limits and traces of the work's genesis] (301). Rather, Uerlings argues, Fichte's polyvocal and multigeneric assemblages of texts leave room for the self-expression of his subjects; moreover, they emancipate the reader, who is left with the task of synthesizing and evaluating the material. I want to stress, however, that the style of Fichte's ethnopoetic works, like *Xango*, differs considerably from the radio plays, which are composed in a unified style, rather than juxtaposing "found" texts. In the plays, Fichte aims not so much to invoke colonial Columbia, as to present a psychological portrait of the white intellectual.

comprehensive overview of his extensive oeuvre. Through close reading of the two radio plays, I want to trace the dramaturgical means through which Fichte explored, and later reconsidered, the possibility of converting whites' sexual desire and cross-racial identification into political power for colonial subjects.

In an interview, Fichte said about his alter ego, the character Jäcki: "He wanted to be loved by Africans, he wanted them to read and be excited by his books. And he sees that for a writer, that is nearly impossible, in part due to linguistic problems."<sup>6</sup> His desire for the diasporic Africans he loved and whose existence and struggles he described in a series of prose works was fueled by a desire to be loved, a desire for mutual recognition. He acknowledged its futility not so much because he, Fichte, could not understand the objects of his desire—he prided himself on his command of several African languages—but because his language was unintelligible to them, he could not return the gifts he received. He strove in his prose to open up narrative space for cohabitation by diverse marginal and insurgent subjects, privileging techniques like the interview, dialogue, and collage that displace and disperse authorial control. Critics have analyzed the relationship of the author to his interlocutors in terms of an aesthetic of "sensitivity," describing openness, responsibility, self-reflectiveness, and loving respect as the hallmarks of the self-taught writer and critic's approach to his subjects. The African Germanist Simo, for example, views Fichte's writing as epitomizing the Bakhtinian notion of dialogism, presenting a polyvocal world in which no authorial subject is empowered to impose a unifying vision and gloss over contradictions and counterhegemonic struggles (224–25).<sup>7</sup>

Hubert Fichte was born in a small town northwest of Berlin in 1935,

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6. Fichte in an interview with Gisela Lindemann, quoted in Böhme 49–50. Jäcki is the adult alter ego of Hubert Fichte in his thirteen-volume *Geschichte der Empfindlichkeit*, which interweaves his fictionalized autobiography with his ethnographic writings.

7. Since the dialogue is regarded as Fichte's central methodology, it is worth noting here that this rhetorical device, according to James Clifford, is not exempt from, or opposed to, colonial relations, but rather risks eliding the fact (the labor and the control) of textualization through the evocation of unmediated speech in an ethnographic presence. Moreover, the dialogue displaces rather than abolishes the single, organizing viewpoint of the author, and tends, finally, to treat the interlocutor as a type synecdochically representing the whole of the other culture. Fichte's tendency to represent himself as a unique innovator of ethnography rather than a struggling practitioner mystifies his rhetorical strategies of ethnographic authority rather than revealing them; and his much-praised use of dialogue as an indicator of sharing textual space and authority with local informants obscures the author's orchestration of such dialogues within the agenda and parameters set by him. Informants are still informants, often remaining anonymous, and are not granted coauthor status, evidencing a rather traditional hierarchy of textual production and authority. Moreover, the notion of syncretism celebrated in Fichte's texts, which focuses on the colonial interaction of masters and

two years after Germany had become a fascist state. His mother, a Protestant, never married his father, a Jew, which made him illegitimate, and, according to the Nuremberg Race Laws passed that same year, a *Mischling ersten Grades* (half-breed of the first degree). His mother raised the boy in Hamburg, and when the city was bombed, he was evacuated to an orphanage and separated from her. I mention these details from the author's early childhood because Fichte has stressed their importance for his sense of himself as jeopardized, marginalized, and abandoned. After the war, he and his mother returned to Hamburg, where they worked in the theater, she as a prompter, he as an actor. In the early 1960s, he also began to publish fiction, which garnered some critical acclaim and an invitation to read at a meeting of the *Gruppe 47*. Fichte began to travel extensively in the 1970s, but his ethnographic writing was not published until after his death of AIDS in 1986. While Fichte's work openly examined homosexual encounters and practices both at home and abroad, the writer had a lifelong relationship with photographer Leonore Mau, an older heterosexual woman. Fichte and Mau traveled and worked together; two of his books were published in tandem with volumes of her photographs, and she appeared as the fictional character Irma in many of his works.

Although Fichte's fictional and ethnopoetic oeuvre never gained large audiences, radio offered him a public venue—albeit a small and rather exclusive one—and a means to support himself financially during the last ten years of his life. He earned an income by writing radio plays and features that combined journalistic reportage, political commentary, music, and fictional elements. Like many independent writers, Fichte benefited from the broadcast medium's state funding and found in its arts programming a forum for artistic experimentation and political expression. His radio plays ranged from brief, satirical skits to the monumental, more than three-hour-long, two-part drama *Das Volk von Granada* (The people of Granada, 1984). Several of the radio dramas, beginning with *Der blutige Mann* (The bloody man, 1975) developed similar themes and raise similar methodological, philosophical, and political problems as his ethnographic prose writing.

Fichte's fascination with the Jesuit priest and Catholic saint Pedro Claver (1580–1654) prompted him to dramatize the Spaniard's life in two radio plays that centrally turn on the white intellectual's propensity for intervening in racist discourses that privilege him. Claver reportedly chris-

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slaves, leaves the dichotomy of self and other, white and black, intact—rather than complicating it by considering the triangular interaction of white colonizers, black slaves, and indigenous population—an interaction that would decenter and destabilize the European subject much more radically, or even write it out of the equation.

tened three hundred thousand Africans during his forty-year tenure in Cartagena de Indias, a trading port in colonial Columbia. The two Pedro Claver plays deploy radically different styles and poetics. Whereas the first, *San Pedro Claver*, offers a subjectivist view of colonial relations as a sadomasochistic ritual set to the operatic score of *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* (1642) by Monteverdi, the second, entitled *Great Act for San Pedro Claver*,<sup>8</sup> affects the cool, objectivist distance of docudrama. It assembles a collage of biblical, clerical, and contemporary documents that replace the sexual torture ritual at the center of the first play with a more general, historical account of the Catholic Church's stance toward domination (including slavery) on the one hand and the religious mortification of the flesh on the other.

*San Pedro Claver*, first produced and broadcast in 1976, draws on a number of sources to document and dramatize the political, humane, and moral predicament of those whose role in the colonial enterprise was more ambiguous than that of either the colonial administration or its victims. Claver, the priest, is depicted as the conquistador's ideological helpmate, a soul-searching intellectual and impassioned writer, a bystander whose heart beats for the dejected and dispossessed. The colonial priest's vacillation between complicity and compassion, I suggest, stands in for a predicament that has preoccupied German artists and intellectuals in the twentieth century. Fichte's construction of large historical continuities, especially in the second Pedro Claver play, resembles the work of those scholars of fascism who broke with the thesis of the German *Sonderweg*, or special development, and pointed to transhistorical, transcultural discourses that neither began with nor ended with Nazism.<sup>9</sup> Fichte offers a similarly broad sweep of texts about slavery and race. Among the texts he assembles for the biographical representation of Claver's life in the first play-within-the-play are Alonso Sandoval's 1627 book *De Instauranda Aethiopum Salute*, which might be translated as *On Instituting Salvation for Blacks* and provides a horrifically realistic picture of the slave trade (see also Fichte 1996, 313). Sandoval was Pedro Claver's friend, teacher, and colleague in Cartagena de Indias, the trading port where the Portuguese

8. The Spanish/Portuguese term *Auto*, which is explained in the play itself, refers to religious or judicial ceremonies, later to one-act plays produced on religious holidays in churches and in public places. Derived from medieval mystery and morality plays, they gained great popularity in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as public entertainment. After 1765, the church proscribed them as a profanation of things sacred and suppressed them with much effort (Fichte 1988a, 253).

9. I perceive a striking similarity between Fichte's broadly conceived canvas of racial oppression and slavery in the second Pedro Claver play and Klaus Theweleit's monumental study of fascist masculinity extending from biblical citations, through the writing of Freicorps soldiers, to Hollywood billboards.

ships brought their human cargo and sold slaves to work in the South American mines. Both Jesuits devoted themselves to the task of “uplifting” the Africans by baptizing them and providing them with minimal medical assistance and food. Other priests whose writings are excerpted and who appear as characters in a play-within-the-play include Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuit order; Bartolomé de Las Casas;<sup>10</sup> Alonso Rodriguez, Claver’s first teacher; and Angel Valtierra, the contemporary Jesuit biographer of both Alonso de Sandoval and Claver and a revisionist historian. Their writing precisely notes even the minutest stirrings of the body and the soul as it is torn between the desire for serenity and the compassion with those subjected daily to atrocities, and yields a nuanced collage of white missionary subjectivity that spans several centuries and reaches into the present.

Fichte’s Claver can be placed in the tradition of alluring and troubling helpmate-figures in twentieth-century culture, from Brecht’s young comrade in *The Measures Taken* to Spielberg’s Oscar Schindler. Yet while both of these examples emphasize the elements of determination, willfulness, and enterprise in their maverick heroes (which Brecht criticizes as misplaced), Fichte’s portrayal of a white conquistador of the soul as submissive, passive, and empty of all autonomous will enables the author to work through a specifically Christian embodiment of whiteness, which predicates power on suffering and self-divestiture. The play shows that the church was able to produce an extremely effective political machine of domination, precisely and paradoxically by exhorting its functionaries to empty themselves of their will. *Pedro Claver* stages the contradiction between ecclesiastical ideology and practice in the form of a sado-masochistic ritual, emphasizing that abnegating one’s will does not mean forfeiting pleasure; indeed, the ritual underscores the material (rather than spiritual) rewards for suffering and self-abasement that apologist accounts of ecclesiastical history separate out into peaceful Christian principles and violent bureaucratic practice. The S-M ritual dramatizes the internal logic connecting them. While the Catholic Church’s complicitous role in oppressive systems such as colonialism is widely known, the ideological

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10. Las Casas’s *The Devastation of the Indies* is considered a powerful firsthand account and indictment of colonial cruelty against indigenous South Americans (see Zantop, 22–30), all the more persuasive because Las Casas first participated in that which he later condemned. However, a lesser known historical fact is Las Casas’s letter to the Spanish court (Fichte 1996, 323), asking for African slaves to be shipped as workers to the new colonies; Fichte’s focus on the colonial violence against the Africans rather than the Native Americans thus prompts him to arrive at a much less charitable evaluation of Las Casas as instigator of the South American slave trade than is commonly the case.

tension between the meekness, compassion, and charity practiced by the missionary and his political function of constructing a racist order is rarely addressed for its contemporary implications. Given the prevalence of Christian precepts and imagery in contemporary multicultural texts (see the discussion of Specht in chapter 4, May in chapter 2), I find Fichte's attention to Christian ideology and his rigorous examination of its relation to the practice of domination quite unique, still timely, and astute.

The competing dramaturgical models invoked for confronting past atrocities—one operating through identification and catharsis, the other through distance and analysis—parallel the experimentation with antifascist dramaturgies of the 1960s and 1970s. *Pedro Claver* juxtaposes the two opposing styles by staging the missionary's story as two plays-within-the-play to a group of contemporary tourists, who have traveled from Hamburg to the Columbian port town of Cartagena and whose tour packet includes the dramatic reenactment of the past. Their responses illustrate the benefits and drawbacks of both dramaturgical models: whereas the traditional docudrama is educational but leaves the tourists emotionally cold, the fervor of ritual is able to engage their subjectivity in historical events, but the ritual's climactic purging of pity and fear also perpetuates the racial ideologies it purports to indict.

Sandoval and Claver (both infected and shaking with the plague), Loyola, and Las Casas enter to provide the broad outlines of Claver's youth and religious education against the background of colonial and church history, to the counterpoint of anticolonial uprisings. While the tour guides act as narrators, commentators, and coproducers of the drama of colonial Cartagena, the tourists watching the reenactment initially confine themselves to the role of passive audience, at the most whispering appreciative comments about the show. After the completion of the biographical reenactment, the tour guides direct the spectators' attention away from the saintly Claver to his slave Manuel, a shift that heralds a role reversal between the pair accompanied by a startling change of register and mood. In contrast to the first portion of the radio play, in which characters speak in measured tones without great variation in volume or rhythm, the vocal quality of the performance suddenly becomes invigorated by syncopated speech patterns, increased volume, and an expanded range of vocal expression including growls and moans from Manuel, panting and yelps of pleasure on the part of Claver. While the director Peter Michel Ladiges refrains from having actors use Spanish or African accents, the contrast between the voices of missionary and slave is exacerbated as they are suffused with passion: while the almost-faltering voice of the terminally ill Claver grows even higher, breathless, and wheezing,

Manuel's vocal quality gains in depth, resonance, and richness of modulation. These vocal differences, while not racialized, convey the effect of a *gendered* contrast underscoring the inversion of the social order that occurs when the feeble, feminized Claver commands the healthy, masculine Manuel to accept the role of white top humiliating his submissive, black bottom:

Up, up!  
 Why do you hesitate,  
 you brown sinner,  
 black sinner,  
 to humble me,  
 fray me,  
 flay me?!  
 Do it, do it, do it!  
 You  
 Dirt  
 the dirt.  
 God does it—  
 do it!

And Manuel obliges:

I, dirt?  
 Swine, you!  
 You unwashed swine! . . .  
 Soot on your face, there!  
 White flour for me.  
 You black!  
 Grunt!  
 On your knees.  
 Grunt! Grovel.  
 I, white, all white!

(1988b, 217–18)

Under the gaze of the Hamburg spectators, Claver symbolically blackens up by prostrating himself, forcing the black slave into the part of flour-faced whip-wielder. The increasingly erotic atmosphere of sexual role playing—in which the entire tourist group soon participates—impels Claver to ever-greater religious fervor and feats of abasement and drives him toward the ideal state of “self-divestiture,” through which he attains at once his sexual climax and its religious sublimation figured through the

miracle of levitation.<sup>11</sup> Their exchange of roles poses the question whether Manuel accrues social power or control through his role as white master, and whether Claver's masochism constitutes a form of abdicating colonial power.

S-M ritual borrows from the imagery, tropes, and settings of colonialism and Christianity for its "theater of conversion," to cite Ann McClintock's apt phrase: literally, its subject is the conversion of African slaves to Christianity by baptism, but Christianity also enacts an "economy of conversion" in the sense of transforming abjection into agency, abasement into transcendence (McClintock, 143). The rituals of bondage and discipline between white missionary and black slave invert colonial power relations in accordance with the Christian promise of elevating the lowly and redeeming the poor. Fichte's representation of the missionary project as S-M spectacle defamiliarizes the "natural," divinely sanctioned colonial hierarchy of masters and slaves. Yet it also questions the political effects of symbolic abdications or reversals of power: does the role reversal between Claver and Biafara rehearse or prefigure decolonization, or does the ritual contain revolutionary energies by confining them to a symbolic form of expression?

The sexual play between Pedro Claver and his African slave Manuel Biafara includes a castration scene, which directly confronts the promise of "phallic divestiture" inherent in S-M. Claver's masochistic identification with the (literally and figuratively) castrated blacks evokes the possibility of forfeiting virility, along with institutionalized (colonial, Christian) domination, as well as racial supremacy. The tour guide describes degrees and methods of punishment for runaway slaves in the colonies, ranging

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11. My reading of Fichte's radio plays is indebted to Kaja Silverman's analysis of T. E. Lawrence's autobiographical novel *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. She elaborates on the Freudian concept of reflexive masochism to explain the internal logic connecting Lawrence's masochist desire for Arab men, his political advocacy of Arab nationalism, and his aspiration to white leadership. Although Silverman notes the revolutionary *potential* of Lawrence's homosexual identification with the Arab nationalists he loved and whose cause he championed, her essay describes the psychic mechanisms by which this potential was neutralized. Rather than undermining the hold of British colonial interests, traditional notions of virility, and imperial leadership on Lawrence, his reflexive masochism indeed strengthened them. Silverman interprets Lawrence's colonial drag (he was famous for wearing Arab robes) as a way of turning himself into a superior model, which the Arabs would feel compelled to copy—not unlike Old Shatterhand, who also wears Indian clothes, hopes to teach by example, and is made an honorary Apache chief. Thus a performance that might be viewed as the white man's abdication of superior status is actually intended to bolster his leadership. Silverman demonstrates the internal contradictions, the elasticity, and the recuperative power of masculinity exemplified by the life of a man who, often celebrated as an Arab sympathizer over and against his own national and imperial allegiance, and a homosexual man at that, could still wield full colonial and masculine privileges.



from public beatings and mutilations to castration and execution. Reenacting such a scenario, Claver plays the part of the captured two-time runaway, whose offense is punishable by castration. Anticipating this ordeal, Claver shudders with horror and lust, submitting himself to the authority of his master Manuel:

Do it!  
The Savage Prick,  
Rip  
it  
out!

(1988b, 239)

The guide then narrates the following scene:

The doctor, clad in black leather, so that nothing distinguishes him from the Ethiopian, approaches the bed of shame. The Ethiopian trembles. Involuntary spasms rack his body. A few moments later the doctor tentatively penetrates the scrotum using a needle. His fingers move quickly and confidently. He draws a blade close to the shaved scrotum and makes an incision. The doctor searches for and finds the testicles and squeezes them through the opening. The doctor cuts the thin vessels connecting the orbs with the Ethiopian's body. (239)<sup>12</sup>

The screams, which both Claver and Manuel emit in response to the castration scene, reference both the climax of masochist pleasure and the protest against racist atrocity. Manuel's scream realigns him with the emasculated black body, rather than the black-clad surgeon. The role-play falters; the exchangeability of the roles signified by live human and dead animal skin, both black, comes to a halt. Manuel attempts to step out of his role and reject Claver's imitation of the pain of racism:

Am I a Jesuit leatherman?  
Shall I torture you,  
because you  
want to imitate

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12. The description is adapted from Larry Townsend's classic S-M manual for leathermen. Fichte had already cited that same passage in his earlier play *Der blutige Mann* (1975), where it had included none of the racial specifications distinguishing the white doctor from the black Ethiopian. In addition, the passage had ended with the reattachment of the testicles (Fichte 1988c, 171–72).

the torture  
 I endured  
 You Naughty One?

(237–38)

Yet the tour guide admonishes him to continue: “Stick to your role, will you. Torture Saint Pedro Claver, who wants to relive how the Ethiopians were tortured for the sake of edifying us” (240). For the black man, castration signals an absolute lack of power that the ostensible agency of sadism cannot recuperate, prompting his refusal to perform. In contrast, Claver’s castration, which symbolically aligns him with colonial Africans, yields a pleasurable experience. The scene neatly splits the signifier *black skin* into a fetish for the white masochist, and the mark of the colonial victim. Manuel’s reaction to the castration, his refusal and then reluctant return to his role make it clear that colonial and neocolonial desire is neither consensual nor mutual: while the slave’s colonial mimicry might be impelled by his desire for privileges and properties reserved for whites, he does not therefore want to *be* white (like the doctor), nor does he necessarily want whites sexually, as his protest shows. Power, even though its radical division along the axis of race might appear to be essentialist, is articulated in the language of the theater: the actor’s lack of power to refuse or revise a role beyond or against a preexisting script is contrasted with the authorial or directorial prerogative to dictate continuation or termination of performance. Power is therefore defined as the control over scripts rather than their manifest content (which can be the dramatization of submission). This directorial power is embodied neither by Claver nor Manuel, but by the tour guides, who orchestrate transgression and risk according to prearranged plots that brook no deviation or improvisation.

