RACE UNDER RECONSTRUCTION IN GERMAN CINEMA

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Introduction

> Writing and reading are not all that distinct for a writer. Both exercises require being alert and ready for unaccountable beauty, for the intricateness or simple elegance of the writer's imagination, for the world that imagination evokes. Both require being mindful of the places where imagination sabotages itself, locks its own gates, pollutes its vision. Writing and reading mean being aware of the writer's notions of risk and safety, the serene achievement of, or sweaty fight for, meaning and response-ability.
>
> Toni Morrison (1992, xi)

National Culture in a Transnational Framework

As I prepare a meaningful point of entry for my readers into the discussion pursued between these book covers, I feel obliged to justify how a single film could have elicited from me an entire monograph. A precedent already exists for assembling 'companion guides,' which generally unpack narratological and stylistic qualities of a given literary and filmic text while also attending to its wider social impact and reception. But such publications have generally assumed as their object of study canonical texts – the 'classics' of world literature and cinema – whose relevance is widely established as much in scholarly circles as among a wider public. By contrast, the West German filmmaker Robert Adolf Stemmle (Magdeburg, 1903; Baden-Baden, 1973) can hardly be classified as an internationally recognized *auteur* on the scale of a John Ford, an Akira Kurosawa, or a Wim Wenders, even though he was one of the most popular and prolific directors in early West Germany. Nor is his work necessarily stylistically innovative in a manner that would have

secured it the status of 'art cinema' produced outside Hollywood's industrialized conditions of production and deviating from generic conventions of film form. Stemmle's output and that of his compatriots was generated primarily with an eye towards a national or, at best, European market; moreover, stylistic or aesthetic innovation, and for that matter, political risk, took second place to working with tried-and-true conventions that would secure box-office returns in a postwar era governed by financial austerity and political caution.

Compelling frameworks are nevertheless now emerging for addressing German popular cinema of the 1950s – frameworks that acknowledge the heterogeneity of these films, their complex engagement with an era of ideological transition and emergent modernization, and their search to articulate a new film language whose influence on later developments of the Young German cinema and beyond has been underestimated or misunderstood (Baer 2009).[1] If Stemmle's 1952 box office hit *Toxi* merits exegesis today, it is because of the conjunctural nature of its subject matter, which self-consciously addresses the issue of racial integration in response to transformations that took place in early postwar West German society. When I first encountered this film at a retrospective curated by Madeleine Bernstorff in 1996 at the Arsenal Kino in Berlin, I was vividly struck by the uncanny manner in which an innocent family film could coalesce with such legibility the racial politics of its time, inviting an archaeological enterprise such as my own that seeks, in Foucauldian fashion, to unearth some of the underlying *epistemes*. Few surviving visual texts from this nascent era of the Federal Republic lend themselves so fully to a 'new historicist' approach that assesses how the film crystallized public controversies while also self-consciously intervening in them. *Toxi* can be read as embedded in a wider societal network of material practices pertaining to film funding, inherited modes of cinematic representation, and lived social relations – all of which were shot through with power relations coalescing out of the historical aftermath of racialized genocide within and beyond Germany's borders, the Allied occupation, and the new nation's struggle to redefine itself along models of Western and, more specifically, U.S. democracy.

Toxi's very existence seems symptomatic of, and participates in, what sociologist Howard Winant has described as 'a worldwide crisis of racial formation,' the result of centuries of racial tensions gestating within modernity in national settings around the globe and reaching 'ruptural unity' during and following the Second World War (2002,

135). Not only was race central to all the major social upheavals that began during the war, the years following its end were marked – within metropoles, colonies, and ex-colonies alike – by further challenges to the existing world racial system and centuries of engrained segregation, Eurocentrism, racial hierarchy, and political exclusion. Indeed, the Allies had conscripted heavily in the colonies, militarizing hundreds of thousands of British and French colonials in a war waged to uphold national sovreignty and democracy. African-American soldiers were similarly hard put to return to Southern segregation after risking their lives in mixed battalions. While the United States became the leading superpower in economic, military, and cultural terms, it was also, as Winant convincingly argues, 'racially emblematic of the epoch' (137): a nation born out of revolution and the defence of liberty, whose wealth and resources were, nonetheless, predicated upon the conquest of indigenous populations and the enslavement of imported Africans. Such long-standing and glaring contradictions fuelled the dawning global racial crisis evident in the civil rights movement in the American South and travelling along other pressure points across the globe, including West Germany, where the American military occupation established irreversible cultural and political crosscurrents.

The issues addressed or, as the case may be, skirted in *Toxi*'s plot today possess a relevance that exceeds both the era of the film's initial release and Germany's immediate territorial borders. During and following the Second World War, a generation of illegitimate children emerged throughout Europe, born out of both volitional and coerced encounters between soldiers and local civilian women. As a recent essay collection reveals, in adulthood many such individuals continue to live with unanswered questions about the circumstances of their birth, which may be shrouded in shame or secrecy (Ericsson and Simonsen 2005). Often, their familial lineage traverses political and ideological affiliations, national borders, and socially circumscribed racial formations, as the Afro-German context also reveals. Among those children born out of postwar liaisons between African-American soldiers and German women, historian Heide Fehrenbach suggests that, by 1968, an estimated 7,000 had been placed for adoption in U.S. American families (2005, 133). Many possess no memory of this dramatic transition that took place at a very early age, and learned only in adulthood of their bicultural background. Today, the Black German Cultural Society, which exists as a website and social network, offers members on both sides of the Atlantic, adoptees and non-adoptees alike, a means to

exchange assistance, advice, and support in parsing fragmented biographies and locating long-lost or never-known parents, siblings, or half-siblings.[2] An early postwar film like *Toxi* can barely gesture towards the consequences of these early transatlantic migrations, but nevertheless sows the seeds of their emplotment. These 'hidden histories' lend a further dimension to my title *Race under Reconstruction*, as, indeed, the film under examination constitutes a foundational text in a social history of Black Germans, whose genealogy has been under reconstruction for at least the past twenty-five years by its living subjects and other scholars, alike.

Within contemporary German popular culture, historicized discourses around race and representation have emerged with heightened visibility parallel to paradigm shifts taking place within institutional frameworks of research and knowledge production. In a survey of contemporary scholarship in German studies, for example, it is richly evident that a 'turn' is well underway in relation to the analytical category of 'race.' During the early postwar decades, scholars came to terms primarily with the ramifications of anti-Semitism and National Socialism, displaying a reticence to theorize 'race' in any broader sense and instead condemning, ignoring, or denying altogether the manner in which discursive constructs manifest material consequences – consequences that inform cultural production as much as they do human embodied experience. However, continental social transformations such as those resulting from global decolonization movements and the European recruitment of foreign labour beginning in the 1950s have proven a too powerful cumulative political and social force to be ignored, particularly when coupled with diverse emancipatory movements driving the identity politics of the 1970s. The 1980s, in turn, witnessed the proliferation of critical scholarship on Black British cultural production, on postcolonial literatures, and on 'race' and identity in American film and literature. Since then, ongoing developments in critical race theory have fed new disciplinary domains, for which Black European studies and Transnational and Diasporic Studies are exemplary, as they continue to disseminate anti-racist epistemologies and promote interdisciplinary exchange among scholars across the social sciences and humanities. Studies of globalization processes, moreover, recognize 'race' as a discourse that is energetically reorganizing itself, as the forces of capital, labour, and technology converge to assemble new hierarchies of racial ordering (Clarke and Thomas 2006; Macedo and Gounari 2005; Scott 2004).

The recent scholarship on the Black diaspora within the German-

speaking world has been especially rich and continues to gain ground, developing increasingly transnational contours in its examination of the cross-currents between Germany and the United States, the UK, Europe, Africa, and South Asia. American Germanistik of the 1980s offered early groundbreaking contributions: those of the cultural and literary historian Sander Gilman (1982, 1991, 1993), along with Rosemary Lester's (1982) monograph on portrayals of Blacks in West German illustrated novels of the 1960s and 1970s, and the first anthology of critical essays, *Blacks in German Culture* (1986), edited by Reinhold Grimm and Jost Hermann. The scholarly shift from examining German cultural production to also assessing lived realities gained impetus from a generation of Black Germans, many of whom chose academic study in history and the social sciences or careers in social work, precisely in order to engage with discourses that had framed their own socialization within Germany. Several edited anthologies (Oguntoye et al. 1986; Hügel et al. 1993) have brought visibility to contemporary Afro-German subcultures and identities. These were followed by comprehensive studies by Afro-German historians (Oguntoye 1997; El-Tayeb 2001; Lemke Muniz de Faria 2002) that consolidated empirical evidence on national racial policy measures in specific epochs and examined their impact upon Black Germans, whose history in the Wilhelmine era, under National Socialism, and in the early postwar years would otherwise have remained effaced. Others have inscribed themselves into this historiographical endeavour through autobiographical writings that bring to life the direct impact of racism on subject formation (Ayim 1997; Hügel-Marshall 1998; Massaquoi 1999; Kaufmann 2004; Soost 2005; Nejar 2007). U.S. scholars in the social sciences as well as in the humanities (Höhn 2002; Wright 2004; Campte 2004; Fehrenbach 2005) have also generated comprehensive contributions that are transnational in their scope. Worthy of note are Uli Linke's innovative anthropological work on Whiteness in postwar German society (1999; 1999), Katrin Sieg's study of the performative dimensions of 'race' and nation (i.e., 'ethnic drag') in West Germany (2002), as well as several anthologies on Black German history, cultural theory, and criticism (Blackshire-Belay 1996; McBride et al. 1998; Anti-DiskriminierungsBüro Köln et al. 2004; Eggers et al. 2005; Mazón and Steingröver 2005).

Mapping Terms and Situating Myself

While it is challenging to address questions of racialized identity in conjunction with Germany's disturbing past, the long-standing repression

of this category for too long enabled culturally inherited perceptions to go unquestioned by all but a few cultural iconoclasts, for which Rainer Werner Fassbinder was exemplary. Early postwar national identity in the Federal Republic was built upon the presumed dominant positioning of a White majority that claimed an imagined cultural superiority in relation to various minorities circumscribed as different. This phenomenon, while maintaining a national and historical specificity, can be understood as inevitably imbricated with global racialization processes fundamental to the project of modernity, as twentieth-century scholars beginning with W.E. DuBois ([1935], 1972) have extensively established. Certainly, the suggestion that the modern nation has ethnic or racial origins is a familiar one. By way of example, settler countries such as the United States and Canada, as well as the nations of imperial Europe (although other geopolitical regions could certainly be invoked, including the ethnically diverse cultures that came to constitute the Soviet Union) forged themselves into homogeneous entities through prolonged processes of both amalgamation and exclusion. These processes unified nation-states internally, while also helping to distinguish them from one another. Introducing phenotypical and corporeal features into these modes of differentiation, in turn, rendered more visible and recognizable the axes not only of difference, but ultimately, of power.

To address this phenomenon, I believe it is important to retain the contested term 'race,' yet without attributing to it a fixed meaning over time, and by necessity also acknowledging its imbrication with gender, class, and ethnicity. For even as a biological fiction or discursive construct, this signifier continues to have far-reaching and very real material effects throughout the world, alternately employed by different groups as a marker of solidarity or as a ground for exclusion; in effect, 'race' has been and continues to function as a political tool in relationships constructed primarily around domination and resistance. Readers will note that, although I have engaged the proverbial scare quotes in my use of the term while mapping my terms, I will for the most part abstain from the use of these diacritics in ensuing chapters, on practical grounds familiar to editors, authors, and readers alike.

Throughout this study, however, I seek to maintain 'race' and ethnicity as two distinct categories, even as use of one term often invokes the other. If we talk about 'race' independently of ethnicity, we border on repressing the former term's discursive origins while implying it is the

latter that designates differences based upon cultural practices. As it happens, the term 'ethnicity' has often been employed in scholarly and journalistic writing as a synonym for 'race' and as a foil for visual markers of difference, in order to circumnavigate charged or controversial terminology. As E. San Juan (1992) maintains: 'Ethnicity theory elides power relations, conjuring an illusory state of parity among bargaining agents. It serves chiefly to legitimize a pluralist but hierarchical status quo.' Whereas ethnicity may be invoked to imply collectivity, shared experiences, and solidarity, he continues, 'race implicates peoples and social structures in historical processes of dissociation and exclusion that have distinguished the trajectory of Western civilization' (5). Given widespread disavowal of any disjuncture between the two terms, 'race' has come to occupy a space in the signifying chain subject to more than the usual semantic slippage and ambiguity.

Even the inclusionist discourse of feminist theory often falls into the trap of using the term to designate certain bodies (e.g., Black, Latino, Asian) as deviating from the Caucasian norm while neglecting to interrogate that racial difference which is specifically White. To cite the polemical point made by bell hooks: 'In far too much contemporary writing – though there are some outstanding exceptions – race is always an issue of Otherness that is not white; it is black, brown, yellow, red, purple even' (1990, 54). In response to this lacuna, a number of scholars hailing from sociology, law, history, cultural studies, and literary criticism launched scholarship on the social construction of 'Whiteness.' The emerging field of 'Whiteness Studies,' whose pioneers include public intellectual Theodore Allen (1994), film scholar Richard Dyer (1997), and sociologists Ruth Frankenberg (1993, 1997) and Vron Ware (1992, 2001), and several feminist philosophers (Cuomo and Hall 1999), has restored discursive visibility to an ideological scotoma and revealed the mutability of Whiteness within different historical contexts and national formations.[3] Those early studies have inspired the German anthology *Mythen, Subjekte, Masken: Kritische Weißseinsforschung in Deutschland* (Eggers et al. 2005) and also a formidable number of Anglophone studies that apply Lacanian psychoanalysis (Lane 1998), review the Jewish context (Goldstein 2006), and examine pedagogical considerations in the classroom (Rodriguez and Villaverde 2000; Leonardo 2005; Cooks and Simpson 2008).

In my own research, I have struggled with the question of how and, indeed, even whether my analysis can avoid succumbing to precisely those gestures of containment and othering it sets out to deconstruct.

Feminist philosopher Marilyn Frye (1992), in her search for a term with which to acknowledge the socially constructed nature of 'race' as well as the impossibility of fully escaping our interpellation as subjects via such discourses, has coined the neologism 'whiteliness.' She employs the word to refer to a kind of whiteness that is not essentially tied to skin tone and yet sustains some contingent relation to it. Whiteliness, as a characteristic Frye attributes to 'White' people, is similar to but not identical with racism. While racism may involve institutionally sanctioned bias or wilful bigotry founded upon perceived epidermal differences, whiteliness can be understood as blindness to one's own seemingly unmarked status and the privileged positioning which that enables. Indeed, Frye maintains, whiteliness often derives precisely from a position of goodwill and open-mindedness that is ignorant of or unable to recognize the possibility that this ethical positioning might originate from within a highly solipsistic system of morality that is silently marked as white. Whiteliness, she continues, is a form of compulsory membership: 'nobody gave you any choice in the matter – but it is contingent, and, in the Aristotelian sense, accidental' (150). Even as it may seem liberatory to renounce any racial identity, she points out that this freedom maintains a different valence in different circles. The assumption that one may simply cast off membership with a given group is itself symptomatic of privilege: 'The ontological freedom of categorical reconstruction may be generic, but what is politically possible differs for those differently positioned, and not all the political possibilities for every group are desirable' (164).

Nevertheless, in certain instances, self-labelling can constitute an affirmative gesture and a means of eluding or reframing confining discourses. The appellate 'Afro-German' or *Afro-Deutsch*, for example, is a relatively recent product of a social and political movement that gained momentum during the mid-1980s and which resulted in the groundbreaking collection of essays, *Farbe Bekennen: Afro-Deutsche Frauen auf den Spuren Ihrer Geschichte* (Oguntoye et al., 1986, rev. 1992). As May Opitz (later publishing under her father's Ghanaian name, Ayim) explains in the introduction to this now canonical anthology exploring Afro-German identity, it was Audre Lorde's three-month guest lectureship at the Free University of Berlin in spring 1984 that provided the initial impetus for (West) Germans of African ancestry, as well as foreign nationals residing in the (then) Federal Republic, to mobilize collectively. The creation of organizations such as the Initiative Schwarze Deutsche (Coalition of Black Germans) in 1985 and of

AdeFra (Afro-deutsche Frauen) in 1986 and the founding of publications such as *afro-look* and *Afrakete* facilitated dialogue about the Afro-German experience, inspired readers to review and document the basis of their own identities, and provided networks of solidarity in the face of a resurgence of racism following German reunification.

Modelled upon the label 'Afro-American,' the term 'Afro-German' implies an ethnic heritage in which one parent traces African ancestry and the other European; however, Opitz/Ayim maintains it ultimately encompasses all those who voluntarily choose to affirm themselves as 'of color' (10). By choosing for themselves an identifier understood, at that time, as carrying equal valence with the synonym 'black German' or *Schwarze Deutsche*, Afro-Germans have recovered a degree of agency with which to combat the damage wrought by other German terms that bear a historically derogatory charge – for example, mixed-race (*Mischling*), Mulatto (*Mulatte(in)*), coloured (person) (*Farbige(r)*), Negro (*Neger(in)*). In my ensuing analyses, I will be invoking some of these latter terms when translating citations from texts published in the 1950s to accurately capture the discourse that was current at that time. I will also primarily, although not exclusively, use the term Afro-German, because my study is centrally preoccupied with a specific historical moment when, indeed, the emergence of individuals tracing dual African-American and German heritage became the focus of public debate about the terms of membership in German society.

As Carmen Faymonville has rightly pointed out, the term 'Afro-German' can be limiting in its purview, in contrast to the term *Schwarze(r)* *Deutsche(r)* or 'Black German,' which encompasses 'people of color living in Germany regardless of whether they are of African, Asian, or other non-European heritage' (2003, 365). The Initiative Schwarze Deutsche (ISD), for example, fosters alliances across multiple borders of identity and geography. ISD members' identification as 'Black,' Faymonville explains, 'follows from the newly developed transnational spaces of identity that allow them to find political and personal connections by emphasizing the similarities of their experiences of race, despite national and ethnic differences within that identity position' (366). Of course, in the overall framework of labelling, I would point out that, while it can be useful to attach identifiers not previously bound to one another, such as Black German or Afro-German, there are circumstances where it is also emancipatory not to feel that there is reason or need to apply any qualifiers of identity, or for it not to always matter.

Certainly, the ongoing challenge in writing this book has involved situating myself critically within various available grammars and terminologies while also acknowledging my own epistemical limits. As a Caucasian North American academic in the early twenty-first century researching racial discourse in West German cinema of the reconstruction years, I am navigating a gulf consisting of historical distance, cultural difference, and gendered identity. These constraints upon the interpretative project are furthermore compounded by the contingent and, thus, potentially problematic positioning shared by Stemmle and myself. What, I would ask, legitimizes his and, by extension, my preoccupation with the discursive workings and practical realities of racialization as they are seen to operate within the cinema? This question of legitimation is not really linked to the accuracy or inaccuracy of my assessments, or those of Stemmle, since I am not assuming the truth of propositions to lie outside of human interpretation with all its bias and culpability or to have validity independent of their specific site of reception. But it is, nevertheless, a political problem. According to Linda Alcoff (1991–2), 'rituals of speaking are politically constituted by power relations of domination, exploitation, and subordination. Who is speaking, who is spoken of, and who listens is a result, as well as an act, of political struggle' (15). The dangers implicit in speaking about or for discursively and politically situated groups in which I do not carry membership are then those of potentially engaging in discursive imperialism – of either erasing previous identities or inscribing new hierarchies.

As a second-generation American struggling towards an elusive sense of continuity with my German heritage, I have often encountered the practical limits placed upon locating myself fully in either of these two societies. Instead, I have sought to render this agonistic space productive through Abdul JanMohamed's notion of the 'specular border intellectual,' someone who 'utilizes his or her interstitial cultural space as a vantage point from which to define, implicitly or explicitly, other, utopian possibilities of group formation' (1992, 97). Ultimately, I hope that I may be able to affect what Gayatri Spivak in her classic essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' (reprinted 1994) refers to as a 'speaking to' (91), understood as the potential space from which scholarly intervention can occur, neither abnegating my claim to a voice nor presuming to speak in place of others, but rather, speaking forth and to others in the hope of inviting counter-responses and public dialogue. Even as this is the ideal which scholarship can never fully achieve, it is nevertheless

the asymptote along which our research endeavours should venture forward.

German Africanism

Since publication of *Farbe bekennen*, numerous articles, anthologies, and monographs have continued the labour of constructing a diasporic historiography of German citizens tracing Black African and or African-American heritage and of the cultural texts that variously reference their social history. My contribution to that larger project is modest with regard to its scale of study but offers an approach congruent with concurrent transnational and transhistorical scholarship. I will not be drawing any definitive conclusions about the status and ontology of specific characters discursively positioned as Black, so much as determining what their inscription within a specific film reveals about historically evolving understandings of the role and status of the discursive category of 'race.' Robert Stemmle's *Toxi* arguably functioned in its time as a media flashpoint; its narrative emplotment and visual style alike disclose prevailing assumptions about national identity and social belonging within the Adenauer era. These, in turn, display certain continuities with racialization processes in earlier German representational practices, but also evince the travel of racial iconography from U.S. popular and literary culture and of concurrent debates on integration in an era of heightened American influence.

In exploring not only the textual construction of racialized objects (i.e., literary characters) but also the racializing subject, here broadly understood as the author or filmmaker and the dominant social context that may shape their artistic process, my own research will trace contours not dissimilar to those elsewhere proposed by Toni Morrison for the realm of American fiction of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Her manifesto, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (1991), explores the role that 'blackness' plays in the authorial imagination of White authors as diverse as Willa Cather, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Edgar Allen Poe, and Mark Twain. She coins the term 'American Africanism' to identify how inherited European assumptions of cultural hegemony, once subjected to dispersal in the New World, could recover coherence and definition by means of their contrast with a veritable phantasm of 'blackness.' In essence, Africanism functions as a literary aesthetic in the service of establishing White character and White authority, but also White authorial mastery. In a

phrase that has since become iconic, she observes 'the subject of the dream is the dreamer,' and continues, 'The fabrication of an Africanist persona is reflexive; an extraordinary meditation on the self; a powerful exploration of the fears and desires that reside in the writerly conscious. It is an astonishing revelation of longing, of terror, of perplexity, of shame, of magnanimity' (7). Morrison's thesis brings historical and discursive specificity to the truism that speaking about others ultimately also functions as a means to speak about one's self and, indeed, to constitute the self.

A homological 'German Africanism' can be said to trace across centuries of German literary and philosophical texts, and in the visual arts, including moving pictures. Sander Gilman (1982) maintains that, while stereotypes about blackness within Germanic territories since the Middle Ages parallel European explorations of distant continents, those stereotypes were generated within a relative vacuum due to the lack of external controls serving as potential correctives (xi). For centuries, the majority of the population had absolutely no possibility to encounter individuals originating from the African continent or, for that matter, South Asia or the Far East, relying instead on the imagery and hearsay adopted from various European cultural traditions. In contrast to the tropes that evolved about other ethnic minorities dwelling in Europe, such as Jews or Sinti and Roma, the phantasm of blackness thus constituted a derivative discourse bearing virtually no foundation in concrete experience or in personal encounters with members of the groups in question. The resulting iconographies and tropologies tracing their way through centuries of German intellectual, aesthetic, and political thought can now be regarded as especially vivid and pristine representatives of the labour of projection.

Certainly, in the realm of German film history, Tobias Nagl's comprehensive research (2009) richly demonstrates that the instrumentalization of the black body is discernible even in the earliest ethnographic culture films, and also evident in colonial propaganda films, in adventure films of the 1920s evoking nostalgia for the lost colonies, and myriad mass culture films of the Weimar era displaying orientalist tendencies. Black actors – whether African nationals living in Germany or Afro-Germans – performed in these films and continued to be appear in Nazi films produced under the aegis of the Ufa film production company, which offered one of the only sources of secure income for a visible minority otherwise shunned from employment under the volatile political climate. Katharina Oguntoye's study (1997) of letters exchanged between

the Ministry of the Interior and the Foreign Affairs Office within the NSDAP (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, National Socialist German Labour Party) between 1935 and 1937 indicates that hire of these actors was a point of extensive discussion, due to the government's broader ambition to expel non-Aryan populations from the country. However, their participation in caricaturesque depictions was perceived as useful for sparking public interest in reified versions of the cultures and peoples of the African continent, and creating a receptive climate for the planned re-annexation of former colonies in Toga, Cameroon, and Southwest Africa.

The Rhineland occupation by French troops following the First World War, including recruits from the French African colonies, offers another historical example of how preconceived racial phantasms informed lived engagement with ethnic, cultural, and national differences. Although the occupation was generally perceived as a national disgrace, propaganda texts such as Guido Kreutzer's novel *Die schwarze Schmach. Der Roman des geschandeten Deutschlands* and Carl Boese's film of the same title, both released in 1921, indicate that vitriolic racism was also deployed to further fuel public resentment and refortify nationalist feelings following a lost war.[4] The representational devices at work evince Morrison's description of Africanism in the aesthetic field, achieved through 'the fetishizing of color, the transference to blackness of the power of illicit sexuality, chaos, madness, impropriety, anarchy, strangeness, and helpless, hapless desire' (80–1). Under National Socialism, these virulent perceptions were revived in the interest of eugenicist campaigns to sterilize the meanwhile adolescent offspring, pejoratively referred to by the yellow press as 'Rhineland Bastards,' once born to German women who had married or mingled with French-African soldiers. The end of the war and the onset in 1945 of the Allied occupation ushered in a new era of extended and more widespread interaction between national and political groups variously framed as 'occupiers and occupied' or 'liberators and liberated,' in which an engaged confrontation – both lived and discursive – with long-standing racial assumptions and prejudices became inevitable and continues to this day.

Iconography, the Gaze, and the Audience

If Morrison's literary manifesto *Playing in the Dark* underscores the overall value of shifting critical attention from the 'racialized object'

to the 'racializing subject,' we find in the neighbouring discipline of film studies an analogous development, yet one complicated by the relay of identifications which take place within the visual field. I turn now to consider some of these evolving approaches. It was U.S. film criticism that pioneered the study of 'race' as a discursive category, as exemplified in pioneer studies on stereotyping and typecasting (Bogle 1973; Pines 1975; Cripps 1977; 1993). Another vital surge of monographs emerged during the 1990s that further explored racial tropes (Pines 1992; Snead, 1994), the imbrication of questions of gender and race (hooks 1990, 1992, 1996; Dyer 1997; Gaines 2001), responses within Black American Cinema (Diawara 1993), and the role of minstrelsy and impersonation (Lott 1993; Rogin 1996, Gubar 1997).

One of the consequences of this 'racial turn' in film theory and cultural criticism has been to recognize that, as Richard Dyer (1997) so convincingly elaborates, the technical apparatus of cinema itself – for example, film stock, cameras, and lighting – were all developed 'taking the white face as the touchstone' (90). Normative assumptions bound up with terms such as beauty, glamour, truthfulness, and morality within photography and classical cinema alike herein became complexly bound up with the aesthetics of Whiteness. As a consequence, the casting of actors for film productions – whether in classical Hollywood, in postwar Germany, or in contemporary international cinema – has necessarily always involved deployment of 'epidermal difference' as a semiotic sign functioning not unlike other elements of mise en scène such as interior decor, costume, lighting. Within relatively homogeneous West German society of the 1960s and 1970s, for example, any deviation from casting normative Caucasian Germans has to be recognized as a conscious choice intended to set into motion particular cultural discourses and historical memories. This general rule also holds even today in the North American context, even as the existence of a comparatively heterogeneous casting base and the politics of cultural pluralism might offer the misleading impression that the film industry and national audiences alike are 'colour blind.' The literal skin colour of actors or actresses is not at issue, of course, but, rather, their instrumentalization in the service of connotative signifying practices.

That this connotative excess is also bound up with the demarcation of power differentials and degrees of agency among characters is easily evidenced in the use of blackface in early cinema. If the trope of Black masculine menace, for example, ultimately originates in the rac-

ist White imagination, what better vehicle for disseminating that trope than the Caucasian body? In David Wark Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), submissive former slaves are played by Black actors, while the aggressive, threatening Gus is played by a White actor in blackface. Casting strategies like these held political implications, intended as they were to prevent Black actors from assuming lead roles in which they would hold agency over White characters or advance the narrative plot (Shohat and Stam 1994, 189), or broach the taboo of 'miscegenation.'

It is no coincidence that Griffith's early silent film about race relations should have become so instrumental to the classical system of narration, whose syntagmatic logic involves such signifying devices as shot-countershot, parallel montage, matching eyelines, and the evocative power of the gaze. For common to both cinematic language and to racist discourse is an intense investment in the legitimacy of visual evidence and, concomitantly, concealment of the masquerade that dwells at the heart of their respective dramas. Aside from the aforementioned iconographical significance of casting decisions, it also true that racialized power differentials translate into an assessment of which characters possess the gaze – that is, the right to look, and by logical extension, hold a claim to full subjectivity and agency. As Jane Gaines has pointed out, 'some groups have historically had the license to "look" openly while other groups have "looked" illicitly' (1994, 185). The gaze, as a form of enunciation not dissimilar to the voice, also becomes a means to establish focalization by suturing audience members into particular points of view. Gerard Genette (1980) coined the term 'focalization' to describe the process by which the viewpoint of certain characters is established as more trustworthy or appealing, inviting us to see the story world through their 'cognitive-perceptual grid.' When divisions between hegemonic and subaltern groups are thematized in mainstream film, the benevolent focus upon the 'dilemma' of oppressed or marginalized groups often occurs through the eyeline matches and perspective of White characters, thereby reinforcing their authority. In this manner, even a film with a story line appearing to advocate an emancipatory agenda can, in fact, make the viewer complicit with racist propositions at the level of enunciation and focalization.

The question of address, which I have just elucidated as the question of who is speaking/looking within a film, cannot be considered without also interrogating the implied interlocutor beyond the fourth

wall, that is, the spectator. Camera work, stage choreography, and editing employed to direct spectatorial focalization may not necessarily engage viewers in a stable or consistent manner. Feminist approaches to spectatorship (Kuhn 1982; Mayne 1993; Mulvey 1989; Petro 1989; Stacey 1994) have generally explored how gender informs the viewing experience – that is, how visual dis/pleasure becomes a function of the apparatus and its collusion in creating a relay of gendered identifications for men and women viewers. At the same time, other scholars (hooks 1992; Diawara 1993; Mayne 1993; Gaines 1994) have identified a scotoma towards the implicit 'whiteliness,' to invoke Marilyn Frye's term, underlying models of spectatorship that neglect the imbrication of ethnicity and 'race' in gendered processes of identification and viewing pleasure. Of course, the trouble with orienting spectatorial positions along the vector of raced identities is the clear danger of essentializing these positions in exclusively 'black or white' terms. Cultural critics bell hooks and Manthia Diawara have both generated pivotal hortative essays encouraging viewers to read/view against the grain and resist stereotypical and limiting representations, while simultaneously lauding positive Black roles – Black characters who possess valour and agency in relation to plot – generated in the Black American independent cinema movement.

However, when contemplating the reception of individual films within a given historical epoch, it hardly seems productive to cultivate false dichotomies, such as those constituted when we assume, for example, that Black-identified spectators are necessarily oppositional (and thus active) viewers and Caucasian spectators are passively complicit with narratives of oppression. Such dualities overlook the manner in which hegemonic values and viewpoints are also internalized and perpetuated within marginalized groups, and do not concede that members of groups privileged on the basis of epidermal difference may cross-identify with disempowered fictional characters on the basis of disenfranchisement relating to class, gender, or other vectors of identity. One might take a cue from Janet Staiger's study of the reception of Hollywood cinema (2000), in which she coined the term 'perverse spectators' to capture the non-normative nature of interpretation and experience. Rather than frame the spectator's interpretive act as either a morally and/or politically hegemonic reading or, alternately, as a wilfully oppositional reading, the notion of perversion is useful for implying that the reception of a film can also be non-normative without any conscious intention to be 'progressive,' resulting, rather, from 'an

inability to respond otherwise' (2). Ultimately, whether at the level of 'drive' or of 'will,' spectators oscillate between different identificatory positions precisely because of their simultaneous membership in different, often contradictory communities of identity. As scholars, then, we need to account for a spectrum of possible spectatorial positions as they intersect with different vectors of identity provoked by a given film text.

Of course, 'the spectator' should not be conflated with any given really existing viewer, nor with the discursively posited 'cinematic subject.' If the latter two categories always remain in some way incommensurate – the one empirical, the other textual – the notion of 'the spectator' is intended to negotiate between the two, in Judith Mayne's words, 'as a viewer who is and is not the cinematic subject, and as subject who is and is not a film viewer' (1993, 36). Even if the study of spectatorship constitutes a speculative endeavour at best, comprising a combination of speculation, projection, and generalized observation, it has expanded the epistemical horizon of cinema studies beyond theories of the apparatus or of a closed text, to consider interactions between audiences and projected screen images. Further, it avoids deterministic hypotheses about how films 'show' or 'reflect' in static ways a given society's preoccupations, instead engaging 'with modes of seeing and telling, hearing and listening, not only in terms of how films are structured, but in terms of how audiences imagine themselves' (Mayne 1993, 32).

All three approaches to spectatorship outlined by Mayne in her study – the perceptual, the institutional, and the historical – have informed my reading of *Toxi*. The perceptual model, which presupposes subject positions abstracted from psychoanalytical models of perception and identification developed most especially by French theorists Jean-Louis Baudry (1975) and Christian Metz (1975), is useful in elaborating how circuitries of desire operate within Stemmle's film narrative and how desire installs particular subject positions for viewers to occupy in their identification with diegetic characters. Those subject positions are recognized within the institutional model as also carrying an ideological valence; filmgoers are interpellated through the mechanics of the camera, editing, and the screen relationship to inhabit presumably dominant societal views about German identity, 'race,' and class.