Claver’s “double mimicry” (Silverman) rests on the religious concept of *Entselbstung* (self-divestiture), in which the missionary subordinates himself to the higher ideal of the Christian mission, sublimating his carnal desires and redirecting them toward “higher” aims.<sup>13</sup> He eats worse food than the Africans do, he wears filthier clothes, sleeps less, works harder, and licks their lesions to become as they are: diseased, dejected, dying—as a means of attaining a state of divine grace. The trope of crucifixion, which predicates resurrection and ascent on prior suffering, epitomizes this economy of conversion. The crucifixion staged in *San Pedro Claver*, however, calls into question the universal promise of conversion. Here Manuel plays

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13. “Wasn’t I so self-divested that I was as those I wanted to uplift?” Claver asks Manuel (244).

the part of the suffering Christ, while Claver takes on the complementary role of Roman tormentor pressing the crown of thorns on Manuel's bleeding brow, lifting the cross onto his shoulders, taunting him with a sponge full of vinegar, and slicing into his side. At the height of Manuel-Christ's suffering, Claver begins to levitate. This image conveys both a state of religious ecstasy and sexual climax. While for the Africans, abasement and submission are the normal reality of colonialism, their suffering neither redeems nor glorifies them. The same acts performed by different bodies "prove" their bestiality in the one case, or their saintliness in the other. The splitting of crucifixion into the suffering of the tormented and the levitation of the tormentor along the lines of race collapses the ideology of salvation that undergirds the colonial mission and its promise to uplift the savages. Claver's "lofty" spiritual status is not so much determined by the degree of his suffering, but by his location in the grid of racial difference. Conversely, the African's claim to redemption is not refused for lack of abjection and pain, but because the conversion promised by the crucifixion is contingent on the white, male body and its capacity of mimesis, transcendence, and redemption. By denying that capacity to the black body, Christianity reveals its ideological investment in slavery.<sup>14</sup>

So far, I have bracketed the role and the function of the tourist group for whose benefit the two plays-within-the-play are performed. Whereas the historical reenactment of the colonial mission and Claver's biography in the first one maintains a separation between the cast of actors and the tourist-spectators, the sexual rituals in the second elicit a much more active, participatory response on the part of the tourists. As their guides

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14. T. G. Alea's film *La Ultima Cena* (The Last Supper, 1976), makes a similar point. Interestingly, the Cuban film, which dramatizes a slave uprising at a sugar mill near Havana during Holy Week in the late eighteenth century, emphasizes the slaves' understanding of Christianity as a potentially anticolonial ideology, based on the promise of universal equality and peace. By contrast, their Spanish master, who stages the Last Supper with himself in the role of Jesus and the Africans as the apostles, underscores that the reward for pain and suffering is reserved for the hereafter. The slaves respond to his exhortation to patiently bear all violence at the hands of the overseer with amused laughter, signaling their incredulity at his expectation that they suspend their common interest in humane living conditions and freedom. Yet this is the only time that the oppressed Africans react in unison. In contrast to Fichte's play, Alea's film focuses on the range of resistance strategies among colonial slaves, which extend from the "house slave's" ambition to be exempted from the worst mistreatments, to the artist's sublimation of pain into song and dance, to the demoted African king's delusions of authority, to the irrepressible rage of the revolutionary. Due to their disunity, the slaves' spontaneous uprising on Good Friday leads to the destruction, rather than the appropriation of the means of production, and to their immediate defeat and punishment. Whereas the plantation owner enshrines the murdered overseer as Christian martyr, the film's final images show the black revolutionary in flight (to Santo Domingo?), underlining the necessity to "convert" suffering into freedom in the present, rather than in Heaven.

set the scene for them with a lurid description of naked blacks in Africa, they soon enter the fantasy by tormenting imaginary blacks in an increasingly sadistic fashion. One woman's protest is quickly quelled by a guide's remark that what she sees is "all included in the price" (218). The group reenacts the capturing of African villagers, a slave market and auction, and the slaves' arrival and christening in Cartagena de Indias, only to turn its attention again to the Middle Passage. While the tourists at first identify with the white slave-traders, Portuguese merchants, and Spanish colonizers, deriving sadistic pleasure from the humiliation and torment of the Africans, their alignment shifts suddenly toward impersonating suffering Africans on board a slave ship, forcing Manuel to serve as sadist to the entire group of white spectators in the throes of masochist pleasure. This shift extends the colonial mimicry to the (neocolonial) present heralded by the arrival of Caravelle Tours in Cartagena, aptly named after the Portuguese vessels transporting human cargo. It also marks this scene as *their* colonial fantasy in which they identify with both positions: with the white colonizer and his accomplices (Claver and the slave traders) as well as with the black victim, with sadistic as well as masochistic desire. The Third World is commodified as a historical theme park, a torture chamber that allows whites a respite from their everyday, progressive values of racial equality and respect. While the tourists' identification with the roles of colonial tormentors awards them the illicit pleasure of mastery otherwise unavailable to enlightened Europeans, the play emphasizes the continuity of racial discourse even when they identify with the victim. Indeed, it shows that identification with the victim is perfectly compatible with neocolonial arrogance and might even be its prerequisite.

The tourists' participation in the ritual of colonial S-M, no matter whether they side with the master or the slave, cannot undo the power divisions that continue to separate First and Third World. The ritual reenactment and reversal of (post)colonial power relations contests the naturalness of racial and geopolitical hierarchies, but tends to reinscribe rather than transform the grave social contradictions that constitute its symbolic material. Moreover, within the S-M logic, Manuel's anguished "no" only stokes colonial desire, fueling further repetitions rather than ending the scene. Its dramaturgy of serial catharsis (marked by the scream after the castration scene, the levitation after the crucifixion) purges those emotions released by large-scale conflicts, stabilizing rather than transforming an oppressive social order. Only the collapse of the

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Likewise, Timm's fictionalized account of the Herero uprising in *Morenga* stresses the anticolonialist biblical readings of indigenous preachers and agitators, who appropriated the very rhetoric that had served to legitimate their subjection to kindle a guerrilla war against the German military.

strict opposition of civilized and primitive, therefore, can reconfigure the relationship of First and Third World—albeit at the cost of the former’s participation and centrality.

Despite Manuel’s taunting claim to being the original *Schmerzmann* (man of pain) that the white man strives to copy, his appeal to the Platonic taxonomy of truth and representation fails to grant him redemption. The ostensible universality of Christian discourse breaks down. Christian ritual is interspersed with incantations to the African deity Gu, prefiguring the syncretism of African and European-Christian cultures resulting from the circumatlantic slave-trade. Claver’s speech dissolves into African chants, and Manuel, writhing on the cross, cries out:

Beat me! Beat me!  
 I sing on my cross at Golgotha:  
 Gu Gu Gu  
 Ooo  
 Eeee  
 Gombe manciale  
 Yansu melaco  
 Ario Neger congo chimbumbe.  
 Dare it!

(1988b, 243)

Yet this is no essentialist eruption of African spirituality, a return to pure, uncontaminated blackness:<sup>15</sup> Manuel makes some utterly modern demands in the name of Gu:

Now  
 I want cars  
 Gu!  
 Now

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15. Hartmut Böhme, to my knowledge the only critic who has written about Fichte’s radio plays, interprets this passage, which precipitates the end of the colonial sex act and, shortly thereafter, that of the play, as an act of resistance on the part of the Christianized Manuel. Manuel’s “invocation of African gods prompts his identification with the deity Gu [1988b, 245–46] who in [Fichte’s last] radio play *I Am a Lion* appears as the protector of the Abomey magicians. Through the syncretistic mixing of African and European cultural elements he manages to elude the Christian S-M spectacle and let Pedro’s identification with the black man run on empty” (Böhme, 79). Since Christianity, along with the conquistadors, was responsible for that syncretism, Böhme’s remark begs the question why that syncretism should also be able to countermand the sexual economy of colonialism. In addition, I think it is significant that the tourists, in their reenactment of the capture and the Middle Passage, and later Pedro Claver, invoke Gu before Manuel does.

I want carafes,  
 Gu!  
 Now  
 I want canons,  
 Gu!  
 Now I want  
 sacks of silver, mouth pears, Spanish boots,  
 doilies, leather-bound books, saucers,  
 valances, slave drivers, crinolines,  
 bedpans!

(1988b, 246)

These demands not only juxtapose the colonizers' claim to bring the gift of civilization to the slaves and indigenous peoples, with their implementation of a racial regime that used "mouth pears" and "Spanish boots" to torture them, but also illuminate the tourists' fantasy of postcolonialism as a return to a wholesome premodernity. Gu's claims to torture instruments of the Inquisition, weapons, and symbols of oppression conflict with the tourists' expectations regarding the African postcolonial. The African who wants to be a slave driver challenges not only the colonial order, but also the contemporary expectation that the victims of oppression embody a repository of anticolonial, anticapitalist, and anti-Western values. The tourists' bored response to this spectacle highlights the continuity of colonial and neocolonial ideologies, which predicated the First World's support of Third World people on their demonstration of noncapitalist, premodern lifeways. The unruly admixture of African and American culture, primitivism and modernity, spirituality and materialism disrupts the strict separation of these terms in Western notions of postcolonialism. Their collapse terminates the ritual repetition of white domination and repentance that reproduces First World power.

The open-endedness of syncretism, its lack of nostalgia or a teleology, and the decentering of a white subject within such a view of culture-in-process obviate any closure of the contact narrative, provoking boredom on the part of the spectators, who observe that the dialogue between Claver and Manuel "is going to continue along the same lines for a long while to come, without anything noteworthy happening," as they go ambling off to the next sight (1998b, 247). Their exit marks the end of the scene, but not the play. Its brief epilogue recounts Claver's death and notes the continued, irrepressible resistance of escaped Africans, who had settled in proximity to Native Columbians, to colonial administrators and militias. It is unmediated by any spectatorial stand-ins, presented in direct address to the radio audience. The triumphant final line, "The Cimarrons

were never subjugated,” marks Fichte’s investment in this vision of anti-colonial liberation and black power. The emergence of a subject that is no longer defined by its distance to whites, but by its proximity to other colonized people, coincides with the end of a white author’s representation.

How does Fichte reconcile his championing of decolonization with his dramatic focus on Claver? Even as the play exposes the missionary’s complicity with colonialism, it stresses the compassion Claver showed for people whom his contemporaries treated as little more than cattle, a compassion that humanized them. That compassion, intended as a corrective to military and mercantile colonialism, yet supporting it too, makes Claver a compelling figure for working through the sentiments and institutions structuring contemporary encounters between European travelers and Third World subjects. Through Claver, Fichte dramatizes his own predicament as a white ethnographer and artist, using his title figure to mediate and question his own contact with and love for postcolonial blacks. Yet how does Fichte’s desire for black empowerment differ from the tourists’ eroticization of black strength, which is shown to be consistent with white domination?

Although the tourists, who are enthralled with the strength and virility of Manuel, at first appear to embody the author’s erotic and political desire for an opening up of the subject position, the boredom with which they respond to the spectacle of syncretism allows Fichte to distinguish his desire for black empowerment from their erotic pleasure. The tourist group is erotically invested in specific complementary scripts and roles, and punishes any deviation from the principle of complementarity. The tourists’ departure is depicted in a positive light, since it makes possible the social and cultural transformation that their compulsive repetitions of white abasement both evoke and forestall. Fichte’s utopian proposition is that the desublimation of the erotics driving the colonial mission expends the energy that fuels the colonial project, allowing for the emergence of new, syncretic postcolonial subjectivities that no longer subscribe to the logic of colonial mimicry. The compulsive repetition of the social contradictions informing the S-M ritual between saint and slave invites listeners’ radical disidentification with the terms of the fantasy that the tourists are intent on upholding. However, the derisive depiction of the tourists as racist hypocrites whose professed sympathy for blacks is impelled by self-serving erotic and economic appetites, risks blocking rather than eliciting the audience’s self-critical identification and confrontation with neocolonial, leftist practices. Although Fichte arguably worked hard to block an objectifying relationship between white listener and black, decolonizing subject, his “author fantasy” also opens the door for an unmediated, unmarked space in which the listener can imagine him or herself as unfet-

tered by historical relations of identification, desire, and domination. Critics like Kobena Mercer have attempted to unhinge the power of the cinematic or photographic gaze to interpellate viewers into white, male pleasure and subjectivity, by narratively recuperating the agency of the so-called object of representation.<sup>16</sup> While Fichte's attempt to decenter his own authority parallels that critical endeavor, the radio play's aural evocation of space and subjectivity facilitates the construction of an unmarked subject position. Whereas the tourists' complicity with colonial mimicry is associated with the visible, the radio audience, which (re)produces the colonial fantasy in their imagination in response to aural cues, is allowed to inhabit the author fantasy of disembodied desire. Ladiges, who directed both radio plays, created a richly varied vocal tapestry of sound textures, registers, and qualities. While the visual sense entraps the tourists in the roles of voyeur and participant, the broadcast production constructs a listening space that is both sensuous (enhanced by the ethereal tones of the Monteverdi score) and ostensibly outside of racist ideology.<sup>17</sup>

### Estrangement Technique II: Docudrama

The *Great Act for Saint Pedro Claver*, which Fichte wrote five years after *San Pedro Claver*, revisits the dramaturgy of the docudrama that the previous play had so quickly dismissed because of its inability to fully engage white subjectivity. Moreover, it unfolds an even larger discursive canvas

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16. Kobena Mercer's reading of white, gay photographer Robert Mapplethorpe's black male nudes attempted to carve out the possibility of cross-racial alliances among homosexual men, which set him apart from those black, gay artists like Marlon Riggs and Cheryl Dunye, whose films (*Tongues Untied*, 1989, *Watermelon Woman*, 1997) caution against cross-racial love. Mercer argues that Mapplethorpe's photographs, rather than reproducing a stable dynamic of objectification and fortification that would affirm the conventional hierarchies of gender and race through the apparatus of the gaze, construct a relationship based on mutual identification, reciprocal desire, and ultimately, a more decentered notion of authorship/authority between author and models than the concept of a monolithic "white male gaze" would permit. By drawing on comments by Mapplethorpe's former models, Mercer is able to arrive at a less hierarchical view of their collaboration, concluding that "Mapplethorpe implicates himself in his field of vision by a kind of participatory observation, an ironic ethnography whose descriptive clarity suggests a reversible relation of equivalence, or identification, between the author and the social actors whose world is described" (1991, 183). While invoking the vocabulary of ethnography, Mercer challenges that discipline's monolithic equation of racial difference with hierarchy and exploitation through sexual desire.

17. Peter Michael Ladiges directed *San Pedro Claver* in a coproduction of the broadcasting stations Süddeutscher Rundfunk and the Westdeutscher Rundfunk, and *Great Act* in a coproduction of the Sender Freies Berlin, the Norddeutscher Rundfunk, and the Süddeutscher Rundfunk.



for the construction of race that culminated in colonialism, embedding Pedro Claver's biography in an aural collage of citations ranging from the Bible to contemporary chroniclers of Jesuit history. The *Great Act* is presented in an objectivist, documentary style without the framing action and the organizing sexual metaphor of the S-M ritual that structured the first play. Its form is reminiscent of the German docudrama of the 1960s. In alternating narrative and dramatized passages, speakers present evidence concerning the historical crime of colonial slavery, embedded in the larger biblical discourse on servitude (*Knechtschaft*); Fichte appears in the role of epic narrator who calls on witnesses (ranging from biblical characters, apostles, and Martin Luther, to the cast of church officials that had appeared in *San Pedro Claver*) and pronounces judgment on the themes of domination and slavery. While omitting the central motif of the ritualized racial cross-identification, it provides a much richer sense of the discursive entanglement of conquest, colonialism, and Christianity. The citation of biblical pronouncements on human inequality and corporal punishment takes up over half an hour before the story of Claver even commences. The drama conveys the horror of the middle passage, the punitive system in the colony (including castration), and daily life of forcibly Christianized colonial slaves in much greater, terrifying detail assembled from a variety of contemporary documents; I found it no less compelling than the first play. Although Claver's biography constitutes the frame for organizing the wealth of historical material, his subjectivity is not elaborated; the play offers an external portrait of the man rather than emulating his viewpoint.

In the *Great Act*, Fichte revises the thematic of identification as it impinges on postcolonial pedagogy and the leftist commitment to social transformation. Fichte's omission of the tourists no longer presumes a uniformly racist public. The introduction of Fichte himself as a character, which emphasizes his control over the material and the characters, obviates the unmarked author-position that ultimately undermined the critical agenda of the first drama through its unspoken presumption of exceptionality and special access. This choice submits the authorial role to a critique of the ostensibly nonauthoritarian dialogism so cherished by many of Fichte's critics. The 1981 production underlines the prominence of the Fichte character, which is one of the few voices recognizable throughout the play. The large number of speakers, who sometimes have only a line or two, leads to a much less rigorous association of voice with character than in the first play; in addition, voices are much less clearly distinguishable, taking up a much smaller range of textures, modulations, and memorable qualities. The impression that all other voices are interchangeable increases the importance of the narrator as acoustic guide through the text.

There is a sense of dramatic development in the play's chronological movement from past to present, from ideology (the Bible) to practice (the colonial mission), and from distanced presentation to engaged commentary and interpretation, yet the *Great Act* does not afford closure through catharsis. Its form, a combination of the documentary feature with the docudrama device of the tribunal, emphasizes both the constructedness of the play and its partial, partisan perspective and agenda. Rather than establishing a dramatic character by associating acoustic signals with particular stories and thereby anchoring them in the listener's imagination, the narrator announces the speakers by name. Dramatized scenes interspersed with narrative descriptions are announced like Brechtian captions, instead of creating an acoustic environment that allows the listener to immerse her- or himself in it in a plenitudinous delusion of "being there." The narrator's voice is occasionally tinged with irony and bitterness, reminding listeners that, while knowledge about the past requires a great deal of labor collecting, comparing, and weighing evidence, the aim is not objectivity or detachment, but partisanship, engagement, passion. However, that passion is not permitted to reactivate past violence and afford contemporary listeners the vicarious experience of sadism or victimization.

The final lines of the play are spoken by the Fichte character, who observes that Claver's funeral rites resemble those African customs to whose eradication Claver had so industriously contributed (Fichte 1988a, 313). The earlier celebration of cultural syncretism, embodied in an irrepressible African deity clamoring for black modernity, is here complemented with a vision of the white, Western subject as irrevocably changed by colonial contact. Whereas the first play used the metaphor of racial drag to distinguish between the white colonizer's desire for black bodies with their imagined racial properties and the black slave's desire for Europeans' technological accomplishments, the second turns its attention to the effects of colonialism on the white European. Claver's African funeral could be taken to symbolize the "blackening" of colonial whites and, by extension, the transculturation of Europeans in the colonial and, today, postcolonial and metropolitan contact zones. Yet the "becoming primitive" of the ostensibly civilized, while gleefully pointing to the futility of maintaining cultural and racial purity as the prerequisite of supremacist thought, is also shown to be consonant with domination. Just as Manuel's embrace of modernity is distinct from a presumptive desire for Europeans or whiteness, so Claver's (and Fichte's) desire for and identification with blacks does not automatically entail an abdication of racial privileges or authorial authority. Rather, the very notion of the author's narrative control over historical material is shifted to the center of the critique.

### The Erotics of Exchange

Ottinger's film *Johanna d'Arc of Mongolia* exhibits some remarkable similarities with Fichte's Pedro Claver plays, particularly the first one: like them, it situates cultural encounter at the scene of homosexual desire and seduction; it shifts abruptly from the mode of theatrical performance to that of ethnographic fantasy; and it offers characters that mediate authorial and spectatorial desire for and identification with the fantasy, making it available as a collective fantasy for women. The fantasy, which is also named in the film title, is that of Johanna d'Arc, a figure of female competence and combativeness. Refigured as a lesbian fantasy, she emerges triumphant from her run-ins with patriarchal institutions, neither castrated nor preoedipalized. Taking my cue from Teresa de Lauretis's seminal essay "Film and the Visible," I will argue that the women who become involved in this fantasy, identifying with it, desiring it, and producing it as a figure of their desire, are thus constituted as lesbians—and hence address spectators in a lesbian subject position. Moreover, I will describe how the film's lesbian recuperation of the Johanna fantasy hinges on the East-West exchange that frames it. That operation veers close to a colonialist strategy of reenergizing exhausted Western icons of female power by cycling them through Asiatic fantasies of matriarchal authority and domination; however, it also opens up the possibility of inhabiting the subject position together, across ethnic, cultural, and class differences. Here, the traffic in women—the exchange of a woman, a figure of lesbian desire, among women—instigates a system of kinship that is not organized around sexual difference, that is, patriarchy and the heterosexual imperative, as Gayle Rubin had described it, but female autonomy and same-sex desire. *Cultural exchange*, a term whose connotation of equality makes both ethnographers and feminists bristle, marks a desire for reciprocity in lesbian as well as cross-cultural relations; however, it is not taken to mean "sameness" either in the sexual sense of preoedipal merging nor the colonial inflection of assimilation or "going native." The film invokes the terms of classical colonial mimicry as the hegemonic discourse that frames intercultural, cross-racial desire, yet is not subsumed by them. The notion of exchange does not mean forfeiting an analysis of power differences, here attached to ethnicity and geopolitical location, but is articulated within them. Camped up and ironically distanced, they offer the codes of power that lesbian seduction plays on, not to.

The theme of exchange structures the plot of the film as well as the content of the Mongolian fantasy of cultural encounter. Seven women traveling aboard the Trans-Siberian and then the Trans-Mongolian railway are abducted by a group of Mongolian women, who invite them to

stay for the summer and its high point, the summer festival. After their arrival at the summer camp, the seven guests are given yurts (mobile tents), with the three musicians, the Kalinka sisters (a Russian ladies' combo) living together, the American musical star Fanny Ziegfeld rooming with a German schoolteacher, Frau Müller-Vohwinkel, and the romantic couple, a French traveler named Lady Windermere and Giovanna, a young French backpacker, sharing a yurt.<sup>18</sup> The romance undergoes some changes when the Western women's host, the Mongolian princess Ulun Iga, courts and seduces Giovanna. At the end of the summer, the princess joins the group of Western women on the train to Paris, while one of the travelers, the German schoolteacher, decides to stay behind in Mongolia.

The film's division into two parts of unequal length reiterates the binaries that organize and shore up Western subjectivity. The first segment is set on the train and associates the West with progress, technology, and linearity, but also with a performative paradigm consonant with the central perspective of the imperial I/eye. The film sets the thematic of cultural mingling within the spatial tropes of stage and auditorium, interposing frames and prosceniums between spectator and the scene. The film's opening shot shows Lady Windermere gazing out of her window onto the Russian tundra. The excess of theatrical framing devices ironically undercuts her philosophical musings that every cultural encounter is experienced as new, as if it were the first discovery: the window shades (printed with proscenium arches) open up to a view through the wooden window frames out onto painted dioramas that simulate the whirring by of a pastel-colored steppe, punctuated by telegraph poles. The model for contact on board the train is the American "melting pot," embodied by Broadway singer Fanny Ziegfeld and her Jewish colleague Mickey Katz. Every innovative impulse is absorbed into a hegemonic monoculture at a pace that has plunged Ziegfeld into deep melancholy. The force that brings the train to a halt is not the novelty, the unprecedentedness of cultural contact—belied, at any rate, by the director's recourse to that most tired of clichés, the ambushed train—but the impulse of lesbian seduction, which heralds the turn from performance to fantasy. But whose fantasy is it?

Strolling through the train, the elegant Lady Windermere (Delphine Seyrig) wanders away from her first-class luxury compartment into the third-class quarters, where she meets Giovanna (Ines Sastre) perched on a luggage rack. The lady lures the young girl, who travels with little more than her backpack and a Walkman, back with her by promising her to tell

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18. The French lady's name references the lesbian title character in Oscar Wilde's famous play *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892).

her a story. “You remind me of that legendary Mongolian princess who could fly over the desert and steppes on her magic sword,” Windermere croons, and Giovanna responds eagerly: “Tell me her story!” Lady Windermere’s story of female heroism, strength, and cleverness is presented with oratorical verve and a penchant for ornamentation indebted only in part to its oriental subject matter; it also functions to prolong their contact, and extend it into a night together. The Mongolian woman warrior is the figure of Windermere’s desire for Giovanna; Ulun Iga, when she materializes atop a mountain to direct the ambush, is the incarnation of that desire, a product of the lady’s imagination, saturated with Western knowledge about the East. Her appearance marks the conjunction of storytelling and seduction, and Giovanna responds with desire (she becomes the princess’s lover) as well as identification—with that which Windermere finds attractive in her. Ulun Iga, who is shown to seduce a rather passive Giovanna, is thus also a stand-in for Windermere, who remains central to the romance rather than being eclipsed by it. After the princess propositions Giovanna, for instance, the girl rejoins Windermere in their yurt and tells her older companion what has happened. Windermere languorously stretches out next to her and, by explaining the meaning of Ulun Iga’s words to Giovanna, gives her a cue for the next turn of events, upon which Giovanna gazes dreamily off-screen, contemplating and anticipating the consequences of this latest twist. The princess’s invitation produces the only on-screen moment of intimacy between Windermere and Giovanna, strengthening rather than threatening their bond.

Lady Windermere’s role in this constellation is that of author/observer—she always appears with notebook or sketchbook in hand—the one who watches, whom we see watching and imagining, and who, through the frequent alignment of her point of view and that of the camera and the use of her voice for the narrative voice-over, produces that which she sees and imagines for us. In addition, she functions as a translator and mediator between Giovanna and Ulun Iga. The Mongolian rider heading an army that victoriously brings the train to a halt personifies the Johanna of the title, embodying the fantasy that Windermere produces for and shares with Giovanna. At the same time, Johanna is also Giovanna, the cross-dresser and lesbian lover, who dons a Mongolian fur hat and embroidered vest over her torn jeans and T-shirt. Johanna is both the Western icon of female bravery and the Eastern princess of a matriarchal clan who asserts her authority over that of kings. As a literally coupled lesbian subject position shared by Johanna and Ulun Iga, Johanna invites identification with the pleasures of conquest and instruction embodied by the princess and those of submissive adoration embodied by the French student/captive.

But during their sojourn in the grasslands, this constellation undergoes another change. The high point of the summer festival is a recitation of an old Mongolian epic; the local variations in this epic oratory are what initially drew Windermere to this region. Against an ethereal backdrop of gauzy white banners fluttering in the breeze, Ulun Iga in full regalia stands up to deliver her version of the courtship of a beautiful princess in a far-away land to an audience of Western women variously engaged in listening and translating, watching and recording. The story can be read, of course, as a summary of the film, as the story of Windermere and Giovanna, who both cross vast distances to woo a beautiful woman. Told in the style and narrative conventions of her clan, it is also the story of Ulun Iga's own desire, in which she plays the part of the ardent suitor, not the object of desire. This scene rotates the positions of producer, observer, and figure of desire, with the Mongolian orator occupying the first, Windermere the second, and Giovanna the third position within the fantasy scenario. The reversal sets up the surprising last scene of the film and its punch line, which finds Lady Windermere and Ulun Iga drinking tea in the princess's dining car in the now-westbound train, where they are soon joined by a breathless Giovanna arriving on horseback. That constellation opens out the coupled subject of orientalist fantasy to a tripled one, by revealing Ulun Iga, now attired in a svelte haute couture suit, as coauthor of the *mise-en-scène*. The inexplicable simultaneity of Ulun Iga on horseback, in full regalia, staring after the departing train, and, in a Chanel number, chatting with Windermere in the luxury car, underscores the status of the Mongolian interlude as fantasy by exploding the realist logic of linear time. Ulun Iga, it appears, has been on the train all along, a citizen of postcolonial Paris back from her exotic summer vacation, involved in a scene of seduction with Lady Windermere. Giovanna's romantic entrance, boarding the train by jumping onto it in mid-gallop, executed with the high-camp bravado of the western or swashbuckler films, could then be seen to embody Ulun Iga's desire for Windermere, whom the princess has lured into her compartment, a figure of seduction heralding the beginning of another fantasy—shared by Ulun Iga and the French Lady. It even suggests that the Mongolian fantasy had been hers all along, in terms set by the princess.

The reinvention of female combativeness and energy in the verdant expanses of Inner Mongolia as well as the French capital rotates a lesbian fantasy around the East-West axis, and instigates a feminist system of symbolic exchange that submits neither to the taboo on homosexuality nor to the principle of sexual difference. In both incarnations, "Johanna" is a polyglot lesbian fantasy because it revises the murderous ending of the historical figure's clash with patriarchal injunctions and her death as a

witch at the Inquisition's stake for donning men's clothes; a revision that is not achieved at the expense of regression to the imaginary, the non-European spaces of orientalist fantasy. Here "Johanna," a fantasy shared by three women, combats at once the patriarchal forces and armies within Mongolian culture (represented by the emissaries of a predatory rival king), the imperialist might symbolized by the train, and the Western technologies of ethnographic representation. She emerges victorious from both encounters and ends up riding (the train) proudly into contemporary Paris, insisting on the simultaneity of imaginary pleasure and female object-choice fully articulated within the symbolic. And through these women lovers, through their passionate engagement with this fantasy, their pleasure and ardor, it is made available to the film audience as a collective fantasy for lesbians.

It is important to understand in this reading of the film that, as de Lauretis notes in her revision of Freudian and post-Freudian psychoanalytic theory, "fantasy is not the object of desire, but its setting" (231, quoting from Laplanche and Pontalis, 26). Mongolian culture, oratory, and the festival are not merely *performances* for the inspection, consumption, and mastery of the Western spectators (the seven abductees), nor are Ulun Iga and her women *objects* of spectatorial desire—an interpretation that impels the feminist and ethnographic critiques of the film as an orientalist text.<sup>19</sup> The subject of fantasy, de Lauretis claims, is analogous with the subject in cinematic spectatorship. She specifically points to the unconscious, reflexive form of fantasy with its "oscillation between and copresence of opposites," both active and passive, sadistic and masochistic, that "may find a place in cinema in the position of the spectator as subject see-

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19. Among Ottinger's feminist critics, Kristen Whissel is the most unequivocal in her condemnation of Ottinger's romance as racialized spectacle, arguing that "Johanna d'Arc of Mongolia does not subvert traditionally racist cinematic representations of racial difference. Rather, Ottinger's film participates in the cinema's traditional process of producing, reproducing and organizing historical conceptions of racial and ethnic difference from the position of dominant Anglo-American and northern European culture" (42). Katie Trumpener, who places the film in the larger context of Ottinger's work, where it marks the turning point from the filmmaker's earlier interest in camp masquerade to the later ethnographic documentaries, is more attuned than Whissel to the irony permeating Johanna d'Arc, but criticizes Ottinger for the "timeless presentism" attributed to the Mongolian nomads—a hallmark of the Enlightenment tradition of narrating cultural alterity as "a kind of time travel" (93)—as well as for her declared intention to "record and preserve a threatened traditional culture" (79 n. 4). Trumpener sees the artist's unreflected view of her construction as a contradiction typical of traditional Western anthropology: "a belief in cultural authenticity . . . often suppresses the memory of its own role in inventing what it records" (79). Kay Armitage assembles Ottinger's supporters and detractors in her essay, humorously staging the disagreements as a boxing match between critics of Ottinger's putative orientalist politics against the post-modern champions of a camp sensibility.

ing herself and yet not seeing herself, a subject not placed in either one of the terms of the fantasy, but looking on, outside the fantasy scenario and nonetheless involved, present in it" (234). The ambush heralds the shift from performance to fantasy in the film, moving from the train to the grasslands, but also from the conventional actor/spectator dyad to the participatory regime of fantasy. Like the tourists in Fichte's *San Pedro Claver*, the travelers eagerly take up their roles in a play of desire. This fantasy is not articulated in relation to gender and heterosexuality, but to ethnic difference. In Ottinger's film, ethnicity takes the place of heterosexuality as the social institution and visual regime organizing the subject. That representation implies that a lesbian subject is constituted by discourses of ethnicity as well as sexuality.

Let me now take a closer look at three standard tropes of contact staged in the fantasy "Johanna": the fantasy of interracial love, which, according to Susanne Zantop, mystifies imperial domination and desire by imagining the seduction of the conqueror by the native princess;<sup>20</sup> the trope of "going native," which dramatizes the Western subject's fear of and fascination with being absorbed by a "primitive" environment; and the stance of imperial mastery, subjecting foreign places and people to Western regimes of knowledge. All three women participate in the fantasy of interracial love in the roles of producer/narrator, observer, and figure. Soon after the women's arrival in the Mongolian summer camp, Giovanna captures the attentions of their hostess, who gives her new friend a horse and several pieces of Mongolian clothing, teaches her about the customs of her tribe, and performs a commitment ceremony with her. Giovanna is invited to share the princess's yurt and, when the time comes for the visitors to leave, appears to have decided to stay behind with her in the grasslands.

Is this seduction merely an all-female version of the (specifically German) colonial fantasy Zantop analyzes, inserting women into a dynamic of domination and thinly veiled appropriative desire? That seems to be what Brenda Longfellow (following Rich) suggests in her essay on *Johanna d'Arc*: now women enjoy the pleasure of mastery and submission, and women's pleasure is feminist and hence good (134). In contrast, critical ethnographers would immediately point to "interracial love" as a neo-colonialist mystification of the power differences between ethnographer and informant, determined by their class, racial, and geopolitical positioning, now cloaked under the mantle of integration, acceptance, and romance (Trumpener, 98). Either of these analyses, however, is based on a

20. Zantop explores this trope in a chapter entitled "Husbands and Wives: Colonialism Domesticated." She discusses two Kotzebue dramas as examples of the romanticization of the conquest.



subject-object dynamic between the women on the train, especially the benignly authoritative Lady Windermere, and the Mongolian women. Whereas feminist critics like Longfellow point to that dynamic as liberatory for women, because it validates the eroticism of domination that feminist “dogmatism” usually denounces, the position of critical ethnography represented by Whissel, Armatage, and Trumpener would deny the utopian value of such a fantasy, and characterize it as a Western fantasy shoring up—and mystifying—white privilege. Reading *Johanna d’Arc* as a lesbian fantasy potentially shifts the sexual/ethnographic critique past the deadlock of a naive, queer validation of differences on the one hand, and of racial determinism on the other. Whereas the former ignores the stable hierarchical arrangement of ethnic differences and hence begs the question how their eroticization can be liberatory, the latter fails to recognize the implications of a lesbian fantasy that operates in conjunction with but also cuts across a monolithic white subject position. Keeping both a materialist critique of racialized power differences and the feminist-lesbian utopia of desirable differences in view, the film allows us to imagine a space and a desire that is excessive to either the ethnographic or the exoticist/romantic gaze and its voyeuristic conventions.

Interracial lesbian desire, with its utopian vision of mutual exchange, is framed by the tropes of “going native” or reasserting Western mastery. In terms of filmic conventions, these tropes would either produce an aesthetic of immersion in the ethnographic present, in which the ethnographer’s selective and interpretive activity is elided in an illusion of immediacy, as if the camera itself were a native informer, seeing but unseen, recording as if its presence had no effect on that which it records. Alternatively, an aesthetic of cognitive and scopophilic mastery translates and explains cultural practices for a Western observer through such conventions as voice-over or the fetishistic portrayal of spectacles of foreignness, addressed to a disembodied imperial I/eye. Often, the ethnographic, observational documentary executes both gestures. While the Mongolian portion of the film mimics certain features of that genre, the Western I/eye is both seeing and seen in *Johanna d’Arc*.

The camera work neither provides the illusion of transparency nor establishes a unitary narrative or visual authority over its subject. Ottinger’s privileging of wide-angle shots and their often almost painterly sense of composition and blocking, and the direct address to the camera during the wrestler’s dance at the summer festival, both call attention to the presence of the camera. They emphasize the apparatus, even though the camera or microphone itself is not shown. What stands in for this within the film is Windermere’s activity of picture making: she is shown to draw sketches she then gives to her subjects, a pattern emphasizing the

propensity of a visual technology to give as well as take. Whereas the first part of the film frequently uses the device of the voice-over, which narrates and explains “the Mongolians,” the second part uses this technique sparingly or not at all; occasionally, Windermere acts as translator, but her perspective is shown to be partial rather than disinterested. Specifically, the scene in which she translates the meaning of the word *chuluk* (friend/lover) to Giovanna, leaves it open whether she merely glosses something that has just happened, or whether she in fact instigates that which she ostensibly explains: a romantic declaration.

Windermere and Müller-Vohwinkel, the latter an avid botanist, collector of specimens, and reader of guidebooks, demonstrate a stance of analytical distance and cognitive control emphasized by their preoccupation with reading and writing, collecting and recording. Their perspective consistently foregrounds the discourses of cognitive and scientific mastery that have informed colonial literature. However, their authority is at once campily exaggerated and undermined, evoking colonial traditions without ensuring imperial mastery. While her search for botanical samples cites the Linnean classification system, which Mary Louise Pratt discusses as a scientific enterprise fostering “planetary consciousness” as the necessary prerequisite for “modern Eurocentrism” (15), Müller-Vohwinkel’s search for specimens only gets her lost in the steppe. That it is edelweiss, a rare alpine flower found in Austria, which she discovers in the Mongolian highland ironically highlights the predicament of the scientific gaze, which can only confirm the categories it knows in advance. Here, the edelweiss does not symbolize the *Heimat*, but heralds the teacher’s rejection of it. The film seems to delight in the exigencies, the partiality of translation, and the creative dimension of cultural misunderstandings.