Yet it is the historical model, exemplified in studies by Dyer (1986), Renov (1988), Petro (1989), and Staiger (1992; 2000), that takes into consideration specific, local ways in which viewers make sense of cinema

in interaction with a continuum of other contemporaneous textual artefacts and discourses, which will assist me in explaining the specificity of the visual pleasure extracted from *Toxi* in the early years of the Federal Republic. To grapple with 'race' as an analytical category necessarily requires mapping its relationship to the pernicious legacy of anti-Semitism. While different strains of xenophobia cannot be collapsed into one stream, their mechanisms of exclusion are often similar. Historian Frank Stern (1992), for one, concludes from his extensive archival research on the occupation years of the early Federal Republic that the displacement of public attention onto other social groups such as the modest Afro-German population or, later, the early waves of migrant workers from southern Europe, itself functioned as a foil for anti-Semitism. This enabled an indirect exorcism via other substitutes, without acknowledging the continuing presence of Jews in Germany or of anti-Semitic subtexts in public policy and popular sentiment.

We can expect responses to *Toxi* in the early twenty-first century to assume entirely different contours. My own study of this historical text is invested as much in mapping its significance for an earlier era as in its usefulness for measuring both continuities and divergencies in the treatment of racial discourse in popular cinema today. Cultural production by German artists tracing African descent has emerged parallel with critical scholarship on the history of Black Europe; both have helped shape a public sphere in the sense Miriam Hansen (1993) elsewhere elaborates, such that a historically unprecedented level of awareness exists among audiences about the 'difference' that racial discourse produces. *Toxi*'s value and our understanding of it as a cultural artefact derive from the way in which it was once and is today again poised to participate in what Janet Harbord (2002) describes as 'film cultures,' understood as a given film's 'place within spatial contexts, particular sites within cities and regions, related to other cultural practices, and connected to larger networks of circulation' (40).

At this time, prints of *Toxi* exist for scholarly examination at several German archives, including Berlin's Federal Film Archive on the Fehrbelliner Platz and the Film Museum Berlin on Potsdamer Platz; inevitably, unofficial copies also circulate among scholars. Public access in recent years has included screenings at international academic conferences and historical retrospectives of German cinema, such as those undertaken by the Deutsche Kinemathek Berlin and the Goethe Institut. With the generous assistance of Kirch Media in Munich, the Goethe Institut in 2003 programmed the series 'After the War, Before the Wall:

German Film 1945–1960,' which included *Toxi* among a collection of sixteen subtitled 35 mm prints that toured sites such as the Harvard Film Archive, Lincoln Center in New York, and Goethe Instituts around the world. The print of *Toxi* produced for that tour could still be rented through the Goethe Institut in Munich until November 2010. Arthouse contexts such as these have been described by Harbord as 'a system of distribution characterized by its independence from mass cultural disseminaton,' fostering instead 'economic dependency on the system of bourgeois patronage and latterly, commercial sponsorship' (2002, 43). All too frequently, it is precisely a previously archival film's visible ascent to the status of arthouse cinema or historically valuable or socially relevant work which also marks its viability for DVD authoring and distribution. That status may be garnered on the basis of formal innovations, social realist content, its alignment with 'national heritage culture,' or independent financing relative to U.S. media conglomerates.

In light of recent negotiations by the DEFA Library at the University of Massachusetts for the rights to *Toxi*'s North American distribution on DVD, we can look forward to entirely new modes of consumption and reception for this historical artefact. In its day, a mass cultural icon circulating among movie houses in urban centres and smaller towns, it will once again undergo realignment with its commodity culture origins, entering into that widening sphere of what Charles Acland (2003) elsewhere describes as 'mutating global products' appropriated by consumers in manifold ways. *Toxi*'s storyline and social intervention during the 1950s signalled an ambivalent stance towards modernity and towards American influences in particular: on the one hand, approval for how commodity culture can stimulate the postwar economy, and, on the other, reticence towards the mixing and merging of peoples and cultures. Through its release on DVD, however, the film will squarely enter into the realm of postmodern modes of reception. Deployed in the classroom, available through lending libraries, purchased for viewing at home or while travelling with laptop, DVDs generally enable new permutations of 'the mobilized and virtual gaze,' the phrase Anne Friedberg (1993) first coined to describe a type of looking that travels in the manner of the camera, shifting across a range of separate and unconnected objects. Social and perceptual transformations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, she maintains, have resulted in distinct but interrelated ways of looking respectively associated with tourism, shopping, and cinema going, which, in turn, converge in a gaze 'para-

digmatic of postmodern subjectivity' (132). The movie theatre, then, is exemplary for producing 'a derealized sense of the present and a detemporalized sense of the real' (4), which has come to generally characterize the 'virtual mobility' (147) of perceptual relations at the cusp of the twenty-first century.

DVD viewing, I would suggest, further reinforces the mobile gaze because the navigation of menu features (e.g., film chapters, interviews, 'the making of') enables continually new recombinatory arrangements to traverse one another in relation to the viewer's unique spatiotemporal context. Through repeat viewings, freeze framing, accelerating or slowing the speed of shots, scrambling the sequence in which chapters are viewed, or pausing the film, the viewer enacts the social relations between elements of a text no longer self-evidently linear, causal, or holistic, as well as between that text and otherwise unrelated sites, experiences, and discourses. In accordance with Barbara Klinger's compelling study (2006) of home viewing practices, DVD consumers inevitably devise 'strategies of textual appropriation that rewrite films according to viewer desire' (187) and thereby reinforce a sense of 'mastery' over public material in private spaces. Yet media consumption nevertheless remains a deeply social practice, one in which Klinger suggests consumers are both 'active' and 'implicated'; while they actively shape conditions and terms of viewing, these necessarily 'occur in relation to existing frames of reference, from industry practices to their own socialized experiences' (11). If conditions of production and distribution the 1950s conspired to, in some regards, commodify the fictional character Toxi and the Afro-German actress who performed her role in order to 'sell' the movie-going public on specific understandings of racialized identity and its place within society, it also bears mentioning that the publication of this book and the eventual release of *Toxi* as authored DVD similarly participate in the marketing and distribution of goods and may not remain immune from ideological, intellectual, or material investments. They can, however, also instantiate a level of social awareness and facilitate for individual viewers and readers as well as for broader interpretive communities and institutions an inquisitive engagement with this veritable time capsule of German social history.

CHAPTER ONE

A Changing Postwar Landscape

Military Occupation and the Transnational Politics of Racial Integration

There is some historical irony to the fact that the German nation, so determined under National Socialism to exterminate or expel from its borders all individuals not fitting the Aryan profile, should, upon war's end, be confronted anew with emerging heterogeneity within its population. With the Allied occupation came also foreign troops of varying cultural backgrounds and racial formations. One might think that the arrival of African-American soldiers, in particular, would pose a challenge to local members of the population firmly inculcated in Nazi theories of racial difference. Doubtless, the encounter of African-Americans with local civilians would have been a qualitatively different one from that of many of their Euro-American comrades in arms, but not always for the reasons one might anticipate in the aftermath of racial genocide. Oral testimony from African-American soldiers indicates that they were surprised to encounter less racism from German citizens than they did within their own military ranks, which remained legally segregated until 1948.[1] Many Germans, in turn, maintain that it was the Black soldiers who were often the most generous and compassionate towards them in the early years of profound material scarcity. Historian Maria Höhn's compelling use of oral histories in her study *GIs and Fräuleins* (2002) reveals gendered and racialized nuances in these encounters, with an eye towards the multiplicity of responses among German communities surrounding the military bases in the Rhineland-Palatinate. As the first wave of so-called 'occupation babies' were inevitably born

out of these alliances, pragmatic concerns began to surface for infants born out of wedlock, for whose welfare American military law did not hold soldiers financially or otherwise accountable. That concern, in turn, was sometimes mixed with alarm about the birth of Afro-German children, whose presence tested the general citizenry to move beyond tolerance of or even appreciation for foreign troops and to embrace lasting and visible heterogeneity emerging within its own population and incumbent generations.

Questions and controversies about racial integration in the early Federal Republic West Germany were conjunctural, with policies and social trends on both sides of the Atlantic proving mutually informing. Recall that racial conflict was also escalating in the United States in this very same era, as returning black GIs, whose horizons had been considerably expanded through the encounter with foreign cultures, proved reluctant to resubmit to institutionally sanctioned limitations placed upon their advancement at home. It seemed increasingly difficult to reconcile years of governmental wartime rhetoric about fighting National Socialism abroad with the domestic realities of racial segregation and the lack of state and federal intervention on behalf of civil rights. The landmark bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, initiated in 1955 in support of Rosa Parks, who had been convicted and fined $14 for refusing to give up her seat to a white passenger, is only one of many notable nonviolent protests mobilized against a virulently racist society. Individual efforts to contest segregated schools reached the courts for the first time in 1951 and culminated in the 1955 Supreme Court ruling 'that in the field of public education the doctrine of "separate but equal" has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal' (excerpted from Brooks 1974, 94). However, resistance to this ruling among the white population remained emphatic, as the infamous events of Little Rock, Arkansas, demonstrated two years later: 1,000 paratroopers and 10,000 members of the Arkansas National Guard were enlisted to prevent a civil war, while 9 black students exercised their right to attend Central High School among about 2,000 white students.

It was against the backdrop of these agonistic struggles taking place in the United States that the newly founded Federal Republic had to contemplate the long-term welfare of the emergent population of Afro-German children, their impact upon public sentiment, and the challenge they posed to the nation to uphold the terms of social equality in the newly installed democratic order. Historians Yara-Colette Lemke Muniz de Faria (2002) and Heide Fehrenbach (2005) have generated

comprehensive monographs that explore the complex cross-currents between two national governments, social welfare agencies on both sides of the Atlantic, and among individuals and families. From respectively German and American scholarly perspectives, they trace reverberations set into motion by the encounters between African-American soldiers and German women, taking into account both the macrological consequences as well as accounts of individual experiences. I do not intend to replicate that research here, so much as to touch upon data that helps contextualize my own study.

In 1952 the Wiesbaden Conference for Educators and Social Workers (Wiesbadener Konferenz von Erziehern und Fürsorgern) convened to address the topic 'The Situation of Coloured Interracial Children in Germany' (*Das Schicksal der farbigen Mischlingskinder in Deutschland*), and identified as its goal 'to resolve and standardize legal responsibilities accruing to the occupying powers and to the Federal Republic' (excerpted from Resolution IV.2). Resolution IV.3 reads: 'The conference recognizes that the problem of the coloured mixed-race children is primarily a German problem, which must be solved within the given German circumstances. The absolute equal rights of these children are incontestable. Based on the rights available to all Germans and guaranteed under the Basic Law and the individual state constitutions, they must not be in any way disadvantaged, but, rather, be provided the same possibilities for personal development and social integration as every other German child.' Some initiatives to recruit the overall German population to adopt an integrationist ethos assumed textual or filmic form. Their didacticism often involved remapping paths of identification, using fictional emplotments in which an individual harbouring lingering racist sentiments learns to overcome his anxieties through contact with Afro-German children.

One such example was the booklet *Maxi, Unser Negerbub* (Maxi, Our Negro Boy) published by the German Overseeing Council of the Society for Christian-Jewish Cooperation (Deutsche Koordinierungsrat der Gesellschaften für Christlich-Jüdische Zusammenarbeit) (Simon 1952). One among a series of educational books, the story co-habited perhaps somewhat incongruously with such titles as *Tierkinder in seltsamen Wiegen* (Baby Animals in Uncommon Cradles), *So leben Eskimos* (How Eskimos Live), and *Radfahrt nach Neapel* (A Bike Tour to Nepal). A school teacher, Herr Schmidt, has been asked to accept an Afro-German pupil named Maxi into his classroom. The story invites the reader to identify with the teacher's goodwill but also builds empathy for his inner inhi-

bitions and lingering racism. His search for, and implementation of, social tactics for defusing anxieties among pupils renders the classroom a metonym for resocialization processes across different sectors of society, as Herr Schmidt systematically also confronts and overcomes his own initial reservations about racial integration.

Released that same year, the timely box office hit *Toxi* displays a similarly didactic emplotment. The script, written by Countess Maria von der Osten-Sacken and Peter Francke,[2] but revised considerably by director Robert Stemmle, traces the fictive fate of an orphaned six-year-old Afro-German, the eponymous Toxi, as she seeks acceptance within a bourgeois family harbouring reservations about her unanticipated arrival on their doorstep. News articles published in the spring of 1952 in anticipation of the film's release, as well as reviews generated in response to its tour through the western States (*Länder*) in August and September, confirm the important role the film played in preparing the public for the imminent enrolment in West German schools of approximately 500 children fathered by African-American soldiers during the first year of German occupation. Although many articles mention a statistic of approximately 3,000 Afro-German children born since war's end, the fact that a number of press releases mistakenly quote the figure 30,000 seems to underscore the hypervisibility of this minuscule population among a traditionally 'white' citizenry.

In fact, the indeterminacy and inconsistency of overall statistical figures itself points to the larger challenges of identifying the demarcation lines of racial difference. In 1955, for example, among the 67,753 children registered in the FRG (including West Berlin) as fathered out of wedlock by Allied and Soviet occupation soldiers, 4,776 were classified as of 'coloured descent (*farbiger Abstammung*).' The latter term remains ambiguous in its mythical parameters, as it is unclear from the data provided whether the term is intended to encompass only people of African descent or also those of southern Mediterranean, South Asian, East Asian (i.e., Mongolian), Arabic, or Hispanic background (*Statistische Berichte*, Statistisches Bundesamt Wiesbaden, 10 October 1956).

The weekly journals *Stern*, *Spiegel*, and *Neue Revue* produced special inserts and cover articles in response to *Toxi* and, together with regional newspapers, seemed aware of the need to emulate for West German citizens and, further, to stage for a watchful public abroad an enlightened or reformed postwar attitude towards perceived racial difference. The press release formulated by the film's distributor (Allianz-Film GmbH) hits upon the essential lacuna nonetheless at work in the film: 'It is the intention of director R.A. Stemmle to win our hearts for these children

TOXI - BRD 1952 - Uraufführung 15.08.1952 in Frankfurt
Regie: Robert A. Stemmle
Quelle: Deutsche Kinemathek

1.1. *Toxi*'s theatrical release against the backdrop of West German reconstruction.

with humour rather than to create a film portrait about their problematic fate. The laughing and crying Toxi … is supposed to remind us that there are also 3,100 innocent beings living in Germany that need love and understanding.' The reference to innocent beings (*unschuldige Wesen*) leaves unspoken the ambiguous location of guilt and blame between two formerly warring nations, merely insinuating a vague sense of wrongdoing in relation to the emergence of children of biracial heritage. Amid an almost exclusively White population, children of darker complexion became a visible signifier of German national defeat. German children fathered by Caucasian occupation soldiers, by contrast, were not visibly recognizable as fathered by foreign soldiers and thus did not invoke the memory of national humiliation and submissive political positioning.

Yet, if moral judgment was frequently passed against the German women who fraternized with the former enemy, of whatever ethnic background, there were also pragmatic concerns regarding the material welfare of the children they bore out of wedlock. The West German government became embroiled in disagreements with the U.S. military about who should assume financial responsibility for children fathered by American soldiers, given that most enlisted men had returned to civilian life in the United States, leaving the German mothers to raise the children alone. Former court reporter for the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials and later reporter with the Bunche Mission to Palestine, Vernon W. Stone, explains:

> Under military law the father has only moral responsibility for his illegitimate child born overseas and for its mother. If he admits responsibility, circumstances may put pressure on him to legalize the relationship; if he does not admit paternity, it is almost impossible to prove it. The result is often tragic, owing to the woman's lack of funds, and refusal on the part of the U.S. government to take any responsibility for the offspring of its servicemen abroad.[3]

He goes on to elaborate that, in fact, of the 500 Afro-American soldiers interviewed for his study, 280 wanted to marry Germans and had filed the required forms. Yet 'American custom, in almost every instance, intervened to prevent such a union. Even when a child was expected, or had been born, requests for permission to marry were disapproved on racial grounds. Army officials turned down thousands of such requests. Only recently have any Negro American soldiers been permitted to wed German women, and then only under certain specified restrictions' (584). Laws against biracial marriage were also still in place in most American states. At the time of Stone's survey, only 22 of the aforementioned applications had been approved, and 91 were pending.

A German news article published at the time of *Toxi*'s release, titled 'Aller Anfang ist schwer! Schwarze Abc-Schützen kommen jetzt in deutsche Volksschulen' (Beginnings are always rough! Black ABC kids arrive in German public schools), seems to direct moral condemnation towards both African-American soldiers and the German women dating them, when it posed the question, 'Will the little "black ones," the offspring of German mothers and coloured occupying soldiers, have to atone for the guilt of their parents?'[4] An analogous moral rhetoric underpins the later 27-minute documentary short *Toxi lebt anders* (Toxi

Lives Differently), produced in 1958 by SDR (Süddeutscher Rundfunk). The film's title positions itself as a sober corrective not only to *Toxi* (1952), but to an ensuing feature film starring Elfie Fiegert, *Der dunkle Stern* (The Dark Star, 1954). The latter sought to capitalize on the child actress's previous popularity but could not replicate the conjunctural success of her earlier performance. Both the 'Toxi films' share an implicit sugar-coating of societal racism and achieve narrative closure by locating the Afro-German child's fate beyond the periphery of civil society, or even the nation. While *Toxi lebt anders* can hardly be said to make light of the sociological situation of single mothers with Afro-German children, its advocacy on behalf of this constituency replicates the tone of ambivalency that haunted public discussions throughout the 1950s.

Director Peter Schier-Grabowski becomes the conduit for that ambivalency in his dual role as on-screen investigator and voice-over narrator, who interprets the visual data for the viewer and thereby also overdetermines its meaning. In his profilmic interactions with single mothers, his tone shifts mercurially between false empathy, mocking irony, and moral superiority. Exemplary of these vacillations are the stylistic alternations between montage and expository realism. The film opens and closes on a series of close-ups of individual Afro-German children, whose endearing smiles into the camera signal the innocence of childhood as a universal leveller but also reify difference, as if to capture the very ontology of Blackness through anonymous, serial portraiture.

Significantly, the extra-diegetic orchestral scoring that accompanies this montage features sweet violin strains reminiscent of the opening music to *Toxi*, as if citing that film's prevailing tone of innocent endearment – only to signal a critical distance through the social realism of the ensuing establishing shot. The camera surveys the rooftops of a German city, only to pan subtly to the right to reveal rows of soulless modern barracks on the periphery, as the voice-over narration by Peter Schier-Grabowski intones:

> Our 'Toxis' live right here in this housing settlement. A settlement on the outskirts of the big city, somewhere in the BRD. There are about 4,000 children from American coloured soldiers and German mothers, and the majority of them live in this type of environment. The settlement is surrounded by industrial plants and American barracks. Around 2,000 mothers live here on the margins of the German economic miracle. Among

> them, 12 mothers with their illegitimate coloured children. The majority of the fathers are no longer in Germany The mothers have stayed, as have their children.

A tone of condescension can be heard in his following observation: 'And this is the main street,' herein referring to the dirt road leading through this heterotopic space, one distinct from the more commonly recognized landscapes of either rustic German villages or urban metropolises.

In the next shot, a car travels the dusty road to reach the settlement. Arriving within close view of the camera, the car stops and Schier-Grabowski himself steps out and then rubs his chin apprehensively as he scans this unfamiliar terrain, one which historian Maria Höhn (2002) elsewhere refers to as a 'contact zone.' Höhn adopts in an ingenious way the term Mary Louise Pratt (2008) originally coined to refer to 'the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict' (6). In Schier-Grabowski's film, social norms in this liminal space are no longer German in any singular sense, but have undergone reterritorialization through numerous transactions and interactions with the hegemonic occupation forces. Simultaneously, the racial politics and class and social differentials among the occupation soldiers themselves lead to qualitatively distinct encounters with the German population.

In his role as ethnographer, the filmmaker gingerly navigates laundry lines and children playing in the street; the rehearsed nature of the scene is betrayed when he approaches a house whose door opens from within, ushering him into its fold, neither preceded by a knock nor followed by a greeting. His ensuing pointed questions to the single mother who evidently resides there broach practical concerns: how she supports herself, whether the father of her child is still in Germany or providing support, whether she experiences racism against her son, what kind of future she anticipates for him, and whether she could envision giving him up for adoption to facilitate his upward mobility. Following this encounter, he is shown stepping out the door and lighting a cigarette, while his voice-over remarks sardonically, 'Here one comes to understand a lot; the need is great and the American barracks are nearby.' His observation reduces the encounters between GIs and German women to one based upon sexual exploitation of an eco-

nomically needy population, thereby overlooking what Maria Höhn's nuanced study reveals: namely, the diverse emotional and sexual needs that were also negotiated in these complex intercultural encounters and the socio-historical consequences for all parties involved.

Schier-Grabowski stresses the thoroughness of his sociological investigation by presenting the same questions to a woman living within the city limits in what he calls 'orderly circumstances' (*geordneten Zuständen*), which are signalled via pointed shots of a clean stovetop, a lace doily on the living room table, properly made bed, and an upward camera pan to a crucifix on the wall. The answers, it appears, are the same, revealing that both women do not receive enough state support to raise their children, that the father is not in the picture, and that they have experienced ostracization on account of their child yet remain emphatically unwilling to give him or her up for adoption. As if to counter the absence of biological mothers in the two 'Toxi films,' the evidence at hand proves that German women demonstrate maternal feelings that supersede any form of racial bias. When Schier-Grabowski ask the second mother whether her child would be better off finding employment with a circus, he is also making an ironic reference to the plot of *Der dunkle Stern* (1954), in which the Bavarian Afro-German orphan Moni found her niche among a crew of carnival performers.

Having cast a scrutinizing gaze upon these German women, Schier-Grabowski shifts the gaze to the American fathers of these children, none of whom actually assumes individual form in his study. Instead, as the camera pans the American barracks at a distance, he intones 'Jimmy, Johnny, and Billy – or however they are called – all live in one of these large complexes.' The circumstances of the African-American soldiers are hereby generalized in a manner that recalls the interchangeability of the faces of the Afro-German children in the opening and closing sequences. The voice-over does, however, point forth that the problems with racial integration in American society carry over into the military barracks of the occupation forces; while the soldiers do not experience official segregation, in their off-duty hours, the narrator maintains that African-American and Caucasian soldiers do not generally socialize together, instead seeking out possibilities for integration among the civilian population. Footage of African-American soldiers examining kitschy wares sold by vendors just outside the gates of a U.S. military compound is accompanied by remarks to the effect that this population is especially attracted to shiny trinkets. By following this observation with footage of German women dancing in nightclubs to

American jazz music, it is implied that the women, too, are just another tourist attraction.

The documentary closes by identifying the centrality of educational institutions – and hereby also the power of the state – in shaping the destiny of Afro-German children and the place they may ultimately be able to occupy within society. In a series of excerpted interviews, child-care workers and public school officials testify with robust enthusiasm to the lack of differences in teaching black and white children. Their assertions are reinforced by disingenuous shots of, for example, darker- and lighter-skinned children in leather trousers with suspenders (*Lederhosen*), holding hands on the playground. Teachers and administrators alike appear to have internalized a very specific integrationist discourse, which they zealously recite in florid, complex sentence structures that betray their self-consciously rehearsed origins.

Although offering verité glimpses of the circumstances into which some Afro-German children were born and raised, *Toxi lebt anders*, like all documentaries, employs rhetorical strategies of visual and verbal narration very much a product of a historically conditioned understanding of the relationship between 'reality' and representation. Fiction films like *Toxi*, in turn, while purporting to offer narrative scenarios merely 'inspired' by reality, and otherwise operating within the codes of melodramatic realism, can also offer insights into discourse formations, modes of moral judgment, and patterns of subjective identification specific to a given era. To the extent that Black actors and actresses appear on screen in German cinema of the 1950s, their presence yields little sociological insight into extant race relations in the early Federal Republic. Instead, they serve primarily to signal scenic exoticism in adventure tales and comedies such as *Zwei Bayern im Urwald* (Ludwig Bender, 1957) or *Unsere tollen Tanten* (Rolf Olsen, 1963) that contain scenes set south of the equator, or alternately, lend a touch of 'Americana' to stories involving upbeat rock and roll or big band soundtracks, as exemplified in the Black piano player Tarzan (played by former American GI Al Hoosman) in *Tante Wanda aus Uganda* (Géza von Cziffra, 1957). Regrettably, there remains a paucity of available film material, documentary or fiction, from either the late 1940s or the 1950s that addresses social transformations resulting from relations between African-American GIs and German women. Logistical obstacles exist that inhibit even ascertaining the extent to which such material was ever generated. Long-standing repression of cultural production from

the fraught postwar years is as much at fault as is the long-standing scholarly neglect of popular culture from a nation more often lauded for its 'high culture' contributions. Film production and distribution companies during this era, moreover, endured a precarious economic existence. Bankruptcies were common, as was the transfer of rights and licences from insolvent companies to others that might soon after also fold and sell their stock or, barring any buyer, let it languish into oblivion. Even today, many documented film titles remain untraceable, neither archived nor circulating, there being little financial incentive on the part of their legal owners to disinter them in the absence of concerted demand.

One can therefore only contemplate in the abstract the conclusions that might coalesce out of a comparative study of early postwar West German and U.S. films variously thematizing issues of racial (re)integration relative to their respective social and political formations. In their time, early postwar Hollywood productions such as Robert Rossen's *Body and Soul* (1947), Elia Kazan's *Pinky* (1949), Mark Robson's *Home of the Brave* (1949), and Richard Brooks's *Blackboard Jungle* (1955) were regarded as social problem films that took risks to foreground these issues in an era of growing unrest, as returning African-American soldiers of war returned to civil life and employment opportunities which, for many, were circumscribed by institutionalized racism. Although both the American and German contexts bear impure histories regarding the parameters of membership in the nation, former Ufa director Robert Adolf Stemmle's *Toxi* (1952) is one of the only surviving West German documents available to the public that parallels American societal and representational concerns through its timely focus on the social integration of German children fathered by African-American soldiers

Aesthetic and Political Dis/Continuities in the Interregnum Film Industry

Before turning to an overview of Robert Stemmle's artistic career, I will briefly examine the ideological and political circumstances against which his broader postwar success can be measured. Questions of racial integration specific to *Toxi* are closely imbricated with other postwar concerns prevailing in Stemmle's earlier and ensuing work and in that of his colleagues: namely, the social and economic implications of the

Allied occupation, the ideological construction and political implementation of a democratic state, the reconstruction of a viable social fabric and gender roles, and moral confrontation with the fascist past and the Holocaust. In the postwar search for not only new motifs around which to mobilize audiences but also for a new film language, numerous contradictions prevailed at the level of both ideology and aesthetics, displaying both continuities and discontinuities with the past.

The oft-invoked notion of a German 'zero hour' in 1945 implies a clean break with former ideological and political alliances. And yet, to think with Italian political theorist Antonio Gramsci (1971), in any interregnum the effort to abnegate the past becomes a defining absence that continues to inscribe itself onto the present. Ideology is not merely false consciousness, cloaking a nation and its people like a uniform that can be replaced at will or by force. Rather, as one of Gramsci's foremost interpreters, Chantal Mouffe (1981), reasons:

> The objective of ideological struggle is not to reject the system and all its elements but to rearticulate it, to break it down to its basic elements and then to sift through past conceptions to see which ones, with some changes of content, can serve to express the new situation. Once this is done, the chosen elements are finally rearticulated into another system. (231)

This is hegemony at work, wherein shifts in power do not occur uniformly or even coherently but necessarily involve contradictions, disjuncture, and residues of previous formations. Of course, Gramsci conceived the term to apply to rivalling groups and principles within a more properly democratic context rather than one of military occupation (1971, 185). Although the Allied agenda of denazification, de-centralization, and democratization was pursued as a military prerogative to which citizens and newly installed political leaders alike had little choice but to submit, it would be highly reductive to assert that the postwar political climate and cultural context resulted exclusively from military coercion. Rather, consent from the occupied population was also gained through what in Gramscian language would be referred to as seduction and co-optation. Indeed, because the economic and political interests pursued by the Allied forces were not that far afield from those of the middle class during National Socialism, it seems justified to refer to this process of co-optation as, in some regards, a mutual one.

Historian Klaus Kreimeier (1973) has applied similar reasoning in his neo-Marxist assessment of the West German film industry after 1945. He maintains that the Allied strategy of ideologically 'reprogramming' the Germans to purge them of an imputed collective streak of fascist extremism and delusions of racial superiority comprised an inadequate basis for establishing a 'zero hour.' For fascism was not purely an ideological movement; it was also grounded in specific economic and material practices, pushing imperialist capitalism to its most fanatical extreme by means of forced labour conscripted according to racial and political criteria. The foreign imposition of democratic political forms gave clout to the intention of political renewal but was also yoked to an American model of market-driven capitalism that modelled some continuity with earlier fascist models. Although it is beyond the scope of this study to undertake such an analysis, several scholars of critical race theory have promulgated the thesis that racism is a discourse intimately linked to the political economy of capitalism and thus impervious to ideological reprogramming that does not also encompass a wider reterritorialization of the means of production and class relations.[5] Certainly, the American Information Control Division, whose task consisted in supervising the ideological reform of the German public through news and entertainment, was guilty of contaminating abstract ideological ideals with corporate economic interests in ways that delivered mixed messages. Some of the policies within the U.S. Armed Forces, as well, conflicted with the ideals they claimed to defend on German soil; for example, the officially sanctioned racism inherent in American military units that remained segregated until 1952, or the anti-Semitism prevailing among some Allied officials administering the fate of the DPs.[6]

In other instances, ideological reform served, at best, as pretext for promoting the economic agenda of U.S. industries that were seeking to capitalize upon a captive population. American film distributors, for example, had hoped to recoup lucrative European markets unavailable during the final war years and to gain compensation for a more immediate loss in domestic income incurred through the newly instated federal anti-trust laws. However, well into 1948 Hollywood released only its second-rate films onto the German market, hoping to save its best films for a time when German box-office receipts could be converted into hard currency (Fehrenbach and Poiger 2000, 87) These lesser films, allegedly circulating for the purposes of promulgating American values

of individualism and free enterprise – i.e., 'democracy in action' – were often cloaked in simplistic narratives defined by a carefree or escapist attitude with which the postwar population could hardly identify.

Box office figures indicate that German audiences were more interested in films offering familiar themes and actors and spoken in their native language; accommodating that demand through reconstruction of the German film industry dovetailed with the broader need to generate national income with which to fund the occupation. However, the ambition to institutionally and financially restructure the German film industry – what film director Helmut Käutner called the *Demontage der Traumfabrik* – remained an incomplete one.[7] An overall production ban was initially put into place, necessitating that each individual project first be assessed for its political content and social merit before receiving authorization. The intention was to prevent the type of monopolization that had occurred under the Nazi regime, when the most powerful film production companies (Ufa, Bavaria, Terra, Tobis, etc.) were consolidated into the state-owned conglomerate Ufi Film GmbH. Under the so-called Lex Ufi law, instated on 7 September 1949, the American and British military forces called for the complete dissolution and reprivatization of the Ufi-Film GmbH within eighteen months.

While the Allied forces were keenly interested in the de-cartelization of the German film industry's remaining assets, this process proved more difficult than anticipated, due both to internal disagreement among American, French, and British officials on the parameters of such a process and resistance among West German film trustees, who feared that the remaining meagre holdings were hardly adequate to compete against international film productions. Furthermore, the rapid onset of the Cold War presented the Allied forces with compelling grounds to construct a West German film industry as expeditiously as possible, to counter the accelerating pace of film production in the eastern occupied zone. The Soviet forces had actually inherited the more substantial portion of the Ufa in the form of equipment, raw materials, and copyrighted films and had immediately centralized East German film production in the new DEFA (Deutschen Filmaktiengesellschaft) to produce Wolfgang Staudte's *Die Mörder sind unter uns* in early 1946.

As the ideological differences and political tensions between Allied and Soviet occupation forces quickly intensified, the Americans increasingly viewed West Germany as a needed ally against the eastern zone and recognized the need to mobilize existing film resources and personnel in the service of promoting democracy. It has become almost a

truism of German film historiography to assert that the continuity in film production between the 1930s and the 1950s resulted from the lenient Allied licensing policies for West German producers and from the prevailing perception that it was 'more practical to work with the available personnel than to increase efforts to recruit emigrants or search out performers and production crews who had kept their distance from the Reich Film Guild' (Kreimeier 1999, 376). Thus, the twenty-eight films made in West Germany between 1946 and 1948 were produced almost exclusively by members of the Ufi company. The Allied attempt to screen out those film administrators, artists, and technicians who previously held strong National Socialist allegiances was ultimately a futile ambition, as virtually anyone whose career in the film industry had survived the National Socialist era intact could be assumed to have been in some way actively complicit or a grudging 'fellow traveller' (*Mitläufer*). The attempt to guide the selection process through questionnaires and complicated paperwork became a bureaucratic nightmare and was met with bitterness, indignation, accusations of unjust treatment, and bouts of jealousy and betrayal among the ranks of the applicants (Kreimeier 1992, 438).