Lady Windermere’s entrance onto the stage of fantasy is marked by her costume change from the elegantly tailored dresses she had worn on the train into a safari outfit that evokes a Victorian adventuress fresh out of Africa or Banana Republic. In contrast, Giovanna’s appearance in ethnic drag might be seen to signal her romantic absorption into Mongolian culture; likewise, Frau Müller-Vohwinkel’s spiritual epiphany, transformation, and decision to stay in Mongolia after the other women leave has been a long-standing cliché of “going native” in colonial fiction, all the more emphatic since the German schoolteacher is also the one most resistant to the “primitivism” of the Mongolians. (After receiving the princess’s offer of hospitality in the yurts, the German frets: “But what about the sanitary conditions?”) Yet these crossovers are campily distanced: the teacher’s spiritual rebirth is staged as her extrusion from a fuming slit gaping in the steppe, flanked by ecstatic figures with hair standing on end and accompanied by an operatic flourish. Giovanna’s transformation is

marked as partial, her linguistic command confined to vocabulary lists with no sense of grammar, and her visual appearance an odd combination of Eastern and Western styles and costume items.

Moreover, the group of travelers does not conform to the ethnographic ideal of unobtrusive observation, not least because it includes four performing artists: Ziegfeld is a dancer and singer, and the three Kalinkas are likewise musical entertainers. In their performative, playful interaction with the Mongolians the film appears to validate forms of cultural syncretism, spontaneous admixtures, and cross-cultural refunctionings, rather than salvaging “uncontaminated” practices and artifacts threatened by the onslaught of Western civilization.<sup>21</sup> The film clearly privileges performance and oratory as the discourse that synecdochically represents Mongolian culture. Scenes that are rendered at length, even in real time (i.e., with few or no cuts or editing), include the oratory and song by another Mongolian king’s emissaries, the culinary intricacies of the welcome ceremony, the ritual slaughtering of a goat, and the wrestling, singing, and dancing at the summer festival. However, the result is not (just) an impression of “the Mongolians” as a theatrical culture with specific and discrete habits and styles of perception and performance, but a sense that performance offers all participants a stage or setting on which their identities, intentions, and needs can be imagined and performed as permeable, improvised, and changeable. The performative traditions cited on the train—its curtains, stages, and prosceniums, props, dioramas, and wings thick with the history and apparatuses of Western performance, from Broadway musical and vaudeville to cabaret—soon begin to interact with the folk forms of steppe oratory. For instance, when the three Kalinka sisters play their trombones on one side of a rivulet, a band of archers faces them on the other side, using the percussion instruments as shooting aims for their arrows and producing a new tune in the process. By the time the summer festival begins, the guests participate in ways that signal their integration into the host culture, yet the host culture itself has already been transformed by the traces of a long history of intercultural encounters (evidenced by the refunctioned cutlery in the shamanistic ritual, as well as the money in the cave where Müller-Vohwinkel undergoes her transformation). That insight is framed neither as nostalgia for par-

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21. I should note, however, that Ottinger has seen her task as that of ethnographic collecting and preserving, an enterprise that Clifford (1987) regards as highly suspect, criticizing the “salvage paradigm” for its neocolonialist fetishization of the other’s cultural artifacts. Trumpener points to one instance in which Ottinger publicly declared her intention as that of safeguarding a vanishing tradition, and seemed unaware of her own construction of the culture she wished to memorialize (Trumpener, 79 n. 4)

adise lost nor as progress narrative of Western civilization, but as an appreciation of transculturation in the contact zone.

The film's punch line, that final scene in Ulun Iga's luxurious compartment aboard the westbound train in which the princess appears in a chic Chanel suit, emphasizes the point that the Mongolian women are not subsumed by "authentic" ethnic difference, but actively participate in its construction. This last scene forcefully blocks an essentialist reading of the Mongolian performance in the steppe, underscoring that for Ulun Iga the nomadic life in the yurts, the brilliant costumes, the chants, tales, and dances, are no less performative—or no more "expressive"—than they have been for Windermere, Giovanna, and the rest of their group. The voice-over reveals that the princess and Giovanna go on to open a gourmet restaurant of Mongolian cuisine in Paris, where Windermere never fails to stop when her travels take her to the French capital. It is Johanna's simultaneous location in the West and the East, in the imaginary and the symbolic, the nomadic cultural periphery and the metropolis, that makes her such an appealing fantasy for women.

The film's self-reflective, humorous, and campy engagement with the imperial I/eye's visual technologies calls on both the ethnographic rhetorics that have traditionally ensured white Western subjectivity, and a utopian vision of lesbian love crossing and transcending ethnic and geopolitically vested boundaries. It entertains both propositions and keeps them in tension, without one being subsumed by the other. It works through the ways in which Western lesbian fantasy and subjectivity have been shaped yet are not completely contained within a white cultural imaginary and its filmic and narrative technologies. It poses the question of what can be seen and imagined within the visual apparatuses of ethnicity by showing women seeing, seeing themselves, seeing themselves seeing, imagining, fantasizing, and thus opening up the fantasy that is the film to a collective, desiring, feminist, lesbian subject.

### **Interracial Desire and Decentered Authority**

Both the Pedro Claver plays and *Johanna d'Arc* stage competing modes of discourse about interracial desire and knowledge: one being documentary, the other erotic. Curiously, both works mark junctures in the respective artist's career, offering a final, passionate engagement with the heated register of fantasy about the African diaspora and Mongolia, before abandoning it for more distanced, objectivist styles of presentation along with more collectively organized, "dialogic" techniques of artistic creation. To stress the point, the documentary styles Fichte and Ottinger adopt as a

result of their experimentation with fantasy do not “return to” the traditional sense of the documentary that is suggested by the radio feature or mainstream filmic ethnography with its ostensibly unmediated transparency and reliance on a technology understood as reflecting rather than constructing reality. Instead, both artists develop important strategies of revising such an ahistorical view of the documentary as outside of power relations.

While one might see in these liminal texts the final flickering of a white, European subject loath to let go of the defunct yet cherished colonial romance and hogging the screen (or the airwaves) one last time, these works are also deeply compelling in the way they reveal the profound fantasmatic investments in racialized cultural encounters presented in the documentary works that followed them. Fichte’s queer adaptation of a quasi-Artaudian dramaturgy of cruelty, which agitates colonial contradictions until they rupture into the political “double” of black modernity, and Ottinger’s rotation of an intercultural lesbian subject among the roles of author, addressee, and figure of fantasy, offer genuinely innovative aesthetic strategies for decentering Eurocentric notions of authorship—strategies that were necessitated by the absence of a lived, social dialectic that framed the postcolonial assaults on the white, Eurocentric subject in other national contexts.

The white-authored abdication of a privileged reach across racial differences, as this chapter makes clear, is an avant-garde gesture. Even while foregrounding the elitism ingrained in ethnographic discourses, the texts discussed in this chapter are themselves esoteric in their experimental forms and venues; one is more apt to find *Johanna d’Arc* shown at alternative movie houses and gay and lesbian film festivals rather than in glitzy multiplexes, and the experimental radio play is not known for its mass appeal either. However, I do not mean to duplicate the common equation of popular or mass-cultural forms and genres with a hegemonic racial politics, and avant-garde texts and styles with a radical, oppositional stance. Such a conclusion is belied both by some of the popular hobbyist practices I discuss in chapter 3, and by the performances that are the subject of the following, final chapter, which appropriate high, popular, folk, and mass-cultural genres and tropes for a comic traverse of colonialist eroticism and racial mimicry.

## CHAPTER 6

# Ethnic Travesties

Leave me alone. Don't take your fantasies out on me.

Spiderwoman Theater

In the 1980s, the Native American theater company Spiderwoman, an all-woman group, toured West Germany. Baffled by spectators' repeated questions about the great Apache chief Winnetou, whom they had never heard of—to the great amazement of their audiences—they obtained Karl May's *Winnetou* trilogy and decided to use the text as material for a play that deals more generally with white myths about, fascination with, and appropriation of Indian culture and spirituality. Entitled *Winnetou's Snake Oil Show from Wigwam City* (1988), the play lampoons the heroic duo Winnetou and Old Shatterhand, the excessive violence embedded in the stories, and their preachy Christian morals. Fast-forwarding through a century of intercultural relations and genres, the troupe then reenacts a Wild West show that culminates in a New Age naming ceremony in which a blond, fair-skinned volunteer can choose between bogus names such as Old Dead Eye Dick and Two Dogs Fucking. Whereas hobbyists painstakingly construct their practice as mimetic and respectful, and distinguish it from demeaning mass-cultural masquerades, Spiderwoman places them on a continuum with the circus, the *Völkerschau*, and the New Age circuit, sites where the commodification of "Indianness" produces surplus value that does not, however, accrue to Native Americans. They foreground what I have called the economics of enchantment (chap. 3), that is, the geopolitical, (post)colonial relations of social, political, and economic dependency that underwrite the Western theatrical production of the noble savage in the mode of authenticity. The troupe's travesty of Western images of the Indian marks the epistemic violence and collective alienation Native Americans have experienced, along with their subjective psychic effects. They persistently frame mimetic modes of perception—reading a social role for racial truth—against the political-economic discourses they serve to uphold, framing epistemological questions within a materialist

critique of the institutions within which they are produced. In their play, the subaltern speaks, neither from outside the (post)colonial economy, nor utterly subsumed by it, articulating a critique of racial ideology and a call for social transformation by both rejecting and reclaiming the tropes of her alienation.

This chapter asks what happens when the referent takes the stage to lay claim to the alluring and persistent figurations of the Wild West and the Orient in the Western imagination for political purposes of her own. She is gendered female in this chapter, to mark the feminist imperatives driving her antiracist interventions. From within the Western imagination, as previous chapters have reconstructed it, such a reclamation appears impossible. To recall some of the dramatis personae from chapter 1, through which I raised some of the theoretical questions I will pursue here, we return to the predicament of Mei Lan-Fang, the brilliant Chinese impersonator who inspired Brecht to theorize defamiliarization but was deemed incapable of understanding or benefiting from the ideological effects of his performance. To the playwright, the masquerading Easterner is obtuse, cannot even be conceived of returning the ostensibly dispassionate stare of the Western spectator. The “Jewish” subjectivity Frisch constructed in *Andorra* (chap. 4) is entirely composed through internalized anti-semitic tropes. When the costumed Other does wield the look, as in *Jew Süß*, the Western imagination perceives him as a sinister usurper who must be punished for appropriating the masquerade for his own (rather than the Western spectator-scientist’s) pleasure (chap. 1). But what if a non-German subject addresses itself to that imagination, taking hold of its personnel and machinery to investigate the Platonic taxonomy of true and false representations and its ideological function in the (Federal) Republic? Does the entrance of the referent and her appropriation of the visual apparatus trap her in the ethnic coordinates of the body, even as she contests its devaluation, hence repeating the predicament of the Jewish Nathans (chap. 1)?

Native American actors’ impersonation of whites’ impersonations of Indians places us in the Brechtian paradigm of drag, which entails the insertion of a critical (and comic) distance between the actor and her roles in order to denaturalize and historicize them. Nonetheless, this strategy also courts essentialist readings, for how are spectators to distinguish between Native American actor and character if the role corresponds so closely to long-cherished assumptions about Indian authenticity, captured especially by the mysticism of Native American spirituality? Does not the actor’s body risk lending corporeal proof to images believed to be accurate? What are the risks and costs of authenticating “positive” images?

Moreover, would not the refutation of white imitators infer an ontological racial ground from which their impersonations are denounced as false? If an essentialist base for rejecting white imitations and appropriations is invoked, does that not reinstate the mimetic paradigm that the drag show ostensibly subverts? And finally, how do performers construct a transformative notion of political community and ethnic interests if they denounce “the Indian” as a figure of alienation, of false, externally imposed unity?

I will discuss these questions through a reading of Spiderwoman’s Winnetou parody in the first part of this chapter; in the second, I will address the political potential of travesty to highlight the economics of enchantment by examining the play *Keloglan in Alamania* (1991) by Turkish-German writer Emine Sevgi Özdamar. Both texts make explicit the configuration of exoticization and exploitation in German traditions of Wild West and oriental drag respectively, and call attention to the colonial inscriptions in contemporary multiculturalism. A look at these travesties of the tropes cycling through the diverse racial representations examined in the preceding chapters seems a fitting and necessary undertaking for the final chapter of this book. Their comedic response to the seriousness of racial mimesis rallies the power of laughter, a laughter that creates, affirms, and authorizes certain spectatorial communities that are, I will argue, defined by political interest and alliance rather than racial commonality. The affirmation of cultural differences and ethnic authority is invited primarily through disidentification with mimetic modes of perception and their investment in neocolonial, ethnic truths. Likewise, *Keloglan in Alamania* rewrites the story of the tragic Oriental embodied by Madame Butterfly, subverts its pathos, and envisions a much-needed political coalition around the spectators’ disidentification with a mode of perception that reads appearances as racial truths. Whereas in the American context, hyphenated ethnic identities mark the inclusion of cultural differences in a national subject (albeit subordinating ethnicity as a modifier to nationality), the play depicts Turkish-German as an impossible identity impaled on the poles of racial alterity and a notion of assimilation so rigid it demands nothing less than the foreswearing of Turkish religion, culture, and politics. The drama’s critique of this skewered hybrid cuts in two directions: it deplors the current legal and political conditions that circumscribe citizenship and civic participation, and calls into question the survival strategies of two generations of migrants who have learned to eke out a sense of belonging on grounds that have become increasingly untenable. The spoofs on Winnetou, Butterfly, and other nobly moribund figures do not reject them as untrue or irrelevant so much as deploy these types against the colonialist fantasies they have traditionally served to



uphold. Their drag acts call attention to the unacknowledged legacies operating in New Age and multicultural discourses, which continue to shape dominant perceptions and minorities' self-representations.

In a book devoted to German performance culture, the inclusion of Spiderwoman's play might be questioned, yet I think it provides a much-needed opportunity to bring into view the material and subjective effects on their "objects" of the intercultural representations performed in Indian clubs, at the Karl May festival, and by masquerading schoolchildren and professional actors. While ethnic drag is often marketed as a form of dialogue or encounter, it displaces the interlocutor. As I argued in chapter 4, the logic of drag obviates dialogue, and conversely (as I show in chapter 5) the decentering of white authority in dialogic forms of representation entails the renunciation of racial masquerade. *Winnetou's Snake Oil Show* interferes in the monologic situation that has made ethnic drag possible as a device for romanticizing cultural encounter and facilitating a chain of therapeutic substitutions and historical revisions. Even when ethnic drag acts are proffered as expressions of admiration and respect for another culture, these performances are not consumed "amongst ourselves," nor do they affect only the white drag actors (yielding critical insights, awarding catharsis). Instead, the plays discussed in this final chapter insist on the referentiality of the impersonated subject no matter how fanciful, asserting that Turkish migrants are held to the suicidal script of Madame Butterfly even though that colonial master-text is not specifically German, and that Germans' Wild West fantasies epitomize the obstacles Native Americans perceive in their fight for cultural authority and political sovereignty in the United States. In their texts, Spiderwoman and Özdamar stake their claims to these transnational representations and refunction a hegemonic imperialist imagination for their respective political struggles. They privilege the vantage point of those who, as Barbara Christian has indignantly phrased it, "have never conceived of ourselves only as somebody's *other*" (54), yet who do not remain unaffected by the visual technologies that continue to construct postcolonial relationships in the binary terms of classical mimesis. They criticize and ridicule the hegemonic spectator, yet they do not take lightly the weight and endurance of his insistent misperceptions. The plays construct communities of expert, deviant readers by connecting their visual practices to urgent summons to act on behalf of the identities invoked. As knowledgeable impersonator-readers, these insurgent subjects are able to manipulate—to different degrees—the cultural, economic, and political institutions they expect to misrepresent them, and they expertly harness visual pleasure to their own political agendas.

## Estrangement Techniques, Alienation Effects, and Ethnic Subjectivity

In *Winnetou's Snake Oil Show*, four fairly hefty Native American women, frequently changing characters, slip into the roles of cowboys (Old Shatterhand, Wild-Eyed Sam), white wannabees like Klekepetra (*sic*, from May's *Winnetou*) or shamaness Ethel Christian Christiansen, and Indian warriors (Winnetou) or princesses (Princess Pissy Willow, Princess Minnie Hall Runner), switching genders and ethnicities with swift costume and prop changes. In addition, the four actors play witches, demons, hordes, and themselves: Hortensia Colorado, for instance, is listed as playing six characters: Wild-Eyed Sam, Witch no. 1, Mother Moon Face, Demon no. 2, Hordes no. 1, and Hortensia.<sup>1</sup> Spiderwoman takes on racist myths and the dramatic genres that reproduce them in the tradition of poor, itinerant theater, emphasizing the resources available to the western, the circus, and the New Age show in comparison to the sparse means of their own type of theater. They stage their intervention with little more than their bodies, a few simple props and costumes, a "signature backdrop made of many different pieces of cloth to form a hodge-podge patchwork quilt," and some old sheets, on which home movies of powwows since the 1940s are projected. Roles are pointed to, rather than fully assumed: a checkered flannel shirt suffices to indicate Wild-Eyed Sam, a gold-lamé wrap calls up Pissy Willow, and Winnetou's blood brother is summoned by a stiff gait and a strong German accent. The spirit of a drag show also prevails in their style of comic exaggeration and stylization: Hortensia's hamming up of Wild-Eyed Sam's crude toughness or Lisa Mayo's take on Old Shatterhand's Teutonic know-it-all attitude do not allow the actor to vanish in the character the way that Pierre Brice or Gojko Mitic has "become" Winnetou at the Karl May festival in Bad Segeberg.

Through costume choice, onstage role changes, and physical style, the actors emphasize the noncoincidence of actor and role. The incongruity of performer and character is emphasized, for instance, in the operatic style of the *Winnetou* episodes in order to undermine the high pathos of the

1. While witches and demons are expressions of the actors' attempts to recuperate dark and spiritual forces for their political struggles, the "hordes" are composed of Indian stereotypes. About the "hordes," Hortensia Colorado explains: "Hordes #1 evolves from Mother Moon Face as all the stereotypes there ever were of Indians. So steeped in stereotypes is she that she goes off into impersonations of various stereotypical Indians. Like worms in your skin." Gloria Miguel interprets her "Demon #1 [as] not only the dark side that is a part of us all, it also represents the spirituality within native tradition that our people believe in." Hortensia Colorado sees her witch persona as flamboyant: "with her power, she will put in motion history in its most ridiculous vein" (Spiderwoman, 56).

noble savage. Yet when it comes to the roles of the Indian princesses or of Mother Moon Face, the “Plastic Shaman” persona who organizes the “Plastic Pow Wow Workshop” for white wannabees, the defining moment of drag, namely the highlighted disjunction between actor and role, becomes conceptually more difficult to maintain and risks collapsing into mimesis. A childhood photo of Lisa Mayo and Gloria Miguel, which is included in the printed script, illustrates the risk incurred by the performers’ parodying of Indian femininity. The picture shows them in costume as Princess Pissy Willow and Princess Minnie Hall Runner. The phony costumes, together with the bogus names and the ironic caption “Haute couture by Aunt Lizzie. Between identities again!” (Spiderwoman, 61), signify a joke on the princess stereotype rather than an earnest attempt at passing for royalty. They offer important contextual clues to the reader, who might interpret the image differently if it were reproduced in a hobbyist journal or along with a Karl May script with a different (or no) caption. Hobbyists might respond with the kind of critical commentary that bolsters white expertise and authority over Indians’ ignorance of their own traditions, or less culturally literate viewers might take these young women in Aunt Lizzie’s outfits for typical Indian adolescents. Its position in the script, along with the caption, renders it legible as an in-joke, however, conveying the sense that these personae are part of an ongoing game between the two friends, which possibly includes the relative behind the lens, since they smirk straight at the camera. The Indian princesses are a joke connecting and empowering subject, object, and viewer—all of them Indians in the case of this photograph. The joke, of course, resides in the noncoincidence of girl and role, in the possibility that this role might be taken for racial truth and the “haute couture” for traditional attire. In other words, it depends on an implied dupe, whose misperception—or more precisely: mimetic presumption—occasions the pleasure shared by the girls and the photographer. Since the Indian princess cites the visual repertoire of white pop mythology, the dupe is designated as the hegemonic spectator. In *Winnetou’s Snake Oil Show*, this implied observer is much more clearly articulated in order to render the difference between evidence and parody intelligible, a difference that in the familial context of the photograph can be understood to rely on shared codes of recognition. As theatrical performers touring in a wide variety of regions and cultural settings, however, Spiderwoman cannot presume such a shared set of visual and interpretive conventions for its spectators. What makes this play so compelling is its spelling out of these rules, which are delineated against the hegemonic mode of perception of the implied dupe. The postulated presence of the dupe guarantees that the Indian characters in this show won’t pass as authentic Indians but will be recognized as drag acts.

While the performance's campy style certifies it as a drag show, the postulated dupe's misreading of Indian stereotypes as authentic serves to distinguish between two styles of reading identity, one mimetic and hegemonic, the other performative and partisan. These two styles are brought into conflict in the shows-within-the-show, in an effort to deprivilege hegemonic vision.

The vocabulary I have used to describe the triangulation of actor, in-group spectator, and dupe derives from the discourse of "passing," which Amy Robinson has theorized in her study of racial and sexual passing in American literature (1994) and which I would like to adapt for the context of performance. Robinson outlines what she calls the triangular theater of the pass, in which the encounter of passer, dupe, and in-group witness in African American novels undermines the dupe's insistence on mimesis. Robinson's analysis of Jessie Fauset's novel *Plum Bun* (1928) generates the following schema: the dupe reads the passer's identity according to a mimetic logic, supposing her light skin color to be expressive of, and true to, her white identity; to the reader, the perspective of the in-group witness intervenes in that logic and suggests an alternative mode of reading based not only on the witness's prior knowledge of the passer's "true" identity, but, according to Robinson, on her sudden perception of the apparatus of passing, the mimetic regime of the visible, which is revealed and kept intact at the same time by the witness's conspiratorial silence. Nevertheless, in Robinson's view, the critical yield of the pass is the moment when, through the eyes of the in-group witness, a claim to white identity is both successfully executed, that is, *real* with all the attendant privileges and rights, and yet unsustainable by the mimetic truth regime. "For the literate member of the in-group," Robinson writes, paraphrasing Brecht, "the passer stages her identity . . . as a 'double role.'"<sup>2</sup> To the in-group witness, the passer *passes in drag*: she sees a calculated performance taken for truth, a simulacrum. The dupe's misreading is thus just as necessary to this scenario—without him, the passer would merely appear as impostor to the in-group witness—as the witness, without whose presence at the scene the pass would simply not register as such, or without whose collaboration the pass would fail. Robinson's notion of a "triangular theater of identity," which she elaborates in reference to narrative, offers a helpful gloss on Spiderwoman's performance of Indian maidens and sages, which are read both mimetically and parodically by different groups of spectators. Despite the admittedly "qualified pleasure" the pass affords the witness—to see the duping of the dupe—Robinson positively contrasts the critical yield of the pass with what she believes to be the overrated potential of drag to subvert

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2. Robinson (1993, 24) cites *Brecht on Theatre*, 195.

hegemonic sign systems. Whereas as a social strategy, she claims, the pass has no pretensions to be subversive, its narrative representation in African American novels serves to call into question the mythically prediscursive bodily ground that drag's playful inversion of social identities keeps in place. In *Spiderwoman's* play, as well as the one by Özdamar, these two distinct, even antagonistic performative paradigms coexist, are even contingent on each other for their critical undoing of mimesis.

The *Wild West* show illustrates the troupe's double address to an audience expected to be not only split along ethnic lines but also antagonistic in their perceptual practices. The scene in which three Indian princesses perform circus tricks under the direction of Princess Pissy Willow is presented in direct address to an implicitly white audience represented by taped applause. Pissy Willow's announcements and commentary on the acts, however, do not coincide with the tricks performed on stage, yet the implied (taped) audience responds to them as if they were. She opens the *Wild West* show by introducing Princess Minnie Hall Runner as the star, an "expert bullwhipper," assisted by Mother Moon Face and Ethel Christian Christiansen. The star, wielding her imaginary whip, performs such "stunts" as snapping the ends of tubes made of rolled-up newspaper until they are gone (the stage directions explain that the assistants crumple up the paper rolls in their hands); cutting a newspaper tube in half while not touching the faces of the assistants, who hold its ends in their mouths (Ethel Christian Christiansen actually cuts it with a pair of scissors); and snapping a sheet in half (the assistants tear the sheet down the middle). The tricks continue for quite an extended period of time, including equestrian stunts and animal math tricks (performed with two mops), sharpshooting at a volunteer (using balloons that are popped), and trick roping (with an invisible rope). The acts are punctuated with canned applause, whose noise level increases from normal to "incredible" and "great" to "thunderous" (*Spiderwoman*, 59–60), simulating mounting admiration and enthusiasm. The sight of grown-up women performing what looks like a bad imitation of a children's *Wild West* show, coupled with the mistress of ceremony's exhortation to the spectators that they applaud these supposedly difficult, sophisticated, and artistic acts is comical due to the incongruity between what the taped audience seems to be watching and applauding (namely the show Pissy Willow describes) and what spectators actually see (namely sloppy tricks that would impress or deceive no one). The foolishness of the postulated dupe allows the actors and the audience to recognize and appreciate the moment when they see (or hear, from the applause tape) a dumb stunt pass for Indian artistry and magic. At that moment, which stages a theatrical equivalent of what Robinson names "competing strategies of reading," performers clearly denounce the hegemonic point of view and its powerful culture industries

that reproduce ostensibly benign racial ideologies. The audience, positioned to share an extended in-joke, perceives the mimetic apparatus at the dupe's command, yet is granted expertise and authority for its contrary reading of the princess acts as impersonations, laughable because of the disparity between that which it sees and that which the taped dupes believe to be true.

The double address to in-group-spectators and hegemonic spectators is central to the drag show's cultural intervention. Only by certifying the Indian princess as an effect of the dupe's *willful and continuing misrecognition* is Spiderwoman able to shift the terms of discourse from a critique of the image (the princess as misrepresentation) to a critique of the apparatus that determines what can and cannot be seen and known. It is the discrepancy between the double roles of Minnie Hall Runner and the "expert bullwhipper," as which she appears to the hegemonic spectator, along with the duration of the scene, which make strange her performance for the in-group experts present *and* the hegemonic spectator, whose gaze is presumed even when no whites are physically present. What is most noticeable about these scenes is their length, given that the "jokes" performed therein are really one-liners that are endlessly varied and repeated. Their canned humor evaporates as the scene's drawn-out repetitiveness also references the bitterness and humiliation of performing Indian culture as a collection of stupid tricks for white consumption, the shame of "selling out," and, as a consequence of white wannabees' appropriation, even being cheated of the monetary rewards of selling out. One can imagine that, as the dupes' appreciation and enthusiasm rise, the recipients of the in-joke will eventually stop laughing.

The play's divided reception registers this double mode of address: according to Lisa Mayo, spectators in the Netherlands, where Spiderwoman presented *Winnetou's Snake Oil Show* at the Stage Door Festival in 1988, were not amused by what they perceived to be an attack on Winnetou and reacted with hostility to the women's send-up of "noble" Indians. Apart from touring in Europe and regional theaters in the United States, where whites would constitute the largest part of the audience, Spiderwoman also presents this play at reservations and at theaters where spectators are predominantly Native American. What I have called the implied audience, therefore, does not necessarily correspond to the actual ethnic composition of audiences on a given evening. The modus operandi of a Native American women's theater group playing to audiences of mixed ethnic and gendered affiliations requires the performers to delineate the codes of intelligibility and recognition against a representational apparatus they expect to misrepresent them.

The joke in the show is that the princess acts are so exaggerated and ludicrous that it would be impossible to view them as anything but paro-

dic—yet, incongruously and comically, the hypothetical hegemonic spectators persist in their mimetic reading. The coexistence of the constitutive elements of passing and drag, one concealing the act of impersonation, the other foregrounding it, not only registers the expectation that someone will not get the joke but also stresses that the joke is contingent on someone's not getting it. I find Spiderwoman's device of postulating a dupe in order to reveal and critique the apparatus of mimesis and articulating an alienated and appropriated Indian identity as impersonation quite innovative, effective, and humorous. Nonetheless, their devaluation of the dupe's presumptive and flawed perception, which is heard on tape, rests on privileging the faculty of sight over that of sound in order to devalue the audience's seemingly transparent, unmediated visual access to what is actually happening on stage. By invoking a hierarchy of the senses that aligns truth with the visual, the play succumbs to the same logic of ostensible internal coherence and resemblance that subtends mimesis. It is that very appeal to the visual that makes mimesis such a problem for theorists of identity endeavoring to challenge the intuitive, "natural" congruity of inner/anatomical truth and outer/social "proof" of gender, race, or sexual orientation.

While the rejection of a particular style of perception does not necessarily entail an essentialist appeal to purity, Spiderwoman's insistence on referentiality might be seen to court essentialist readings. The actor's "double role" in *Winnetou's Snake Oil Show* includes her own biography that is brought into play as the ground on which the performative identity-effects (the characters, the mimetic apparatus) are inscribed and on which they take their toll. Thus Hortensia Colorado plays the role of Hortensia, Gloria speaks in the voice of Gloria Miguel, Lisa Mayo plays Lisa, and Muriel Miguel takes on the role of Muriel. In these personae, the actors reclaim parts of their family history from which they had been alienated. The character Lisa speaks about her mother's and grandmother's psychic abilities, a trait she inherited, and of the community of women that had celebrated that gift; Hortensia reveals how her Indian mother had been both despised by her Spanish father's relatives and ostracized by her Indian friends. Finally, the actors reclaim the memories of their fathers. These parts of the play are marked off from the turbulence and hilarity of the drag-show segments, creating a quieter, more contemplative, subjective style. Such scenes are heralded by the blowing of a conch and structured by the alternation of monologue and rhythmic choric repetition. Individual memories are thus delivered to a group that receives, echoes, and affirms their value and meaning to the collective. Spiderwoman brings back into play subjectivities that antifascist drag had left opaque and unrepresentable (chap. 4). The Indian princess and her New Age provenance have profoundly shaped each woman's sense of identity and social relations. The predicament the women face is that they must reclaim the

means by which they hope to heal these injuries from the discourse that had inflicted them in the first place.

Spirituality is what is most deeply at stake in this play: refuted in its commodified, white-determined and -directed incarnation, yet reclaimed for a self-determined reassembling and remembering of Indian community and history. In her preface to *Winnetou's Snake Oil Show*, entitled "Appropriation and the Plastic Shaman," Mayo explains the significance of spiritual, as opposed to material, appropriation as the final theft, after which nothing is left: "They've taken so much and now they've come for our spirituality, and if they take that, we're really lost. That will be the end of Native people" (Spiderwoman, 54). If there is nothing that distinguishes Native people from whites, that bars access to white appropriations, then Native Americans will cease to exist as a distinct group. In this sense, spirituality figures as a crucial diacritical marker in cultural morphology. Yet their spirituality is both the inalienable property of Native Americans and an attribute deriving from colonialist ascriptions. Mimicking the noble savage of colonial fantasy, Gloria chatters: "Thank you, thank you, thank you. For discovering me, for recognizing me, for saving me. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to exist. For knowing more about me than I do. Thank you for giving me spirituality. Thank you" (63). Having been granted spirituality within the dualistic world view that privileged reason and intellect over physicality, magic, and spirituality, Spiderwoman reclaims colonialist discourse for its own purpose, invoking spirituality and psychic female powers as well as the demons and witches of the European imagination with whom the denizens of the New World were associated in the iconography of the voyages of discovery.<sup>3</sup> As some feminists have reclaimed witches, those fear-inspiring figures of castration and malignant magic, Spiderwoman too seems to "identify with the monsters," reappropriating the power stored in those images without acceding to their ontological status.

The alternation of performance styles between parody and ritual reiterates the feminist dialectic of personal and political; Spiderwoman is one of the oldest feminist theater groups still in operation, having been founded in 1976 at the heyday of the women's theater movement that emerged in the early 1970s along with feminist activism.<sup>4</sup> Its dramaturgy aims at validating the individual's subjective experience of shame and

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3. I am grateful to Susan Cocalis for pointing out the association of witches with Indians in discourses about the New World. See Brauner on this topic.

4. For a brief description of Spiderwoman's history and performance style, see Schneider. For an overview of the feminist theater movement, which includes a discussion of Spiderwoman, its earliest incarnation, Womanspace, and its spin-off (in 1981) company, Split Britches, see Canning. Schneider examines Spiderwoman's work, including *Winnetou Snake Oil Show*.



humiliation, placing it in a political context, and manufacturing from the reinterpretation of the personal a sense of collective healing and agency. In consonance with a feminist ethos of acknowledging, exploring, and affirming differences between women, the moment of outrage that Lisa Mayo narrates in her introduction to the script, which might have impelled Spiderwoman's collective creation of *Winnetou's Snake Oil Show* and which is echoed in the play, hinges on the refutation of the notion of universal sisterhood: "During a tour of Germany," Mayo remembers, "a very blonde young woman approached Spiderwoman with great love and embraced us and said, 'Sisters, I am a Sioux.' She had had a naming ceremony and had an Indian name. She was sincere" (Spiderwoman, 54). Mayo briefly mentions the popularity and proliferation of Indian clubs in Europe and North America, which she labels "Plastic Shamanism."<sup>5</sup> To Mayo and her collaborators, this practice is self-evidently "alarming and dangerous," yet, to their dismay, their pronouncement that Karl May's stories are "riddled with racism" and that Europeans should stop reading them to their children went unheeded: "People are still reading these stories to their children and they refuse to accept that they are racist." In a context in which white wannabees like the prominent "shamaness" Lynn Andrews (the model for the character Ethel Christian Christiansen)<sup>6</sup> define what does and does not count as properly Indian, Spiderwoman painfully faced its loss of authority over Native American culture. The

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5. In her introduction, Mayo describes the rallying of Native Americans to combat "plastic shamanism" as the context for their own theatrical project: "It is a very alarming trend. So alarming that it came to the attention of an international and intertribal group of medicine people and spiritual leaders called the Circle of Elders. They were highly concerned with these activities and during one of their gatherings addressed the issue by publishing a list of Plastic Shamans in *Akwasasne Notes*, along with a plea for them to stop their exploitative activities. One of the best known Plastic Shamans, Lynn Andrews, has been picketed by the Native communities in New York, Minneapolis, San Francisco, Seattle, and other cities. Spiderwoman approached the Circle of Elders to ask guidance for a theater piece in response to this phenomenon. A meeting took place with Chief Oren Lyons of the Onondaga Nation to discuss the many ticklish issues surrounding the Plastic Shaman, and our work continued under the guidance of the Circle of Elders" (Spiderwoman, 54). Other Native American sources use the less gender-inclusive designation *plastic medicine men* (see Kubat and Rühmann in chapter 3). Ward Churchill reprints a "Declaration of War Against Exploiters of Lakota Spirituality" ratified by the Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota Nations in 1993 in his *Indians Are Us?* as well as an "Alert concerning the Abuse and Exploitation of American Indian Sacred Traditions" published by Support and Protection of Indian Religions and Indigenous Traditions (SPIRIT). Churchill himself wrote numerous articles protesting what he calls "spiritual hucksterism," reserving particular bile for New Age entrepreneurs and Robert Bly's men's movement (Churchill 1994).

6. Lynn Andrews has authored a number of novels with vaguely Indian-sounding titles like *Medicine Woman* (1981), *Jaguar Woman* (1986), and *Windhorse Woman* (1989) that are marketed to New Age consumers.

group's attempt to shore up interpretive authority over Indian roles, acts, and appearances, and its hostile denunciation of hegemonic vision in *Winnetou's Snake Oil Show*, are a response to a red-white "sisterhood" that facilitates a colonial dynamic of expropriation in the New Age culture industry. The closing off of the Native American family against the invasion of such sisters (and oedipal sons, I would add—see chapter 3) and the recuperation of Native American spirituality from plastic shamanism illustrate that the struggle over questions of cultural identity is the arena in which questions of property, expropriation, and transformation are negotiated. On that battlefield, the discourse of drag and deconstruction, which refutes white authority over Indian identity and history, is seconded by a strategy of reoccupying a ground that cannot be ceded to the familial discourse of sisterhood. In *Winnetou's Snake Oil Show*, that strategy is organized around spirituality—precisely at the point of entry of white wannabees like the plastic shamans.

Spiderwoman's recuperation of spirituality, kinship, and community reoccupies a territory the women do not want to leave vacated by the drag show's deconstructive estrangement techniques. They issue a provisional appeal to identity, in order to summon those who answer to them to act. As Cindy Patton has argued, minorities have learned to deploy these identity rhetorics as strategies of disidentification (with false images, with the mimetic apparatus of vision) rather than appeals to identification and commonality, which, in view of the plastic shaman and the sisterhood of wannabees, constitutes the problem rather than the remedy to the appropriation of Native American culture.<sup>7</sup>

### **Migrants between Hypermarginalization and the Assimilationist Imperative**

Let me now return to the German context, to the play *Keloglan in Alania* by Emine Sevgi Özdamar (born 1946). Although the production of an earlier play by the same author at the Schauspielhaus Frankfurt in 1986 received some critical attention and praise, Özdamar, a theater artist by training, is far better known for her prose, which has garnered her several

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7. In "Tremble, Hetero Swine!" Patton analyzes the parodic reliance in some queer activism of the early 1990s on the homophobic rhetoric of the far Right (144). Parodying, for instance, conservative Christians' fear of a queer world conspiracy allows activists to capitalize on the (alas, exaggerated) power attributed to them, as well as create a broader-based consensus against right-wing extremists by ridiculing their paranoid fears (145). As Patton claims, this tactic of inviting the mainstream's disidentification with the far Right is more effective than creating active allegiances to any minority agenda, since it "produced at least temporary allies"—although the disadvantage of this rhetorical strategy has also been an awkward dependence on the ideological adversary.

awards, among them the Ingeborg Bachmann prize and the Adalbert von Chamisso prize. Her two plays, *Karagöz in Alamania* (1981) and *Keloglan in Alamania* (1991), take figures and motifs from Turkish folklore and reinterpret them within the history and experience of the Turkish laborers' migration to West Germany. *Keloglan* is situated in the vast social transformations precipitated by the opening of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the socialist German state. Many migrants perceived an immediate change of atmosphere regarding the German public's perception of foreigners during the frenzied celebrations of East-West German brotherhood and concomitant resurgence of ethnic conceptions of nationality. They viewed even small signs of change in the relations between Germans and resident minorities with alarm, such as the passing of a more restrictive *Ausländergesetz* (foreigner law) in 1990. In retrospect, the significance of the law is indeed minor when compared to the much more pervasive and threatening changes in the social climate affecting those who visibly looked different. Those active in migrant politics deplored the sudden loss of longtime allies from the Left in protesting that law, German allies who were now occupied with "things German"—which evidently no longer included questions of citizenship and civil rights. *Keloglan*, which never makes reference to reunification, seems to downplay that event as a factor in German-foreigner relations, even as the dream of receiving one hundred deutsche marks as "welcome money" in the play's final scene alludes to the different reception of new arrivals according to their place of origin; "welcome money" was reserved for the "brothers and sisters" from the GDR who had made it to the West.