Conceding the impossibility of the task at hand, the American officer responsible for film, music, and theatre in the 'Information Control Division,' Robert Joseph, warned against false hopes: 'It would be overly optimistic to expect that German film personnel that remained in Germany, would get film ideas overnight that weren't in some way influenced, tainted, or biased by the nightmare of the past 12 years. It is difficult enough for Germans to integrate the new grammar of the democracy into their everyday life. So how can we possibly expect them to grasp the democratic syntax of filmmaking immediately after we assign them a license?' (Chamberlin 1979, 229). Because the parameters of this new 'democratic syntax' seemed to elude concrete definition, the realm of postwar film production rapidly became a contested territory upon which ideological shifts were haphazardly negotiated, resulting in a heterogeneity of film styles and narrative strategies as often in political and cultural conformity with the Allied directives as in complicity with the discourses of the past. Most films continued to bear recognizable features of the so-called *Ufa-stil* which had flourished in the 1930s and which now recovered living form through re-employment of many former Ufa (and Ufi) stars, directors, and technical staff. As exemplified in rubble films or later *Heimat* films, the mise en scène increasingly incorporated outdoor location shooting, but also

continued to include standardized blocking and an inherited semiotics of set design, decor, and lighting. The syntax of parallel montage, first cultivated by D.W. Griffith under the influence of Charles Dickens, continued to evoke the bourgeois worldview by means of facile moral binaries and naturalized oppositions between the urban and the rural, the proletarian and the bourgeois, virtue and corruption, poverty and wealth.[8]

In some rubble films, critical citations of the Ufa aesthetic offered a self-consciously stark contradistinction to the neo-realist aesthetic, first cultivated in postwar Italian cinema, which had made a virtue of necessity by utilizing the extant backdrop of war-torn Italy in lieu of the collapsed Cinecittà studios, and hiring lay actors to disrupt the culture of glamour associated with stars of the white telephone films.[9] Early postwar films produced in the Soviet-occupied sector of Germany, such as Wolfgang Staudte's *Die Mörder sind unter uns* (1945) and *Rotation* (1949), utilized avant-garde techniques such as disjointed flashbacks, expressionist lighting, and war-torn urban facades to implement their anti-fascist stance. Yet ideological bivalencies dwell even in seemingly progressive narratives, as Robert Shandley (2001) convincingly argues; in the instance of Staudte's *Die Mörder*, he argues that selective appropriation from Hollywood genre conventions such as the Western offered a means to reframe the Nazi past via a fantasy about an individual moral hero and his relationship to changing definitions of community and the Law.

Of German directors from the former Ufa and Ufi company, such as Helmut Käutner, Josef von Baky, Heinz Rühmann, and Robert Stemmle, who continued to make films after the war, Kreimeier observes: 'Among them were both the "burdened" and the "unburdened," former party members of the regime and hidden dissidents, lukewarm followers and vigorous opponents of the Hitler dictatorship. All were united, however, in the desire to "once again" make "unpolitical" films that would help the wanting and demoralized population forget their miseries, "for at least a few hours"' (443). Kreimeier's pointed use of ironic paraphrasing signals his perception that the postwar film industry and its institutionalized societal framework reinstalled a veritable 'dream factory' that operated so effectively in earlier eras of production. And, indeed, for directors seeking to continue their profession and their craft, the distinction between political propaganda and popular entertainment may have constituted merely a semantic trifle when applied to an apparatus powerfully equipped to intervene in the public sphere under any regime

in any era. In her monograph on Nazi cinema, Linda Schulte-Sasse (1996) has similarly ceded the limitations of establishing a too radical distinction between propaganda and entertainment, between the political and the 'mundane.' The conclusions drawn from her study concede 'the infinite corruptability of narrative formations, whose structures can be filled with whatever content serves a given purpose' (2).

Film personnel in the postwar era displayed an understanding of cinema's social influence that was politically multivalent. Former Ufa director Werner Klingler, whose filmography included the Nazi propaganda film *The Titanic* (1943), submitted a postwar application whose justifications speak to the cathartic qualities of the cinema-going experience and the desire to create films

> whose themes are relevant to people in today's times, and which gently synthesize certain inclinations in such a way as to enable viewers to leave the movie theatre having experienced a sense of release … Freed of the past system of ideas, German films need to be filled with new content and a new world view. Following assessment of staff resources, and under clear direction, they can become an instrument deployed to substantially assist in the revival, socialization, and education of their intended audiences. (quoted in Witte 1972, 391–3)

Such assuaging words arguably summarize the moral and artistic stance of many German filmmakers of the time, including Robert Adolf Stemmle, to whose illustrious career I now turn.

Robert Stemmle's Oeuvre: Negotiating Populism, Parody, and Pedagogy

Early West German cinema may be distinguished from earlier and later eras by its lack of an outstanding international auteur in the sense promulgated by critics and historians of art cinema. Directors such as Helmut Käutner, Luis Trenker, Willi Forst, or Josef von Baky never fully penetrated the international market in a consistent or memorable way as did, for example, contemporaneous directors of the Italian postwar cinema. However, German cinema of the 1950s became wildly popular with domestic audiences, 'earning an average 74.5 percent of the revenue from the top ten films of each year' and leading the nation to become the fifth-largest producer of films worldwide (Baer 2009, 2). Some directors were prolific in output, and many also artisanal in their

Robert A. Stemmle
© Arthur Grimm
Quelle: Filmmuseum Berlin - Deutsche Kinemathek

1.2. Robert Stemmle (1903–1973)

craft; their influence should not be underestimated. They held wide appeal for domestic audiences in their time and continue to occupy a place in the national imaginary through their recurring circulation on television to this very day. Even among young viewers for whom the name Robert Stemmle does not ring a bell, one need only mention titles such as *Quax der Bruchpilot*, *Charley's Tante,* or *Die sündige Grenze* to elicit a spark of recognition. Between the late 1940s and late 1950s, Stemmle was one of the most successful German directors, despite austere financing conditions and constraints imposed by the dual ideological fronts of the Cold War and the Allied occupation. In the course of his long career he came to assume a place as one of early West Germany's most popular and prolific writers and directors. Between 1934 and 1959 alone he produced thirty-nine films and wrote fifty-six screenplays and several bestselling novels (including *Der Mann der Sherlock Holmes war* and *Affäre Blum*) as well as radio plays.

His place among the established cadre of directors was reinforced when he was recruited to teach dramaturgy among a faculty of his

peers at the Federal Republic's youngest film school, the Deutsche Film- und Fernsehakademie Berlin, on Theodor-Heuss-Platz. Founded in 1966, following a 1965 agreement between minister of the interior Hermann Höcherl and Berlin's senator for science and art, Professor Werner Stein, the DFFB's mission was carried out by a directorial team consisting of Erwin Leiser, Peter Lilienthal, and Wolfgang Staudte. In recognition of Stemmle's lifetime achievement, just one year before his death in 1974, he was awarded the Filmband in Gold (Federal Film Prize) beside other recipients Hans Cürlis, Gustav Fröhlich, Helmut Käutner, Dorothea Wieck, and Billy Wilder.

Stemmle's pre- and postwar successes proved his ability to deftly negotiate tectonic shifts in ideology throughout Germany's tumultuous social and political history. Born in 1903 in Magdeburg, his first ambition was to become a schoolteacher like his father. However, after four years of teaching, he returned in 1928 to the University of Berlin to study literature and theatre, and in the process got to know fellow cabarettists Werner Finck and Hanse Deppe, with whom he founded the cabaret 'Katakombe.' His first play, *Kampf um Kitsch* (1931), was based on his experiences as a schoolteacher; it was a huge success at the Berlin Volksbühne and toured throughout Germany, France, and Amsterdam. Stemmle started out assisting such esteemed masters as Max Reinhardt and Eric Charell and soon gained all-round experience as assistant director, cutter, and scriptwriter to Carl Fröhlich, while also cultivating a special talent for children's and puppet theatre. Although he first gained notice for the sharp social criticism and leftist sympathies latent in his film scripts during the Weimar Republic, this did not prevent him from pursuing a successful career as chief dramaturge and director with Ufa (Universum-Film AG), Tobis Cinema, and Bavaria between 1936 and 1942. As Kreimeier (1992) summarizes the situation: 'Like many of his colleagues, Stemmle vacillated between his own morally enlightened ambitions, industry-driven concessions to public taste, and occasional collaboration with the political demands of the regime' (335). His *Mann für Mann* (1939) and *Jungens* (1941), for example, offer a fairly accurate assessment of the proletarian milieu of the times but were also produced under the constraints of National Socialist propaganda, as was the anti-Semitic *Am seidenen Faden* (1938). At the same time, he also assisted in some Hollywood productions, hired, for example, by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer as a co-screenwriter for Frank Borzage's *Desire* (1936) starring Marlene Dietrich and Gary Cooper.

Throughout his career, his successful and socially topical films

deployed popular generic forms and motifs and engaged with international cinema, as exemplified in the comedy of cross-dressing and gender bending in *Charley's Tante* (Charley's Aunt, 1934), which was based upon the American version (1925) made by Sidney Scott for the silent screen. Stemmle's versatility also included the detective or crime story exemplified in the screenplays for *Der Mann, der Sherlock Holmes war* (Karl Hartl, 1937) and *Affäre Blum* (The Blum Affair, Erich Engel, 1948); Nazi propaganda stories of proletarian upward mobility in *Am seidenen Faden* (1938) and *Mann für Mann* (1938); war patriotism in the screenplay for *Quax der Bruchpilot* (1941); the jazz music film *Heimweh nach Dir* (1952); and children's films such as *Emil und die Detektive* (1954) and the screenplay for Walt Disney's *Almost Angels* (1962).

After the war, Stemmle was able to work in all occupied sectors of the country, quickly resuming filmmaking, as well as directing cabaret, supervising the radio play department at NDR (Nordwestdeutscher Rundfunk), and teaching at the School for Acting in Munich.[10] Some of his most notable films and scripts were generated in the period between 1948 and 1952. These include the script to Erich Engel's *Affäre Blum* based upon the Kolling-Haas case of 1926, which Stemmle had followed closely in the papers: a Jewish factory owner was falsely accused of murder and narrowly escaped mistrial due to corruption and anti-Semitic bias among some members of the judicial system. Like Wolfgang Staudte's *Die Mörder sind unter uns* (The Murderers Are Among Us, 1946) and Kurt Maetzig's *Ehe im Schatten* (Marriage in the Shadows, 1947), *Affäre Blum* was made in the DEFA Studios in Babelsberg prior to the founding of the Federal Republic. Some critics in the western sector maintained the plot placed too much emphasis upon fascism and capitalist greed while soft-pedalling anti-Semitism.[11] The film does, indeed, appear overdetermined by generic conventions of the detective story, driven by the question of whether justice will be served and the transgression of the law properly brought to light. The individual characters are, moreover, sketched in broad strokes that leave little room for complex psychological portraits, nor are the underlying origins of anti-Semitism addressed. In this regard, *Affäre Blum* anticipates some of the weaknesses evident in *Toxi* as a social intervention produced in the same era.

Stemmle also received acclaim for a most unusual Heimkehrer film, *Berliner Ballade* (The Ballade of Berlin, 1949), which was shot at original locations around Berlin and at Union Film studios in Tempelhof under strict electricity rationing due to the famous Berlin Blockade. The

story is structured as a flashback from the year 2048 to some archival films from the year 1948 that trace the fate of the returning soldier Otto Normalverbraucher (the German-language equivalent of the phrase 'Joe Schmo'). Expressionist in its camera work and highly Brechtian in combining a satirical tone with the use of prototypical characters and voice-off commentary by an omniscient narrator, this moral allegory of the postwar struggle for survival traces Otto's journey's across war-ravaged Germany, his comical efforts to fulfil absurd bureaucratic requirements for proving residency in a new city, landing a job, and acquiring ration cards. It develops into a love story and ends on a note of optimism about human resiliency in the face of adversity.

Soon after *Berliner Ballade* was nominated for a prize at the Venice Film Festival, Stemmle travelled to Milan, the first German director to be invited after the war to shoot an Italian film. His *Abbiamo Vinto* (*Wir haben gesiegt*, 1950) is a political satire about a Roman family that hides a wealthy Jew from the fascists in their basement in return for ongoing payment from him. When the war ends, they resort to all manner of farcical deceptions to uphold the illusion of an ongoing occupation in order to continue benefiting from the cash supply proferred by their stowaway. Some critics found the humour to be in poor taste, in light of the millions of Jews who were not so fortunate as to find refuge. Stemmle, however, maintained that the film intends a timely interrogation of altruism, revealing the mixed motives behind human behaviours in times of tumultuous political transition: 'In my film, I want to show how war changes human character. War makes good people turn bad, and bad people become good – the latter, only in exceptional cases.'[12]

Stemmle's stint in Italy enhanced his international profile and exposed him to the technical and stylistic strategies of the Italian neorealists. As he explains, use of postproduction dubbing made a virtue out of a vice by eliminating concerns about sound quality and facilitating greater camera mobility during location shooting.[13] The influence on Stemmle's next film, *Die sündige Grenze* (The Border of Sin, 1951), is evident in a story that focuses on the real-life dangers faced by children involved in smuggling goods such as coffee and cigarettes along the border between Holland, Belgium, and Germany. Stemmle's use of local children who actually dealt in the dangerous business of contraband together with location shooting at customs posts in Aachen easily recalls Vittorio de Sica's *Sciuscià* (Shoeshine, 1946) and *Ladri di Biciclette* (Bicycle Thieves, 1948), as well as Roberto Rossellini's *Germania Anno*

Zero (Germany Year Zero, 1948). The highly effective and dramatic choreography of crowds – during scenes involving police raids or children traversing the border at night, for example –displays traces of Rossellini's *Roma, citta aperta* (Rome, Open City, 1946).

Stemmle also seems to have picked up a few pointers from Giuseppe De Santis's *Riso amaro* (Bitter Rice, 1949), as he combines social realism with a degree of eroticism and moral frisson in the love story and also includes scenes involving diegetic rock and roll music. Some critics felt that these elements compromised the film's critical edge by ceding to popular or 'vulgar' taste – a point of view admittedly reinforced in a publicity still showing Jan Hendrick's character reaching his hand up the dress of a stuffed pigtailed doll, to show fellow teenaged smuggler and love interest (played by Inge Egger) where the drugs have been hidden. Evidently multiple levels of transgressive behaviour were referenced in the film's title: not only the young people's defiance of border tariffs, but also of sexual propriety and, moreover, the moral authority of the church, when they steal for their resale value religious relics from the church and extract brass lettering from tombstones in the cemetery. The gritty realism of *Die sündige Grenze* evidently touched a nerve in a Cold War era when the financial, political, and moral dimensions of border controls generally were under contestation. If audiences were attracted to the frisson of early rock and roll and a more verbally assertive and visibly promiscuous youth culture, they also sought reassurance of its moral domestication on screen. Stemmle's production was only one of two German films featured at the Berlin Film Festival a year after its founding in 1950. It was hailed by the press as indicative of Stemmle's status as Germany's most versatile postwar filmmaker who was ushering in a modern style and flair even as he approached his fiftieth birthday.[14]

Stemmle's use of children accords with trends discernible not only among Italian neo-realists but also among a number of early postwar German films across all occupied sectors. For such films, Jaimey Fischer maintains, 'Discourse about youth proves particularly useful for the contradictory challenges of realistically depicting both a social crisis and its (reconstructive) solution' (2007, 195). Jeopardized youth, in particular, mirror a wider loss of faith within society and resistance to restoration of the social order. Their relative innocence and the portrayal of their (re) socialization and reintegration stands in for processes also taking place across different social groups. Indeed, depictions of troubled youth in

rubble films such as *Somewhere in Berlin* (*Irgendwo in Berlin*, 1946), *And the Heavens Above* (*Und über uns der Himmel*, Josef von Baky, 1947), and *Ways of Twilight* (*Wege im Zwielicht*, Gustav Fröhling, 1948) are informed by broader social crises of the era, facilitating paths of identification for adult diegetic characters and among historical spectators, and, in turn, enabling contradictory forms of resolution at a narrative, formal, and social level. Fischer suggests that young people may, for example, serve in some narratives as 'diegetic and formal foil to the returning soldier, the *Heimkehrer*, whose struggle with *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* stands in for an assortment of postwar challenges' (178). As both social outsiders (because not fully assimilated into adulthood) and insiders (because nevertheless members of society), youth reflect the *Heimkehrer*'s dilemma, which is 'to face the past while reintegrating himself into civilian life' (184). As well, a child's lack of a formative adult role model may create a relational vacuum within the plot, one that summons the broken-spirited *Heimkehrer* to become a moral compass and formative presence in the child's life and within society at large.

While the preoccupation in *Toxi*'s script with the social welfare of Afro-German children may, on first glance, find no precise precedent among rubble films and other postwar genres, continuities do exist both with the use of children in other films of the era, as well as with the dramaturgy of Stemmle's overall oeuvre. I would here draw attention to the relevance of Stemmle's earlier training and experience as a schoolteacher, which often lent his film plots a degree of didacticism, intended as much to entertain as to inculcate skills of moral discernment in the viewer. *Toxi*, in this regard, similarly becomes a vehicle for entraining audiences in the proper moral comportment towards questions of race in the postwar period. Moreover, because the parental origins of this Afro-German child initially remain a mystery, and she herself acquires the status of, in a sense, metonym for the transgressive behaviours of others (i.e., premarital romance between former political enemies), the plot also readily lends itself to alignment with qualities of the detective genre.

As it happens, Stemmle was a passionate reader of crime and detective stories and of famous historical trials; his home in Zehlendorf outside Berlin boasted one of the largest libraries of detective fiction in the world. His fascination with the law and its transgression traces throughout his entire oeuvre; as writer and director he was highly skilled in generating suspense and titillating audiences with characters

who moved outside the law or social conventions while also restoring moral order at story's end. It was particularly the concerns of the petty bourgeois, of individuals anchored in the local or regional, that fuelled Stemmle's narratives. His penchant for populist storytelling in pictures was, moreover, clearly informed by an interest in various progenitors, as evinced in his collection of antique Bavarian and Austrian votive boards acquired by the Berlin Volkskunde Museum in 1974 after his death. In the nineteenth century, these rolled-up parchments contained images serving as the basis for oral elaboration by an accompanying bench singer (so named because he stood on a bench above the crowd). While often originating in true historical events and once intended as a form of travelling newspaper, these stories were embellished over the years to become the stuff of legend – effectively a primordial version of comic books. On the basis of his own extensive research, Stemmle had gathered together and published in 1936 and 1938 two anthologies of *Moritaten*, or sung ballads, which had once elaborated the votive board, often accompanied by a wind-up organ, on the street, on the commons, or at village fairs.

Stemmle reached German audiences not only through the popular media of film and the detective novel, but also through regular columns in local newspapers and journals, where he would muse about his ongoing film production work, offering a glimpse behind the curtain or the silver screen, demystifying the craft, and assessing current trends. For example, in 'Auf die Filmfolter gespannt: Gedanken über die Grausamkeit,' Stemmle discusses the narrative function of violence in film history, from Fritz Lang's *M* to Alfred Hitchcock's *Rope*.[15] He points to British sociological studies that correlate unruly behaviour in young people with a rise in film violence and calls for greater moderation in its narrative deployment. In another article, 'Am Anfang steht der Stoff' (*Die Welt*, Hamburg, 10 February 1951), he discusses the primacy of the film script and 'the secret ingredients' that contribute to a good story, maintaining that you can make a bad film out of a good script, but you cannot make a good film out of a bad script.

Despite Stemmle's pedagogical penchant and his gift for working with children on the set, it would be inaccurate to regard him as a director of children's films. He himself rejected that label, declaring in an interview following the completion of *Toxi* in 1952: 'Now, if I don't watch out, I'll get typecast into making only this type of film.'[16] Here, it may be useful to distinguish between the children's film, which captures

the world from a child's point of view and addresses concerns specific to childhood, and films about children. The latter, film scholar Björn Steinborn (1978, 24) observes, tend to project a perception of childhood that is regressive, even childish, because they are informed by adult yearnings about the innocence of childhood; alternately, they project adult knowledge into a child's world. The majority of films Stemmle made with and about children were intended to have cross-generational appeal rather than to target exclusively the niche audience of young people. For the children's film was actually quite difficult to market in the austere years of the early Federal Republic, due to the far lengthier amortization period (the time needed to recoup production expenses at the box office) that films for niche audiences entail. Whereas in 1955 most German feature films could bank on recovering their costs within two years, films made explicitly for children (*Kinderfilme*) often had to wait four to eight years. Between 1949 and 1961 only about fifty 'true' children's films were made in the FRG, most of which were adaptations from classics of children's literature: for example, Erich Kästner novels such as *Das doppelte Lottchen* (Joseph von Baky, 1950) or Grimm fairytales, continuing a tradition initiated with Paul Wegener's *Rübezahl's Hochzeit* (1916) and *Rattenfänger von Hameln* (The Pied Piper of Hamelin, 1918) and sustained in the 1930s with Gerhard Lamprecht's adaptation of *Emil und die Detektive* (Emil and the Detectives, 1931).[17]

As the postwar economy in western Europe and North America picked up in the 1950s, so did consumer spending at the box office, triggering sociologists and market researchers to explore the broader moral and psychological ramifications of moving pictures. Children comprised a substantial portion of film theatre audiences, as they seldom limited their viewing to films targeted for their age group but also attended a heterogeneous cross-section of American films – westerns, film noir, and adventure films. Concern over the moral impact of cinema on young children led to the introduction of the Jugendschutz in der Öffentlichkeit Gesetz (JSCHÖG) or Law for the Protection of Youth in the Public Sphere in 1957, which prohibited pre-school children under six years from attending public screenings. As if this did not already spell the death of children's cinema, the rapid increase in television viewing – by 1958 there were two million television sets in use in the FRG – led children into watching daily programs instead (Heidtmann 1992, 42). In the GDR, by contrast, the children's film occupied a central niche as a means for disseminating social and moral values of socialist

democracy and was lavishly and consistently financed after the DEFA (Deutsche Film AG, founded by the Soviet military administration in May 1946) became an official state institution in 1953.

If it is true, as one scholar has maintained, that we have become 'media-constructed adults who remember and memorialize our childhoods (and subsequent stories) as infected by, and constructed via film and television shows' (Bradley 1994, 1), Stemmle contributed substantially to such trends, shaping the cultural imaginary of childhood in the Federal Republic for adults and children alike, beginning with his early postwar social realist productions. He also negotiated the shift to producing films for television during the 1960s, sometimes in the form of remakes of classics such as *Das Testament von Dr Mabuse* (1960) or scriptwriting for Karl May adaptations such as *Old Shatterhand* (1964) starring French star Pierre Brice. As such, Stemmle arguably possessed the capacity to size up the political, social, and economic climate of a given era and produce films with both broad popular appeal and a socially relevant edge: 'A director who understands the pulse of our time,' according to *Toxi*'s producer, Allianz-Film GmbH. Films such as *Toxi* or *Sündige Grenze* foreground for adult audiences contemporary conditions concerning children, but they also include tropes central to the children's film.

The motif of the orphan, for example, recurs in an international array of children's stories and fairy tales, where it serves as a vehicle for juvenile spectators to work through anxieties about literal or emotional abandonment. Some tales may involve children seeking to win over a parental substitute – one generally idealized as possessing desirable qualities that are lacking in the unavailable or deceased parent. In 'A Childhood at the Cinema,' Patricia Erens (1994, 28) correlates these identificatory processes with the latency period, defined by Freud as an extended phase of learned repression of erogenous desires that sets in around age five, with the end of infantile sexuality, and lasts until the onset of puberty. What Freud ([1910] 1959) referred to as 'family romances' tend to appeal to children in this age group. These are stories that accommodate the fantasy world of children as they move into the larger world beyond the home and begin to compare their circumstances with those of others. The development of the ego continues via adaptation to the reality principle and elaboration of defence mechanisms, while the superego coalesces with the aid of sublimation, formation of reaction mechanisms, and identification processes. Disappointment with one's own family may then be mastered by, for example, imagin-

ing a more noble or powerful set of parents from whom one became estranged at birth. Such scenarios also offer children identificatory channels for the gradual release of primary attachments to their current family and facilitate movement beyond the Oedipal triangle through rejection of the mother or father as libidinal object and substitution of another figure of cathexis. Children's stories may also involve a secret or mystery that must be unearthed and may correlate, in Erens's view, with the threshold of adolescence, when children are ushered into the previously hidden secrets of the adult world.

Ultimately, popular film manufactures narratives that reflect the utopian fantasies of the broadest spectrum of the target population without contravening the socio-political agenda of the dominant discourse. Permitting a form of wish-fulfilment to occur within the phantasmatic space of the cinema may diffuse anxieties about ethnic, gender, or class differences and thus free them of their otherwise disruptive potential. As one journalist wrote about Stemmle's skill in this arena while *Toxi* was still in the planning stages: 'The secret of his past successes? Well, perhaps they can be attributed to his innate inclination to want to stir up the glowing coals and take up issues that are "in the air" – issues that require a steady, but sensitive and understanding hand, lest any porcelain get smashed.'[18] The immense popularity of this film following its release verifies that it filled particular needs for a broad segment of the population. The mechanisms of wish-fulfilment at work appear consistent with those of earlier Ufa and Ufi film productions of respectively the Weimar and Nazi eras, and herein evince the existence of structural continuities in how social fantasy produces ideology across popular cinemas generally.

In her monograph on Nazi cinema, Linda Schulte-Sasse (1996), for example, argues that these films shared an ambition symptomatic of bourgeois modern texts, including Hollywood films of the same era – that of producing viewer pleasure by providing 'illusions of wholeness' within the narrative structure. The fantasy at work, one in which the social fabric is illusorily perceived as free of discontinuity and disagreement, and thus as an organic whole, can only be sustained by positing a particular element within society as bearing imposter status and as the source of rupture and disharmony. While the theorem of displaced blame is hardly original, this psychoanalytic inflection – one Schulte-Sasse adapts from Slavoj Žižek – sheds new light on the underlying circuits of desire involved in this displacement, reconceptualizing fantasy not so much as wish-fulfilment but rather as the framework that makes

desire as such conceptually possible. Fantasy conceals the reality that desire is never fulfillable, that the gap between the self and the symbolic order that hails it is ultimately insurmountable. The yearning for a utopian society can only be set into motion if we are made to perceive that we are not currently dwelling in a utopian society and are furthermore provided with positive evidence of that which is allegedly blocking this possibility. In the example of fascist discourse, Žižek (1989) has argued, it was the stereotype of the Jew that assumed the role of the fetish, of that 'which simultaneously denies and embodies the structural impossibility of "Society"' (126).

Both Nazi Germany and the newly founded Federal Republic shared a similar anxiety about sustaining a cohesive imaginary national body. West German citizens struggled amid the postwar reshuffling of signs to attain the semblance of a coherent national identity, one simultaneously undermined but also reinforced by the establishment of 'another Germany' that was seeking a claim to the same national inheritance. However, Stemmle's film obviously cannot revert to the time-worn device of anti-Semitism to shore up identity, given its self-consciously anti-racist mission. Instead it achieves no less than a collective reterritorialization of the public imaginary, transforming perceptions in such a manner that a source of public anxiety, namely the emerging presence of Afro-German children, is reconceptualized as affording a peculiar form of national enjoyment. My use of Lacan's notion of the imaginary refers to the domain of transference relations as played out between individuals or between societies.[19] Feelings of jealousy, competition, or aggression, for example, are mediated or transferred through mechanisms of idealization, love, and misrecognition in relation to objects or people. Such mechanisms appear to be at work in the discursive structure of Stemmle's film and in its reception by the press, such that the dialectics of xenophobia and xenophilia ultimately inscribe the Afro-German child outside the social body. The very nature of the film's petition, its appeal for tolerance of difference, performatively installs a racialized white community as interlocutor and provides the framework for the film's imaginary coherence.

CHAPTER TWO

Toxi's Allegorical Narrative: Adjoining Reality and Fantasy

The Domestic Melodrama: Reconciling Race, Class, and Gender

A closer examination of *Toxi*'s allegorical structure can elucidate how national fantasy and historical reality adjoin one another. A great deal of publicity was generated around the similarities between the actual biography of the six-year-old actress Elfie Fiegert and her eponymous film role. This would seem to be a wishful conflation of their differing fates, for while Elfie was placed in an orphanage by her biological mother and then adopted by a childless German couple, the film script circumvents any implication that Toxi's mother would have voluntarily given up her darker-skinned child even under the pressures of social ostracism.[1] Instead, questions posed to Toxi reveal that her mother has 'gone to heaven' and the grandmother herself much later admits that – having becoming too frail to raise her grandchild alone and suffering also from cataracts – she deposited her on the doorsteps of the patrician family who employed her as housekeeper prior to her disability, in the hopes that they would have the material means and fortitude to provide her a more adequate upbringing.

The three generations encompassed within the expansive Rose family household are depicted as sociologically emblematic for postwar society and, in fact, come to allegorize the German nation in the course of the film. According to Robert Moeller (1993), 'building a new Germany required building new Germans, and this was work that began at home' (110). Indeed, it also continued in the film studios, where star actors and actresses still familiar to audiences from Ufi productions of the 1930s and early 1940s now assumed character roles involving those performative moral and ideological transformations also solicited from

postwar audience members amid the new realities they faced. Precisely those figures in *Toxi*'s didactic plot who undergo some necessary moral rehabilitation are also cast members who appeared in earlier Stemmle productions of the 1930s and 1940s or other classics of the Nazi era. Thus, Paul Bildt and Elisabeth Flickenschildt also performed in *Ohm Krüger* (Hans Steinhoff, 1941), Paul Bildt and Carola Höhn appeared in *Zu neuen Ufern* (Douglas Sirk, 1937), and Wilfried Seyferth had a bit part in *Der Stern von Rio* (Karl Anton, 1940) and other lesser-known films. Within Stemmle's idealized representation, the extended family constitutes a fortress of moral solidarity in the face of postwar hardships. We have the paternalistic grandfather, Gustav Rose (played by Paul Bildt), who exudes Christian tolerance and sympathy and is described in the film script as 'a stately gentleman about 60 years of age,' glimpsed on several occasions in his study puffing on a cigarillo. Together with his wife Helene Rose, he reigns over an extended household that includes their two grown daughters, Charlotte and Hertha. Charlotte is married to the stuffy and inflexible Theodor Jenrich (played by Wilfried Seyferth), who is owner of a pharmaceutical company, and is homemaker and mother to their young children, Ilse and Susi. Charlotte is conservative and traditional, reigning exclusively over the affective realm of emotions and moral propriety, and submitting to her husband's sentiments in every regard. Her sister Hertha, by contrast, represents the 'modern woman' who has internalized more progressive discourses of the immediate era and is an independent thinker. However, like her sister, she aspires to marry and seems to possess a similarly philoprogenitive drive that is awakened through her encounter with the orphaned Toxi. Her fiancé Robert Peters, an aspiring artist in the advertising industry, is similarly inspired by Toxi and will later come into ideological conflict with Theodor over her fate. Together, the couple models the ascendant generation who have the progressive flair and optimism needed to advance a society on the mend.

This fictionalized family portrait does not fully correlate with existing fragmented social structures. Early census figures indicate that in 1950 there were still more than 130 women for every 100 men aged 22 to 40, with many households run not by men but rather by widowed or single women caring for aging parents, illegitimate offspring, or orphaned children (Moeller 1993, 28). These same women often had to resort to black market employment to support their families, since most jobs involving secure and stable income were immediately allocated to men presumed to be supporting extended households. Stemmle's

film, however, counters such realities with a fantasy scenario complying with the platform pursued in 1950 by the CDU/CSU (Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union Bavaria) in its policy recommendation for instituting social welfare policies. Under such recommendations, a single woman responsible for children or dependent adults did not constitute a family. Rather, a 'normal family' consisted of 'a male in regular employment and a wife who stayed at home with at least two children' (Moeller 1993, 112). Family allowances were suggested as a means to finance this particular social structure and enable women to stay home while their husbands worked. In self-conscious contradistinction to similar social welfare strategies in the eastern sector, the intention was to support families not so that women could enter the industrial workforce, but rather so that women could stay home and circumvent wage-labour altogether. In the process, a great deal of pressure was brought to bear upon a very specific social unit as the site at which the economic contradictions of competitive capitalism, class conflict, and gendered labour division were to be concealed, if not reconciled.[2]

Toxi's opening sequence begins with an exterior shot of the single-family home at the cozy address '11 Lilac Lane.' Lighted windows signal human activity and warm shelter within that contrasts sharply with the surrounding dusk and silently falling snow. This external point of view anticipates that of Frau Berstel and her Afro-German granddaughter, Toxi, who will stand bundled in simple winter coats and boots before the gated walkway only minutes later. Throughout the film, alternating exterior and interior shots of the home will spatialize the discourses of inclusion and exclusion broached in the dialogue and also establish a synecdochical relationship between the walls of the home, the integrity of the family, and the ideological, social, and economic borders of the nation. Now cutting to the bustle of activity inside, its inhabitants appear caught up in last-minute preparations for a dinner in honour of Helene Rose's fiftieth birthday. Amid the bustle of domestic activity, Tante Wally (Grandfather Rose's wealthy spinster sister) drops in unexpectedly, and daughter Hertha Rose also announces that she has spontaneously invited Robert for dinner to meet the family. When the housekeeper in the kitchen receives word that she must set the table for two extra guests, she exclaims that if any more people join them, 'then there won't be enough roast to go around!' This script line anticipates Toxi's later appearance on the family doorsteps as the 'third guest,' and would have struck a familiar chord with spectators in regard to public

debates about accommodating diverse refugee groups seeking entry into the Federal Republic.

Chaos seems to be erupting amid preparations for the evening's festivities, as if foreshadowing the further exacerbations that will ensue following Toxi's entry. Charlotte stands upstairs in the bedroom with wet hair, unable to get the hairdryer to work. When Theodor rushes in and expresses his displeasure that she is not yet ready, she protests, 'What am I supposed to do if the hairdryer doesn't work! That's something completely unforeseeable!' Theodor is particularly anxious about Tante Wally's arrival because he hopes to approach her over dinner about a possible financial loan for his ailing firm; he thus retorts irritably, 'The unforeseeable is not permitted! Order! I want order in our lives! Especially nowadays, when everything is running amok!' This allusion to the volatility of the contemporary social and economic climate veritably solicits a response from the Real when he snatches the hairdryer from his wife, attempts to switch it on, and yelps as it releases electric sparks and a cloud of smoke.

Meanwhile, the cook in the kitchen below cries out in dismay, as the camera cuts to an extreme close-up of a gloriously puffed up marble cake that promptly collapses upon removal from the oven. The fact that the camera lingers over such a trifling detail makes it difficult not to read the blending of dark and light cake batter as metaphor for racial integration, with the cake's implosion portending the social unviability of such a configuration.[3] At the same time, Grandfather Rose is trapped in the study – described in the film script as 'the men's salon' (*das Herrenzimmer*); he is trying to placate his sister Wally, who is indignant because he has invited the lawyer Mr Übelhack for dinner, who happens to be her old flame from thirty years ago who went on to marry another woman. Unable to reconcile herself to this affront, Tante Wally storms out of the house in a huff, flinging her fur stole imperiously over her shoulder and extending hasty birthday wishes to Helene with the promise, 'I will still send you something, a little surprise!' It would seem that the Rose family, and by association the young Federal Republic, has its hands full rebuilding social ties and restoring economic stability without also having to cope with further intrusions.