*Keloglan in Alamania* addresses questions of assimilation, which in the public debates before and since reunification have been wedded to the legal issue of naturalization. While recent, far-reaching changes in citizenship law, introduced by the red-green coalition government that was elected in 1998, will hopefully render some aspects of the predicaments explored in this text obsolete, *Keloglan's* meditation on the cultural, philosophical, and subjective dimensions of assimilation is not foreclosed by these changes. The play's critical examination of migrant modes of adaptation and survival prefigures the more overtly antiassimilationist politics that emerged in the late 1990s, while also interrogating the politics of cultural separatism that sometimes attend antiassimilationism. The considerable lag between the writing and the production of this play, which was first staged at the Oldenburg State Theater in 2000, measures the resistance to publicly considering cultural differences along with political equality. Moreover, this postmodern comedy lends itself to an examination of how the theoretical preoccupation with identity and performativity of the last decade translate into theatrical and political terms. The prolif-

eration of ethnic drag acts in *Keloglan* raises the question whether the scrambling and reassembling of racial and gendered codes on a variety of Turkish and German, male and female, human and animal bodies can effectively unsettle the ontological discourses that underpin citizenship, civil rights, and cultural production and consumption. Moreover, the play's bilingual address poses the question of how the representation of a minority's oppression may escape the conventional appeal to the majority's pity, and articulate shared political interests across ethnic boundaries.

An essay by Sanem Kleff entitled "Wir sind auch das Volk!" (We, too, are the people! 1990) exemplifies the very personal response of a West Berlin migrant to unification, while also analyzing the anguish among the migrant community at large and interpreting its sources, consequences, and political implications. Kleff is a spokesperson for the German teachers' union and a Berlin resident; she is often cited as an authority on multicultural affairs, and occasionally publishes political commentaries in the leftist daily *die tageszeitung*. Her rhetorical strategies for claiming a rightful place for resident minorities to participate as equals in a political debate about citizenship, nationality, and culture are instructive when read side by side with Özdamar's play. The title of Kleff's essay pleads for inclusion of foreign residents into the *constitutional* body of "the people" and implicitly refutes the *ethnic* definition of "one people" that epitomized pronounification rhetoric.<sup>8</sup> By marking that important distinction, which is conveyed by the use of the definite and indefinite articles, Kleff aligns herself with those philosophers and critics who in the Historians' Debate, staged in the West German media in the mid-1980s, had deplored the return to ethnic discourses of nationality as a sign of Germans' political immaturity.<sup>9</sup> She emphasizes that the consideration of who or what can be included in the referent *German* has immediate pragmatic consequences for the country's resident foreigners. Kleff's invocation of "constitutional patriotism" (Habermas) rehearses a progressive notion of nationality, which she views as good protection against the blatant xenophobia that erupted both symbolically and physically with the ascendancy of ethnic nationalism. The essay's objective, to argue for the inclusion of resident migrants under the aegis of "the people," is coupled with a strategy of differentiation directed against the East German newcomers. It aims to discredit them in the competition for recognition as citizens of a modern, cap-

8. Kleff's title alludes to the slogans "Wir sind das Volk!" [We are the people] and "Wir sind ein Volk" [We are one people] chanted at the famous Leipzig demonstrations of the fall of 1989. At the time of Kleff's writing, the latter phrase, with its appeal to ethnic and political unity, had already replaced the earlier formulation, which invoked "the people" as the referent of constitutional rights, executive power, and agent of reform. See also Huyssen.

9. For a documentation of that debate, see *New German Critique* 44 (1988).

italist, urbane, and multicultural world. Kleff accuses East Germans of ethnic arrogance and outright racism, compounded with a bumpkinish mistrust of anything foreign, resulting from their imposed isolation behind the Iron Curtain. In a clever reversal of West/East (and First/Third World) assignments, she derides East Germans for gawking, exhibiting crude materialism, uttering ethnic slurs, and other behavior considered inappropriate for sophisticated citizens of the modern metropolis—in effect claiming that Turks are more (Western) European than East Germans. Kleff juxtaposes an enlightened, Western-style internationalism to the East Germans' parochial pride in an ethnic notion of Germanness. In addition, her argument is informed by the Cold War equation of Communism with fascism. To incorporate East Germans, with their totalitarian mentality, into the institutions of the unified republic such as the police force threatens to insert Turks and other resident minorities into the role formerly reserved for the Jews. That analogy had frequently been made by antiracists (including Wallraff and Kromschröder, see chapter 4) in order to indict the institutions of the West German state; Kleff rewrites it from a migrant perspective. The essay evidences a sense of entitlement to the diverse Western culture flourishing in West Berlin, but its protest of migrants' place in the emergent civic hierarchy implicitly acquiesces to a notion of graded citizenship, recognition, and participation. Moreover, the text is unclear about its addressee (and hence political ally), invoking the stale tropes of antifascism prevalent in the old Left, even though that old Left is recognized as having forsaken both its rhetoric and its "foreign fellow-citizens." Migrants appear as the cheated victims of historical events beyond their control.

I have retraced Kleff's argument not only to reconstruct the immediate historical context of Özdamar's play but also to contrast the former's rhetorical strategy of inclusion through differentiation with the latter's dramatic project. Özdamar's text diverges remarkably from Kleff's response in that it exhibits no nostalgia about the recent past, sketches a geopolitical matrix that thwarts the familiar—and paralyzing—analogy of Turks and Jews, and locates questions of allegiance and entitlement within migrant rhetorics of identity without submitting to a staggered model of civic recognition and participation. Özdamar wishes for nothing less than full acceptance of cultural heterogeneity, civic entitlement, and material equality for all residents, even though that wish is marked as utopian. While acknowledging the power of the discourses determining the parameters of migrant survival, the play retains a sense of agency for its subjects. Özdamar avoids the before-and-after comparison through which Kleff launches her critique of the socialist newcomers and the changes they allegedly instigated. Instead, *Keloglan* criticizes prereunification habits of

performing one's ethnicity as contingent on circumstances that were always provisional, alienating, and tendentially hostile. Özdamar depicts Turkish-German relations without portraying the former as victims and the latter as fascists. In her work, the larger referential frame of colonial orientalism, in which the Germans' perception of migrants is embedded, neither singles them out for a special racist propensity nor allows for a naively harmonious notion of internationalism or multicultural cosmopolitanism. Intercultural relations, the play insists, have long served to legitimize geopolitical divisions of labor.

In *Keloglan*, Özdamar offers a generational schema of adapting to the exigencies of migration, embodying two types of migrant identity by a parent-child pair. The generational model echoes (but also satirizes) the periodization of scholars who link the sociological experience of migration with certain cultural styles.<sup>10</sup> The play differs from the scholarly narratives in that it does not construct a generational model to tell a story of progress, from outsiderdom to acceptance (Fischer and McGowan), or, in a nostalgic variant, from political opposition to aesthetic commodification and then social conformity (Suhr). Rather, mother and son parade two performative ethnic styles signified by masks; their masks parody the dream of upward mobility, as well as thwarting any nostalgic impulse. Each mask offers the bearer certain advantages within the fundamentally contradictory German situation in the 1980s and 1990s, which Fischer and McGowan summarize as follows: "On the one hand the state, through its immigration laws, prevents foreign residents from integrating fully into

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10. Fischer and McGowan use a three-generational schema proceeding from *Pappkoffer* (characterizing first generation migrants' "simple autobiographical accounts of prejudice, identity conflict and broken dreams," 6) to *Pluralism* (evidenced by the "complex interaction of the individual and the culturally typical" (11) they attribute to third-generation writing). The narrative they construct weds upward class mobility to aesthetic progress, valorizing the universal over the particular and formal sophistication over political appeal. See also Tan and Waldhoff's description of the emergence of a Turkish-German literary avant-garde and an intellectual elite (150–53). Suhr's centering of a class critique in her tripartite schema (which she adopts from Teraoka 1990) obviates such a model of generational progress: recognizing that many "first generation" migrants writing in the 1970s were university-educated, for instance, prevents her from asserting literary advancement from the stereotypical simplicity of workers' preliterate to the postmodern complexity associated with a newly emergent middle class of foreign intellectuals. Her categories group together writers (and institutions) by political purpose rather than age or length of stay and suggest a nostalgia for former radicalism now undermined by increased aestheticization and commodification. Her comparative approach privileges an "oppositional literature," aesthetic shortcomings notwithstanding, over a politics of humanist universalism or the "vague general idea of rapprochement" fostered by the Institute for German as a Foreign Language in Munich, which was important in creating a mass literary market for the writing of foreign nationals in German (97).

German society, and on the other hand it demands their total assimilation to the 'legal, social and economic order of the Federal Republic, its cultural and political values' as specifically required of them by the *Ausländergesetz* (Foreigner law) of 1991" (1).<sup>11</sup> Both assimilation and separatism ultimately fail—not as a result of individual shortcomings, but due to the very contradiction inherent in Germany's proclaimed nonimmigrant status. The play doubles back on these strategies, illustrating both their political and economic determinants and their subjective effects.

Özdamar herself is a first-generation migrant, whose middle-class background, secular upbringing, and aesthetic sophistication underscore the inadequacy of the generational model for categorizing migrant literature, which often presumes the first generation to have been uneducated. In her autobiographical novel *Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn* (The bridge of the golden horn, 1996), Özdamar describes her own initial migration to West Berlin in 1965, where she worked for the Siemens Corporation, shared a room with other Turkish women in a company dormitory, and was neither expected nor encouraged to learn German or socialize with Germans. When she returned in the 1970s, she worked with director Benno Besson at the East Berlin Volksbühne as an actor and assistant director. Özdamar's experience of migration, while throwing into doubt the characterization of first-generation migrants as inferior artists, should not detract from the sociologically significant correlation of ethnic differences and class status in West Germany, which persists to this day in the low educational and occupational status, income level, and quality of housing of migrants, especially the Turkish minority (Kolinsky). Sociologists continue to describe migration and acculturation in terms of generational behavior, distinguishing between those migrants who profess an enduring orientation toward their country of origin and those (often their children) who orient their expectations and aspirations toward the country of residence and its cultural value systems. These generations correspond to attitudes of isolationism, in order to preserve cultural traditions, and assimilation to the host culture respectively.<sup>12</sup> Where the generational model breaks down (if one grants it explanatory power over migrant identity formations) is in its inability to account for the changed ideological landscape following reunification. The increasingly xenophobic and politically polarized public sphere has given rise to new ways of enacting ethnic identities, with many Germans expressing fear and aggression vis-à-vis an expanding gallery of ethnic stereotypes including the Turkish gangster and the Russian mafioso. The migrants' claim that, as German cultural sub-

11. They quote H. H. Feldmann, "Zum Ausländergesetz 1991," *Vorgänge* 1 (1991): 63.

12. Fischer and McGowan distinguish among "integration, ethnic isolationism and denial of ethnic identity" (1).

jects, they have a great deal to say about the country is challenged by Germans' persistent perception of them as "foreigners." Despite the 1999 revision of the citizenship law, designed to facilitate the naturalization of long-term foreign residents, the persistence of popular myths like the "nonassimilable Turkish Muslim," not to mention the continuing hate crimes against minorities, greatly limit their day-to-day existence, life choices, and sense of physical safety.<sup>13</sup>

The melancholy view of migrant identity located in a twilight zone of "in-betweenness" and loss has been countered by a more militant reassertion of composite identities in the new context of globalization. In the 1990s, displacement and migration are experienced by larger numbers of people in Europe and elsewhere. Under these conditions, new cultural forms have emerged, which validate the migrant and the diasporic subject as expert and privileged interpreter. The large ethnic communities in Berlin, Hamburg, Munich, and the industrial Ruhr region have produced spectacularly creative, postmodern admixtures, citations, appropriations, and refunctionings: Aziza-A. is a rap singer whose initial *A* stands for *abla*, Turkish for "powerful sister" and whose CD is subtitled "oriental hip-hop"; the "techno-bellydancer" Aysegül currently runs the "multisexual" Café Lubunya (the Turkish word for "gay") in the bourgeois Berlin neighborhood of Wilmersdorf; writers Zafer Şenocak and Feridun Zaimoglu have found different idioms and geopolitical reference points for their respective discourses of diaspora and *Kanakster* defiance. The fledgling movement *Kanak Attak* refunctions an ethnic slur into an expression of militance, pride, and defiance in its name and proclaims its impatience with tokenized Turks and German liberals alike. All of these artists and activists deride assimilation as offensive, since it presumes the superiority and homogeneity of the target culture and reinforces the outsider status of people who were raised in Germany by Turkish parents and have no intention of leaving.

The opposing orientations toward separatism versus assimilation, the

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13. The coalition government of Social Democrats and Greens, which was elected in 1998, revised Germany's anti-immigration policy and introduced the territorial principle of citizenship (*ius soli*) alongside the principle of descent (*ius sanguini*) dating from the citizenship law of 1913 in order to facilitate the integration of foreign residents, many of whom had been born in Germany. The adoption of the territorial principle made those residents whose parents had come to Germany as children and who themselves had spent at least five years in Germany eligible for naturalization. Moreover, the legalization of double citizenship was designed to avoid different national allegiances within one family. Both the introduction of the territorial principle and the "double passport" were vociferously opposed by the Christian Democrats. Prerequisites for naturalization include the ability to communicate in German, the ability to support oneself without government aid, and a clean police record. Four million foreign residents are estimated to be affected by this revision.



experience of rightful belonging versus unjust exclusion, the celebration of multiculturalism versus the exploitive economics of race, the rejection of identity politics versus the legal uncertainties of migrant existence, the clash of collective ascriptions versus individual aspirations—these are some of the contradictions running through *Keloglan in Alamania*. Its title figure Keloglan is a well-known character from Turkish children's literature and has been used to explain German culture to Turkish children;<sup>14</sup> like the Karagöz in Özdamar's first play, he is a comic figure who is constantly in trouble but overcomes adversity through his cleverness and wit. Aside from these characters, Özdamar's plays (especially the first one) are peopled with talking animals, plants, and other ordinarily inanimate objects: *Keloglan*, for example, features a cat who serves as narrator cum translator. These fairy-tale elements are combined with a dramaturgy derived largely from Brechtian epic theater, which has considerably influenced modern Turkish drama (Pazarkaya, 318) and to which Özdamar was exposed both as an acting student in Istanbul in the late 1960s and later at the Volksbühne in East Berlin. Its comic style ranges from slapstick to linguistically sophisticated parody, but most of its humor derives from the clever citing and refunctioning of German and European high culture. Her bilingual plays may be seen as analogous to the tradition of Chicano theater in the Southwest United States, not only attempting to translate migrants' concerns for a German audience but also reflecting a bicultural generation of speakers and spectators. The play warns that the hope of "playing by the rules" to assuage Germans' xenophobia is a dangerous delusion, since the part of the sympathetic Oriental results in a suicidal script à la *Madama Butterfly*, which, like the Winnetou story, reserves sympathy only for the moribund. Through its operatic citations, the play embeds German-migrant relations in the larger, European context of colonial fantasies and thus avoids conflating ethnic nationalism with fascist racism.

The curtain opens on a rehearsal of Puccini's opera *Madama Butterfly*, which is interrupted by a break for lunch. The feline narrator Tekir then enters and launches into a comic monologue that serves as exposition for another plot, seemingly unrelated to the opera rehearsal. Tekir sums up the trials and tribulations of the youth Keloglan, who, in order to avoid being deported, must either find work in Germany or a German wife before he turns eighteen at midnight. Keloglan is spurred on by his aging mother Kelkari, a former opera singer who now works as a cleaning woman. She confides to the audience her plan of buying a German bride for her son, and the main portion of the play chronicles the pair's com-

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14. I am indebted to Leslie Adelson for pointing this out to me.

bined efforts to obtain residency and work permits for the unhappy Keloglan. With much slapstick action and many comic plot twists, the two not only fail to make any progress toward their goal but also see their hopes and dreams slipping away. Their fate seems sealed when robbers steal Kelkari's concert piano, her hiding place for the bride-money. Without a job, a bride, or money, Keloglan falls into a deep sleep of exhaustion and despair. At this point, the author herself intervenes in the plot to force a reversal.

Conceding her failure to accomplish a satisfying ending within the parameters of realism, the playwright announces her decision to stop abiding by the rules of verisimilitude. Taking recourse to the fantastic devices of the stage instead, a German fairy-tale forest appears, replete with Little Red Riding Hood and the Wolf, as well as two Shakespearean trolls. The trolls, in Midsummer Night fashion, puts spells on Keloglan and Little Red Riding Hood, who fall in love with each other upon waking up. The happy ending is assured as Kelkari recuperates her possessions and her money. She pays Red Riding Hood five thousand deutsche marks to marry Keloglan, and the troupe lines up for the wedding chorus from Smetana's opera *The Bartered Bride*.<sup>15</sup> As the clock strikes midnight, the stage manager hands the happy couple telegrams from the minister of labor and the chancellor, a gift of one hundred deutsche marks, and the coveted residency permit, and the curtain falls.

Situated as an intermezzo to a high cultural performance, *Keloglan* evokes *Butterfly* as the supreme imperialist fantasy: the "oriental" woman, seduced and abandoned by a white, Western man, who kills herself out of love for him. The opera encapsulates the racist myths and figures of colonialism, which continue to exert their high cultural and hence highly subsidized powers of seduction. Keloglan and Kelkari insert themselves into this drama, transposing it into a burlesque register, inverting its gendered coordinates, and rewriting its ending. *Keloglan* summons the operatic apparatus for its own purposes, putting Puccini, Smetana, and Shakespeare to work for its cast of Turkish migrants.