In the next scene, family and guests are gathered around the dinner table poised to toast Helene. The family friend, Mr Übelhack, beams at the circle of guests and notes how fortunate Helene is to be surrounded in her home not only by two adult daughters, but also by a son-in-

law and two granddaughters. As an afterthought he remarks jovially, 'And from a practical point of view, the housing bureau can't bother you anymore. There's no room for intruders here. The house is already packed!' His remark draws attention to the cramped quarters many families were compelled to inhabit on account of financial hardship and the acute postwar housing shortage and reinforces the cook's earlier observation that the family's resources are already pushed to capacity. The man's ironic tone, however, also signals that the local authorities likely would not regard the current 'capacious' quarters in the same light. In effect, nationalist anxieties once exteriorized through the drive to expand territorial boundaries eastward under agitatory slogans such as 'a people without space' (*Volk ohne Raum*) have now turned inward towards fortifying the borders of the home and the nuclear family. With regard to the reterritorialization of the postwar family Moeller (1993) remarks: 'In the confused categories of totalitarian theory, it was possible to establish an identity as a new sort of Germany by associating National Socialist family policy with communist family policy and, by rejecting both, to claim to be something completely different' (138). In discussions of family law reform, he goes on, the ruling CDU/CSU coalition in particular 'emphasized state support of the family as an intimate, inviolable "nucleus of society" in contrast to Nazi and communist attempts to subordinate the individual to the nation directly by weakening the link – the family – that should hold the two together' (138).

This spatialization of the family unit as metaphoric fortress also assumes aural contours when the camera again cuts from the noisy dinner setting to the stillness of the dark outdoors, where Toxi and her grandmother are shown standing before the house. That this shot exercises a moment of social critique is evinced by the camera's positioning behind the silhouetted figures, hereby assuming their point of view from the metaphorical periphery of society. Moments later, the ringing doorbell penetrates the interior acoustic space; after Toxi is ushered into the house, wearing a fetching winter coat, matching hat, and white boots, and clasping a bouquet of flowers, she curtsies and repeats the apparently rehearsed phrase, 'I am supposed to wish Grandmother Rose a happy birthday!' Amid cries of astonishment from the guests – 'A chocolate girl!' 'Where is she from?' Theodor remarks sardonically, 'Aunt Wally sent her!' surmising that this is what was meant with her promise of 'a little surprise.' The flurry of remarks condense rac-

ist associations originating in earlier colonial eras – especially that of American slavery, when a black child was perceived as property, an object of exchange to be sold or gifted between white owners. The reference to chocolate also retraces to the Sarotti-Moor, a commercial icon associated with the import of cocoa beans as luxury crop harvested in colonized European territories by cheap indigenous labour. Attributing Toxi's arrival to Tante Wally also establishes a peculiar affinity between blackness and the unmarried wealthy spinster. Embodying respectively racialized difference and financially and socially independent womanhood, these two characters offer deviant forms of femininity that threaten the narrative's patriarchal order.

The film script itself makes a point of designating Tante Wally – played magnificently by Elisabeth Flickenschildt – as a figure of spinsterly caricature: 'To put it delicately, she carries herself like a tart old maid. Her facial expression is somewhat stern, she is obviously unmarried.' Looming half a head taller than either Gustav Rose or Theodor Jenrich, speaking imperiously, and moving elegantly across the room in couture clothing, Tante Wally also stands for a new social marker – the so-called 'Lady of Fashion,' who became a symbolic cipher in the 1950s for the imminent shift away from years of starvation and frugality towards glamour and affluence. Many autobiographical writings on growing up in West Germany during the 1950s include memories of a similarly 'fashionable aunt' (Carter 1997). German director Helma Sanders-Brahms, whose *Deutschland, bleiche Mutter* (Germany Pale Mother, 1980) is roughly modelled upon postwar gender dynamics she witnessed in her family, recalls: 'My aunt was also beautiful with blond hair and blue eyes. When she embraced me, I could smell the scent of powder and lavender water. She was the first to wear shimmering nylons on her legs and a velvet flower on her flannel dress. She wore the first Newlook skirt and was the first woman in the area to drive a car' (Sanders-Brahms, 1985, 9–10). Such images of female ostentation became crucial in consolidating bourgeois class privilege in postwar Germany and cultivating a lifestyle of conspicuous consumption. In effect, 'the fashionable aunt' heralds an as yet unrealizable but imminent better future. Her allure is somewhat tempered in this family film, however, as Tante Wally's ungainly height infantilizes the men in the family while also defeminizing her. Significantly, the one man who outmatches her in stature is Robert Peters, who, as a progressive member of the younger generation, is advanced in the course of the narrative as the most viable model of masculinity.

TOXI - BRD 1952 Regie: Robert A. Stemmle
Quelle: Filmmuseum Berlin - Deutsche Kinemathek

2.1. Aunt Wally, the 'Lady of Fashion,' looms over her brother and son-in-law.

If each character in this film occupies a distinct place marker in relation to a broader national allegory, it is easy to deduce that Theodor Jenrich represents the German citizen who suffers from chronic racial prejudice and exaggerated concern as to how an Afro-German child will affect his social standing and that of his family. The press packet for Allianz-Film allegorizes the plot as 'Saul becomes Paul,' herein framing in Christian terms his conversion from a racist intent upon delivering Toxi to the local orphanage at the earliest possible moment to a compassionate man who grows to love and accept Toxi.[4] Relative to the biblical story of Saul of Tarsus's conversion to Christianity after encountering Jesus of Nazareth in a vision, Toxi would seem to occupy the role of the persecuted Jesus – a constellation reinforced later in the film and which my reasoning supports in later subsections of this book. Early in the story, however, Theodor adamantly resists Toxi's presence, asserting:

'On no account do I want her playing with my children. She may have some infectious disease.' Gustav Rose retorts, 'One more child in the family is only a problem when there isn't enough food to go around!' This leads Theodor to state more explicitly the heart of his concerns: 'I mean the problem of race (*das Rassenproblem*).' This is the only line in the film script where past Nazi racial ideology is openly acknowledged; it is underscored through an ensuing dramatic silence that accompanies a relay of reaction shots, cutting first to Charlotte Jenrich and the dinner guests, who look almost approvingly towards Theodor, who meets their gaze and then turns defensively towards Gustav. Cut to Hertha and Robert looking on with apprehension, followed again by the two men shown in a low-angle close-up that makes Theodor in the foreground look menacing and belligerent although he is shorter than his father-in-law. The latter still occupies the centre of the frame, however, and treads the higher moral ground when offering a comeback that unwittingly identifies the conflictual core of the film's ideology: 'Of course that still exists. But I believe we've learned to view it in a different light.' In this pithy exchange, Theodor's phrase 'the problem of race' implicitly frames some portion of the population as typologically different and, furthermore, as bearing no self-evident claim to reside in Germany, while Gustav Rose's following concession, 'that still exists,' affirms this typology and its continuity with the historical past.

In fact, it is racism itself that remains pernicious, as Immanuel Wallerstein (1991) also maintains:

> Racism has always combined claims based on continuity with the past (genetic and/or social) with a present-orientated flexibility in defining the exact boundaries of these reified entities we call races or ethno-national-religious groupings. The flexibility of claiming a link with the boundaries of the past combined with the constant redrawing of these boundaries in the present takes the form of the creation and constant recreation of racial and/or ethno-national-religious groups or communities. They are always there and always ranked hierarchically, but they are not always exactly the same. Some groups can be mobile in the ranking system; some groups can disappear or combine with others; while still others break apart and new ones are born. (34)

By way of corroborating Wallerstein's thesis, documentation gathered by historian Frank Stern (1992) from polls, newspaper articles, and military archives confirms that anti-Semitism, cautiously expressed in

highly codified form, remained prevalent in postwar Germany. Several anti-Semitic tropes also remain stubbornly embedded in *Toxi*'s dialogue, plot, and iconography; I elaborate these in later sections of the book as evidence that racism was not so much eradicated in this film or in the 'sequel' *Der dunkle Stern*, as reformatted within newer discourses of tolerance and liberalism towards minority populations that included Afro-German children. What remains constant is that a group identified as different, rather than the mindset of the majority, is often framed as the source of 'the problem.' Although the official humanism prevalent in Western Europe since the close of the Second World War has censored the open racism historically associated with earlier eras of American slavery, of European colonies, and of National Socialism, Étienne Balibar (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991) maintains it nevertheless persists as a latent part of the institutional structure of many democratic nations. Balibar's discussion is directed specifically towards the resurgence of racism against immigrants in contemporary France, but his analysis extends to the widespread inclination to target particular groups as 'the problem':

> It is, in effect, characteristic of these utterances that they induce a transformation of every social 'problem' into a problem which is regarded as being posed *by the fact of* the presence of 'immigrants' or, at least, as being aggravated by their presence, and this is so whether the problem in question is that of unemployment, accommodation, social security, schooling, public health, morals or criminality … We touch here upon the concrete form in which one of the essential characteristics of racism reproduces itself today: its capacity to lump together all the dimensions of 'social pathology' as effects of a single cause, which is defined with the aid of a series of signifiers derived from race or its more recent equivalents. (220)

The remarks of another dinner guest who comes to Theodor's defence exemplify this inclination to collapse racism and issues of moral propriety: 'I know what Theodor means. This is a child born of a shameful act!' While the remark references the fact that Toxi was likely born out of wedlock and is the result of an alliance with a former military enemy, the opprobrium of the interracial encounter is also implied. Theodor nods in agreement and quips to Grandfather Rose, 'You spoke of prejudices, but I find this to be a matter of personal feelings!' Theodor's sentiment seem to reference prejudicial beliefs prevalent during the Third Reich, if Konrad Wolf's GDR production of *Dr Mamlock* (1961)

is any indication. Here, too, a number of characters explain their anti-Semitism towards the Jewish surgeon Dr Mamlock on the basis of elusive 'feelings.' However, Grandfather Rose brings the dialogue back to its primary point of dispute, reproaching Theodor, 'And your first feeling is racism?!'

Even as the film dialogue tackles the issue of racism, it simultaneously perpetuates tropes of racialized representation at other levels: in Toxi's charming persona, for example, which condenses colonial tropes and iconography. While most children would experience parental abandonment as a traumatic event, Toxi seems to have a resiliency that is less a symptom of precociousness or emotional maturity than it is an indication of her agelessness as a stereotype. When the family wonders how Toxi will react to her delivery to an orphanage, the family doctor reassures them, 'Toxi is so healthy. Even if she is brought to an orphanage, she is *so* resilient, she will find her way!' Indeed, she displays a virtually prelapsarian innocence and trustful attitude reminiscent of the Sambo prototype: eternally childlike, content to live from day to day, simple-minded and happy, but given to bouts of melancholy (Pieterse 1992, 152–3). Even when Toxi later encounters moments of cruelty and racist jeers from other children, she merely exhibits puzzlement rather than a justified sense of rejection and indignation. Displaying neither the vulnerabilities of other children nor the jaded wisdom of other adults, she remains an implausible character repeatedly instrumentalized in the service of the moral education of the other fictional characters as well as of her viewership.

German Patrimony under Siege

In this respect, an assessment of Toxi's 'subjectivity' becomes virtually impossible; at best, her portrayal offers insights into the illusory coherence she facilitates for the identities of other characters as much as for historical audiences of the time. This transaction accords with Lacan's (1973) optical model of the subject: 'It is in the space of the Other that he sees himself and the point from which he looks at himself is also in that space. Now, this is also the point from which he speaks, it is in the locus of the Other that he begins to constitute that truthful lie by which is initiated that which participates in desire at the level of the unconscious' (144). Lacan's use of the masculine pronoun fully accords with the fact that Stemmle's film is concerned primarily with jeopardized (white) male subjectivity, which undergoes fortification within the

specular field of a perceived otherness, falsely bifurcated into racialized femininity and gendered blackness. For Lacan's optical model, predicated as it is upon operations of misrecognition, is also linked to processes of projection – that is, of disavowing inadequacies within the self by projecting them onto another. Classical Freudian theory frames this in terms of an implicit masculinist concern with castration anxiety, thereby disavowing the fact that an earlier 'amputation' prior to that of gender difference is at stake, namely, that of every individual's entry into and splitting by means of the symbolic order. As Kaja Silverman's (1988) lucid exegesis of the parallel operations of classical cinema and psychoanalysis demonstrates, the audiovisual registers are critical axes for such processes of disavowal: 'Vision and hearing play a key role in the relocation of an unwanted quality from the inside to the outside … the projecting subject protects itself against unpleasure by placing the unwanted quality at a visual and/or auditory remove – by making it the object of the scopic and invocatory drive' (16–17). In a similar fashion, Grandfather Rose's response to Theodor's anxieties about racial difference also reminds the targeted German viewership of this didactic film that 'we have learned to view it in a different light.' In the original German ('Wir haben gelernt es mit anderen Augen zu sehen'), the script quite literally invokes the scopic drive as the means by which disempowerment or threat can be transformed: namely, by fetishizing Toxi and rendering her a voyeuristic object of visual pleasure. She thereby becomes the catalyst for an illusory reconciliation of otherwise conflicted discourses on gender, class, and nation as they find institutional expression within the patriarchal and capitalist order of the early Federal Republic.

Initially, the Afro-German child's presence in the Rose household poses an indirect threat to Theodor's patriarchal authority, for she clearly cannot 'pass' as his biological daughter and is thus destined to always remain the vestigial signifier of another man's potency. In this respect, Stemmle's film evinces the axiom that underlying every melodramatic narrative is an Oedipal drama. As a form of sexual division and gender orientation, the Oedipal scenario, as posited by Freud, constitutes a form of sexual division and gender orientation set in motion when the father, as executor of paternal law and the symbolic order, intervenes between the infant and the mother's body. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (1977) elaborates: 'It is not just the place of the man relative to the woman, but that of the parent (male) relative to the children, which is crucial here. Melodrama enacts, often with uncanny literalness, the

"family romance" described by Freud – that is to say, the imaginary scenario played out by children in relation to their paternity, the asking and answering of the question: whose child am I (or would I like to be)?' (116). At stake is Toxi's claim to German heritage and the rights that come with citizenship. This is metonymized in her search for a niche within the Rose family and inclusion on the same terms as Theodor's own two daughters, Susi and Ilse. It furthermore finds expression in Toxi's affectionate use of the terms 'Uncle Theodor' and 'Grandpa' to map out the coveted relation. The confounding that thereby occurs between status within society, and within the family, is not coincidental; yet under a German constitution that defines membership in the national community on the basis of patrilineal inheritance – i.e. having a German father – Toxi's petition stands a weak chance.

Of course, the contestation surrounding questions of lineage also bears implications for the bequeathal of material wealth from one generation to another, for example, the question of who may lay claim to accumulated capital. For melodrama has traditionally centred on the plight of the middle class as the ascendant social group that must strike a balance between inherited wealth and wage labour. One of Toxi's subplots traces Theodor's anxiety about the financial health of his pharmaceutical company. Consulting Gustav Rose in the older man's study, he delicately points out that investment of a certain sum of money could possibly revive the ailing business. Despite his elderly condition, Rose still sports a stylish suit and smokes his cigar with a self-assured air. The totemic struggle between father and son-in-law signals tension between a representative of the vestigial pseudo-aristocracy and a younger generation that must compete within an increasingly international market-driven economy.

Relative to these tensions, Toxi represents the threat of lower classes attempting to penetrate the insular sanctity of the privileged bourgeoisie. For, unbeknown to the Rose family, Toxi's grandmother is their former housekeeper, who left suddenly under mysterious circumstances to care for a sick daughter. This plot detail correlates with the sociological realities of the time; it was quite common for single women raising an Afro-German child to remain with or return to the household of their own mothers (themselves often widowed), to pool limited financial resources, and to share the labour of childcare. According to the 1958 study conducted by Eyferth et al. (1960), approximately 30 per cent of those German mothers who kept their Afro-German children

opted for this solution.[5] In many cases, the grandmother actually came to play a more formative role in the child's life while the biological mother was earning an income outside the home. Eyferth speculates that the grandmother's bonding with her grandchild was often based upon retroactive guilt for having earlier pushed her daughter into liaisons with American soldiers to obtain food and supplies during the immediate postwar years of severe scarcity and starvation (43).

The scene of Toxi's initial arrival in the Rose household intercuts a glimpse of Grandmother Berstel hovering outside in the bushes to ascertain whether Toxi will be permitted to stay indoors. The use of parallel montage enacts yet another naturalized binarism, one that situates the grandmother as an almost menacing exterior force (the proletarian class) violating the intimate sanctity of the middle-class family and destabilizing precarious generational politics within the Rose household. She is further stigmatized by the fact that she suffers from an eye disease (presumably cataracts); following this opening sequence, she does not resurface until much later, in hospital recovering from an eye operation, and, again, in the closing scene; in both scenes she is wearing a most unflattering patch. The symptom of clouded vision parallels the idea of miscalculating the legal repercussions and moral travesty of child abandonment (*Kindesaussetzung*). While we are supposed to consider it deplorable for the child, I cannot help wondering if the underlying disapproval is really directed at the fact that Toxi's grandmother has at least temporarily disabled the bureaucratic drive to document and register the existence and location of every living person and, more importantly, has undermined the parallel obsession with tracing Toxi's regional as well as 'phylogenetic' origins, a task that mobilizes a number of accessory film characters.

Melodramatic plots typically incorporate a lawyer, a doctor, or a detective as figures whose responsibility – in psychoanalytical terms – is that of gauging the extent of a protagonist's deviation from the measure of the law. Transgression can assume any number of narrative forms and may invite subsequent disciplining through legal action, diagnosis of physical ailments indicative of some form of libidinal repression, or retracing the path of a given individual's geographical displacement or dislocation. Stemmle's film cast includes representatives from all three institutions of surveillance – legal, medical, and criminal: we have Dr Übelhack, the long time friend and lawyer present at the original dinner when Toxi arrived; second, the family doctor

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Quelle: Deutsche Kinemathek

2.2. A committee of men try to establish Toxi's origins.

called in to ascertain whether she is carrying any contagious diseases and, in a later sequence, to attend to Grandfather Rose when he suffers a heart attack; and third, the detective assigned to sleuth out Toxi's parental and geographic origins. The fact that no less than a tripartite committee of patriarchal figures of authority must be summoned forth indicates that far more is at stake in the presence of a six-year old Afro-German child than meets the uncritical eye. The grandmother's real crime or short-sighted action may be that of attempting to enable her daughter's offspring to infiltrate the bourgeois class while concealing evidence of her proletarian and patrilineal origins. Both grandmother and grandchild become cyphers for a feminized and proletarian class undermining the patrilineal and bourgeois order ascendant within the new Federal Republic.

Having addressed the grandmother's 'myopia,' let us also consider

threats to Gustav Rose's visual acuity. Whereas the irascible Theodor is concerned with his family's social standing, the potential reaction of his colleagues, and Toxi's contaminating influence on his daughters, the grandfather is depicted as paternalistically affectionate, nearly moved to tears by Toxi's steadfast charm in the face of various small cruelties. After taking her along for an initial investigatory visit to the orphanage that Theodor proposed for her long-term care, he promptly concludes that she would be better off within the Rose household. This results in renewed conflict of opinion and Theodor's ultimatum, 'I demand that the child leave the house! I have a right to demand this as the husband of your daughter. I have to do it as the father of our daughters! Either the child leaves this house or we leave!' Grandfather Rose indignantly retorts, 'Then you all go! At once! I don't ever want to see you again!' and suddenly clutches his chest. Stumbling forward, he grasps at a nearby table for support, pulling tablecloth and dishes crashing down. As Helene Rose rushes out to call the doctor, Theodor turns to his wife and exclaims in agitation, 'You see what is going on with your father! His love for this alien child, why, that's no longer normal! You mustn't forget what you've just heard! The possibility of disinheritance! Take note!' Toxi is herein made responsible for jeopardizing familial bonds and disrupting the continuity of financial and social standing between generations.

In a theme that recurs in the story and is taken up by the media, it is implied that Toxi has drawn the grandfather into an 'abnormal' relationship which undermines his loyalty to his own family. Later, family members tiptoe anxiously through the house while the doctor tends to the old man in his bedroom. Propped by pillows, defeated and exhausted, he finally cedes to Theodor's demand that Toxi be returned to an orphanage, but in his shame about this betrayal of Toxi's trust, he urges, 'Bring her there immediately! As fast as possible! I can't look her in the eyes any longer!' while his hovering wife, Helene, and the family doctor exchange looks of both concern and relief. His remarks on several occasions underscore the centrality of vision in the disputes at hand, first telling his family he does not want to see them anymore and later rejecting the sight of Toxi out of a sense of guilt. It is the spectre of gendered or racial difference that seems to trigger the grandfather's 'pathological attraction' to Toxi and, in other characters, becomes associated with impaired vision or other metaphors of castration: for example, financial insolvency and loss of social status.

The spectacle of the grandfather's martyrdom has two functions. It

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Quelle: Deutsche Kinemathek

2.3. Grandmother Rose and the family doctor exchange looks of relief as Grandfather Rose agrees to send Toxi to an orphanage.

absolves him, and by association, a generation of citizenry who lived through National Socialism, of guilt for Toxi's expulsion from the family and, by extension, of racist bias. But his suffering also inscribes him as a victim, and if he is a victim, he cannot be a perpetrator, or *Täter*. This dramatic interlude also deflects attention from Toxi's victimization, usurping her abject status to draw attention to how Germans have also suffered under the stress of rapid societal changes and transfigurations of identity. An uncanny libidinal equivalency between these two figures is sustained throughout the story and reinforced when Grandfather Rose later retrieves Toxi from the orphanage again in a moment of remorse. As they traverse the orphanage lawn holding hands, the camera intercuts close-ups of Toxi looking up to him affectionately and of him looking down paternally; in a cinematically unusual gesture,

this exchange of lingering gazes is repeated with chiaroscuro effect. The sunlight filtering through the trees as they walk prints unusual patterns upon their faces in a manner that recalls a similar intersubjective moment between Antontio Ricci and his son Bruno in de Sica's *Ladri di biciclette* (1948) (and evinces the neo-realist touch Stemmle acquired during his stint in Italy two years previously). The absence of dialogue heightens the impact of the visual, while the strains of the theme song, 'I want so much to go home now' (*Ich möcht' so gern nach Hause geh'n*), sung earlier by the children in the orphanage, first fades and then echoes, when they are outdoors, from a seemingly theological realm outside diegetic space and time. Tensions with regard to her status in the family are not resolved within the realm of culture; instead they are suspended in an ethereal moment of sempiternal harmony within nature.

It is this intersubjective moment that ultimately initiates a trope I elaborate at greater length in chapter 6 as 'the German worthy of love again,' hereby adapting for my purposes a phrase coined within another context by Slavoj Žižek. In the *Sublime Object of Ideology* (1989), Žižek discusses the distinction between ideal ego (*Ideal-Ich*) and ego-ideal (*Ich-Ideal*) as marking the difference between imaginary and symbolic identification. While the former involves identification with the image representing 'what we would like to be,' the latter pertains to 'the very place *from where* we are being observed, *from where* we look at ourselves so that we appear to ourselves likeable, worthy of love' (105). The look Toxi bestows upon Grandfather Rose similarly restores to the German viewer the sense that the German citizen is worthy of regard and affection, that is, that s/he can be absolved of the guilt and incrimination of the recent Nazi past. It may also constitute a self-conscious moment in the film's discourse, intended to display a quality of interracial harmony superior to that prevailing in American society of the same era. The relay of gazes produces a relation in which Toxi functions as Ego-Ideal in the sense of being the point from which German citizenry can see itself in an idealized and respectable form again. The camera fetishizes this perspective, wrapping the fascinated viewer in the encomium of Toxi's trusting gaze.

The Language of the Symptom

Melodrama, as a genre that evolved out of nineteenth-century bourgeois literary traditions, participates in the societal codification of gender and racial differences and offers an illusory reconciliation of real-life

social, moral, and material contradictions that accompanied the rise of the middle class (Brooks 1995). Within the textual realm, however, the repressed resurfaces, often in the form of bodily symptoms such as those exemplified in Frau Berstel's cataract or Grandfather Rose's heart attack. Theodor, we discover, also suffers from lumbago. As Grandfather Rose explains to Tante Wally: 'He cannot seem to shake it off, the lumbago. It's all related to the difficult state of his business at the moment, of course. A matter of nerves.' Hardly the epitome of heroism or charisma, Theodor at times appears downright comical, as when glimpsed in the kitchen sweltering inside a state-of-the-art household contraption – the so-called 'Home-Sauna.' In what appears to be a playful jab at the emerging enthusiasm during the fifties for all manner of household gadgetry promising to improve quality of life, this inflatable and heatable rubberized sweatbox encases its voluntary victim so that only his perspiring head protrudes. Theodor, now reduced to a literal talking head, submits to Charlotte's anxious ministrations with a washcloth, while he continues to rant (literally 'giving off steam') about the chaos he believes Toxi has brought into his household.

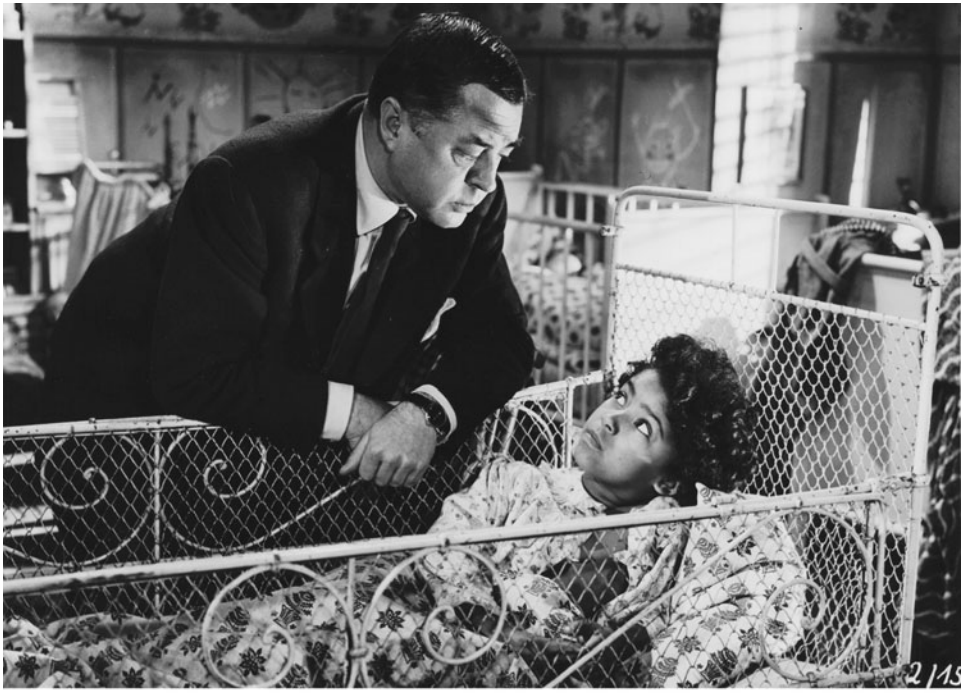
As the story progresses, Theodor's evolving symptomatology closely parallels the transformation in his relationship to Toxi. The more determined he is to bring Toxi to the orphanage, the worse his back problems become. On the morning following Grandfather Rose's capitulation, Theodor rises early to wake Toxi before his daughters notice her absence. We see him wince as he attempts to put on his coat, and again after he enters the children's room and leans over the sleeping Toxi. When she doesn't respond to his tapping on the metal rails of her bed, he tentatively reaches forward to shake her shoulder. Roused from slumber, she turns to him, her nightshirt partly unbuttoned. The moment of physical contact, Toxi's sleepily mumbled 'Guten morgen Theodor,' and his secretive explanation that they are going on an outing together all collude to give the scene vaguely sexual overtones. The film script even makes a point of mentioning that waking Toxi specifically represents Theodor's first *physical* contact with her, which accords the gesture some figurative significance. In fact, I would argue that it is the beginning of the restructuration of his feelings from those of aversion to those of desire.

The transgressive nature of that shift in sentiment is heightened when circumscribed by his wife Charlotte's surreptitious gaze, as the sequence inserts a low-angle shot of her scribbling something on a piece of paper (presumably the address of the orphanage) downstairs in the

foyer, where a banistered staircase leads to the second floor. Editing and camera work conspire to create a triangulation of looking relations with Oedipal overtones when Charlotte glances up momentarily: the camera follows her sight line to the second floor landing, merging with her POV to watch Toxi emerge from the children's sleeping quarters, close the door behind her, and shuffle down the hall into the parental bedroom. There, Toxi requests Theodor's help in buttoning the back of her shirt, peering over her shoulder at him in a stylized gesture of femininity that Annette Brauerhoch (1997) has maintained evokes the intimacy of two lovers (121). That intimacy is interrupted by the jangle of an alarm clock that pierces the cloak of conspiratorial silence hovering over the sleeping household; its effect is that of a scolding conscience or, perhaps, the sonoric expression of Theodor's latent desire, which he rushes forward to muffle.

The subsequent drive to the orphanage during an early morning drizzle begins with an exterior shot through the windshield, offering a blurred image of Toxi and Theodor huddled in the Volkswagen. If interior car shots have become a cinematographic cliché for evoking spatial intimacy, in this instance that device lends an erotic charge to what is, in effect, an abduction, since Toxi is unaware that they are headed for the orphanage. Further narrative tension results from Toxi's complete misreading of the circumstances: she is simply enchanted to be undertaking an outing with 'Uncle Theodor' and to be the exclusive object of parental dotage for a few hours. As spectators, we become complicit in this deception, since we know full well the fate intended for her. Interestingly, while this scene is shot from just beyond the car windshield, the original film script, although evidently altered during production, was supposed to include a line of dialogue inside the car, with the two riding in silence until Toxi beamed proudly at Theodor, slid closer to him, and affectionately murmured, 'I'm so happy.'

Directives in the film script reveal that a further significance was originally supposed to be attributed to this scene. Theodor's demeanour was to remain unmoved, neither concurring nor disagreeing with Toxi as they continued in silence. However, Toxi was then supposed to inquire, 'Where are we going?' thereby placing Theodor at a loss to tactfully explain that he is going to abandon her at the orphanage. Here the inevitable 'answer of the Real' was to kick in with exquisite timing; the car begins to stutter loudly and shudders to a halt. In its original conception, the car travel scene would not only have facilitated the spatial transition from one film setting to another, it also would have traced



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Quelle: Deutsche Kinemathek

2.4. Theodor wakes Toxi to bring her to the orphanage.

the restructuration of Theodor's sentiments towards Toxi, at once soliciting a confession of his racism while averting its actual articulation through the 'intervention of the Real' – a response from outside forces that affords metaphoric expression to the ineffable dwelling within a given character's psyche. In effect, Toxi's direct question would have challenged him either to profess his deceitful plan or alternately to undergo an apostatic reversal in his belief system. While the mechanical breakdown obviates the need for a verbal response, I would argue that, at this moment, he would have reversed his original intention and reconciled himself to returning her to 11 Lilac Lane. That this scene was originally intended to represent a key turning point – that Theodor was to experience a 'breakdown' in his ideological convictions – is underscored through the directive that his lumbago should suddenly disap-

pear. The original script describes him cautiously easing out of the car to take a look at the engine, startled to discover that he experiences no restriction in his limbs. Puzzled, he presses his hands into his lower back and bends his knees repeatedly in disbelief.

What we witness here is not unlike 'the answer of the Real' Slavoj Žižek (1993) has observed in textual examples ranging from the operas of Gluck and Mozart to the biblical story of Abraham and his son, in which

> the Other intervenes at the very moment when, in a suicidal act of abandonment, the subject expresses his readiness to put all at stake in a gesture of defiant renunciation and thus disavows all the cheap tricks of instrumental reason. As long as I endeavour to bargain, as long as I propose my self-sacrifice so to speak with my fingers crossed, counting on the last-minute intervention of grace, the Other will not respond. Grace … occurs at the very moment when we abandon all hope and cease to count on it. The situation is here ultimately the same as that of Abraham's acceptance of God's command to sacrifice his son: because he accepted it, he did not have to carry it out; *but he could not know that in advance*. (168–9; italics in original)

Thus, once Theodor makes a decision to defer blindly and unconditionally to the law (here, to the film's surface discourse of human compassion and tolerance), the real intervenes to preclude the necessity of his articulation and furthermore rewards him through the release of his bodily symptoms. As the film ending will later evince, circumstances will not press Theodor to keep Toxi once he has agreed to her inclusion in the Rose family. This hypothetical and ultimately omitted scene seems allegorical for the production of postwar political identity; democracy functions as a discourse within which a similar confidence or faith in the answer of the real is at work. In Žižek's words, 'that – in the long term, at least – the result will be in the best interests of society can never be directly proven, it always relies on a minimum of miraculous coincidence' (169).

While the filmed version still involves an automobile breakdown, it loses some of its significance because it is not attended by Theodor's miraculous cure and implied epiphanal moment. The originally scripted foreclosure of one phantasm (a vision of a society segregated along the divisions of perceived racial difference) and the substitution

of another (democratic principles, at least according to the letter of the law) is instead rendered even more ambivalent through the comments of a labourer who glimpses Theodor staring helplessly into the engine of his car and offers to take a quick look. His prognosis: 'The distributor is broken. The dream is over.' One cannot help wondering if a double entendre is intended that references equal 'distribution' of wealth and opportunities within the newly installed social welfare state. The labourer's words could then be pessimistically construed to imply that the new, if only provisionally enforced, ideological aspirations towards democracy and civil rights are precariously susceptible to rupture and collapse. This disparity between written script and final copy does not constitute a singular episode; as I elaborate in chapter 4, further strategic omissions seem similarly suggestive of dramaturgical interventions undertaken in the interest of sustaining a decisively conservative subtext.

Consuming Differences: From Xenophobia to Xenophilia

After the car breaks down, Theodor and Toxi proceed on foot but take a detour into café Süsse Ecke after Toxi points out that they have not had breakfast. In the next shot, the camera tracks forward to the pair seated at a small table stacked with empty plates from the baked goods consumed. Toxi gazes intently at the slightly discomfited Theodor and says triumphantly, 'You see, Theodor, now isn't this nice!' like a wife on a rare outing with her anti-social spouse. In a conspiratorial tone she adds, 'Today is also a special day,' leaning in to whisper, 'Today is my birthday.' Theodor looks first perplexed and then guilty, evidently recalling the mendacious mission he was set upon, and asks blankly, 'What? Today is your birthday?' Toxi explains, 'Aunt Hertha said that, since my birthday isn't written down anywhere, I can choose one for myself. A nice day. And today is a nice day!' The volitional claim to a date of birth offers a subversive means for Toxi to recover agency amid circumstances that, unbeknown to her, seem determined to chart her fate for her; it also draws attention to the manner in which birthdays serve as evidence of one's claim to a genealogy within the social unit of the family and within a given nation-state. To dwell within contemporary global society without the spatio-temporal reference points provided by documentation of date and place of birth, proof of national citizenship, and social security number is to be not only lacking an identity that carries global currency, but also to be rendered incapable

of assimilation into a given symbolic order and barred access to the various privileges and securities this order promises.[6]

Birthright has been a preoccupation from the earliest sequences of the film: the family dinner in honour of Helene's fiftieth birthday, Susi's birthday party (to be discussed later), and the penultimate scene, where the birth of Jesus is staged by the children as a costumed pageant. Through her volitional claim to a date of birth, Toxi solicits membership within Theodor's family and acceptance into the social fold on the basis of her humanity rather than her skin colour. Her logic recalls the classic line from postcolonial theorist Frantz Fanon, 'I will try quite simply to make myself white; that is, I will compel the white man to acknowledge that I am human' (1967, 78). As we shall see momentarily, her petition will be at least temporarily approved, its provisional ratification grounded in the fact that she can fulfil a certain function within the larger libidinal and socio-monetary economies that link the film characters. For even as Toxi's trusting gaze upon Theodor misreads his actual intentions, she also restores to him, as to Grandfather Rose, the sense of 'the German worthy of love again.'

In the café scene, this affection also acquires a further libidinal charge predicated upon oral gratification. For one, we can infer that Toxi has capitalized on the opportunity to indulge her sweet tooth when the harried waitress returns and calculates aloud the final tab while recounting an exaggeratedly long list of consumed pastries. But before Toxi and Theodor depart, the camera also lingers on a close-up analogous in significance to the intersubjective display between Grandfather Rose and Toxi on the orphanage lawn. Theodor encourages Toxi to finish her éclair, but she insists that the last bite is for him, climbing onto his lap and holding it to his mouth for him to consume; in the fleeting close-up, she leans affectionately over his face while he returns her gaze like an infant at the bottle. This interaction can be construed in a number of ways. While reducing her to the racist cliché of 'the chocolate girl,' Toxi's gesture can also be read as strategic, as she may sense Theodor's distrust and innocently try to 'win him over.' When Theodor's face thereupon smudges with chocolate, she wipes his mouth with a napkin, giggling, 'No matter how one cleans Theodor, Theodor is always dirty!' The remark evokes a veritable intertextual 'minstrel moment,' that of Al Jolson singing the song, 'Dirty Hands, Dirty Face' in his role as Jack Robin (a character who sheds his Jewish origins as the former Jackie Rabinowitz) in the first American talkie *The Jazz Singer* (Alan Crosland, 1927). As Linda Williams (2001)

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Quelle: Deutsche Kinemathek

2.5. Toxi feeds Theodor an éclair in Café Süsse Ecke.

has elaborated, those lyrics offer a double entendre on Oedipal desire ('dirty hands') underpinning Jackie's intense affection for his mother, while also referencing the blackface tradition ('dirty face') on which Jack Robin's career will be built.[7]

It is significant that the rhyming phrase Toxi recites was previously spoken at Susi's birthday party by another girl, where it was directed at little Susi after she plunged a chocolate Mohrenkopf into her mouth. The phrase itself is not directly racist, but because Toxi is directly situated between Susi and this rather odious party guest, who already raised several previous objections to Toxi's presence and to her skin colour, the remark invites the spectator to link Susi's chocolate-smeared face with Toxi's naturally darker skin. It is as if the latter had somehow 'rubbed off' on the former like either ink or even a contagion, since the speckled brown spots on Susi's face bring to memory her earlier bout with measles. Significantly, it is also Toxi, leaning in close, who reaches for a napkin to wipe the chocolate off Susi's face, thereby claiming responsibility – a gesture she later repeats with Theodor.

Her subversive move recalls didactic elements of 'The Story of the Inky Boys' in the illustrated children's classic, Heinrich Hoffmann's *Struwwelpeter* ([1844] 1997), where the teacher Nikolas dips two naughty little boys into his (oversized) inkwell as punishment for laughing at a young 'Moor' in public. Toxi can be understood to unwittingly reroute any latent racism previously directed towards her, in order to now remark figuratively upon Theodor's own broader moral dilemma. For he is, indeed, tainted or *beschmutzt,* insofar as this early morning outing is overshadowed by his deceptive behaviour and a subtle eroticism. Toxi's rhyme may also serve as an oblique reference to the culpability of Theodor's generation in the National Socialist legacy and the impossibility of simply 'whitewashing' these wrongdoings. One need only recall the eager pursuit immediately following the war's end of *Persilscheine*, or denazification certificates, postwar parlance for a clean bill of health with regard to previous political wrongdoings.[8] Perhaps Theodor's sudden change of heart pertains to the opportunistic recognition of precisely such a *Persilschein* in the form of adopting an Afro-German orphan, with which any doubts about his past political leanings could be mollified. When the camera shifts to register Theodor's reaction to Toxi's playful words, his expression indicates that he is wrestling with a guilty conscience. When she looks at Theodor expectantly and asks 'What are we going to do next?' he responds spontaneously, 'Let's go home.' The polysemy at work in this sequence condenses three levels of

Theodor's implied guilt: as it relates to his awareness of his racist bias, to the eroticized nature of his interaction with Toxi, and perhaps to a historically more remote memory of personal or collective complicity in the fascist past.

The staging of what is virtually an abduction, in which Toxi has neither knowledge of nor control over her destiny, plays out a rescue fantasy in which Theodor redoubles his own dominant positioning by first threatening to bring Toxi to an orphanage, only to later extend compassion towards her. Psychologically speaking, the scene also dramatizes the pleasures of loss and recovery of the object of gratification, which Freud elaborates in his description of the 'fort-da' game as the awakening of desire through absence of the love object.[9] Object relations, as summarized by Laplanche and Pontalis (1973), constitute the 'complex outcome of a particular organization of the personality, of an apprehension of objects that is to some extent fantasized, and of certain special types of defence' (277). Toxi has come to assume something akin to the role of an *objet petit autre* (Lacan 1978), that is, one of a number of transitional objects that trigger for a given individual fleeting recollections of an earlier unity between self and other elements misapprehended as extensions of the self. In the most primal sense, it is the mother's body, voice, and gaze that once assumed this role; however, as these recede, other objects and people come to serve as transient substitutions and may be subject to incorporation via the oral drive. The candid gratification involved when Toxi feeds Theodor an éclair maps this literally and metonymically. Previously, Theodor found himself confronted with charges of racism in a postwar society that has suddenly become morally righteous (as exemplified in philo-Semitism); his defence against this synecdochical rejection by the social body can be read as now involving proactive incorporation of difference, of that which dwells decidedly outside his narrow system of understanding. Naturally, it is socially problematic to sexualize a six-year-old child in the manner outlined above, and the script backs off from pedophilia through the ensuing comical antic. While Theodor is making a phone call from the café, Toxi marches off to the washroom and unwittingly passes through the door labelled 'H,' for *Herren* (men), rather than that marked 'D,' for *Damen* (women). By making Toxi seem unaware of social codes for segregating the sexes, the film restores to her a degree of presexuality.

In essence, the object once so threatening to Theodor has been palliated, reappropriated, and 'consumed' in a manner that simultaneously satisfies his libidinal, moral, and, as I shall now outline, economic inter-

ests. For although Grandfather Rose and Theodor initially disagree about the new arrival in the Rose family, the dispute ultimately brings their individual economic interests and ideological standpoints closer in alignment. Grandfather Rose is already a representative of a latitudinarian viewpoint that links Christian tolerance, old money, and cosmopolitan savvy. This stance is not threatened by socio-ethnic changes within West Germany as long as it remains a question of absorbing perceived 'others' into the pre-established categories of what is German, rather than requiring a radical reconceptualization wherein what or who is German would also necessarily demand redefinition. Theodor, on the other hand, jeopardizes these pre-established ideals through an excess of zeal; he is burdened by a too literal identification with racist premises. The first half of the film is therefore devoted to the didactic project of converting Theodor's overt racism to a more covert form. Once a necessary gap grows between his everyday symbolic universe and its (racist) phantasmatic support, progressive discourses can coexist with, and even cultivate, a lingering racist kernel.

It is established early in the film plot that Theodor's financial solvency as owner of a pharmaceutical company will remain heavily contingent upon his ability to reconcile himself with members of the Rose family, who wield greater financial control and, by extension, ideological authority. The morning after Toxi's arrival and the dispute between Theodor and Gustav Rose about 'the race problem,' Theodor joins his father-in-law at the breakfast table, and apologizes for his outburst. Gustav generously passes it off as symptomatic of Theodor's financial worries, leading the rueful man to further confide that his recent pharmaceutical patent has been a failure and that he stands on the threshold of financial ruin. He sees only two possible solutions: either surrender autonomy to a presumably larger corporation or cultivate improved relations with an estranged family member who can offer financial support: 'Either a merger with Laurenz in Baden-Baden, or ask for help from Aunt Wally.' Gustav agrees to invite his sister back to the house so that Theodor has another chance to 'wave the white flag,' as he puts it. The pragmatic concerns of family and finances that bond the two men despite their ideological differences echo the contemporaneous *Realpolitik*, which Frank Stern (1992) has described as intimately yoking 'moral and material restitution' (366). He maintains that Chancellor Konrad Adenauer's declaration on 'The Attitude of the Federal Republic toward Jews' in September 1951 exemplifies the perfunctory manner in which reformed racial attitudes were performed in the interests

of foreign policy exigencies and of accelerating the cancellation of the Statute of Occupation.[10] Philo-Semitism became a political and economic stance from which to negotiate the terms for reparation to the Allied countries, for restitution to the newly formed state of Israel, and for encouraging international investment in rebuilding the Federal Republic's industrial base.[11]

On the local scale of family politics that arguably metonymize those of the nation as a whole, *Toxi*'s script may be participating in a complex recoding of anti-Semitic discourse, such that Tante Wally, rather than an amorphous conglomerate of international Jewry, becomes synonymous with finance capital. Not only does she represent the perceived threat of women's financial and sexual autonomy, she is also – at least early in the plot – falsely associated with the further 'peril' of hybridized racial identity when Theodor surmises it was she who dispatched Toxi to his family; both become a societal opprobrium tolerated in the interests of national economic recovery. Once Theodor has reconciled himself to Toxi's return to the Rose household following the café scene and an ensuing sequence in which Toxi accidentally gets separated from Theodor and wanders the city streets for a few hours, the film quickly moves towards narrative closure. Grandfather Rose meets with Theodor in his study and shows him a letter that confirms the sale of one of his patents and asks whether this sum would restore the solvency of his pharmaceutical company. As Theodor gratefully stammers to the affirmative, Grandfather Rose gives him an encouraging pat on the back; their transaction becomes a parable of the financial benefits accruing to those who can adapt to the social reorganization of the West German landscape and convert to the new ideology of tolerance. That the two men have forged only an illusory alliance and will remain of fundamentally different political and generational mindsets is signalled when Theodor extends his hand in a reconciliatory gesture and Grandfather Rose subtly declines to accept it, instead reaching into his breast pocket for two cigarillos and letting Theodor light them.

Symbolic Capital and the Labour of Images

In his study of the historical function of racism and sexism under capitalism, Immanuel Wallerstein (1991) has similarly concluded that excessive xenophobia is partially incompatible with capitalist interests, which are structured not around losing or ejecting elements of society

TOXI - BRD 1952 Regie: Robert A. Stemmle
Quelle: Filmmuseum Berlin - Deutsche Kinemathek

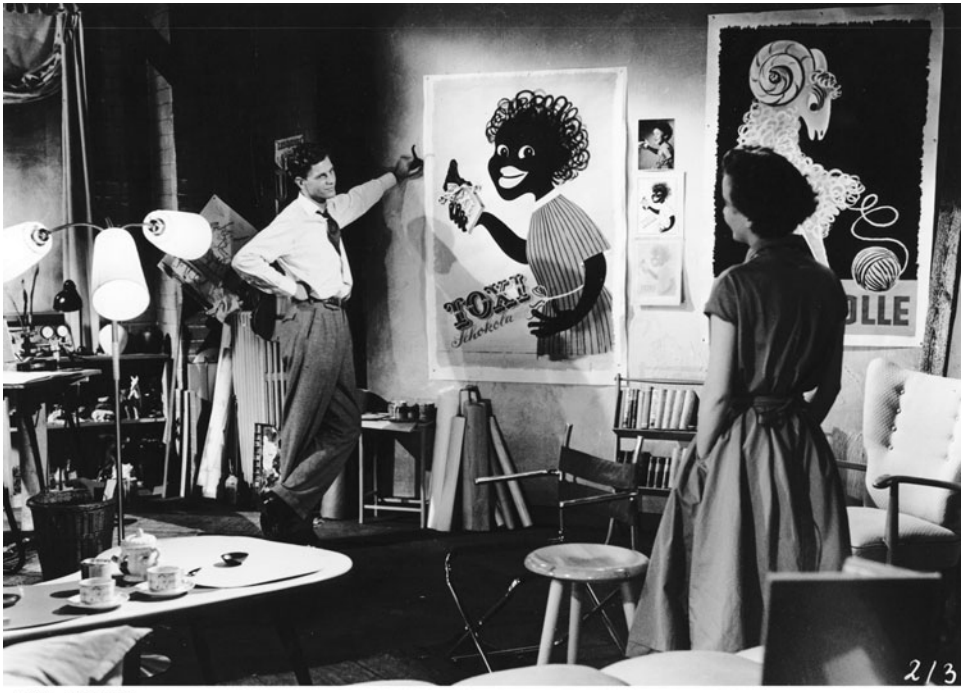
2.6. By 'seeing things differently,' Theodor gains financial support from his father-in-law.

but rather around extracting whatever surplus production that group/entity may offer while mimimizing political disruption:

> A capitalist system that is expanding (which is half the time) needs all the labour-power it can find, since this labour is producing the goods through which more capital is produced, realized, and accumulated. Ejection out of the system is pointless. But if one wants to maximize the accumulation of capital, it is necessary simultaneously to minimize the costs of production (hence the costs of labour-power) and minimize the costs of political disruption (hence minimize – not eliminate, because one cannot eliminate – the protests of the labour force). Racism is the magic formula that reconciles these objectives. (33)

For Wallerstein's comments to have bearing upon my analysis, one must, of course, read the term 'labour' in its broadest sense, as Karl Marx ([1856–58] 1972) originally intended, to encompass the realms of production, consumption, distribution, exchange, and even circulation. Toxi (and by extension, Afro-German children of the 1950s) arguably came to constitute a form of symbolic capital, serving as an ideological icon around which to restructure national coherence in a publicized display of xenophilia. Her iconic status also has commercial applications, exemplified in her relationship to the graphic artist Robert Peters in two key scenes in his atelier. The day following Toxi's unexpected arrival, Hertha takes her along when she goes to visit Robert, who had abruptly left the Rose home the previous evening out of disgust at Theodor's racism. Hertha likely perceives the family spat as jeopardizing her relationship to Robert and must find a way to patch things up. Although I discuss other facets of this scene in chapter 3, its significance here pertains to the way Toxi's presence triggers Robert's artistic imagination. After Toxi has passed the time painting a crude image of a couple in wedding frock and gown, Robert offers her a bar of chocolate. A reverse shot shows her eagerly biting off a chunk, and then cuts back to Robert reaching for his camera and taking a snapshot of her grinning as she waves the unwrapped bar in the air. A later scene in the same atelier reveals that he has designed a larger-than-life poster of Toxi, one stylistically reminiscent of the caricatures of indigenous Africans found in colonialist cartoons of the 1930s and probably most familiar to a contemporary readership through reprints of the graphic novel *Tintin in the Congo* [1931], one of twenty-four instalments in the *Tintin* series authored by Belgian writer and illustrator Georges Prosper Remi (1907–1983) who published under the pen name Hergé.

The veritable halo of wiry curls that drape the head and the popping eyes of Robert's artistic creation also recalls the turbaned 'Sarotti Moor,' the emblem adopted by the Sarotti chocolate company back in 1910 (now owned by Stollwerck AG in Cologne), possibly because the factory was first located in Berlin's Mohrenstrasse, but likely also playing off the fact that cacao imported to Europe was, at the time, harvested primarily from African colonies. With the rise of industrialization in late nineteenth-century Europe, trademarks with similarly imperial allusions had become commonplace in the packaging, posters, and advertising for coffee canisters, sugar bags, and syrup bottles. They were imbued with an aura of luxury that derived not only from the non-staple status of these products but also from the surplus value



TOXI - BRD 1952
Regie: Robert A. Stemmle
Quelle: Deutsche Kinemathek

2.7. Toxi becomes the muse for Robert's most recent poster design.

(i.e., capital) associated with the exploitation of indigenous labour and resources in colonial and dependent areas where raw goods were funnelled into Western economies. In his comprehensive study of images of Africa and Blacks in popular culture, Jan Nederveen Pieterse (1992) points out that this period was 'a time of sharp social and political cleavages. European hegemony, then at its height, was reflected in advertising along with colour, class and gender hierarchies' (188). Against this backdrop, Sarotti's turbaned servant in harem pants can be read as 'a symbol of status and luxury, traditionally associated with the German courts and with patrician prosperity' but now democratized for mass consumption (159). Under the rationale that chocolate, in particular, was often bought by men with purchasing power to please women and/or children, Pieterse suggests that the Sarotti emblem came to function as a character in an imaginary harem, mediating desires among differ-

ent tiers of consumers: 'The subliminal potency of the emblem then is both that it eroticizes and that this Moor cannot be a sexual competitor because he is only a child (the alternative would be a eunuch); thus it satisfies the needs of both the male purchaser and the female consumer. At the same time, with its resemblance to toy characters like Bimbo, the figure is also appealing to children' (159). Parallel relays of desire take place when Robert offers Toxi chocolate in order to appease her while he devotes his attention to Hertha; simultaneously, of course, Toxi also serves as placeholder for the child that will motivate and also retroactively justify the couple's future marriage.

Rosemarie Lester's (1982) study of ethnographic reports, serial novels, and satirical cartoons published in West German illustrated magazine weeklies such as *Bunte, Neue Illustrierte*, *Quick*, and *Stern* during the 1950s offers further evidence of a wider resurgence of earlier colonial tropes in representing the Black African. Symptomatic of a nostalgia for a time when Germany still freely competed with other European nations for a piece of the colonial empire, such yearning for the 'lost paradise' of white rule in colonial territories was also at a general high throughout Western Europe in the early 1950s, parallel to the growing emancipatory spirit and political unrest spread throughout Africa. Great Britain ceded independence to Ghana in 1957 and to Kenya in 1963; in 1959, Belgium relinquished its claim to the Congo; in 1960, France and Great Britain granted autonomy to the jointly supervised territories of Togo and Cameroon, which it had originally annexed from Germany under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. The decline of European colonial power over territories previously under the governance of the German Reich, in particular, reinforced in the eyes of many West Germans the conviction that had the nation been permitted to keep its colonies, it would have done a better job than did other European countries in governing southwest Africa.[12]

Among the diverse postwar initiatives undertaken on behalf of orphaned Afro-German children, one in particular displays continuities with earlier modes of colonial philanthropy perhaps best exemplified by Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965), the Alsatian doctor who cared for the sick and indigent in Lambaréné (now in Gabon) and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1953. Lemke Muniz de Faria (2002) has researched in detail the interventions of Irene Dilloo, a German woman born in 1887, who trained as a childrearing consultant, married a Protestant minister, and became mother of nine children. Dilloo believed the social solution for Afro-German children was neither integration nor adop-

tion abroad, but rather a separate community within Germany where they would not be exposed to the trauma of racism or be socially disadvantaged. Instruction in foreign languages was to be included so that those who elected to could later emigrate to other continents and cultures or serve as cultural or political ambassadors between Germany and African countries. The Ministry of the Interior emphatically rejected her proposal on the grounds that it reinforced the children's sense of difference and would undermine their future integration into German society. She also gained no sympathy from the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), which endorsed the desegregationist principles of the civil rights movement. Nevertheless in October 1952 Dilloo established a foundation to raise money, secure land and property, and plan pedagogical goals for the Albert Schweitzer Children's Home. Approaching the 'cause' of the Afro-German orphans with a missionary's zeal, Dilloo pursued her dream project with mixed results and in the face of considerable governmental resistance until her death in 1964.

Robert's poster of Toxi eating chocolate displays affinities with the aforementioned neocolonialist sentiments and aesthetics of the 1950s, but it also functions self-reflexively, foregrounding the aspiring ad artist's co-optive stance towards Toxi and the way child actress Elfie Fiegert came to iconicize all Afro-German children and was used to market a successful film. Hester Baer (2009) suggests that the motivic recurrence of painters, graphic artists, and fashion designers in postwar films served 'to inscribe a series of diegetic spectator positions through which characters in the film look at and respond to varying kinds of visual representations' (12); as such, the motive constituted 'another step in the ongoing attempt of postwar filmmakers to relegitimate the cinema and find a new film language' (13). Robert Peters serves in many ways as mouthpiece for Robert Stemmle, another professional in the commercial image-making business. His words seem to issue directly from the director when he eagerly conveys to Herta: 'I'm confident that they [the company] will take it on and then I will convince them to draw up an entire product line. Just imagine: in every shop window the most diverse packages of bars, candies, and pralines! And each of them with my Toxi picture. That would really be something!' His remarks just as easily apply to the ingenuity with which actress Elfriede Fiegert's alternately smiling and sad face was deployed to market Stemmle's film; she was captured in forty-five press photos, nine different sketches, two posters, and in slogans for use by movie houses that included,

'A charming brown imp shakes up a stuffy patrician household!' 'An enchanting film comedy about current times,' and 'A warm appeal to the heart and to the good in humanity.' As the film travelled across the western *Länder*, Fiegert also made public appearances at opening matinees, which provided occasions for autograph sessions, cake and cocoa, and pony rides. Although these gimmicks have an extended tradition both in the earlier Ufa and in the Hollywood film industry, when employed in *Toxi*'s publicity, they also bring more sharply into focus how an imagined community implicitly founded upon Whiteness can be interpellated.

Like the 'Sarotti-Moor,' Fiegert and the various photographic and stencilled permutations of her film character became a consumer logo that advanced *Toxi*'s mass distribution through brand-name recognition. The encoding of neocolonial nostalgia during this process finds a certain corollary in the southern plantation nostalgia both thematized and critiqued in a Hollywood film of an earlier era: John Stahl's *Imitation of Life* (1934), which was based on Fannie Hurst's bestselling novel published just one year earlier. In Stahl's adaptation, the financially savvy White single mother, Bea Pullman (Claudette Colbert), mass markets the pancake recipe provided by her Black housekeeper, Delilah Johnson (Louise Beavers) in such a way that the pancakes and housekeeper's image become fused into a national icon. The fictional scenario directly references the famous 'Aunt Jemima' label, which exploited the southern mammy stereotype in order to dominate the sale of pancakes, waffles, and syrup beginning at the Chicago World Fair of 1893. Both Stahl and Stemmle foreground how stereotypes turn into icons, but Stahl signals a greater critical distance. When Bea asks her housekeeper to pose with a big smile that her painter can copy for the design concept of 'Delilah's Pancake Shop,' Delilah replies 'Oh, yes'm' in exaggerated African-American dialect and freezes her round face into a wide-eyed grin that she sustains even after Bea turns back to the painter and obliviously resumes talking. While Bea's voice occupies the soundtrack, the camera lingers over Delilah's soundless static pose just a little too long, thereby drawing the viewer's attention to the reified image of black culture as commodity (Hardy and Thomas 2001, 425). In the corresponding scene in *Toxi*, Robert asks Toxi to pause mid-mouthful while he takes a snapshot of her triumphantly holding up her chocolate bar. But the moment is so fleeting that any possible irony is lost on all but discerning viewers. The mechanisms at work in both films are nevertheless analogous: just as the jolly mammy's face

rewrote the violent history of the American South in order to promote a national commodity, so, too, the sketch of a kinky-haired Black girl with a full-lipped smile clutching a chocolate bar effaces a century of colonial relations between European countries and those African cultures where manual labour was harnessed to European production quotas. In both instances, racialization processes organized the desires of consumer markets and stimulated sluggish economies in, respectively, the years following the U.S. Great Depression and postwar austerity in Germany.

CHAPTER THREE

Genealogy, Geography, and the Search for Origins

Creating the Model Couple for a Post-Racist Society

West Germany's emerging economic miracle exhibited trends similar to those of social market economies in other industrialized nations; production and consumption of goods, it seemed, best achieved synchronization within a national population socially conditioned to consume within stabilized and predictable socio-sexual and socio-racial configurations. As Fehrenbach's comprehensive study (1995) demonstrates, West German feature films documented and reflected on this ongoing preoccupation with restoring women to the domestic sphere and aligning their identity with more traditional norms of femininity after the war had compelled them to acquire greater autonomy and new responsibilities. Although women were frequently reluctant to retreat into the gender roles of an earlier era, the serious shortage of eligible bachelors apparently offered a compelling enough reason for many women to comply with their 'redomestication' in the hopes of escaping the maligned fate of spinsterhood. This concern traces like a leitmotif throughout *Toxi*'s dialogue, including the early sequence in the kitchen, when the housekeeper worries about stretching the prepared menu to include another dinner guest, Hertha's fiancé Robert. When the servant girl makes a sly comment about the young couple, the harried cook chides her: 'Don't gossip! Pay attention, so you learn something! You have to able to cook, otherwise you'll never get a husband!' – to which the girl retorts hotly, 'And you? You cook and still don't have one either!' So too, the early debacle, in which Wally Rose takes affront when her brother Gustav inadvertently invites a dinner

guest who jilted her thirty years ago to marry another woman, contributes to a landscape of women not so much spared domestic drudgery as deprived of their biological destiny and marital bliss.

One woman who will be spared their fate is Hertha Rose. The film's moral order clearly establishes that Toxi's unexpected entry into the household will not impede her move towards the social contract of marriage and domesticity; in fact, it will actually accelerate it. The day after Toxi's arrival, Hertha walks hand in hand with her through the neighbourhood. The cheery extra-diegetic music underscores her affectionate relationship with the child and her indifference to the way she could be misconstrued in the public eye as Toxi's biological mother – a conclusion one woman seems to draw as she casts a disapproving look back over her shoulder at the 'incongruous' pair. The next scene reveals that the utopian familial framework Hertha and Robert will come to embody is precisely enabled through Toxi's presence and by her gaze. As Hertha and Toxi arrive at the atelier, Robert scoops Toxi into his arms while also leaning forward to kiss Hertha, prompting the highly observant child to inquire, 'Are you two married?' Hertha responds laughingly, 'No, but we are allowed to kiss one another!' which Toxi interprets to mean that she too can give Robert a kiss. The innocuous query of a sexually innocent child and her gesture of affection draw attention to the precariousness of the couple's relationship, one not yet consolidated through the social contract of marriage. Yet their status within the story as a couple ideally suited for partnership and parenthood (replete with its Oedipal triangulations!) within a postwar society undergoing moral regeneration is repeatedly reinforced at the level of composition: for example, when Hertha and Robert face each other with Toxi positioned between them on Robert's arm and standing against the backdrop of an urban cityscape (presumably Hamburg, where the Wandsbeker Film Studios were located) visible through the floor to ceiling windows.

Also visible slightly frame left against the back wall is a large abstract painting in the cubist style of Picasso, portraying a human figure whose body is divided down the middle into half white, half black; the latter half was evidently filled in by the figure's own hand, as he holds above his head a black paint brush whose strokes have just filled half of his head so as to show up his contrasting white face in profile. When Toxi turns her head and glimpses behind her an entire wall of artwork, she asks whether Robert made them all himself. His affirmative answer

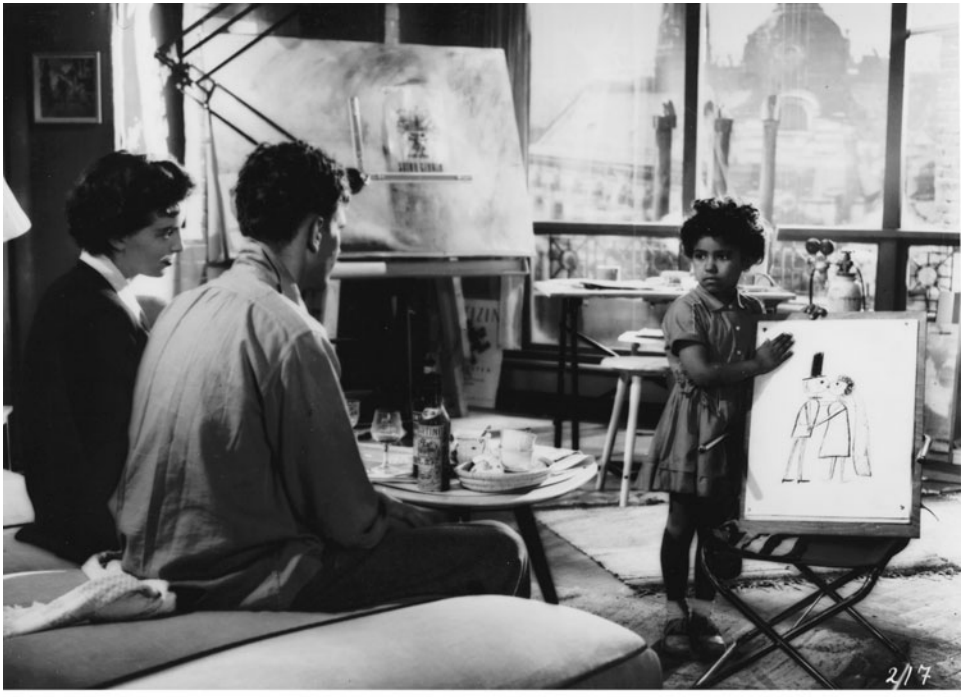
underscores the way this particular painting seems to comment on Robert's willingness (as stand-in for the white half of the figure, whose one arm also holds the paint pot) to 'dabble' with discourses around 'blackness' and embrace a society based on racial integration. My reading of the painting's significance gains support from the stage blocking of bodies: as Robert holds Toxi in his arms, his body almost exactly blocks our view of the white half of the figure on the wall behind him, while Toxi's body partially obscures the black half.

While Hertha and Robert continue to talk, Toxi wanders to a nearby table to examine a cartoon sketch of a man and woman holding hands. She calls Robert over and asks whether this represents himself and Hertha. When he answers no, she sets about with paintbrush and palette to create a picture of them, while he turns again towards Hertha, who broaches in earnest the altercation that arose the evening before, in which Robert had sided with Gustav. She encourages him to apologize to Theodor, but as Robert points out in an assertion that weds his progressive politics with patriarchal authority, 'Never! A man must never change his moral views on account of a woman!' The depth of field reveals Toxi in the background hunched over her sketch pad with her back to the camera; her triumphant cry of 'Finished!' interrupts their altercation as she turns and approaches Robert and Hertha (and the camera) with her masterpiece. We fleetingly glimpse a man in top hat and a woman in a bridal gown and veil holding hands and engaged in a kiss, as the camera rotates 180 degrees on the axis of the primitive sketch to a two-shot of Robert and Hertha seated on the couch, gazing somewhat warily upon what is, effectively, a representation of their idealized future. The exchange of gazes across the 180-degree axis establishes Toxi as the site from which the couple is projected as utopian possibility at the same time that she also serves as the camera capturing the discrepancy between that image and their as yet unfinalized commitment to one another.

Subsequent sequences similarly suggest that Toxi contributes indirectly or directly to the narrative trope Raymound Bellour refers to as 'the creation of the couple' (Bergstrom 1976, 88). When Tante Wally drops by the Rose household for the second time, she happens to spy Toxi among the other family members and immediately looks accusingly at Hertha, asking pointedly whether she had not, at one time, worked at an American army base. Before the young woman can fully grasp the implications of her cryptic comment, Tante Wally archly stands up and leaves in a huff of moral indignation. When Hertha fits

the pieces together seconds later and realizes Tante Wally has mistaken Toxi as her illegitimate child, she bursts into laughter at the impossibility of the insinuation. But when in a later quiet moment with Robert, she asks worriedly, 'What shall become of us in the future?' Robert replies, 'I'm quite happy about this, because I believe now you will stay with me.' He recognizes that Hertha will now need his status as fiancé in order to redeem her honour, for as a single woman within an extended family harbouring a young Afro-German child, Hertha will invite the types of accusations of unrestrained sexuality insinuated by Tante Wally and already presaged in the aforementioned reverse shot of the snobbish woman on the street. Only a monogamous alliance sanctified by the exchange of matrimonial vows can now rescue her from society's circumspect gaze.