Strikingly, both *Spiderwoman* and *Özdamar* choose opera as the medium for caricaturing white, Western high culture. Whereas *Spider-*

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15. Since the differences between German and Turkish gender systems often stand in for German-Turkish differences in general, much sociological attention has focused on Turkish girls and women; the title of one such volume, *Die verkauften Bräute: Türkische Frauen zwischen Kreuzberg und Anatolien* (The bartered brides: Turkish women between Kreuzberg and Anatolia), by Baumgartner-Karabak, sums up German preconceptions about victimized Turkish women. In her play, *Özdamar* picks up the image of the "bartered bride" and turns its national inscription around, both by having a German bartered bride marry Keloglan, and by having a Turkish boy turn into a bartered bride.

woman borrows opera's stiff gestural style and emotional pathos to generally parody white European arrogance and bodily comportment, Özdamar's operatic citations are thematically specific. Her operatic intertexts are ironic glosses on Keloglan's story, embedding his despair at his imminent deportation in a larger context of orientalism (Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*) and colonialism (*Manon Lescaut*). Smetana's *The Bartered Bride* (celebrated as an instance of Czech national art) is invoked to underscore the irony of making Keloglan's stay in Germany contingent on an arranged marriage—a custom modern theater has denounced as antithetical to the modern nation-state.<sup>16</sup> The motif of mismatched lovers is also underscored by the allusion to Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, which, like the reference to the German folktale of Little Red Riding Hood, aligns the play with the European tropology and practice of transvestism.

When Kelkari first enters dressed in Butterfly costume and wig, she pushes a giant floor polisher across the stage while singing a Puccini aria. Her appearance immediately signals drag's typical disjunction between body and role, contrasting the refined sensibility, beauty, and desirability of the ethereal Butterfly with the physically demanding, dirty work performed by an elderly Turkish woman. However, the "double role" of mistress and menial, underlined by the competing sounds of music and machine, does not correspond to a relationship between Butterfly and Kelkari in which one is authentic, the other a false role. As Kelkari tells her story, her oriental costume signifies her own sense of cultural displacement and hope of providing for her son in the ennobling idiom of opera; at the same time, the tattered wig measures Kelkari's social descent from opera diva to cleaning woman since coming to West Germany. The mask of Butterfly sums up Kelkari's aspiration, her mode of survival, and the conditions of Western approval and toleration. Likewise, Kelkari the migrant is foregrounded *as* role, the complement rather than the "real" counterpart to the Butterfly act. As the migrant introduces herself to the audience, Tekir is standing in the wings, visible to the audience but not to Kelkari. From that niche, the cat indicates which of Kelkari's claims are true and which are not. Spectators are made aware of the lies, exaggerations, and deceptions assembled into a migrant biography of displacement and loss, whose rhetorical effect is calculated to elicit sympathy and com-

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16. *The Bartered Bride* celebrated the emergence of Czech national opera and premiered in Prague in 1866. Its plot tied modernity to individual partner choice and the primacy of romantic love, breaking with the older system of arranged marriages. It also minimized generational tensions by showing the young lovers' choice to coincide with parental wishes.



**Kelkari in *Keloglan in Alamania*, production at Oldenburgisches Staatstheater, 2000. (Photograph by Claudia Hoppens.)**

passion. Yet Tekir's signals leave open who or what a "real" Turkish migrant could be outside of the scene of performance.

This constellation—the actor playing a double role, the signaling narrator—varies the scenario introduced earlier in this chapter, of Spider-woman postulating a dupe in order to shore up perceptual authority for an audience addressed in the position of in-group witness. *Keloglan* does not allow the audience to occupy any secure ground of knowledge reserved for the witness, however provisional that ground may be. Instead, by casting Tekir in the role of in-group witness, whose commentary betrays Kelkari's tale as a calculated performance, the audience is situated in the position of dupe. While the classical dupe does not know that he is duped—hence enabling the witness's reading of performance as drag rather than mimesis—Tekir's commentary confronts the audience with the inadequacy of their perceptual habits. The cat's silent laughter at Kelkari's lies exposes the apparatus that reproduces the colonial presumptions that pass for knowledge in multicultural Germany, a privilege ordinarily accorded only to the in-group witness and her insight into competing sets of codes. Addressed as dupe, the audience of *Keloglan* is presented with a blatant deception without learning another truth. In this play, there *is* no ethnicity outside of its performance; like Joan Riviere's famous essay, which theorized the same about femininity and the masquerade, Özdamar's dra-

maturgical thesis, that ethnicity and masquerade are the same thing, is both novel and consonant with orientalist presumptions. In an angry satire on Özdamar's first novel, critic Zafer Şenocak observes that Orientals are always already assumed to be lying, exemplified by their propensity for disguise and masquerade: "In oriental stories, everyone cross-dresses, especially the women," he mocks her (Şenocak 1994, 56). Özdamar, playing with that orientalist myth, shifts attention from the pathologically mendacious body to the theatrical and social apparatuses that dictate its forms of appearance. The spectatorial address, however, also recalls the scenario of *Jew Süß*, which constructed the audience's "dupability" as a form of innocence in need of being defended by the state's visual and punitive technologies; the Other's deceit was countered by the state's penetrating gaze exposing racial truth. Özdamar's deferral of the hegemonic look that pierces the masquerade does not locate the truth of Turkishness in the body, nor does her equation of ethnicity with masquerade forfeit any performative agency through which her migrants could rewrite Germans' ethnic fantasies for their own purposes. The cultural institutions of performance that stage ethnic subjectivities and which are cited in this play (opera, classical theater, folktales, television documentaries, music clubs) are shown to provide the scripts and personnel of racial fantasy, but they are to a certain degree open to interpretation, revision, and reversal by performers and spectators. Fantasy is not granted the power to subsume the parameters of the social in a deterministic fashion; the gap between the symbolic and the political and economic spheres also provides some maneuvering space for Kelkari and Keloglan.

Özdamar's use of the Butterfly mask illustrates her strategy of engaging simultaneously with the symbolic and the material registers, in order to interrogate their mutual contingency. Floor polishing and operatic singing inscribe competing yet related ethnic gestures (in the Brechtian sense) on the same body, gestures that resonate within the disjunctive discursive field of "multiculturalism." Referencing both the underclassing of ethnic minorities within economic/demographic discourses of immigration and their exoticization within a "culinary" discourse of multicultural consumption, Kelkari/Butterfly begs the question whether the celebration of cultural diversity and the commodification of ethnic differences can effectively challenge a racially stratified class and legal system, or whether in fact these two aspects of multiculturalism go hand in glove.<sup>17</sup> While multiculturalism welcomes the proliferation of ethnic differences in the sphere

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17. Petra Wlecklik has generated a three-part schema of complementary multicultural discourses, which she divides into demographic/market-oriented, pedagogical, and culinary/folkloristic variants. Her book also includes a useful and intelligent overview of positions on multiculturalism by political parties and the churches.

of consumption and validates exotic commodities such as food, fashion, dance, and music, the economic and demographic discourse of multiculturalism—whose most prominent exponent in Germany is the conservative Christian Democratic politician Heiner Geißler—emphasizes the usefulness of migrants for Germany’s shrinking and aging population in terms of guaranteeing pensions and social services. Geißler advocates “controlled immigration” on the model of the United States, for an economic and intellectual rejuvenation of German society (17).<sup>18</sup> Hazel Carby has pointed to the seeming contradiction between the positive connotations of cultural diversity and the material disadvantage of racialized groups within economic hierarchies as constitutive of multiculturalism in the U.S. context (193). Without the commitment to yoke equality in the economic and judicial realms to the celebration of cultural diversity, the latter cannot be assumed to intervene in systematic economic, legal, and social discrimination.<sup>19</sup>

The double role of Kelkari/Butterfly cites the apparent contradiction of economic oppression and cultural appreciation, while dramatizing their mutually contingent relationship on one body. Butterfly is the “good” oriental woman’s form of appearance in high culture, denoting both the romanticization of her tragic image in the register of the symbolic and her relegation to the lowest-paying jobs with few benefits and no prestige at the site of material cultural production. While Kelkari’s migrant career reproduces Butterfly’s story of seduction and abandonment by the alluring West, she is also alienated from Butterfly in the classical sense: her labor literally enables the orientalist show to go on, yet its low value also prevents her from exerting any authority over it, whether as consumer or producer. Donning the mask of Butterfly has afforded Kelkari a modicum of economic security, at the price of her artistic aspirations or upward mobility. By taking the oriental mask as her form of appearance, she has con-

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18. Steep class differences are as integral to this system as a notion of cultural and artistic productivity driven by social abjection. In her incisive discussion of Geißler and other politicians of his ilk—who often refer to the U.S. “anarcho-capitalist” David Friedman as their model—Wlecklik points out that their main concern is the German economy’s competitive edge in the global marketplace, rather than expanding the possibilities of individual self-realization of migrants, although that trope is often invoked. In this variant, which elaborates something like a multicultural Darwinism, individual autonomy and a flourishing economy are made contingent on the state’s noninterference in market processes. It legitimates modernization benefiting international corporations under the mantle of philanthropic humanism (31).

19. In a public panel discussion in Berlin in 1998, the leftist journalist Eberhard Seidel-Pielen made the same point for the German context when he derisively spoke of a “multikulturelle Industrie” [multicultural industry] that caters to liberals’ fetishization of cultural difference while short-circuiting political activism and coalition.

sented to be commodified in the only form that accords her value, yet her calculated masquerade also evidences an actorly intelligence able to predict and manipulate spectatorial responses. Because of her acute sense of performative effect, Kelkari is willing to exploit the naturalization law's heterosexism by arranging a phony marriage as the tactic most likely to procure a residence permit for her son.<sup>20</sup>

By inserting a laboring, migrant body under the orientalist Butterfly mask, Özdamar also risks collapsing the one into the other. Özdamar takes up the challenge of a "real" Turkish body—one that resides in a certain place or is denied residency, that cannot eat out of fear, that is afraid to be dissected and sold through organ banks, that threatens to hurl itself out of a window—to stage its political determinants. Yet ethnicity never comes to rest on these bodies; the set of theatrical identity-signs continue to circulate, being assumed and rejected, discarded and reassembled on different bodies. In this play, a Turkish woman dresses up in "oriental" costume and wig, a wolf masquerades as a pug, German adolescents parade around in vegetable costumes, and a Turkish boy impersonates first a German boy and then an oriental woman. Rather than attaching to bodies, Turkishness is figured through the play's references to cultural and narrative traditions and motifs—hybrid as they are in their imbrication with German epic theater—and its irreverent parodying of German fairytales and folk songs. Moreover, despite the palpable, physical effects of ethnicity on bodies that are forced to signify, it is important to note that under her Butterfly wig, Kelkari is bald, as is Keloglan. Wigs and moustaches, primary ethnic signifiers, foreground ethnicity as constructed on the body, not an essential trait inherent in it. They also underscore the performative competence of their wearers, who use them to gain access to certain roles and spaces. Within limits, subjects are shown to have a choice of props.

Mother and son have opted for two performative paradigms, determined by gender and generational differences. While Kelkari's drag strategy of hypermarginalization manipulates (and theatrically exaggerates) the trope of difference through which she is read in Western culture, Keloglan's strategy is mimetic, operating within the paradigm of imitation and assimilation. Rather than masquerading as oriental Other, he identifies with the Western, cosmopolitan cultural practices and artifacts admired by German youth. Having grown up in Germany, he likes to

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20. Kugler notes in his handbook on foreigners' rights that the guiding principle of naturalization law is to unify citizenship within the family unit (115). While this principle makes the naturalization of foreign spouses of German citizens easier, it provides an obstacle in foreign families where not all members wish to change their citizenship. The citizenship reform, which includes the granting of double passports, obviates these considerations.

break-dance, play with his toy robot, and practice his DJ skills with Western pop music, mixing and matching Elvis with the Rolling Stones, the Beatles with Nina Hagen, and Grönemeyer with Pink Floyd. Keloglan enthusiastically demonstrates the very cultural and linguistic competence and commitment on which German authorities predicate naturalization, yet his predicament is that the standards set by officials are based on obsolete, narrowly ethnic canons of “German culture,” to which few German youth would subscribe and which in the play are figured through folk tunes and tales. Keloglan’s very obedience to the principle of cultural commitment shows up the impossibility (and undesirability) of turning Romantic philosophers’ notion of the folk into a bureaucratic norm of Germanness. His embrace of Western culture also forces the ontological underpinnings of nationality to show, according citizenship the same status traditionally accorded to race. At the point where Germans’ rejection of his mimetic efforts can no longer be explained by a perceived inadequacy of his performance to resemble a culturally conceived nationality, the faltering of mimesis exposes a radical, unbridgeable alterity, whose specific nature is posed as a question. Although Keloglan himself is unable to perceive the gap between the promise and the impossibility of assimilation, that disjunction is staged through his endeavor to bring into congruence his internal pledge to Germanness and others’ perception of him. Choosing to pass as German, he dons a blond wig and bleached moustache and walks off to look for work.

In the street, the blond Keloglan, having renamed himself Blondoglan, runs into two youths masquerading as a head of lettuce and a bottle of salad dressing respectively, who tell him that there is an opening for a carrot impersonator. When Blondoglan calls the employer and asks for work, he describes himself as a “blond Turk,” whereupon the employer hangs up. The youths who report the job opening to him (mis)read Blondoglan as German; they are duped, attesting to Blondoglan’s success as a passer. To the audience who witnesses their reaction, nationality is thrown into relief as performative, conferring economic security and legitimacy on a subject who, despite his (internal and external) resemblance, is not a German, even while the very success of his performance confirms his entitlement to the attendant rights and privileges of that appellation in the eyes of the law. Blondoglan’s appearance, which literalizes his naive acceptance of German identity, makes a successful claim to the real; the prospect of a job and hence the all-important permit appear, for a moment, within reach. While the employer could not have detected his performance as impersonation, Blondoglan’s honest self-description as a “blond Turk” sabotages his endeavor. He is someone who looks and acts like—but is not—German. For the employer, who takes “blond” for “German,” the



combination with the national appellation “Turk” constitutes an incommensurable identity, which she interprets as an act of wrongful usurpation. Although Blondoglan is required to demonstrate Germanness in order to gain employment and residence rights, that demonstration is punished, because he is not German and his imitation therefore remains always already illegitimate. Here the spectator can recognize the simulacrum not in the disjunction between cultural role and bodily “truth,” since those are congruent, but in the ontological status of a passport, whose absence designates the performance as fake.

This scene points to the deep disingenuousness at the heart of the discourse of assimilation, which predicates recognition on imitation yet precludes certain subjects from mimesis altogether. Rather than serving as the measuring stick supposedly dividing better from worse approximations of Germanness, mimesis is shown to be a privilege that many will never be granted, and here the division of those who are entitled and those who are not is, not accidentally, referenced by Blondoglan’s choice of an anatomical marker, the blond hair. The wig’s visual allusion to the racial underpinnings of German nationality, which predicated citizenship on German descent according to the principle of *ius sanguini*, highlights Keloglan as the classic “mimic man” described by Homi K. Bhabha. His cultural masquerade enables spectators to see the “not quite/not white” that characterizes colonial discourse, operating in the discourse of assimilation in a multicultural democracy. The ontological status of the boy’s passport is revealed as an instant of state-imposed performativity, determining rather than expressing national identity and its attendant rights and privileges. Spectators recognize drag in the disjunction of technocratic “truth” with cultural identity, a political disjunction that the play indicts.

Following his unsuccessful pass, the play’s plot traces Keloglan’s gradual loss of his means to perform within the coordinates of ethnicity and gender: his wig, his moustache, and his pants. At that point, Keloglan dons the Butterfly mask—the wig and costume Kelkari had left behind in her pursuit of a bride. Butterfly and her colonial inscription, then, is revealed as the default setting for the tragic feminized colonial pining for her Western seducer. At that moment, Keloglan, locked into the Butterfly position, seems clearly headed for tragedy. The outcome of his predicament, were this a realist play, is briefly indicated by a documentary film-clip of protesting foreigners being deported. Yet the author herself intervenes in this trajectory and switches to the register of the fairy-tale.

*(Stagehands carry a German fairy-tale forest on stage; in it are Little Red Riding Hood and the Wolf. A documentary shows the deportation of a foreigner or of several foreigners who resist police. In the back-*

ground the sound of a typewriter and the author's voice) The playwright did not know how to have the foreign youth Keloglan find a solution for his problems before midnight. That's why she let him fall asleep. In reality, he would have woken in the morning, gone back home, perhaps had a glass of tea, then the police would have come to fetch him and he would have left the country on the first plane. But here. . . ? (Özdamar, 24)

The ending, a fast-paced romp through the master narratives of gender bending, modulates the motif of racial masquerade through its gendered and sexual registers, from classic Shakespearean drag to the oriental campiness explored by *M. Butterfly* and the legend of Little Red Riding Hood, German folklore's icon for the dangers—and pleasures, as Djuna Barnes suggested (79)—of cross-dressing. The courtship of Butterfly and Little Red Riding Hood and the former's insertion into "German culture" are figured through their singing of German folk tunes, with the wolf (cross-dressed as harmless pug) blaring the refrain. Against such an onslaught of what the Romantics believed to be expressions of the German folk's soul, the very technology of the stage itself revolts (30), interrupting the music with thunder and lightning.<sup>21</sup> The bridal kiss between Keloglan/Butterfly and Little Red Riding Hood dramatizes the convergence of German folk culture's aggressively social Darwinist vision and Butterfly's story of abandonment, passivity, and death: Keloglan/Butterfly, caught in the oriental mask *and* impelled to sing along with the bellicose tunes, has reached the point of zero agency. Yet it is also a supremely funny and delightful transvestic moment that obviates any tragic pathos or attempt to sympathize with the victim. The irony of the ending, in which Kelkari presents Little Red Riding Hood as the "bartered bride" to the happy Keloglan, crosses out assimilation and hypermarginalization as effective strategies for migrants' claims to their own body, its integrity, and its labor. It operates as a classic Brechtian "Not, But": it shows the ludicrous lengths to which Keloglan must go before he is accepted, in order to denounce the process that impedes it.

Against the proliferation of masks during the finale, one curious instance of unmasking captures the spectators' attention: after the singing of the wedding chorus from *The Bartered Bride*, Little Red Riding Hood removes her mask and reveals the face of an old woman. While this image resonates with a number of references from modern art and literature,

21. The lyrics Özdamar adapts and invents for that extended musical medley are drawn from folk tunes such as "Häschen in der Grube," "Auf einem Baum ein Kukuck saß," and "Ein Jäger aus Kurpfalz." The monotonous repetitions in these songs offer a "naive" vision of the "natural" cycle of hunting, killing, and regenerating.