Toxi's painting of bride and groom was intended to lend two-dimensional form to the social unit into which she yearns to be absorbed and with which her future welfare must become fundamentally bound if she is not to land in an orphanage. It soon appears that her petition will be successful. Following Theodor's second tirade, which results in Gustav's collapse and the family resolution to deliver Toxi to an orphanage for good, Robert and Hertha meet again in his atelier, their conversation offering a counterpoint to what Robert in an earlier scene had referred to as Theodor's 'outdated ideas.' The scene opens on Robert admiring the oversized sketch of Toxi eating a chocolate bar and exclaiming enthusiastically that it will be a very effective marketing concept. As the camera pans slightly left, Toxi's own clumsy artwork comes into view, propped against an easel behind the conversing couple. As the camera dollies in for another two-shot of them, Robert turns to his fiancée and says resolutely, 'I think it would be best if we married as quickly as possible.' Hertha concurs and he adds, 'You know, I was thinking, maybe then we could take in Toxi. Funny thought, no?' Hertha confesses she had also had the same thought, leading Robert to kiss her on the cheek, pleased, before he turns again towards his Toxi poster and declares, 'I'm sure it will be a success.' Hertha now moves frame right to fetch her coat near the entryway; although the camera follows her, a metal latticework that divides the foyer from the rest of the atelier now partially obscures the view. Robert joins Hertha for a departing embrace and kiss captured by the camera, underscoring the spectator's position as voyeur upon a moment of intimacy only possible in private until the pair are officially married. The shot composition also signals the way the couple is 'framed' by outdated modes of thinking



TOXI - BRD 1952
Regie: Robert A. Stemmle
Quelle: Deutsche Kinemathek

3.1. Toxi facilitates Hertha's and Robert's move towards marriage.

and societal judgments that place constraints upon their own progressive understanding of family and belonging. Toxi's plight, her need for shelter and familial acceptance, is assimilated into the larger project of establishing the nuclear family as normative social unit, one in which a woman's worth is measured by the depth of her maternal instinct, while the man must prove himself in the role of primary breadwinner. Hertha and Robert emblematize that generation portrayed in both East and West German films of the 1950s as morally equipped with the youthful idealism and lack of historical baggage to successfully navigate the new social order.

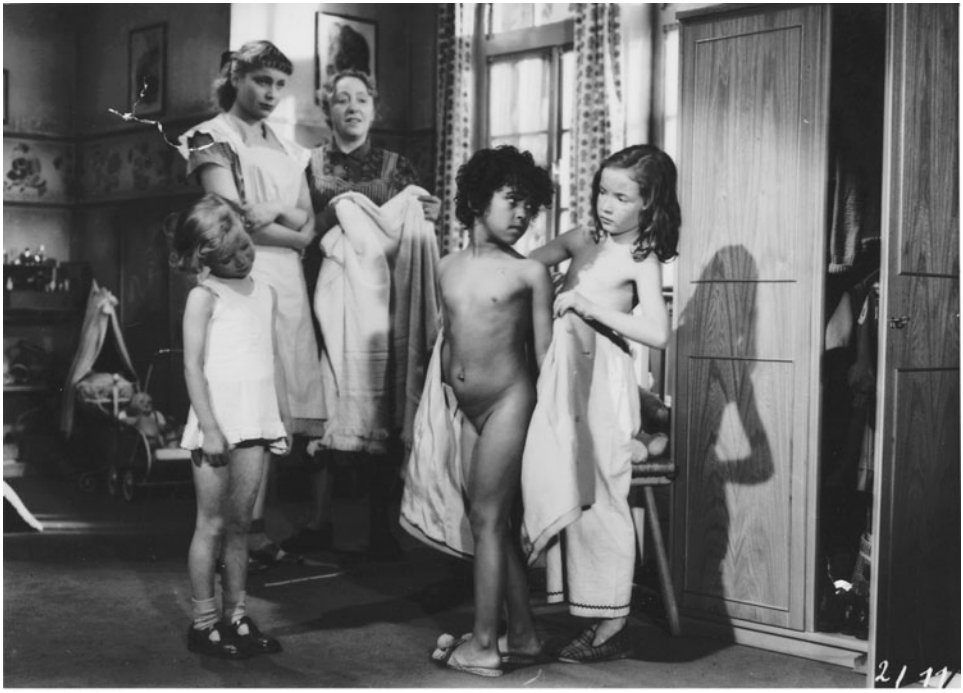
Mapping Sexual and Racial Differences

If the majority of postwar films achieved narrative closure through

successful advancement of the morally worthy couple, this was a plot device predicated upon the spectator's capacity to discern the most viable respective ideals of masculinity and femininity and extract pleasure from identification therewith. In *Toxi*, a variety of models of femininity are proferred for our consideration: the spinsterly Tante Wally, the pragmatic housekeeper, Hertha's progressive spirit, Charlotte's helpless genuflection to her husband's racist opinions, Grandmother Rose as kindly matriarch. What binds these portrayals despite their moral, class, and generational differences, is that they are performances of specifically *White* femininity. Perhaps nowhere is this more apparent than when camera and dialogue collude in one particular scene to displace the more explicit markers of sexual difference, and, thus, of lack, onto Toxi, who already bears the sign of another social lack constituted through racial difference.

Toxi's first morning in the Jenrich family becomes the opportunity for visual scrutinization of her along both these axes of difference. As the maid helps Ilse and Susi get dressed in the children's room, they ply her with questions about the surprise visitor who arrived the night before. 'Is she as big as we are?' one of them asks, thereby initiating the anatomical comparison the camera continues via a match cut from the girl standing on a chair as the nanny slips an undershirt through her arms, to Toxi standing nude in the tub under a cascade of water, her body angled towards the camera as the housekeeper scrubs her down. The housekeeper shuts off the spigot, drapes her in a towel, and lifts her onto a chair to be dried off. Toxi already faces frame right, as if anticipating the direction from which Susi and Ilse unexpectedly enter the bathroom in the very next shot. Still in their underclothes, they inquire 'Is she there?' only to pause in their tracks and glance quickly at each other in consternation about the offscreen object of their line of sight. Their rejoinder 'Why, that's a Moor!' offers verbal reinforcement for what the camera itself previously sought to visually ascertain. The initial match cut from the partially clothed white girls to Toxi's nude Black body enacts a manoeuvre in which the symbolic and anatomical lack that Freudian psychoanalysis attributes to the female body is displaced entirely onto the *Black* female body, while the mythical parameters of what can loosely be summated as 'White femininity' escape closer ocular scrutiny.

In 'The Question of Lay Analysis' (1953) Freud prepared the path for this mode of displacement by maintaining that 'the sexual life of adult [implicitly White European] women is a "dark continent" for psychol-



TOXI - BRD 1952
Regie: Robert A. Stemmle
Quelle: Deutsche Kinemathek

3.2. The spectacle of epidermal and sexual difference.

ogy' (212) and thereby condensing female sexuality and the category of 'race.' In unpacking that infamous remark, Mary Ann Doane (1991) has noted Freud's own unconscious debt to the nineteenth-century colonial imagination: colonial literature and documents frequently referred to Africa as a 'dark continent,' both because its inhabitants were darker skinned and because this unexplored territory had yet to yield to the 'en-light-ening' influence of Western civilization. In fact, Freud uncritically adopted the various associations implied in the binary categories of 'primitive' and 'civilized' people as the very framework that justifies psychoanalysis as an epistemological enterprise. The 'primitive' and the 'civilized' he posited to be distinguishable by their differing relationship to sexuality, with civilization resulting from sustained social repression of sexual drives and their sublimation in the form of creative

arts, technological invention, science, the pursuit of knowledge, and so forth. One of the less productive by-products of sublimation, however, is the emergence of neuroses – psychological symptoms Freud assumed indigenous peoples were spared, since they ostensibly did not engage in a similar repression of drives. If psychoanalysis is a science anchored in the diagnosis and treatment of neurotic symptoms, then indigenous populations outside the Western civilizing influence also remain beyond its purview. Instead, as Doane concludes, 'Psychoanalysis can, from this point of view, be seen as a quite elaborate form of ethnography – as a writing of the ethnicity of the White Western psyche. Repression becomes the prerequisite for the construction of a white culture that stipulates that female sexuality act as the trace within of what has been excluded' (211).

That 'trace' may explain the long-standing preoccupation with Black female nudity and sexuality which Sander Gilman (1985) maintains resurfaces like a leitmotif throughout both nineteenth-century European medical discourse and cultural and artistic (i.e., painterly) production. It finds a more immediate corollary in the dramaturgical decision to include a shower scene in Stemmle's film. The camera's prurient gaze upon Toxi's anatomy, when accompanied by the edit to the Rose daughters, also constitutes a gesture of comparative verification and differentiation that recalls the earlier preoccupation with reifying *Rassenmischung* or racial mixing in the work of Eugen Fischer (1874–1967), a professor of medicine whose studies integrated anthropology and eugenics. His 1908 study of the offspring of White colonists and local Hottentot women in Southwest Africa (today Namibia) resulted in the publication *The Rehoboth Bastards and the Problem of Miscegenation among Humans* ([1913] 1961), which influenced colonial legislation prohibiting interracial marriage in 1912 and offered 'scientific' evidence that later shaped the Nuremberg race laws. Under the Nazi regime, Fischer developed comprehensive specifications for determining racial origins among Sinti and Roma populations and among Black Germans, using a range of physiognomic measurements and blood tests (see Mosse 1985; Hohmann 1991).

Such preoccupations extended well into the postwar era, when the exploration of possible biological as well as social and psychological ramifications of racial mixing became the subject of two doctoral dissertations. In coordination with the Berlin Youth Welfare Office and the State Health Office, Walter Kirchner's anthropological study (1952) assessed whether different character traits and developmental patterns

could be detected among Afro-Germans. The research of Rudolf Sieg (1955), in turn, involved a comparative anatomy, or anthropometry, of German school children of mixed heritage (*Mischlinge*) and their 'white' counterparts. As was the case for Kirchner's study, mothers and foster parents of Afro-German children as well as officials of the Ministry of Youth resisted having children in their care subjected to such an investigation. Its focus was thus limited to one hundred three- to six-year-old Afro-German subjects visited in diverse orphanages across the FRG to compare the size and relation of limbs; assess hip width, arm length, shoulder span, eye colour, length of fingers, skull length and width, ear size; and determine the tone of skin on a chart demarcating five shades from white to dark brown. Sieg seems aware not only of the developmental ramifications of racism, but also of how his study might contribute to that problem, when he writes: 'Whenever possible, we studied a mixed-race child together with a Caucasian child, so that the mixed-race child would in no way feel singled out as the object of interest. An awareness of appearing different from others develops surprisingly early among the mixed-race children; it is insensitive behaviour among adults that daily confronts them with the sense of being an exception' (17).

Toxi's script addresses this issue in a scene in the children's room, where Susi and Ilse read aloud 'The Story of the Inky Boys' from Hoffmann's *Struwwelpeter*, specifically the scene in which the naughty boys, whom Nicholas punishes for mocking a 'moor,' are dipped into ink and come out completely black. This prompts Toxi, who has been sitting beside them, to point out that her hands and feet are actually white, holding up first her hands and then one of her feet as the other two girls lean over to have a look. As Ilse then launches into the next story, 'The Thumbsucker,' Toxi gazes thoughtfully upon her hands and then asks 'Hey, Ilse, why am I black?' When Ilse diffidently shrugs and replies, 'I dunno,' Toxi declares that she will ask their grandfather downstairs. The scene's heightened reflexivity is underscored by the fact that it plays out under Hertha's watchful gaze, first opening on her sitting at a table preparing costume materials for the later Christmas pageant, but panning frame right to the children reading aloud. The camera later pulls out again to enable the depth of field to register Hertha listening carefully, and closes by moving in for a medium close-up of her concerned gaze following Toxi as she leaves the room in search of guidance.

That a significant shift in perception is underway is signalled by the deliberately long and seamless crane shot that hovers behind Toxi as

she closes the door to the children's room, where Ilse and Susi still pore over *Der Struwwelpeter* with the aid of a reading lamp, and closely follows her movement down the lengthy and generously apportioned staircase that leads to Gustav Rose's study, where a presumably more enlightened explanation of racial difference will now ensue. The family patriarch bears an aura of cosmopolitanism and enlightened rationalism, reinforced by his sitting at a desk with a globe perched on one edge and, behind him, bookshelves filled with file folders. A study lamp arcs forward over his desk, illuminating its surface as he engages in some minor technical repair with jewellery pliers in hand; his eyeglasses are pushed atop his head, while a small monocular eye loupe presses into the hollow of his right eye. When Toxi first enters his study, she stands unseen in the shadows beyond his desk, causing Gustav to peer unseeing into the darkness and call out, 'Who's there?' His question assumes almost ontological dimensions in relation to the subsequent dialogue on the taxonomy of epidermal difference. Toxi literalizes her own search for 'illumination' by stepping out of the darkness and into the single source of light in the room to repeat her earlier question, 'Grandfather, why am I black?' Momentarily taken aback, he gazes at her thoughtfully before responding: 'Black hand in white hand, moon, sun, and star; God, who created all children, loves every one of them.' This platitude circumvents the question of how differences are culturally inscribed upon the human body and also directs blame away from societal prejudices towards the innateness of racial differences within a pre-ordained cosmology only imperfectly accessible through human reason. A quick cut now shifts the camera angle upon the tightly framed two-shot of Gustav with Toxi from the side of his desk to face the desk from the front; the study lamp is now positioned frame left behind Gustav, its rays shining over his shoulder like the sun onto the earth, i.e., globe, now located to the right on his desk. His alignment with rational authority is completed when he sets the globe spinning and points out specific sites on its surface, explaining:

> All people born here on earth are either light or dark. When a light child is born over here, a dark child is born over there. When Susi was born, she was light and when Toxi was born, she was dark. On this big patch of land over here, there live only people just like yourself – adults and children alike. They all have skin as dark as yours. If you were there, you wouldn't even think about it. And over here live the white people. And if Susi were to go over to those on the other side, then the black children would say, 'Why, look there, she's white!'

3.3. Grandfather Rose locates Africa on the globe for Toxi.

From the grandfather's pseudo-positivistic recourse to the globe we infer that racial differences are spatially predetermined and, thus, located outside history or culture. Land maps may appear to objectively trace land formations, but they are no less divested of social values and ulterior motives than any other cultural artefact. In theorizing the discursive origins of cartography as the spatial mapping of knowledge, historical geographer J.B. Harley (1988) draws inspiration from Michel Foucault's philosophical elaboration of how the gaze confers power on its agents. Within occidental history, spatial knowledge – i.e., the mapping of geographical terrain – has traditionally operated as a means to lay claim to economic and political control. The film scene at hand also links genealogy and geography in a gesture that anchors Toxi's origins outside of Germany and implies that she actually belongs elsewhere. This Manichean division of the globe into black and white populations

(as if one could measure where one end of the melanin spectrum ends and the other begins) also completely overlooks Toxi's 'hybrid' status and the reality that neither of Toxi's parents stems directly from Africa. Toxi is nonetheless content with this explanation, responding, 'Grandfather you are wise!'

The grandfather's explanation bears some genealogical affinity with early racial theory, for which Immanuel Kant's essay 'Von den verschiedenen Rassen der Menschen' (1775) may be considered representative. Kant developed a theory of physical geography (*physische Geographie*) (24), in which he distinguished between variety (*Abart*) and race (*Rasse*). *Abart* was defined as a chance variable that disappears after a few generations, while *Rasse* constituted a body of traits evolving over generations in response to a particular climate and, by logical extension, geographical location (19). Kant's argumentation tended to conflate physical traits with moral characteristics that he suggested would have developed in response to a given climate; this reasoning led him to assess the African man or woman as someone who, 'in accord with the ample sustenance available in his native land, is innately lazy, indulgent, and flirtatious.' It is this moral dimension that lends his notion of different racial groups an atemporal dimension simultaneously contradicted and reinforced by the so-called 'Hamitic Myth' in the Book of Genesis (9:20–7), which Kant was apparently hesitant to place into question. Also sometimes referred to as the Curse of Canaan or the Curse of Ham, the biblical account maintains that Noah's son Ham glimpsed him drunk and naked one evening; in revenge for this humiliation, Noah placed a curse on the next generation, on Ham's youngest son, Canaan, decreeing that he should be a servant to servants (i.e., a slave). Early interpreters both of the Bible and of the Talmud have frequently associated slavery with race in this story and cast Canaan with darker skin (Spöttel 1998, 132). Whereas Old Testament writings seem to imply that all humans derive from one originally Caucasian family, they also seek to explain the existence of people with darker skin tones. Kant reconciles this ambiguity by arguing that Caucasians were best equipped to have been the first original race, 'for the person whose descendants were ultimately to disperse in all directions was best adapted for this by dint of his disposition for temperate climates ranging somewhere in the middle among the most extreme conditions his progeny could encounter' (25–6). The two strands of thought at work here – namely, an obsession with origins, on the one hand, coupled with a desire for sempiternal identities, on the other – nevertheless remain

mutually incompatible, for while origins imply change over time, the racist stereotype is grounded in stasis.

Dreaming of a White Christmas

Grandfather's Rose's own recourse to cosmology may function as what Peter Brooks elsewhere refers to as the 'moral occult,' a term referring to fragmentary and desacralized remnants of sacred myth that are woven into melodramatic narratives (whether literary or filmic) and that establish the coordinates along which both desire and interdiction may travel (1995, 50). In early West German cinema, these remnants of the sacred consistently assumed the form of Christian symbols and biblical references proliferating across such diverse popular genres as the Heimat film, the historical costume drama, the comedy, and the romance. Heide Fehrenbach (1995) suggests that German clergy undertook a self-proclaimed 'fight for the Christian West' that played itself out in early films of the Federal Republic, as church leaders sought to recover the influence they had once sustained as cultural arbiters in pre-Nazi Germany and criticized 'the secular materialism they believed was embodied in both the National Socialist organization of culture of the recent past and newly introduced liberalizing policies of the social market economy' (119). Church officials also served on the film industry's voluntary self-censorship board, the FSK (Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle), which was founded in 1949 after consultation among German producers, the U.S. Motion Picture Branch, and British and French military governments; in this capacity, they were able to challenge both commercial films from the U.S. and domestic productions they deemed fostered an overly materialist viewpoint or exerted a 'morally endangering' influence. To accommodate the contemporary moral zeitgeist, a number of German film productions resorted to a seemingly indiscriminate and prophylactic use of religious motifs, props, and ceremony, leading Protestant film commissioner Werner Hess to complain, 'The church has become the most acceptable and obvious accessory when it is deemed necessary to appear serious or to take on the tinge of great art … the opposite effect is usually achieved: they appear untruthful … because one notices they are not affirmations of Christ but of mammon' (Hess 1949, 2). Heated arguments were waged and films were occasionally boycotted, as exemplified in the febrile controversy surrounding Willi Forst's *Die Sünderin* (1950).[1]

As the hegemonic political party during the reconstruction era, the

CDU arguably also instrumentalized Christian discourse as a moral cover for what would otherwise appear as a too-zealous reinstalment of monopoly capitalism so soon after its sobering exhumation under National Socialism. Within this vein of reasoning, fascism and communism became coeval in their status as totalitarian regimes, while Christianity was regarded as overcoming (or concealing) class differences and socio-political inequities through the very compelling myth of a spiritually united national community forced by circumstance to endure the necessary evil of capitalism. In the words of Konrad Adenauer in one of his speeches from 1947, 'Capitalism, socialism, and National Socialism all originate from materialism. For this reason, we seek a return to Christian thinking in today's times' (cited in Kreimeier 1973, 91). Such invocations of theological discourse instantiate a rhetorical strategy also known as the jeremiad, one Sacvan Bercovitch (1978) has defined as 'a mode of public exhortation … designed to join social criticism to spiritual renewal, public to private identity, the shifting signs of the times to certain traditional metaphors, themes, and symbols' (9). For the purposes of my study, it is worth noting that the jeremiad has also been read by literary scholar Jane Tompkins (1994) as an organizing principle for another pivotal intervention into societal racism, Harriet Beecher Stowe's abolitionist novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The biblical story of the crucifixion, which was the central religious narrative of Anglo-Saxon culture in nineteenth-century America, was retold in terms of the national conflict over slavery, with Uncle Tom's martyrdom serving to morally awaken both his fellow protagonists and the wider national readership to the injustices of that infamous institution. Notwithstanding criticism of the novel following its publication and still in evidence today, its rhetorical invocation of powerful Christian myths exerted a strong influence on public opinion, inspiring some (including Abraham Lincoln) to hail it as the text that finally catapulted the nation into civil war.

The rhetoric of the jeremiad is arguably also operative in Stemmle's didactic film, challenging members of the extended Rose family to live up to Christian convictions of compassion and social tolerance towards those less fortunate. 'One can't just set such a helpless being out on the street!' Charlotte exclaims on the evening of Toxi's arrival, even as the narrative logic virtually predestines her departure from the family at story's end. Because Toxi's arrival coincides with the onset of the Christmas season, the biblical trope of 'seeking a room at the inn' restaged annually in nativity scenes in family homes, store windows,

church services, and city centres, here assumes a further layer of social significance. Indeed, in his survey of a historical cross-section of American, British, and European feature films, Mark Connelly (2000) has observed the motif of the Christmas season to function less as a ritual of religious significance than as 'an emotional shorthand to impart mood and the mise-en-scène to the viewer' (6). However, I would suggest that mass culture has also reworked that ambience and the metaphorical implications of the nativity scene, in particular, to subtly reinforce White hegemony – a move also enacted at the close of Stemmle's film via the innocuous pageant staged by Susi, Ilse, and Toxi. Whereas the original biblical story of the birth of Jesus involved a Jewish family, its annual re-enactment in twentieth-century popular media has shifted towards identification with non-Semitic Whiteness. This is arguably highlighted through the contrasting presence of the 'Moor' among the three kings who journey forth to bear witness to the holy infant. Since the religion of Islam was founded some six centuries later than the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, the pilgrimage of three kings may have originally been conceived as involving an African potentate, whose status as Muslim signifies a later embellishment generated in the Middle Ages, when the term 'Moor' gained currency as a term that redoubled racial and religious alterities.[2]

Among Hollywood melodramas of the late 1940s and early 1950s – for example, Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946), George Scaton's *Miracle on 34th Street* (1947), Mark Szandrich's *Holiday Inn* (1941), featuring Irving Berlin's hit song 'White Christmas,' and Michael Curtiz's later remake *White Christmas* (1954) – the 'secularized' Christmas season reaffirms the archetypal and implicitly white nuclear family as the central and most natural form of social relation and re(production), while also linking fortuitous acts of generosity and the exchange of gifts to social practices of consumption. It is, moreover, no coincidence that American mass culture's adaptation of the Christmas motif should have surfaced during the Second World War, when many families experienced fragmentation due to the recruitment of men for military service abroad or the geographical relocation of men and women alike to work in war-related production plants. The Christmas motif continued during the early Cold War years, when both the broader American as well as German population struggled to reconcile earlier experiences of social fragmentation with the contemporary retrenchment of gender and social norms. By invoking a holiday season bound up with associations of warmth, generosity, and solid family ties, these films

induced a regression into (often only projected) memories of security and stable community that belied escalating global political tensions and an increasingly aggressive national economy grounded in competition among the labour force and between labour and capital.[3] It is for this reason that Christmas rituals resembling the real lived experiences of only a fraction of empirical viewers could, nevertheless, function as an extremely powerful mass fantasy, one moving and compelling even among viewers who did not share the Christian faith and/or identify with the social category of whiteness.

It may be worth observing that the life of Jesus of Nazareth, as the organizing structure for the New Testament, also affords a clean break with the Hebrew bible and its Jewish associations. George Mosse (1985) offers a cogent overview of the tensions between Judaism and Christianity circulating in various strains of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European intellectual thought. Of relevance to the discussion at hand is his chapter 'Infected Christianity,' where Mosse establishes a historical association between Christianity and racism, one he retraces to the political precedent in European culture of imbricating the state, national culture, and Christianity in such a manner that those professing the Jewish faith were virtually considered foreign nationals. Within German philosophy, he points to Johann Gottlieb Fichte, who regarded the Old Testament as grounded in nationalism and hate, notions presumably incompatible with the Enlightenment search for universal ideals such as freedom and equality. Within this line of reasoning, the Jewish religion was stigmatized for maintaining the limited vision of particularism, and discounted as a historical phenomenon whose usefulness had died out, while Christianity, by contrast, offered a universal and timeless validity. When situated within the Hegelian dialectic of progress in history, the Hebrew bible (and by association, Judaism) came to be regarded as a relic not reflecting the need for 'renewal' more effectively realized in the life of Jesus (Mosse 1985, 129).

There was also a trend in nineteenth-century Germany towards the 'aryanization' of Jesus, as Susannah Heschel's (2008) extensive research reveals. This is detectable both among nineteenth-century philosophers such as Friedrich Nietzsche, as well as in the völkisch religious movement that arose between 1870 and 1945. That these ideas were not obscure in their impact is exemplified in a popular theological novel, *Hilligenlei* (1905), by former pastor Gustav Frenssen, who had become a popular author of colonialist literature. Reconceptualizing the Gospels as an allegory of Germany and Jesus as a saviour from Schleswig-

Holstein, the novel sold 250,000 copies in Germany between 1905 and 1944. It was also translated into no less than forty languages, triggering rounds of debate, including vigorous disagreement, in theological journals worldwide. Other authors, such as the son-in-law of Richard Wagner, Houston Stewart Chamberlain (*Grundlagen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, 1899) and another pastor from Schleswig-Holstein, Friedrich Andersen (*Der Deutsche Heiland,* 1921), continued this line of thinking, which not only contributed to a reading of the First World War as a Christian event, a veritable crucifixion of Germany, but also the selective reconstruction of Christian teachings in such a way as to advance a racial theology that legitimated and justified racist oppression and murder (Heschel 2008, 41–8).

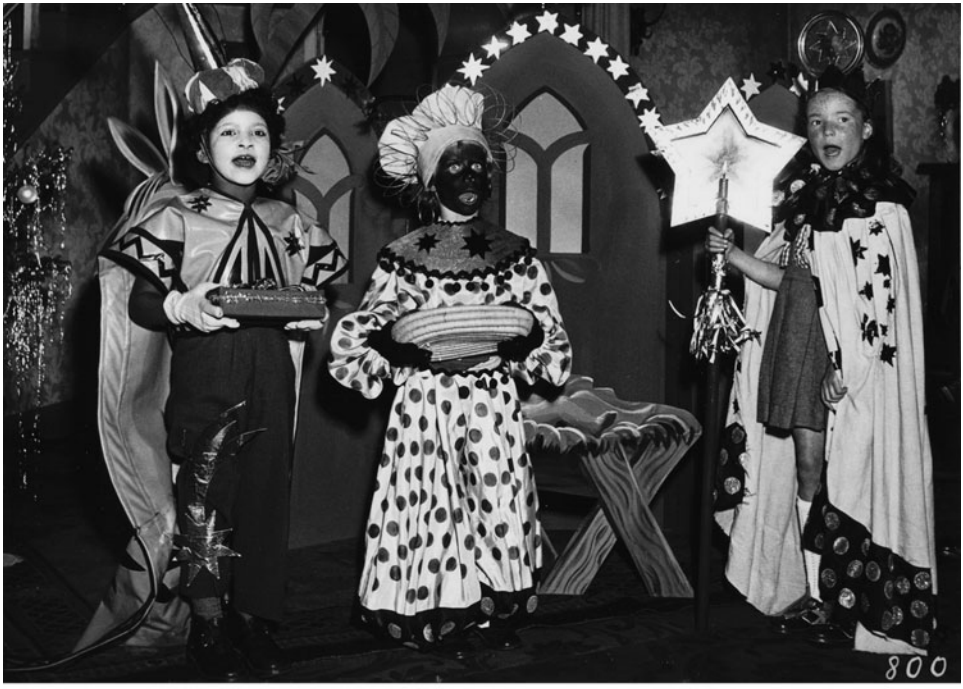
The Politics of Deracination: Leaving Home or Going Home?

In Stemmle's film, the re-enactment of the nativity scene within the family living room serves as metonym for the consolidation of the Christian religion as the prevailing 'moral occult' within the new Federal Republic, while Judaism remains a defining absence. Toxi's role within the pageant becomes that of a syncretic figure: potentially, a substitute for the Jew or for religious difference as such, since it is the role of the Moor, traditionally coded as Muslim, that is at issue here. Just as Enlightenment thinking sought to prove the universal relevance of Christian theology by inviting Jews and members of other denominations to convert to Christianity, so also does a twist in the film plot extend the offer of 'assimilation' to Toxi through an invitation to participate in the pageant as a 'white Moor.' Amid the children's preparations Susi points out, 'Toxi got to be the Moor all year long; now I want to play the Moor!' leading Ilse to chime in, 'Oh yes! Toxi shall become white and Susi shall become black!' Problematic within this otherwise ingenuous attempt to point towards the ultimately arbitrary signifying status of skin colour is the small but critical matter of independent volition. Susi can dabble with the social frisson of assuming a darker tint but can also always fall back upon the privileged social positioning of Whiteness. For Toxi, much more may be invested in the attempt to pass within white society, given that it may enable her to escape intolerant treatment and gain access to broader privileges. The fantasy of 'passing' is thus differently charged according to the direction in which one is moving. Moreover, as Adrian Piper (1992) elaborates in her thoughtful essay 'Passing for

White, Passing for Black,' this phenomenon always seems to exact a price: namely, the repression of at least one facet of one's heritage and the consequent loss of membership in that respective community. The possibility of being an amalgam or of dwelling in both communities becomes a logistical impossibility when the individual's loyalties are divided by what are often competing demands from highly polarized groups.

Although it is the surrounding community that is preoccupied with the right to claim affiliation, the burden lies always with the subject herself, who is repeatedly called upon to resubmit convincing evidence. Within earlier Hollywood classics, this dilemma was condensed in the trope of the 'tragic mulatta' (Bogle, 1973) in John Stahl's *Imitation of Life* (1934), Douglas Sirk's 1959 remake thereof, and Elia Kazan's *Pinky* (1949), and also surfaces as a self-conscious reframing of the stereotype in contemporary African-American director Carl Franklin's *Devil in a Blue Dress* (1995). Traditionally, the trope involves a woman of dual racial inheritance who tries to pass as White, a transgression that usually results in some form of ill-fated self-destruction or, alternately, the decision to escape social ostracization within dominant White society by seeking a tenuous niche within the Black community.

Toxi's culminating sequence will turn towards the latter emplotment, despite the theatrical detour in which Toxi first makes her veritable 'stage debut' as a white person during the nativity scene staged in the spacious parlour of the Rose family home. That event begins with the three little girls poised in their royal costumes on the second-floor stair landing, while an audience of family members awaits them assembled on chairs downstairs. As Robert and Hertha begin their guitar and piano duet, the three kings somberly descend the staircase towards the manger scene below, Toxi in whiteface and Susi in blackface, in a citation of the minstrel performances of American vaudeville. The vertical traversal of differing levels of the film set lends depth to the confined interior of the home, with Toxi's descent dramatizing her assimilation into the social fold or, more accurately, her integration as a White(ned) person into German society. The scene is carnivalesque in its utopian potential, as new identities are temporarily assumed and tried on, yet it also reinscribes difference at a deeper symbolic register to imply that, while the people behind the masks of different colours are the same, something in the mask itself remains mystical, undecipherable, and fetishized.



TOXI - BRD 1952
Regie: Robert A. Stemmle
Quelle: Deutsche Kinemathek

3.4. The nativity scene as racial masquerade.

The queasy destabilization of signs is heightened by a sound overlap that takes place between the verses now recited by the three wise men seeking the baby Jesus and the ringing doorbell that signals the unexpected arrival of Toxi's father, James Spencer, who is also seeking a child, namely, his own. As the transcription below indicates, the first signal of his petition for entry occurs immediately after Susi identifies herself as the 'king from the land of the Moors' and recurs after the three kings express their collective desire to 'see the little babe.'

(*unison*): We three kings led by a star,
We come to seek the Lord from afar.
(*Toxi*): O Star, as you cannot halt along your way,
So must we travel on to Bethlehem this day.
(*Ilse*) To Bethlehem, that beautiful place,

Where Maria now rests with a babe.
(*Susi*) Among the three kings, I'm known the very best,
I am the king from the land of the Moors. (*doorbell*)
(*unison*) So with our treasures let us go forth,
That we might see the little babe. (*doorbell*)

As family members sing a refrain of the final line 'see the little babe,' the film cuts to the front entryway, beyond whose French doors the maid is seen admitting into the house Toxi's grandmother and a tall black man in a white winter coat. Back in the parlour, Toxi now dramatically occupies the foreground, facing the camera and looking slightly stage right as she points with raised arm and declaims, 'The star shines silently over the house, the voices of angels ring forth from without,' while behind her the maid leads the newly arrived guests into the room. Where previously a veritable acoustic mirror was enacted between two spatially and visually separated 'seekers' – Toxi as a 'Moor' (in white-face) seeking the holy child and James Spencer as a 'Moor' searching for Toxi – once the two occupy the same frame, Toxi reverts to being a child again, specifically a child wanting to go home. Although she has yet to glimpse her father standing behind her in the shadows, the mood immediately grows contemplative and quiet as the camera moves in for a close-up of her softly beginning to sing the theme song, 'I want so much to go home.' On the final phrase 'Who will love me and take me home?' which is spoken more like an emphatic demand, the camera pulls out leftward to focus squarely on James Spencer as the answer to this question – a point underscored when Gustav Rose, seated beside and just in front of him, turns and rises to greet him.

The startled adults now converge around the unanticipated guests to shake hands and usher them into the dining room. There, James Spencer proceeds to introduce himself in English. Frau Berstel, still wearing a glaring patch over her glasses from her cataract operation, excitedly jumps in to explain that he is the owner of a gas station in the United States, who previously tried to locate Toxi's mother and has now come to fetch his daughter. 'I'm Toxi's father! I'm so happy to have found her!' he booms, as his large gold spectacles repeatedly catch and reflect the set lights. The fact that both Toxi's grandmother and her father wear glasses stigmatizes them (as it were!) and reinforces their inherent difference from the Rose family: the grandmother, as member of a lower socio-economic class, and Toxi's father, as representative of a foreign nationality and 'race,' 'view' matters pertaining to Toxi differently.

TOXI - BRD 1952 Regie: Robert A. Stemmle
Quelle: Filmmuseum Berlin - Deutsche Kinemathek

3.5. Frau Berstel arrives with Toxi's father, James Spencer.

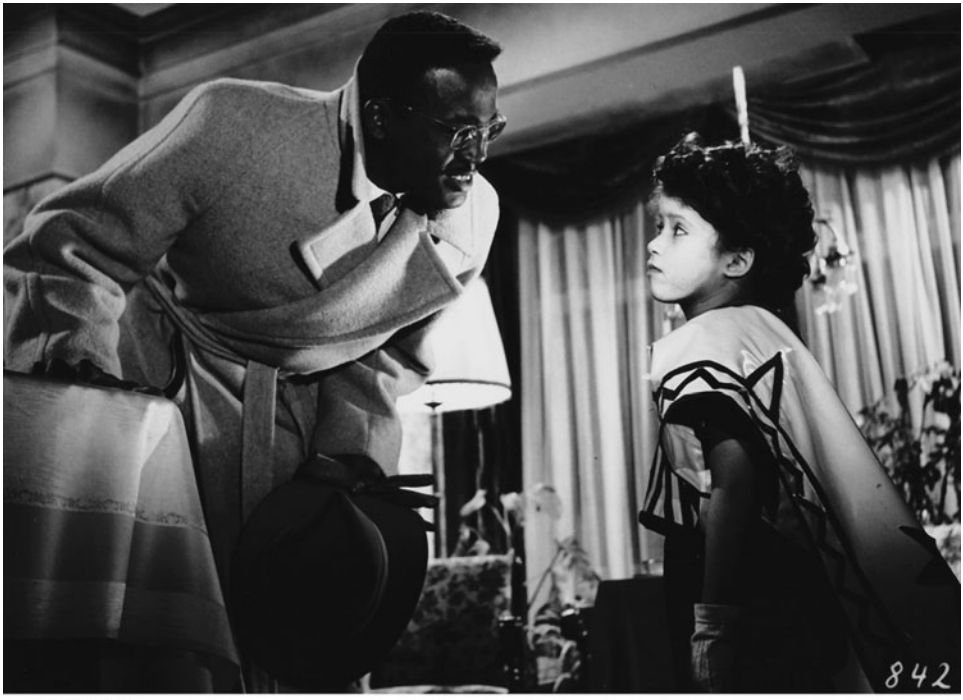
When Toxi encounters her for the first time since being deposited on the family's doorsteps, her concerned query 'Are you able to see clearly again?' reads like a metaphorical allusion to her granny's previously misguided actions. Assigning the actor Alston Hoosman glasses may, in turn, make his character appear more 'bourgeois' but also thwarts his 'gaze' and softens his towering form, thereby possibly also toning down the intimidating associations his status as former American soldier and boxing champion might call forth in historical spectators.[4]

Both the pageant and the family melodrama now move towards rapid closure via a parallel edit to the living room, where the final verses recited by the children broadcast a message of universal reconciliation directed as much towards the film audience as towards the remaining household staff and Robert and Hertha playing the musical accompaniment:

A good evening and a happy new year
Is what we wish for you here.
Health, happiness, and the best of fortune!
Now must the three kings be homeward bound
But their tidings all through the world shall resound.

Even as the camera pulls back from the scene as if preparing to begin the end credits, one last important encounter must take place. Ilse breaks off the chorus to complain that no one is listening, and as if on cue, the door to the dining room opens and the adults peer into the parlour. Toxi turns and glimpses her grandmother and runs to embrace her, whereupon the old woman explains in a tremulous voice, 'Toxi, your daddy is here!' Toxi chimes incredulously, 'My daddy? From America?' Frau Berstel leads Toxi through the doorway back into the parlour, while the other adults swiftly withdraw. Theodor is the last to leave, and as he passes Toxi, she grabs his arm, pulling him towards her for protection as she shyly steps forward to stand before the stranger, until Theodor, too, pulls away, in a gesture symbolizing the transfer of paternal responsibility as much as the depth of Toxi's own mixed allegiances. Yet when her father stoops down to peer more closely at her still wearing her crown, cape, and whitening cold cream, she quickly wipes a hand across her pale face and reassures him, 'This stuff comes off.' Her remark hypostatizes the conclusion drawn in Piper's essay on the subject of 'passing,' namely, that those who bear any visible indication of African heritage will ultimately only be perceived as 'acting' a white role. Toxi may thus assume the role of a white king but will never be considered to actually 'be' White. Alternately, in order to claim her paternal heritage and prove herself a scion of the corresponding Black community, she must similarly prove the provisional nature of her 'whiteface.'

When her American father lifts her onto the table beside him to raise her to his eye level in a tightly framed two-shot, she proudly announces that she can speak English and begins to count, '1, 2, 3, 4 …' The camera closes upon Toxi's pale face gazing into the distance, her head resting upon her father's shoulder as she counts onward until sound and image fade completely. This final image condenses her total deracination: first attempting to 'pass' within German society, and then being delivered into another country, where she will likely abandon her mother tongue for a new language. Ultimately, she is deprived of two traditional coordinates for claiming a home: first, a place in which her



TOXI - BRD 1952
Regie: Robert A. Stemmle
Quelle: Deutsche Kinemathek

3.6. Toxi peers dubiously at the new arrival.

right to stay is unconditional and irrevocable, and second, a context in which to speak her mother tongue, which is obviously German. While Toxi's fate may indeed have been regarded by some Afro-German children as a dream come true – the Afro-German author and activist Ika Hügel-Marshall (1998), for example, writes in her autobiography of the yearning to be united with her African-American father – in actuality, transplantation at a young age to a foreign culture can be a complex endeavour. In a 1954 report on intercountry adoptions, Elinor Prudden Burns, president of Der Internationale Sozialdienst (International Social Services), summarizes some of the concerns pertaining not only to children restored to their biological fathers but also to other adoptees welcomed into the homes of African-American families: 'For who can measure what the move will mean to a child from an institution into what is probably his first conscious experience of a family? And

what does it do to a half-Negro child to find himself for the first time in an all-Negro community? Is it a relief or a secret worry? Will he be rejected by his contemporaries in the American school as a foreigner, or even scorned as an ex-enemy?'[5] This motif of deracination is also signalled in *Toxi*'s soundtrack, now gently reintroducing the melody to the nostalgic song 'Ich möchte so gern nach Hause gehen,' whose lyrics and formal function I discuss at greater length in chapter 5. Certainly, its recurrence in this closing scene now renders explicit its ideological function throughout the film: namely, to anticipate Toxi's eventual departure and thereby 'underscore' the impossibility of sustained heterogeneity within German society. One journalist's use of the verb *heimholen* ('fetch home') to refer to fictive father James Spencer's mission perpetuates such assumptions: 'Other characters in the story, however, harbour certain "racially motivated" concerns, leading to much quarrelling about the fate of the little dark creature, who ultimately – as befits a happy ending – gets fetched home across "the big pond" by her biological father, a former American occupation soldier.'[6]

If *Toxi*'s ending indulged a peculiar strain of wish fulfilment among some German spectators including, perhaps, some Afro-German children, there were also individuals and groups outside of Germany with their own reasons for wishing to facilitate the emigration of Afro-German children to the United States. Historian Lemke Muniz de Faria (2002) undertakes a highly nuanced study of the diverse motives among African-American civilians and philanthropic foundations intervening on their behalf. There is the case of Mabel Grammar, who lived in Mannheim between 1950 and 1954 as the wife of an American officer and who initiated the adoption program, Brown Baby Plan, which helped an estimated fifty Afro-German children to emigrate to new adoptive families (106–17). The African-American press also drew public attention with titles such as 'What to Do about Brown Babies?'[7] or 'Germany's "Brown Babies" Must Be Helped! Will You?'[8] While some adoptive parents wished to provide these children with precisely that form of acceptance they themselves had struggled to attain within American society, others sought to redeem the reputation of African-American soldiers abroad out of concern that evidence of 'sowing wild oats' abroad offered a negative moral portrait of African-American men generally. Others, in turn, wished to support the well-being of Afro-Germans within Germany, hoping their integration there would contribute to the liberation of people of colour everywhere and set an example for the United States, where civil strife was intensifying. Thus

writes Lewis Millan: 'Through the children, the Germans who have no knowledge of their darker brother, and no interest in his plight, will become a part of him. They will learn his worth, his possibilities, his sorrows. They will have the incentive to do something about bad situations affecting the coloured man in various parts of the world. Then, too, the coloured man will find in Germany a new outlet. Let's not take these brown babies away from Germany. Let's help them serve their historic mission.'[9]

Not only German youth welfare workers and African Americans, but also, in a few infrequent instances, the mothers themselves felt that adoption abroad could best secure their child's welfare. According to Fehrenbach's research, less than 13 per cent of German mothers of Afro-German children were willing to surrender custodial rights and put them up for adoption (2001, 184). Among those who did, some were overwhelmed by familial ostracization or by public racism towards their child, or were too indigent to support the child alone, particularly during the early postwar years of material deprivation. It is worth pointing out that until the Federal Republic achieved full sovereignty in 1955, mothers of illegitimate children fathered by American occupation soldiers were barred any legal recourse within German civil courts for filing paternity or child support; nor could they do so in U.S. courts unless the complainant and child resided on American soil (69). Moreover, if the child was born outside of any sort of wedlock (i.e., the mother was not married to another man at the time), the state held guardianship and could give ultimate approval for the child's emigration.

Virtually the only narrative device that can thus lend social legitimacy to Toxi's departure for the United States, without placing the blame either on U.S. military policy or on German society, is the absence from the film of the girl's biological mother.[10] Nonetheless, this plot line is hardly historically representative: the number of Afro-German children orphaned due to the mother's death was very small. Among a cross-section sampling of one hundred orphaned Afro-German children in 1953, only 2 per cent landed in an orphanage because the mother had died.[11]

Toxi's Martyrdom

If Toxi's arrival in the Rose family during the Christmas season enacts a modern parable on the biblical trope of 'finding room at the inn,' the nativity scene staged in the last minutes of the film portrays prima-

rily the journey of the three wise men, to the exclusion of the plight of the humble parents, Mary and Joseph. Their defining absence matches that of the film's own dramaturgy where Toxi's absent mother could be said to also occupy the role of mother Mary: both mothers faced social ostracism for the child they carried. Where Mary faced public disbelief for the plausibility of a virgin birth, the single mother who bore an Afro-German child likely would have been regarded with moral opprobrium. If the infant Jesus seems similarly absented, it is because the sentences recited in unison by the wise men redouble as references to Toxi herself as the exceptional individual, cast as an object of visual scrutiny and also as the object of James Spencer's own search, as he is 'so happy to have found her.'

What might be the broader purpose of equating Toxi with the infant Jesus? A possible answer to this question only came to me after I stumbled upon a film review that frames Toxi's encounter with the Rose family in explicitly Christian terms: 'Toxi reaches the pivotal day when she will have to negotiate the inevitable 'Stations of the Cross' (*Passionsgang*) in the midst of white-skinned people.' The notion of a *Passionsgang* lends Toxi's role a mythical status beyond historical discourse and social intervention. Instead, she seems ontologically predestined to enact the virtual martyrdom of all Afro-German children of her generation. There is a very real sense in which the Christian religion could be laid out as the ultimate valorization of the sacrificial victim, in which one individual (or in this filmic instance, one socio-ethnic subgroup) carries the burden for all society and, through their singular transaction of death or the repudiation of their status as subject, cancels the guilt of others.

It may be worth noting that precisely this valorization of victimhood was an enabling mechanism in reconfiguring anti-Semitism as philo-Semitism in the early postwar period. Victimization of Jews during the Holocaust could be attributed a 'higher meaning' in which their suffering became a sacrificial act on the part of the 'chosen people'; within such a theological reading, the Jew is idealized qua sufferer and victim and therefore becomes worthy of Christian love and sympathy (Stern 1992, 400). This 'symbiotic relationship' is also discernible in contemporary French feature films about the Holocaust, such as Louis Malle's *Goodbye Children* (Au revoir les enfants, 1987) and Michel Mitrani's *Black Thursday* (Les Guichets du louvre, 1974). Annette Insdorf ([1983] 2003) elaborates how the recurring trope of 'the Jew as Child' establishes that figure's 'reliance upon the Christian for his survival, while the Chris-

tian depends upon the Jew as both a witness to his own theology and as a humanizing factor which helps bring out the "goodness" incumbent upon noble Christian souls' (77).

I suggest that Afro-German children came to occupy an analogous structural role, a means for some citizens to disavow historical guilt and complicity amid this early historical postwar reorganization of signs and identifications.[12] Just as the figure of Christ – the most pivotal sign within New Testament narrative – absolved human sin and signalled the potential for reform, so too does Toxi's presence offer a visible sign of Germany's absolution through the arrival of the Allied occupation forces. As the metonymic 'trace' of an African-American soldier, she becomes a vehicle for the nation's redemption and forgiveness for earlier, misguided and racist perceptions and pathogenic behaviours. I would stress, however, that she is not an active agent of forgiveness; it is less a question of seeking absolution through her than of needing a figure to occupy the sign of absolution, to provide evidence that clemency has already been bestowed. The Rose household, in turn, as metonym for the nation, fulfils its role in this drama by displaying the proper adjustments in social behaviour needed to operate successfully within an era of socio-economic renewal and ideological reconfiguration. As the next chapter reveals, these adjustments were also mirrored in *Toxi*'s press reception, which equally embraced this highly cathected image of the Afro-German orphan.

CHAPTER FOUR

‘Black’ Market Goods, White Consumer Culture

Finding a Father for *Toxi*: Film Financing and Production

In previous chapters, much pressure was brought to bear upon a single film in an effort to understand the narratological mechanisms and representational practices safeguarding its internal coherence, most particularly with regard to racialized difference. Stepping back now from the primary text, I will now undertake a closer critical assessment of circumstances leading up to and surrounding the film’s production, its marketing, and its public reception in film reviews and early articles on the situation of Afro-German children. If the film’s system of representation could be said to negotiate a complex path between inherited ideologies and paternalistic good intentions, the journey leading to *Toxi*’s financing and eventual production was equally fraught, with the narrative dénouement implemented in the finalized script likely shaped by pressures originating outside the artistic process. In turn, the resulting narrative tropes and images projected on movie screens across the Federal Republic gained a lengthy ‘afterlife’ in the press and were also reworked or critiqued in German films leading up to the present era.

Toxi’s financing and production history offers textbook evidence for how the system of state subsidization launched in the early Federal Republic impacted the enterprise of film production. As part of a larger campaign to stimulate national economic growth and increase export revenues, federal film credit programs, known as *Bundesausfallbürgschaften*, were established in 1950. On average, these sureties covered 25–30 per cent of a film’s production costs, which generally hovered in the range of 800,000 DM for black and white feature productions.

In the event that a funded film was a flop and could not recoup costs at the box office, these government sureties also guaranteed repayment of incurred debts. Nearly 75 per cent of all West German feature films produced in 1950–1 were supported by state and/or federal sureties (Fehrenbach 1995, 137). Implemented to encourage production of quality films competitive on the international market, this system also tended to unify profit margins, programmatic concerns, and the broader political agenda of hegemonic state interests to the detriment of independent filmmakers and producers taking social or aesthetic risks. Each production was faced with negotiating a tripartite front, such that the ideological and artistic vision of the film director often deferred to the conditions stipulated by private or state financiers, whose cultural or moral circumscriptions had, in turn, to be weighed against popular taste to still ensure a financial return and inspire confidence in further projects. Klaus Kreimeier (1973) convincingly argues that this system functioned as an indirect form of state censorship: 'In the first half of the 1950s, the dispensation of sureties served as an especially effective means of political repression. The system exploited the existing economic dependency of producers as a means of political discipline – punishing recalcitrant participants through subsidy withdrawal and enforcing political compliance through subtle economic bribery' (192).

The unusual difficulties encountered in financing *Toxi* exemplify the fallout that could and sometimes did result from this overlap of multifarious political, economic, and cultural interests. Indeed, the crisis faced by *Toxi*'s producer, Walter Koppel, signalled a critical juncture in this new system of film financing. It elicited attention from members of the film industry as well as the business community in Hamburg, which stood to benefit from every local production that received an infusion of federal funding. It was Walter Koppel who in 1947 had co-founded with Hungarian partner Gyula Trebitsch the production company Real-Film GmbH – thus named to set the company apart from the 'deceptive kitsch of the old dream factory' (Töteberg 1997, 119). Real-Film GmbH set out to make financially viable films that would entertain but do so by offering narrative content that derived from issues of immediate concern to the German population. In 1948 Koppel had the foresight to purchase the old Villa Wandsbek at 90 Tonndorfer Street; on the former estate he built an up-to-date production studio, complete with workshops for set design, sound studios, wardrobe closets, dressing rooms, and a cafeteria. The Wandsbek Studios enabled Real-Film to emerge

as West Germany's largest production company by the early 1950s. Its studios were continually in use for their own productions or rented out to other companies, leading Hamburg to become a regional epicentre of the national film industry.

Production of *Toxi* was originally scheduled to begin in January 1952, but was delayed when the federal government refused to provide the usual film guaranties requested by Koppel. Press articles cited below indicate that the Federal Ministry of the Interior withheld federal guaranties on the ground that Koppel was a former member of the KPD (Communist Party of Germany) and alleged to still harbour sympathies. Koppel, a Jewish survivor of the concentration camp Fuhlsbüttel, whose parents had perished in Theresienstadt, had indeed been a party member between 1945 and 1947. Although he had already relinquished his membership by the time the government launched its accusations, he also refused to make any statements officially repudiating the party. Koppel's difficulties with acquiring federal backing first began in March 1951, when he was called to testify before an interministerial parliamentary committee. When Koppel took legal steps to engage in business with DEFA, state sureties were denied on the grounds that 'the Federal Government cannot offer guaranties to any producers that cannot conclusively prove that both they and their primary staff are firmly committed to the founding democratic principles of the Federal Republic' (Secretary of State Bleek of the Police Ministry, quoted in Kranz 1964, 22). Real-Film was also accused of harbouring active communists among its staff – a conclusion drawn from the fact that the company had made foodstuff donations during the Hamburg dockworkers' strike in October 1951. Although the government was unable to prove evidence of 'subversive' ideological material in any of the thirty-nine films previously produced by Real-Film, Koppel had already encountered similar difficulties accessing federal sureties for a film just prior to the *Toxi* project, namely *Die verschleierte Maja*, which thereupon passed to another producer, Pontus-Film.[1] Koppel was subsequently forced to give up *Toxi* as well, selling the rights to Fono-Film, and suffering a combined financial loss between the two film projects of 300,000 DM.

An article in *Blick in die Woche* offers an overview of the legal proceedings implicating Koppel in 1951 and contextualizes these events within the broader political climate. 'Putting aside any artistic judgements about the productions of the Real-Film company, Walter Koppel's case deserves our close attention, for it has deteriorated into a

form of persecution and defamation that increasingly prevails not only within cultural but also political arenas. This compels us to ask to what extent our democratic and constitutional rights are still respected by the pertinent officials.'[2] Not only did the Federal Ministry of the Interior deny Koppel's application for surety, the Union of Film Producers (Verband der Film Produzenten) was also encouraged to terminate Koppel's membership, thereby undermining his opportunities for future film projects. These strategies not only recall the political machinations of the National Socialist era, they also characterize the political blackballing prevalent in the Cold War era, best known through high-profile cases in the Hollywood community but also occurring on a smaller level in the West German film industry. The same journalist cautions:

> As citizens of the FRG, we should be concerned about the way fundamental rights guaranteed in the Basic Law are daily and hourly undermined. The slander and boycott of a man like Walter Koppel, whose career has been jeopardized and who – on the basis of arbitrary and unfounded suspicions – has been hindered from exercising the constitutional rights guaranteed him as a citizen, may signal the beginning of a new era of injustice, of violation of the law, and of its manipulation. We, and Koppel, in particular, have already experienced such an era and continue to suffer its consequences to this very day. Precisely those after-effects make us acutely sensitive and move us to exercise great vigilance.

Toxi's fate was belatedly resolved when the state of Hamburg offered to provide the needed surety out of concern for the potential collapse of the local film industry. The film was still produced in Real's Wandsbeker studios, but under supervision of the newly founded Fono-Film. Real-Film, meanwhile, had to halt all forms of production during the summer of 1952 while awaiting the results of Koppel's appeal to the Federal Constitutional Court. Indeed, almost the entire staff had to be suspended from employment as of 31 March 1952, prompting representatives from theatre and film circles in Hamburg to organize a protest march to draw attention to Bonn's disregard for the local industry.

While the articles cited above do not broach the question of whether *Toxi*'s thematic material played any role in the federal government's decision, my close comparative readings of the film script submitted by Fono-Film for state subsidy and the actualized film seem to corroborate critical observations made by Kreimeier (1973) about the censorial state

interventions that often occurred at this critical stage of a film's conceptualization. He writes:

> The sponsorship system is, of course, just another form of collaboration between the State and the financial oligarchy. Its transactions are controlled by the German Audit and Trustee Company [Deutsche Revisions – und Treuhand AG], which operates as an extension of the Deutsche Bank to secure monopoly control by the bourgeoisie over not only the allotment of credit, but also over every detail pertaining to a film's production, including its content. Producers seeking federal sponsorship must be prepared to submit for review the film script, the proposed budget, and all contracts, and to keep their studios open during film shooting to inspectors of the German Audit and Trustee Company. The sponsorship system is thus only secondarily to be understood as an institution serving to stabilize micro- and mid-level capital within the West German film industry; its primary purpose serves the interests of the ruling class and its state apparatus by ensuring full control over the political content of the commodity that film also is, and advancing reactionary ideologies at the expense of progressive points of view or those suspected of even the vaguest hint of oppositionality. (189)

What Kreimeier refers to in classical Marxist parlance as the 'ruling class' and the 'state apparatus' was more specifically composed of members of the Bundestag, the Parliamentary Committee for Press, Radio and Film, and the film industry, whose investments in film financing were not purely economical. As Heide Fehrenbach (1995) also points out, even as federal credits were ostensibly to be awarded on the basis of a proposed film's forecasted financial return, the latter was frequently projected on the basis of such volatile liabilities as a director's political associations, his reputation in the public eye, or a film script's potential for popular appeal (142). Consequently, approval was often contingent upon the participation of certain stars, the removal of entire scenes, or the editing of specified lines of the script.

When *Toxi* finally did receive financing, it may have been contingent upon precisely such censorial intervention, for the plot resolution actualized in the Fono-Film production deviates from the original film script Real-Film had released to its successor. In the copy available to me at the Deutsche Kinemathek Berlin, the Real-Film logo was still legible but had been scrawled over with the words 'Fono.' The film itself remains fairly consistent with the dialogue and sequencing of the origi-

nal script, with one significant exception. The screen version ends with the arrival of Toxi's American father, while the original script included one more sequence – scenes 114, 115, and 116 – in which Grandfather Rose returned to the orphanage and retrieved the Afro-German, Tabita, for adoption. Tabita initially appeared as one of several children who gathered around Grandfather Rose during his first visit to the orphanage with Toxi. The camera had lingered deliberately over her as she first asked for, and then simply plucked outright, a button from his coat. Upon viewing the film for the first time, I recall being struck by the attention the camera devoted to this anomalous gesture, obviously underscoring its portent for future developments. The button Tabita wrests from Gustav's coat becomes what in film critical parlance would be referred to as a 'MacGuffin': effectively, a circulating object, in itself inconsequential in meaning, that establishes a libidinal connection between two characters and thereby foreshadows the irreversible linking of their fates.[3] It appears likely that Tabita's return in the final sequence was still anticipated during this stage of shooting, for without it the extended close-up of Gustav's coat button loses all narratological function in the tight economy of film editing. As it stands, she resurfaces only briefly in the same scene, constituting the Black alias to Toxi's own bid for 'Whiteness.' She metonymizes all the orphans as an exterior shot reveals her gazing wistfully out the window at Toxi escorting Gustav to the orphanage gate – a scene discussed earlier with reference to the unusual use of chiaroscuro lighting and the striking absence of sound.

The original script describes these final three scenes as follows, here presented in my English translation:

> *Scene 114:* In front of the Rose family home at night, as at the opening of the film. Snow. Jeep parked in front with Mr Spencer, Frau Berstel, and Toxi. They wave to the cook and maid at the door and the rest of the family standing at the gate. Toxi jumps out and gives Grandfather one more butterfly kiss at the gate. Hertha is weeping, Robert leads her back into the house
> *Scene 115:* Inside the house. At the nativity scene, Robert puts out the last of the candles, packs up his guitar. The star on a stick lies on the floor, the manger has tipped over. Helene helps Hertha to put out the last candle with back to camera, places arm on her shoulder as she weeps.
> *Scene 116:* In front of the orphanage: Grandfather Rose steps out of the orphanage with Tabita. Tabita is twisting his coat buttons again. The

> orphanage mother tells him he will find much joy with this child. He pulls out buttons from his pocket and hands them to Tabita in a close-up. Exterior view of children in orphanage, looking through the window at those departing. Reverse shot through from window's interior of Grandfather leaving with Tabita. They do not look back. Close-up of window from outside, images of faces pressed against window. The Word 'End' is projected upon the scene, followed by fade to black.

The original script evidently accorded Tabita a more pivotal role than did the filmed realization. Indeed, the biblical figure against whom she can be referenced appears in the New Testament Book of Acts (9:36) as a Hellenic Jew and follower of Jesus given to many acts of charity, who upon falling ill and dying, was resurrected by Peter, who commanded of her 'Arise, Tabitha!' (using her Aramaic name rather than the Greek, Dorcas). Gustav Rose's retrieval and adoption of the orphaned Tabita would have similarly resurrected her from an ambiguous fate. Significantly, the second half of the Book of Acts is also the locus for the religious conversion of Paul (formerly Saul) of Tarsus, previously a persecutor of the Christian Church, who was struck blind by the ascended Jesus while on the road to Damascus and became a believer when his sight was restored by Saint Ananias three days later (9:17–19). In the original script to *Toxi,* the gesture of moral fortitude exemplified in Gustav Rose's decision to adopt Tabita exemplifies an analogous 'change of heart'; the 'scales' that fell from the eyes of Paul find a further corollary in the grandfather exhorting his son-in-law earlier in the film to 'view things differently' with regard to racial integration.

In the final analysis, one can only speculate as to why Fono-Film and the film director chose to omit this last scene, probably relatively late in the shooting schedule. Perhaps Tabita's adoption was retroactively deemed a too radical allegory for sustained integration of this German minority population. The intended final image of several orphans staring wistfully out the window to the world beyond might also have undercut the 'feel good' sense of the overall film. If this is the case, it would also be interesting to know (although now impossible to verify) whether Fono-Film initiated this alteration or whether this was Stemmle's own artistic or political statement. It is also possible, although less plausible, that cutting the final sequence became a budgetary necessity; if production costs were running higher than originally projected, narrative closure could be swiftly assigned following Al Hoosman's brief entry on the set. Alternately, the decision to cut

TOXI - BRD 1952 Regie: Robert A. Stemmle
Quelle: Filmmuseum Berlin - Deutsche Kinemathek

4.1. Tabita watches Grandfather Rose leave the orphanage with Toxi.

the originally scripted ending could be attributed to the delay caused when the film switched producers, thereby postponing commencement of production from January 1951 to 24 May 1952 and perhaps necessitating a compacted shooting schedule to accommodate Stemmle's next film shoot scheduled to begin 11 June.[4] However, I am strongly inclined to attribute a political significance to this omission, one corroborating the degree to which the *Toxi* project became a magnet for ideological interests along every step of its development, from the script's inception to its celluloid realization and beyond.

Toxi's Distribution: Gaining New Market Value from Old Stereotypes

The dispute between the Ministry of the Interior and the Real-Film

GmbH finds a corollary in one of *Toxi*'s subplots. Theodor Jenrich's financial problems and his attendant fear of having to merge with another pharmaceutical company can be read as an allegory of the struggle for autonomy among film production companies in the face of indirect censorship exercised through state monopolization of capital. The failure of one of Theodor's pharmaceutical patents on the free market results in financial insolvency, a dilemma that mimics the bankruptcy to which film producers are vulnerable if a film is a box-office flop. Just as state sureties direct assurance towards those directors and producers whose moral orientation and film content pass muster within a given political climate, so too, in this instance, does the welfare of Theodor's company seem contingent upon developing a specific orientation towards the politics of racial integration, whereupon funds from the sale of one of his father-in-law's patents magically arrive to pull his ailing company out of the red ink. But just as Theodor – projecting now beyond the temporal confines of the film story – will have to make good upon this investment, so too must a producer secure a monetary and ideological return value through a film's widespread circulation and positive public reception.

The marketing strategies employed in the press packet released by *Toxi*'s distributor, Allianz-Film GmbH, exemplify the often complex ideological negotiations that take place: accommodating, on the one hand, the interests of producers and federal financiers, while also gauging which public nerve to avoid or which sensibility to cultivate in order to reach as wide a theatrical audience as possible. The synchronization of ideological and economic interests among federal, regional, and corporate entities is evident in the way that *Toxi*'s premiere on 15 August 1952 in the Turm-Palast in Frankfurt am Main coincided with the commencement of the public school year following the summer holiday. (Prior to the financing difficulties and ensuing production delays, the producer had hoped for a premiere closer to Easter, following the winter school holidays when the first Afro-German children enrolled.) As the film travelled among the various *Bundesländer*, its opening at local theatres received further visibility through pony rides, balloons, the serving of cake and cocoa, and Elfie Fiegert's personal appearance. Orphan choirs often opened the film with performances of the theme song, 'Ich möchte so gern nach Hause geh'n,' which the Afro-German pop singer Leila Negra also regularly performed in her repertoire of audience favourites. Exhibition houses also received publicity photos and promotional cards for school distribution, as well copies of Michael

Jary's theme song, which could be passed onto music teachers at local kindergartens and orphanages. Exhibitors were encouraged to invite such choirs, stipulated as *gemischt aus schwarzen und weißen Kindern* (a mix of black and white children), to perform at the film's opening at local movie houses.

That the film found widespread resonance is indicated by the high popularity ranking it received. According to the public survey published in *Filmblätter* (8 August 1952), *Toxi* placed eighth among the top ten film hits (foreign and domestic) in West Germany upon its release during the third quarter of 1952.[5] This is a matter of no small significance, given that *Toxi* was among 112 German films competing in 1952 with an even more sobering figure of 375 foreign films, of which 200 were American productions (statistics from Kalbus 1956, 66). This level of success against the highest of odds indicates that the film attracted not only children but the entire family, presumably providing some form of catharsis for public anxieties attending a multitude of social changes that were taking place within Germany. To understand how and why viewers were moved by this film, and at what level I, as a scholar revisiting the scene over fifty years later, can relate to their motivations, means broaching the very limits of progressive politics and revealing the *différend* – that intransmutable precipitate that defies the labours of cultural and historical translation.

My own analysis of the film has benefited from historical distance and the resulting exposure to ever-evolving discourses on subalternity – factors which also render that reading itself an artefact of a particular era of criticism, shaped by political norms and aesthetic judgments and, indeed, bearing its own blindspots. Literary historian Sacvan Bercovitch (1986) similarly suggests that

> aesthetic structures shape the way we understand history, so that tropes and narrative devices may be said to use historians to enforce certain views of the past; that the task of literary historians is not just to show how art transcends culture, but also to identify and explore the ideological limits of their time, and then to bring these to bear upon literary analysis in such a way as to make use of the categories of culture, rather than being used by them. (viii)

To avoid 'being used' by categories of culture may also, in some instances, necessitate developing a heightened awareness of the pervasive grip of, for example, stereotyping as a phenomenon that often eludes

recognition until a degree of critical or historical distance has been achieved.

For the literary historian, stereotypes, in and of themselves, provide only limited information about the political and social climate of an era; more important is to assess why these types are generated and how they are received within a given era. It is in this respect that stereotypes ultimately reveal more about their agents and recipients than about the typologized social group. Sander Gilman (1991) has described stereotyping as

> the perpetuation of a needed sense of difference, a difference between the self and the object, which in the creation of stereotypical mental representations becomes the 'Other.' The line between the projections of the self and the Other does not exist and therefore must be internalized as absolute … Its deep structure reveals that it is but a reflection of an internalized process, which draws upon repressed mental representations for its form. Stereotypes arise when the integration of self is threatened. They are therefore part of our manner of dealing with the instabilities of our perception of the world. (12–13)

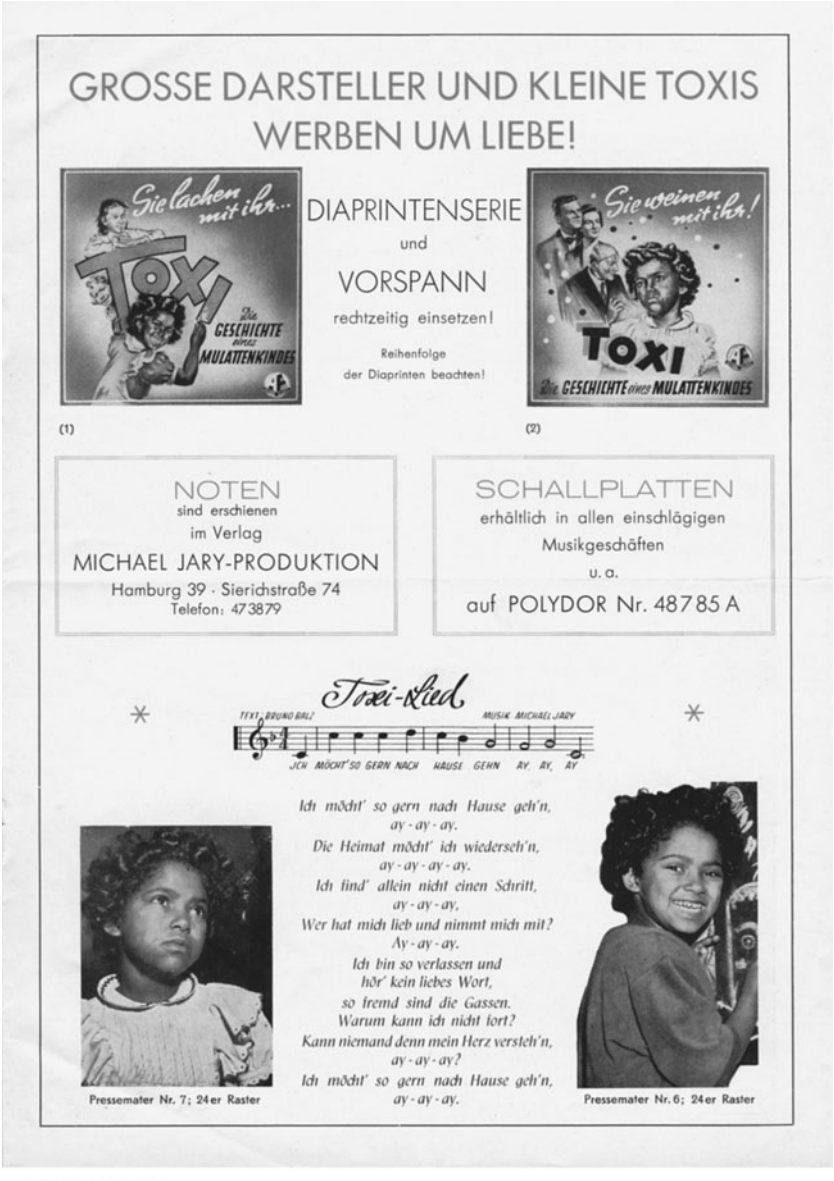
Gilman goes on to argue that as long as one is able to distinguish individuals from the stereotypes into which they could potentially be classed, a degree of stereotypification assists in the quotidian processing of experience and the organization of perception. The pathological personality, however, does not develop the ability to transcend such categories and continues to read the world along rigid lines of difference.