**Martin Wangler (as Keloglan) and Little Red Riding Hood in *Keloglan in Alania*, production at Oldenburgisches Staatstheater, 2000. (Photograph by Claudia Hoppens.)**

there is one specific intertext that elucidates this dramatic moment: the Turkish one-act play *Sair Evlenmesi* (The poet's marriage, 1859) by Ibrahim Sinasi, which revolves around a similar revelation. The piece was long regarded as "the first Turkish play with a European orientation" (Pazarkaya, 321). The playwright dramatizes his critique of the old Turkish custom of arranging marriages through the story of a young poet who is promised a beautiful young bride but discovers during the wedding night that his wife is a crippled old woman instead. This story's disapproval of arranged marriages, which is echoed by Smetana's operatic plot, but also by a number of other European plays heralding modernity, emphasizes the analogy between the consensual love cementing the patriarchal family unit and the contract binding enlightened, yet loyal, citizens to the modern state. The arranged, loveless marriage stands in for the old absolutist order that must be rejected in order to enter modernity. The citation from *The Poet's Marriage*, in which the rejection of the old political order is symbolically aligned with men's horror of old women, underscores the misogynist force of the impulse toward modernity. In addition, the extremely contrived plot twists necessary to transform two female lovers (Butterfly and Little Red Riding Hood) into a properly marriageable bride and groom, along with both characters' function as tropes of cross-dressing and (repressed) homosexual desire, call attention to the heterosexism structur-

ing individuals' relationship to the nation.<sup>22</sup> Gay and lesbian politics in Germany in the mid-1990s has challenged state heterosexism by demanding the right to confer residence and citizenship on foreign partners independent of sexual persuasion; the queer marriage of Butterfly and Little Red Riding Hood weirdly prefigures activists' objection to the state's predication of immigration eligibility on a heterosexual institution.

The final moment of Little Red Riding Hood's unmasking is the only one in the play that hints at a feminist critique of nation and citizenship; hinging on a recognition of the intertextual reference to *The Poet's Marriage*, that critique appears to be specifically addressed to Turkish spectators, since German audiences are unlikely to recognize an allusion to Turkish theater history. Against that, the "orientalization" and feminization of Keloglan, the loss of his pants and insertion into the Butterfly mask and its suicidal script, tracks a process of emasculation, implicitly equating integrity and agency with masculinity. It suggests that the exigencies of migrant existence ("castration") are particularly tragic for men. Women disappear from view, since neither the specific effects of migration on them nor their strategies of contesting or coping with them can be grasped within this discourse.

The peculiarly surreptitious critique of nation and the adoption of a masculine discourse on migration are not, I would argue, representative of Özdamar's work, but point to the differences between her introspective, often autobiographical prose and drama as modes of public speech. *Keloglan* is clearly a response to a political crisis, and its neglect, or repression, of a feminist perspective is typical of political appeals to unity. It acquiesces to an equation of the masculine with the universal, which the author's short stories and novels eschew. The denunciatory allusion to *The Poet's Marriage* encrypts a gender critique of Turkish modernity intelligible only to certain spectators, avoiding the common harnessing of a German feminist critique of Turkish culture to an anti-Turkish rhetoric of alleged Islamic misogyny.

Özdamar avoids positivist notions of migrant identity, however fragmented, liminal, or parodically these may be imagined in contemporary literature. Instead, she casts migrant identity and self-determination as a *commitment* that neither Kelkari nor Keloglan is able to make under the present circumstances. The possibility of a "blond Turk," a subject permitted to enact the relationship between these two terms according to his or her own preferences, is marked as impossible, cannot even be imagined under the present conditions, much less practiced, figured only as that

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22. See Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood* and D. H. Wang's *M. Butterfly* for explorations of these erotic possibilities.

which is effaced by the double negative of Blondoglan and Butterfly. *Kelloglan in Alamania*, rather than appealing to the “truth” of oppressed identities, performs a politics of disidentification when it parodically embodies a colonialist fantasy or the assimilationist nightmare of *Zwangsgermanisierung* (“compulsory germanization”; see Seidel-Pielen). In the hopes of creating a larger consensus *against* xenophobia than it could ever achieve by summoning allegiance *to* any political agenda, this minoritarian strategy might ultimately prove more effective than a rhetoric of authenticity and affiliation.

The triangulated vision that subtends the imperial gaze of *Winnetou* and *Madama Butterfly*, its operations of substitution and overwriting, is here reconfigured as a triangular, parodic theater of identity staging competing strategies of reading. Its success, defined as the ability to solicit political allegiances, resides both in defamiliarizing the “authenticity effects” that lock Indians and Turkish migrants alike into the commodity logic and in recuperating identity in order to stage claims to property and political representation. *Winnetou’s Snake Oil Show* deconstructs the Indian princess as figure of difference and authenticity *and* commodity fetish—yet refuses to cede spirituality to the project of deconstruction. Likewise, the migrants in Özdamar’s play put the myths of the Orient’s tragic, unrequited love for the West under erasure, pointing to their function of confirming white superiority and desirability in the discourse of assimilation, yet insisting on the need to think difference and participation together.

The triangulations examined in this chapter cast a different light on the politics of surrogation examined throughout this book. While my argument in earlier chapters hinges on the assertion that imagined and enacted German-Indian relations allowed postwar Germans to rework their relationship to the Holocaust—in the form of repression, revision, and imaginary restitution, respectively—both Spiderwoman and Özdamar refuse to have Indians or migrants stand in for Jews, constructing different frames of reference (New Age xenophilia, European orientalism) for representing and refuting the racializing gaze. They point, correctly, I think, to the limits of believing that biological racism constitutes the underpinning of contemporary racisms: while fascist racial certainties and hierarchies are still not obsolete, “race” in contemporary Germany makes a difference in (multi)culture, the politics of citizenship, and economics and needs to be examined in its specific articulations at these sites without conflating them with fascist racism.

Both Spiderwoman and Özdamar point to what Homi Bhabha described as the “ambivalence” of colonial discourse, which underwrites both its disciplining mechanisms and its inherent instability, yet they are

not content to wait until the internal contradictions of a racialized economy will erode it. They deploy estrangement techniques through which the oppressive alienation effects of ethnicity can be understood without either granting it truth status or allowing spectators to own the gaze that pierces through the veil of racial dissembling. Ethnic impersonation is shown as a social strategy registering both the persistence of colonial fantasies and the performative agency of these fantasies' latter-day referents. Their double address to the dupe who sees mimesis and the witness who sees drag throws into relief the power relations attending performance. Yet the delineation of ways of seeing and the exhortation to recognize the material and psychic effects of the mimetic gaze are not issued in the name of ethnic essentialism, but on behalf of political communities of interest. For Spiderwoman, that entails a feminist address to audiences seen not as sisters united across ethnic and cultural boundaries, but as allies respectful of cultural difference and property. Özdamar's comedy about belonging and assimilation shows a migrant subject skewered between the alternatives of self-minoritization and compulsory germanization, enjoining spectators of all ethnic affiliations to envision Germanness as open to cultural differences and political equality. Her aggressive parodic dramaturgy foreshadows the more recent political activism practiced by the fledgling movement *Kanak Attak*. It is perhaps no accident that parodic militance is the preferred rhetorical weapon of the third generation of migrants—precisely the cohort that is now included under the revised citizenship law and can thus issue its critique from the position of belonging to a constitutional subject from which Özdamar's migrants were excluded. If a militant parodic politics is fueled by the security of knowing one belongs to “the people” protected by the constitution to contest one's place in the graded scheme of civic participation, parody and ethnic drag promise to be valuable tools for defamiliarizing and dismantling the construction of nationality around gendered, sexual, and racial exclusions.



## Conclusion

In the summer of 1994, as ethnic cleansing was under way in Bosnia and hate crimes against foreign-looking people scarred Germany, I drove up to Bad Segeberg to attend a production of *The Treasure in Silver Lake*, an adaptation of one of Karl May's most popular novels. Watching the Wild West adventure between the German superhero Old Shatterhand and the Apache chief Winnetou, I experienced a profound defamiliarization effect that ultimately prompted the writing of this book. Seeing Winnetou and his German blood-brother embrace on stage to the delirious howls of the audience, I could not stop wondering how to interpret the peculiar marketing of the star in the Winnetou role, which emphasized his whiteness, and the emphasis on masquerade in the books, pamphlets, and postcards about Karl May. What were spectators actually seeing: the German actor or the Indian character? A hostel for asylum seekers in nearby Hamburg had been burned by arsons that summer; how to reconcile the giddy masses applauding interracial love in the auditorium and the noisy mobs not so far away? I suspected that if this play revealed anything about spectators' relationship to "race," it did not do so by *representing* race relations, but by *signifying* them through ethnic drag. A trip to Bad Segeberg is considered good family entertainment, its pleasures simple, its message transparent. It has taken me years to decode the surrogations I encountered there, to reconstruct "deaths and departures," elisions, and inversions. Ethnic drag dramatizes social conflicts in the manner of a dream, through condensations, displacements, and distortions. Its relation to reality is indirect, its outcome in many ways counterintuitive.

In *Vested Interests* Marjorie Garber suggested reading the crisis of categories such as "race" by looking at, not through, the masquerade. Yet queer theory, which constituted my institutional, personal, and political environment in the early 1990s, provided less than useful tools for dissecting *this* drag show. Both Garber and Butler had cast transvestism and drag as key tropes of subversion in their influential works. However, Butler's



caveat that some parodic repetitions “become domesticated and recirculated as instruments of cultural hegemony” (139) offered little explanation as to why, when, or how. I observed many ethnic masquerades in the course of my research, but only a few had the flavor of parody; one of the most deliberately parodic acts, performed by one Albert Wurm in early-nineteenth-century Berlin, indeed ridiculed Jewish assimilation and catered to a distinctly anti-Semitic humor. While ethnic drag betrays the desires, fantasies, and projections of those Germans who at least symbolically touched a Jewish body, it is difficult to see these masquerades as counterhegemonic.

Feminist critiques of female impersonation in classical theater and the critique of blackface minstrelsy in nineteenth-century America offered a better fit for the analysis of hegemonic formations of gender and race in high and low cultural theatrical institutions. The stage history of *Nathan the Wise* and of Nathan’s travestied doubles in the nineteenth-century Jew Farce and other entertainments, such as Wurm’s number, showed that the orientation of impersonation along the axis of mimesis and masquerade aided and abetted masculine privileges and a notion of German culture defined and defended in increasingly racial terms.

After the Holocaust, the theatrical representation of Jews was overdetermined by Germans’ philosemitic desires. Confrontations and negotiations regarding the racist atrocities perpetrated by the Nazis proceeded in a political arena that was set up by Allied occupation forces. The plays about genocide and guilt, denial, and atonement that were staged in the reconstruction period rework this courtroom situation and redistribute the roles of avenger, accused, and victim in the displaced theater of the Wild West. The popular Karl May adaptations after World War II orchestrated West Germans’ racial feelings when the very term *race* had been officially debunked. The productions kept a certain ethnic chauvinism in place while attributing imperialist violence to other Europeans; by later associating heroic virility with an American body, they endorsed a notion of masculine strength that had been discredited because of its fascist associations. Over several decades, the performances dramatized West Germans’ current predicaments, rather than reflecting actual relationships with Native Americans. By contrast, the Indian hobbyists who recounted the history of their clubs underscore the importance of direct contact with Native Americans during the occupation years and later as a corrective to theatricals such as the Karl May festival at Bad Segeberg. Moreover, their emphasis on ethnicity as cultural competence rather than a birthright or innate quality suggests that their practice constituted an amateur, collective effort at reconstructing and overcoming Nazi notions of race.

The notions of drag, performativity, and theatricality connect the

study of mass, popular, high cultural, and avant-garde performance in West Germany to critiques of identity that have been launched from within feminist, queer, postcolonial, and ethnic studies in this country. While these theoretical endeavors might seem “foreign” to the context of German culture and society, they share a focus on identity as culturally specific and historically contingent with the oppositional, antifascist dramaturgy that Bertolt Brecht developed in the 1930s. His concept of the estrangement effect hinges on the same disjunction of actor and role that marks postmodern identity politics. Despite Brecht’s indifference to “race” and his implication that race eludes historicization, postwar artists have productively adapted his acting theory, as well as other political dramaturgies, to the project of critically dismantling race and exposing its historical contingency. From the Swiss playwright Max Frisch, the filmmaker Rainer Werner Fassbinder, and the Bavarian feminist Kerstin Specht, to the Turkish-German author and actor Emine Özdamar, ethnic drag has served to defamiliarize Germanness, to expose its collective construction in specific historical and social situations, to reveal its universalizing conceit, and to rehearse alternative ways of “reading” identity. In these critical and comical interventions, “race” emerges not as a property of particular bodies, but as the spectatorial activity of decoding (and thereby producing) difference. By enjoining spectators to disidentify with the mimetic mode of reading, which takes appearance as evidence of racial character, these texts sever the historical alliance of Germanness and mimesis, and of mimesis to cultural authority, an alliance that had earlier shored up the Nazi state’s prerogative of eugenic measures.

The public discussion of cross-racial casting in the production of a Koltès play, which I analyze in the introduction, provided some of the rhetorical complements to drag’s visual economy. Could the panel discussion, which took place in 1988, occur in exactly the same way now? Ethnic drag is alive and well, on the theatrical as well as the political stage, and cross-racial casting continues to raise no eyebrows. Yet I suspect (and hope) that, in view of the historic developments of the 1990s, the German critic’s claim regarding the country’s lack of a “multicultural” acting pool and the director’s pledge to protect the “homogeneity of the ensemble” would elicit criticism, perhaps ridicule, on the part of the audience. The enormous social changes precipitated by the opening of the Iron Curtain, the reunification of the previously divided German states, the collapse of Communist states in Eastern Europe, and the increased migration from those countries to Western Europe have produced new, multicultural realities, a tremendous surge in nationalist, xenophobic violence, and a revision of Cold War narratives of German history and identity. The scaling back of public funding for the arts after reunification required theaters to

not only tighten their belts, but to generally reconsider their stance of aesthetic distance vis-à-vis a society undergoing rapid and bewildering changes. The well-funded theaters in Hamburg and other large cities dedicated themselves to staging topical, explicitly political plays, but also engaged in other methods of outreach designed to demonstrate the institution's social relevance. During the same year that I traveled to Bad Segeberg I noticed that many productions at state theaters included actors of color. Several theaters opened their facilities to community-based collaborative creations and local history projects (see Sieg 1994b). The socialist Grips Theater (Berlin) cooperated with ensembles from other countries, especially war-torn Yugoslavia. Tiyatrom, a Turkish community theater that presents plays primarily in Turkish, is based in Berlin, but some of its productions tour the Federal Republic. As stand-up comedy became a more and more popular medium in theater and television during the 1990s, Turkish-German comics have carved out a market niche by developing routines about German-Turkish interactions and confrontations. The almost complete exclusion of Germany's resident minorities from official, subsidized cultural production has lessened slightly; Turkish-German artists in particular have individually and collectively asserted their own interpretation of racial ideologies shaping Germany's past and present, and articulate their analyses and fantasies as participants rather than objects or victims.

By interrogating ethnic drag, I grappled with changes in German culture during the 1990s, which I perceived as deeply alarming on my annual summer visits. Yet the masquerades I examine in this book call into question a fascist telos of German history, which has prompted some to interpret contemporary xenophobia as evidence of long-submerged Nazi tendencies or (East) Germans' totalitarian mentality. By tracing postwar permutations and contestations of "race" and ethnicity, this study points to national specificities, but also embeds German culture in the larger theoretical and political canvas of critical race studies. Conversely, ethnic drag in Germany allows American readers to question and modify the analytical paradigms that theater studies, and Marxist, feminist, and queer theory hold available to critics of identity politics. The black/white schema of the minstrel show, while offering instructive parallels to theatrical constructions of whiteness on the German stage, needs to be revised for aural codes of racial difference, but should also be adjusted for the triangular surrogations of "race" after the Holocaust. Some ethnic drag acts can be fully accounted for by queer theorists' focus on subversion and transgression. Many others, however, suggest queer theory's limitations for a study of institutions and their material effects. Feminist and ethnic studies better accommodate an investigation of how institutions (including not only the

theater, film, journalism, and radio, but also nineteenth-century salon culture, turn-of-the-century ethnic shows, and twentieth-century hobbyism) accumulate and organize perception into habits, knowledge into authority, and power into actions. Finally, the texts I examine illustrate the necessity—and historical difficulty—of adjusting leftist critiques of representation (exemplified here by Brecht’s essay on estrangement effects) to a critique of race. This study shows very painfully how secondary such a critique has been to many leftist and antifascist artists in the Federal Republic. Many (but not all) represent “race” merely as a metaphor for oppression, in order to bolster their own claim to speak for the disenfranchised; only a few treat it as the central object of analysis and intervention. I offer my perceptions neither to debunk the diverse critical efforts I describe here, nor to demonstrate that leftist, feminist, or queer endeavors are inadequate and obsolete. Indeed, my criticism is impelled by my own personal and political investments in these positions. Moreover, I find more urgent than ever the need to cross-examine and sharpen these critiques with a view to the social conditions denoted by the umbrella term *globalization*.

The crossing, in performance, of socially vested lines, when placed in the hierarchically structured systems of class, gender, and ethnicity, needs to hold available a notion of appropriation, in order to account for radically unequal positions of access to representation and cultural exchange. As my analysis of ethnic drag—from Jewish impersonation to Özdamar’s migrant comedy—has shown, cultural transactions are framed by, and reproduce, unequal power relations. Global capitalism not only reaches into the remotest corners of the planet and the most intimate spaces of desire with its commodities, values, and infrastructures. It also thrives on the ever more rapid transformation of ethnic, cultural, sexual, and other differences into sexy, exotic commodities available to a small class of consumers, while subjecting the populations that produced this cultural currency to its expanding regimes of austerity and deprivation. This modernist schema is so familiar it has become a commonplace, even though some of the technologies that reproduce it—like ethnic drag—have not been critically elaborated for the German context. However, the global traffic of cultural commodities, accelerated after the demise of capitalism’s historic antagonist and through the proliferation of information technologies across the continents, has created not only more efficient channels of information, products, and labor, but also effected a matrix where the flow of cultural forms no longer proceeds *only* from margin (the former colonies, the so-called Third World, ethnic communities, and ghettos) to center (the metropolis, First World nations, corporate capital) in the mode of exploitation and appropriation on the one hand; and from center to margin in the mode of cultural imperialism and assimilation on the other.

Rather, as George Lipsitz has argued in his work on popular music, exchange and borrowing, impersonation and ventriloquy multiply the points of interaction and transaction along and among what used to be called the periphery or the margins.

Young Turkish musicians in Berlin borrow the rap rhythms of African American bands to formulate different but related experiences of marginalization and defiance; Özdamar, a Turkish playwright, appropriates the devices of the epic theater for a critique of colonial legacies; Turkish intellectual Zafer Şenocak writes his experience of diaspora and exile in Jewish emigrant Lion Feuchtwanger's house in Los Angeles; Spiderwoman, a troupe of Native American women, tour North American reservations with a spoof on Karl May's hero Winnetou to address cultural expropriation in New Age discourses; a gay filmmaker creates a parable on the workings of racism. These borrowings, some of which I have traced in this book, remap networks of affiliation and resistance from political positions beyond the old nationalist ontologies of blood and soil that, until recently, underwrote citizenship laws, and beyond the leftist antagonisms of mass and popular cultural forms. Some masquerades translate high cultural icons into local forms of engagement and activism. Others evoke the shared memories of displacement and ostracization, as well as proximate histories of pride and resilience, for a politics of dialogue, tria-logue, and coalition.

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