While I readily concur with Gilman that there is indeed a spectrum of stereotyping that spans from 'healthy' to 'pathological,' it is also important to acknowledge that the judgments exercised by the discerning critic are themselves historically conditioned. Many, although not all, reviews published around the time of *Toxi*'s release perceived the film as a progressive intervention into the topic of racism. Critics today (Brauerhoch 1997; Fehrenbach 2005) more readily concur that some of the aesthetic strategies employed performatively staged racism anew. Moreover, as the following discussion reveals, those tropes and stereotypes developed 'afterlives' in the film's reception by journalists reporting for local newspapers, who often incorporated textual information available in the press book produced by Allianz-Film GmbH. Those documents include biographical information about the child actress

Elfie Fiegert and her family, endearing and comical anecdotes from the film production process, and a summary of the film plot and its topical relevance.

An excerpted paragraph of the press release published by Allianz-Film in the industry journal *Aktuelle Film-Nachrichten* accurately captures the ambitions of the film, which now read as more limited in scope than the original film script might have intended: 'R.A.Stemmle's intention in this film is not to open old wounds, but, rather, to facilitate healing and foster understanding. Kindness and affection can inculcate tolerance for all Toxis. *Toxi* is an appeal to our humanity, calling upon us to not force this living legacy from the turbulent postwar years into moral restitution for something over which they had no control.'[6] Addressing members of the film industry as much as journalists, the carefully worded news release openly identifies the film's limited liability for controversial issues. Instead, potential exhibitors stand assured of the film's function as a narrative anodyne for old wounds, one that facilitates collective moral catharsis by soliciting audience sympathy for a stigmatized group categorically purged of historical and political baggage through the affectionate label of 'Toxis.'

Although this particular wave of postwar Afro-German children did constitute a veritable social category by virtue both of the historical uniqueness of their situation and of their visibility, their collective labelling as 'Toxis' collapses their individual biographies and circumstances under one signifier, to imply that they remain interchangeable in their fates and, indeed, in their appearance – one dark-skinned child ostensibly indistinguishable from another. In reality, scriptwriters Maria von der Osten-Sacken and Peter Franke received photos of over four hundred children whose mothers had responded to the column in a Munich newspaper – '4–5-year-old negro girl wanted for film role' – before encountering Elfie Fiegert. In Osten-Sacken's anecdotal contribution to the production notes of the press book, tellingly titled 'How I discovered Toxi …,' she recalls: 'After that, we received so many photo responses that, verily, "everything went black before our eyes" [*dass uns buchstäblich schwarz vor den Augen wurde*]. After we had narrowed down the selection to twenty charming coffee-brown girls, it became clear to us that the one we had in mind was not among them. But, then, all of a sudden "Toxi" incarnate was at our door – just as we had imagined her!'[7] The title of Osten-Sacken's narrative unwittingly evokes problematic colonial associations, particularly of mythical inhabitants of foreign territories dwelling in a static geotemporal space where evolution has stood still (or not yet begun) and waits to be set into motion by



TOXI - BRD 1952
Regie: Robert A. Stemmle
Quelle: Filmmuseum Berlin - Deutsche Kinemathek / Schriftgutarchiv

4.2. Promotional materials for *Toxi*.

the encounter with civilization. The phrasing from another newspaper article similarly reinforces this sense of Toxi as a static entity precluding character development; rather, 'this mixed-race child with the instinct of a jungle animal' is conceived as an exotic creature unearthed amid the postwar rubble and brought forth for public display.[8]

The screenwriter's words confirm the truism that any fictional script works with preconceived imagery and affect during the casting process. But Fiegert's success as an actress may also tacitly result from her fortuitous hypostatization of particular fantasies of childhood innocence, which collude with racial tropes such as that of 'the tragic mulatta' unable to transcend her blackness and, alternately, that of the resilient sambo who remains 'the eternal child, the eternal dependent, happy though given to unaccountable moods of depression' (Pieterse 1992, 152). Toxi's fictional persona and the real-life figure of Elfie Fiegert are, in fact, repeatedly conflated throughout the press book and in film reviews. The cast list put together by Allianz Film, for example, indicates that the role of 'Toxi' is played by … Toxi; Elfie Fiegert's name never appears. Although there is an industry precedent for using a single screen name when marketing certain movie celebrities, Fiegert was hardly a celebrity. Instead, in the context of her personal biography, this marketing strategy had the unwitting effect of locating her origins and those of her character outside German society by depriving her of the traditional device by which lineage is established, namely through a patrilineal family name.

Another journalist's ebullient remarks similarly reduce Elfie Fiegert to her caricatured fictive persona: 'Toxi (played by Toxi), this tiny, innocent and captivating actress, is able to resolve the situation at hand through her charming presence alone. She hardly needs a script, for she embodies the childlike entreaty of all defenceless beings and the quiet triumph of kind people everywhere.'[9] Whereas other German actors in the production assume fictional roles, Elfie Fiegert evidently does not even require a film script; her winsome essence as the eternal Samba simply shines through. Certainly, since children under six years of age were not allowed into movie theatres during this era, there would have been little precedent in a child's life for the experience of a film shoot. According to the title story in *der Spiegel* (23 July 1952), Stemmle had become particularly adept during his directorial career in using children on the set: 'Without memorizing a single line of her comprehensive lead role, she simply repeated for the camera whatever Robert told her … "Terrible, really, what one can do with such a child,"

he confessed. So as not to let this lively creature with an above average intelligence become self-conscious, he never let Toxi know that she was performing in a film. Even on the final day of the shoot, she still firmly believed she was just being photographed' (27). Stemmle's allegation that he never revealed to Elfi that she was playing in a film brings to mind the conceit behind the game in a later film, Roberto Benigni's *Life Is Beautiful* (Italy, 1999), where the character Guido Orefice shelters his young son Joshua from a too-conscious encounter with racism (albeit of another order) by pretending that the interactions in the concentration camp are part of an elaborate game. However, Stemmle's remarks conflict with screenwriter Osten-Sacken's description of the training and rehearsal in which Toxi consciously participated. When the cameraman discouraged her from looking directly into the camera during shootings, she maintained Toxi responded, 'That's something I shall learn,' and furthermore explained that at home she 'would place the radio in the middle of the table. In front of this "imaginary camera" she would rehearse her favourite scenes and, in this way, practise looking past the camera.'[10] Whatever the truth about Toxi's acting experience may have been, these discrepancies indicate that much was invested in mythologizing the shooting experience and renegotiating the scission between reality and myth.

In fact, the uncertainty as to whether Toxi was 'performing' highlights the ambiguous manner in which she was ultimately hailed as a subject within West German society. Under contestation is the extent to which Toxi was aware of dwelling within the scopic field of the camera, of being looked at, which is absolutely central to Lacan's account of the constitution of the subject in his *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (1978). Pertinent to my reasoning is his account of the mirror stage – of primary narcissism as a decisive step in accumulating images around which to coalesce one's identity. Inherent in this specular relationship is 'the gaze of the Other,' not just in this founding moment but upon the occasion of any number of subsequent self-recognitions. In early infancy it is usually the mother who occupies this role, gazing at the child and thus acknowledging, or more precisely (from the infant's perspective), constituting the child as a separate entity. In Lacan's words:

> In the scopic field, the gaze is outside, I am looked at, that is to say, I am a picture.
>
> This is the function that is found at the heart of the institution of the subject in the visible. What determines me, at the most profound level, in

> the visible, is the gaze that is outside. It is through the gaze that I enter life and it is from the gaze that I receive its effects. Hence it comes about that the gaze is the instrument through which light is embodied and through which … I am photographed. (106)

Lacan herein reworks the Cartesian notion of self-consciousness, one in which a mirror could be said to simply show us ourselves seeing ourselves. But if the gaze is ultimately something exterior to us, as Lacan maintains, then it is impossible to 'see' an unmediated image of oneself. That image is always ideologically pre-organized, and it is in this respect that we can be understood necessarily to see ourselves from the field of the Other. This also means that the constitution of the subject is grounded equally upon voyeurism (that is, looking) as well as upon exhibitionism (being looked at). To deny that Elfie was aware of her role as object of the gaze is to disavow her capacity for empowering self-display, for control over self as much as over others, insofar as she 'captures' their attention.

At stake in disputing the performed or authentic nature of Elfie Fiegert's role in Stemmle's film is her claim to the same etiology of subjectivity as anyone else, or as it conventionally functions within the visual field. To deny that she is capable of play-acting is to deny her an identity that is culturally conceived and to overlook the fact that the film camera – metaphorically standing in for the normativizing gaze of West German society – is actively implicated in this process. To bar her from this complex circuit of visual exchanges involved in film shooting, and by logical extension, in the constitution of subjectivity, is to relegate her to a place outside the parameters of cultural conditioning and of history itself.

Toxi's Reception: Whitewashing Racial Tropes

If the press materials that accompanied *Toxi*'s release seemed to overlook the specular nature of subject formation by framing the child actress within racial stereotypes, some accounts also deflect responsibility by implying that these originate out of her own self-perception. One journalist portrays Fiegert herself as the one perplexed by her skin colour, thereby deflecting attention from what is in fact a broader public preoccupation with the ontological limits of epidermal difference:

> In the studio, it's generally not too difficult to guide her properly through

> the action. Before each shot, Stemmle reads the text aloud while demonstrating the accompanying gestures. Elfie just naturally converts these into her own world, and then presents them anew the way a child sees and feels things. In the process, gags get introduced into the action that were not scripted and thus feel genuine. While Elfie-Toxi was standing under the spotlight with one of her small white 'colleagues,' she suddenly glanced at her little arms. Shaking her head she muttered: 'By gosh, I can't seem to get clean today!' and scrubbed determinedly at her little body with the brush. This didn't exactly belong to her script, but it fit perfectly within the scene.[11]

Whether true or embellished, the account depicts Fiegert as having internalized a popular misperception that associates darker skin with surface grime and therefore endeavouring to do what Jan Pieterse (1992) refers to in his study of racial iconography as 'washing the moor white' (195), fully convinced that at some substratal level she, and by extension all darker-skinned people, could prove to be ontologically white.

The journalist recounting this anecdote doubtlessly remained ignorant of its more grievous underlying psychological implications, which were – tragically – grounded in a degree of historical truth. Rudolf Sieg's 1955 study of Afro-German orphans cited earlier found a higher incidence of skin diseases among this population than among other children in the same age group; apparently this was the most prevalent recurring health problem among Afro-Germans in a list of ailments including chicken pox, asthma, tuberculosis, measles, flat feet, and so on. While Sieg does not state as much, the origins for this phenomenon could very well be psychosomatic, deriving from precisely the aforementioned internalization of popular perceptions of darker skin as undesirable or even as indicative of deeper malignancies.[12] Alternately, caregivers or mothers of Afro-German children may have washed them too much as a result of their own subconscious perception of darker skin as grimy.

In a further example of 'washing the moor white,' a journalists writes: 'By the way, Elfie speaks three "languages": Bavarian, Silesian, and High German. Among the village children in Nieder-Reid near Munich, she romps around like a "native" (*wie eine Eingeborene*). Does Elfie know that she is a little Negro? "Mommy, our mirror is useless," she once said indignantly and thereupon scrubbed at her body even more vigorously than usual with water and soap.'[13] By playing off the

double entendre in the phrase '*wie eine Eingeborene*,' the account insinuates that Fiegert bears a merely contiguous relationship to German identity. It remains ambiguous whether the author is evoking the ethnographic notion of 'primitive' or 'native' person from a non-industrial cultural setting, or alternately, someone indigenous to or born in Germany; Fiegert is here denied the possibility of actually belonging anywhere, since she is merely 'like' such a person, whether a 'primitive' or a local German, and is moreover presented as herself confused about her racial orientation.

Such episodes of irony paraphrase racist rhetoric in a manner that deflects from its cruelty without actually calling it into question. Instead, fleeting brushes with overt racism (no pun intended) serve to titillate their audience, as in the following account:

> The name is really so funny, it perfectly matches her brown body. And apropos of her brown body: once, during shooting, Toxi was supposed to take a bath and use lots of lather in a tub that was placed in front of the camera. Toxi took great delight in this and took her time while the takes were repeated several times. Finally, one member of the film crew said, 'My God, Toxi, now you've stayed in the water too long and scrubbed your skin too much. You've become very light! Just look at your palms, and the soles of your feet, too –they're already completely white!' Toxi raised her hand as evidence and answered contemptuously, 'Why, that's not from bathing. They're always white!'[14]

The bubble bath and key lighting render Toxi's bath scene an erotic spectacle whose sexual overtones are reinforced by the use of the terms '*Wonne*' and '*Ausdauer*' in the original German to describe her pleasure in bathing. Cast and crew hover around a nude Black girl poised under bright set lights, restaging the drama of the discovery of sexual/racial difference that demands some sort of epistemological guarantee at the visual level. It seems inconceivable that a newspaper would render a story about a Caucasian girl in quite such voyeuristic terms. Elfie's alleged retort only renders the episode more piquant, functioning as the desired reprimand that restores a degree of propriety to the setting and holds its racism and voyeurism within socially permissible bounds.

It is not any overt desire to degrade Elfie Fiegert or her fictional film persona that drives these reviews. Rather, I would suggest it is the frisson of textual transgression, the titillation of broaching certain socially

taboo topics and occasionally defying the borders so carefully drawn within contemporaneous public discourse between that which is racist and that which is designated progressive. There is a phantasmatic dimension at work here, one inspired by the film's own latent racism, but often venturing further in its risqué indiscretions. In his discussion of fantasy as political category, Slavoj Žižek (1996) has argued that 'contrary to the commonsense notion of fantasizing as indulging in the hallucinatory realization of desires prohibited by the Law, the fantasmatic narrative does not stage the suspension-transgression of the Law but is rather the very act of its installation, of the intervention of the cut of symbolic castration. What the fantasy endeavors to stage is ultimately the "impossible" scene of castration' (80). In *Toxi*'s reception, writers and readers alike presumably understood the manner in which racist comments in the public sphere could invite reprimand; that prohibition itself became a unifying force, with citizenal identity secured precisely through this 'castrating' deference to the Law. In the process of overstepping proscribed aesthetic and moral limits, the existence and ongoing potency of those boundaries is reconfirmed and the parameters of the transgressing subject's status within the new Federal Republic are secured. It is veritably a form of 'acting out' in order to gain the attention and acknowledgment from the 'Other,' here, the Law and perhaps also the Allied occupation forces who originally participated in defining the scope of democracy and citizenship within the new nation.

In this respect, Žižek has posited fantasy as structurally very close to perversion: 'The perverse ritual stages the act of castration, of the primordial loss that allows the subject to enter the symbolic order' (80). The transgressive racial tropes employed in the examples mentioned above become gratifying for their authors and for historical readers not because racist discourse is somehow inherently pleasurable; rather, its invocation here results in the yearned-for reaffirmation of subject status. According to Žižek, for the so-called 'normal' subject, the Law functions as a regulator of his or her access to the object of his desire. For the pervert, on the other hand, 'the lost object of desire is the Law itself, the Law is the Ideal he is longing for, he wants to be fully acknowledged by the Law, integrated into its functioning.' Ironically then, 'the pervert, this "transgressor" par excellence, who purports to violate all the rules of "normal" and decent behavior, in effect longs for the very rule of Law' (80). Elsewhere, Žižek demarcates this as the distinction between pleasure and enjoyment: 'A simple illicit love affair without risk concerns mere *pleasure*, whereas an affair which is experienced

as a "challenge to the gallows" – as an act of transgression – procures *enjoyment*; enjoyment is the "surplus" that comes from our knowledge that our pleasure involves the thrill of entering a forbidden domain' (1991, 239). For example, in the aforementioned bathtub anecdote, the rejection of racist rhetoric is rendered more piquant when it is Fiegert herself, the original object of playful mockery, who retorts about her hands, 'They are always white!' Her resistance to racist remarks stands in textual contradiction to the episodes recounted earlier, which alleged that she tried to scrub her 'dirty' skin clean. Such conflicting accounts offer further evidence of the mythologizing supplement at work in the press, which frequently served as an ideological arm of the film industry itself, tacitly accommodating reader or viewer expectations by perpetuating popular tropes.

A similar mythologizing supplement is at work in a collection of jocose anecdotes, titled 'TOXI-logische Weisheiten,' which circulated in newspapers throughout the country in the months following the film's release. As evinced in the title, the anecdotes play upon the phonetic similarity between *Weissheit* and *Weisheit*, between whiteliness and wisdom, to infer that Toxi has a particular logic to the way she does things – one originating in the immutability of epidermal difference. One anecdote reads: 'There is a dog on the film set. His name is "Bismarck." Toxi, otherwise very much an animal-lover, had some doubts about this particular hairy four-legged creature. Director Stemmle tries to assuage these anxieties, pointing out that "Bismarck" isn't at all mean and dangerous. But Toxi is not convinced, and remarks, "Nah, Robert, I don't know about that, not with a name like that!"'[15] By reprinting Fiegert's response in Bavarian dialect, the anecdote underscores her regional identity, corroborating that she fulfils one of the inherited criteria of an ethnic German. Her national belonging is furthermore evinced through her familiarity with a significant icon of German history. The irony of the story would have addressed itself primarily to a readership that knows that Elfie does not otherwise fulfil the visual stereotype of a Bavarian of European ethnic origin.

The impression of an inherent or 'natural' ethnicity is manifest, according to Étienne Balibar (1991), via the twin routes of language and 'race,' which operate in collusion to uphold the illusion of both historically preceding and conceptually transcending actual individuals and political relations. Yet the one category seems to require the other to maintain its fictive cohesion; linguistic community alone is not enough to construct ethnicity. 'The "second generation" immigrant … inhabits

the national language (and through it the nation itself) in a manner as spontaneous, as "hereditary" and as imperious, so far as affectivity and the imaginary are concerned, as the son of one of those native heaths which we think of as so very French (and most of which not so long ago did not even have the national language as their daily parlance)' (99). Yet this 'hereditary' illusion is undermined by the fact that 'the language community is a community *in the present*, which produces the feeling that it has always existed, but which lays down no destiny for the successive generations. Ideally, it "assimilates" anyone, but holds no one.' Thus, Balibar reasons, 'for it to be tied down to the frontiers of a particular people, it therefore needs an extra degree (*un supplément*) of particularity, or a principle of closure, of exclusion.' And this principle is that of claiming a genealogy grounded in a common 'race.'

In the aforementioned 'Toxi-logische Weisheit,' the ironic twist deconstructs difference by conceding that regional affiliation need not be evinced through skin colour alone; it can also be documented through dialect or evidence of shared cultural-historical knowledge. Elfie's reference to Bismarck demonstrates her to be equally interpellated by the historical artefacts of history as any other German child. Yet, as Linda Hutcheon (1994) has asserted, irony's critical as well as complicit dimension exists in 'its marking of difference at the heart of similarity' (4). The anecdote's irony is activated precisely when the German readership participates in the silent acknowledgment of a lingering, insurmountable difference, one that marks Elfie's dialect and historical reference points as evincing an uncommon, even unnatural access to icons of German heritage.

Another 'Toxi-logische Weisheit' extracts mileage from the pro-filmic sequence involving a plateful of the pastry known as a *Mohrenkopf* (Moor's head), which is passed among the children at little Susi's birthday party – a scene also discussed in chapters 2 and 5. The choice of pastry is hardly accidental, excluding as it does any number of biomorphic selections that would not have invoked racist discourse, for example, the *Schnecke* (Snail), *Ochsenauge* (Ox's Eye), *Schweinöhrchen* (Pig's Ear), or *Berliner* (Berliner). Toxi joins her fellow guests at the birthday table and initially looks at the chocolate-covered pastry on her plate with great anticipation, only to be unsettled by a neighbouring child who quips from outside the frame: 'Toxi doesn't need a Moor's head, because she already has one!' Looking puzzled and hurt, Toxi gazes mutely just beyond the frame in a gesture that seems to reproach the viewer. In her autobiography, Afro-German Marie Nejar (2007) describes an identi-

cal taunt she encountered as a five-year-old child upon purchasing a *Mohrenkopf* in a pastry shop, adding that the stinging remark cured her of any desire to ever eat the pastry again (30–1). Although the staged film scene was obviously intended to foreground for children and adult spectators alike the hurtfulness of racist epithets, its moral didacticism appears to have been lost on many journalists whose wanton abuse of the term is exemplified in the following 'toxi-logical wisdom':

> Following a successful shoot, cameraman Igor Oberberg let little Toxi eat the *Mohrenkopf* the script had called for in this scene. Two days later, he needed another *Mohrenkopf* for a reverse-shot. That's when the problems started. The new *Mohrenkopf* was not the right shade; it was too light. Oberberg complained and demanded another one. One after another, a total of twelve were delivered from the most diverse pastry shops, to be tested against the light. Igor Oberberg stopped complaining; with the twelfth one just right, he finally collapsed, as did Toxi – she had consumed all twelve of them![16]

By aligning Blackness with monstrous consumption or overindulgence, the anecdote situates Toxi/Elfie Fiegert as both the consumer and the consumed. For not only are we given to understand that she has an insatiable appetite for sweets (also alluded to in the scene with Theodor in Café Süsse Ecke), she also becomes synecdochical with them when other journalists refer to her as a chocolate doll (*Schockoladenpuppe*) or 'a lively child with big, dark Sarotti-saucer eyes.'[17]

In recounting how staff members pillaged a total of twelve different *Mohrenköpfe* from local pastry shops in the search for the one with the right shade for a black and white film, the text metaphorically recalls the casting search among over 400 applicants in the search for just the right *Mischlingskind*. Be it a *Mohrenkopf* or darker-skinned child, it becomes an obsession with shading and surface lighting, fetishized and invested with overdue significance. And indeed, lighting the human body, as Richard Dyer's study *White* (1997) has already extensively documented, is an art form whose aesthetic concerns are very much ideologically overdetermined and have, in Western film production, been primarily organized around 'lighting for whiteness,' that is, bringing forth morally invested qualities in the Caucasian face (89). Very likely, Stemmle's camera operator Igor Oberberg lacked extensive experience in lighting Black actors, although he was cinematographer for Eduard von Borsody's colonial propaganda film *Kongo-Express* (1939). He evidently

struggled with how to light Fiegert relative to other cast members and the aesthetic significance of those choices.[18] Apparently, her foundation makeup was always mixed a few levels darker because the camera and lighting technicians had determined that her natural skin colour did sufficiently contrast with that of her co-stars. It would appear that the film was not so much bent upon deconstructing racism as upon rendering the distinction between black and white completely unambiguous and thereby repressing even the conceptual possibility of hybridized identities.

Early Consumer Culture and Social Normativization

In *Toxi*'s reception, the seemingly innocuous *Mohrenkopf* became a powerful cipher for framing Elfriede Fiegert as both the consumer and the consumed in ways that can today be recognized as resonating beyond the parameters of the film text to point towards what Victoria de Grazia (1996) has elsewhere summated as 'the myriad conflicts over power that constitute the politics of consumption' (4). To understand how my preceding textual microanalysis interfaces with broader macropolitical trends, we must take into account both the ideological and structural underpinnings of early West German consumer culture. As German historian Volker Berghahn (1982) explains, leading politicians of the time believed that

> social and political integration of millions of psychologically and materially uprooted people could succeed only on the basis of a prosperous economy. They were correct in the sense that nothing did more to consolidate the Federal Republic as a social and political entity and, as the *Bundestag* elections of 1953 and 1957 were to demonstrate, to strengthen the initially weak position of the Adenauer government than the prosperity of the 1950s. With the exception of agriculture, the index of production increased so rapidly in all branches of the economy that people began to speak of a 'miracle.' (202)

The 'economic miracle' can be understood as a meta-historical discourse about purchasing power and the pursuit of prosperity that helped foster the impression of national popular consensus in the early reconstruction years of the two new German states. The economic policy conceived by the political architects of reconstruction, Ludwig Erhard and Konrad Adenauer, sought to negotiate a national identity

that would distinguish West Germany from its socialist counterpart, but also operate according to a more orderly form of capitalism than the perceivedly more Darwinist model operative in the United States. By the late 1950s, the social market economy had not only achieved rapid prosperity for a broad section of the middle class, it had also arrogated exclusive claim to that highly cathected symbolic territory known as 'Germany.' In the eyes of the West, West Germany became the sole inheritor of a centuries-old legacy blending German *Kultur* and craftsmanship in the product label 'Made in Germany.' The cultivation of specifically West German modes and forms of popular consumption in the Adenauer era coalesced along the tripartite fronts of an ongoing oppositional stance towards the East, a need to establish ideological distance from the politics and centralized economic planning of the former Third Reich, and a willingness to emulate in moderate form the American model of a free market economy. To self-identify as a democratic German citizen, as Erica Carter (1997) sums it up, 'was to have access to individual and/or familial prosperity. It was as *consumers*, in other words, that West Germans in the postwar period gained one form of access to citizenship' (6). To wield purchasing power was to contribute to the collective recovery of the national economy and, thereby, to performatively evince and assert one's claim to national citizenship. In the euphoria of early visions of democracy, the roles of citizen and of consumer merged in such a way that consumption virtually became a form of political participation.

However, signs of consumer activity in *Toxi*'s diegetic world should not be regarded as reflecting contemporaneous realities of the middle class in West Germany; instead they offer a prescient glimpse of lifestyle choices soon to become widely accessible. The Rose family would hardly have qualified as *Durchschnittsbürger* (average citizens) in 1952, given their possession of an array of luxury goods (hairdryer, steamer, refrigerator, automobile) as well as their employment of two domestic servants. As late as 1955, only 11 per cent of the population owned refrigerators and 10 per cent electric washing machines, and one-fifth of the population still earned below the minimum wage (Abelshauser 1987, 31). As historian Volker Berghahn (1982) has pointed out, 'most Germans in the late 1940s living, as they did, under conditions of extreme austerity, found it difficult to visualize a successful market economy of plenty' (185). And, indeed, visual culture is actually key to the cultivation and success of consumer culture, as evinced by advertisements that proffer visions of a particular lifestyle best achieved through acqui-

sition of targeted objects around which enjoyment is then organized. *Toxi*'s historical value lies in its veridical enactment of a collective social fantasy that offered viewers an idealized world corresponding with how West German citizens presumably *ought* to experience family life as allegorical of the nation.

The financial woes that initially plague Theodor's pharmaceutical company come to metonymize broader anxieties about the health of the national economy, while the positively charged character of the graphic artist, Robert, in turn, becomes aligned with the organization of consumer desires through his work for an advertising agency. The visual language of advertising, of selling an image by setting into motion the dynamics of desire in relation to racialized identities, normativized gender roles, and class or social standing, is also self-consciously cited at the level of the film's visual rhetoric. The initial introduction of Hertha Rose (effectively, Robert's muse, although Toxi usurps that role) conforms to this language. Preparing for dinner, where her fiancé will make an appearance, her self-conscious preparations overlap with her status as object of the male gaze of the camera. Wearing a flounced skirt with low-cut bodice and propping one leg on a stool as she pulls on a pair of stockings, she strikes an iconic pose that could just as easily double as an ad for nylons or a dress in a women's illustrated weekly. This is enhanced by the lilting violin strains of a waltz melody that saturates the diegetic space and figuratively evokes her ambitions for partnership with Robert. However, when Hertha reaches over to switch off the radio, the magic mood is broken and its construal through the manipulations of music, lighting, and costume are bared, signalling the film's self-consciousness, if not ambivalence towards this process. For not all the associations with consumerism in the film are positive; the consumer subjectivities displayed will be shown to sustain distinct relationships towards the nation, such that certain social groups construed as deviant in their lifestyle and consumer habits also threaten economic stability and national solidarity.

Erica Carter (1997) suggests that in the postwar era, consumer habits and lifestyle choices served to re-establish hierarchical social structures that had been undermined or levelled as a result of the chaos of war: 'Economic reconstruction … was conceived as a vehicle for the reconstitution of fractured relations of class and gender. In the aftermath of war, social typification according to class or stratum, profession or education, had given way to categories of social crisis: war veteran, refugee, prisoner of war, war widow, displaced person, concentration camp inmate.

The consumer lifestyles of the mid- to late 1950s promised, by contrast, to solidify new structures of social difference' (64). Consumption, in this reading, is not merely an act of individual volition, as is so often assumed; it is also a social practice, defined through ruling institutions and standards of consumption (1996, 9). How and what you buy (shopping habits), in turn, contribute to the consolidation of social groupings. One of the most important such groupings during the 1950s was, of course, the family, whose cohesion had been fractured by a world war that dispersed relatives geographically, resulted in loss of life, and divided loyalties along political lines. Within restored bourgeois social structures, the role of the housewife was not merely to feed and care for her family but to do so according to a rationalized system of consumption that positioned her at the divide between public and private, between domestic labourer and public citizen. As Carter (1997) points out, 'as in World War I and Weimar, it is through rational consumption that the housewife is seen to fulfill her national obligations and gain legitimate access to citizenship' (81). She was often the primary agent of consumption, purchasing the mundane articles required for daily survival, providing crucial input in decisions on larger appliance purchases, and cultivating a heightened consciousness of particular models of femininity that were promulgated by the fashion industry. According to the dialectics of subjectivization within the social market economy, women were simultaneously sovereign subjects of market processes as well as – in a Foucauldian sense – the target of disciplinary regulation as they internalized patterns of femininity and female citizenship; their desires were submitted to ongoing subtle recalibration by various industries harnessing the media in order to regulate consumer demand and thereby facilitate market expansion at a pace and level consonant with Fordist mass production. It is only logical, then, that this era would build upon a knowledge-power episteme first introduced in the Weimar era in the form of demoscopy, or market research, to scrutinize, assess, and regulate the consumer behaviours and desires of the public and, particularly, of women.

Toxi's Precarious Status: Between Window-Shopper and Refugee

Within this regulatory project, women were paradoxically regarded as pivotal to market expansion but also as a potential source of its destabilization (Carter 1997, 92), therein reviving nineteenth-century discourses that linked women with erratic (i.e., impulsive) consump-

tion and generally projected upon them displaced fears and anxieties brought about at various stages of modernization. Andreas Huyssen (1986) finds these associations amply evident in the intellectual thought of Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud, as well as in modernist literature and the popular press: 'The fear of the masses in this age of declining liberalism is always also a fear of women, a fear of nature out of control, a fear of the unconscious, of sexuality, of the loss of identity and stable ego boundaries in the mass' (52). In the nascent Federal Republic, women became the concrete symbol of potential market disorder, possessed of an only tenuous capacity to engage in 'rational' consumer behaviour. Certain groups of women in particular – migrants, the young, the working class – were regarded as a threat to the bounds of normative femininity and as capable of undermining the economy through irrational and compulsive purchase habits. It is precisely with regard to such perceived dangers that the figure of Toxi was instrumentalized, both to inspire consumption and to serve as mouthpiece for an indirect critique of excessive materialist culture. This is most vividly exemplified immediately following the sequence at Café Süsse Ecke (Sweet Corner Cafe), when Theodor loses sight of Toxi and she, in turn, ventures forth in search of him. Ambling along the city streets from one shop window to the next, she becomes aligned with a variety of consumer discourses. One display window contains a sign reading 'Consumer purchasing helps!' (*Der Konsum hilft!*), which Toxi scrutinizes carefully. She then proceeds to another window, where mannequin legs display the ubiquitous Perlon nylons that became such a coveted item immediately after the war. By the early 1950s, nylons had come to emblematize West German ideological and economic contestation with its East German neighbour. The United States and East Germany had been the biggest suppliers of nylons until West German production of Perlon stockings commenced in 1950.[19] In the process of laying claim to the market, the Perlon industry began to advertise its stockings as lending the wearer graciousness and a socially elevated femininity – bourgeois ideals implied as lacking among those who opted for cheaper stockings from the East.

The shop window through which Toxi ponders the shapely mannequin legs also captures and reflects her melancholy gaze, creating a heightened contrast between her darker skin and presexual status as child, and the object of our gaze, which her sightline directs towards this icon of white adult femininity. She effectively becomes the linchpin sustaining two opposing discourses. On the one hand, she organizes our desire towards consumer objects, but as she continues to stroll with-

TOXI - BRD 1952
Regie: Robert A. Stemmle
Quelle: Deutsche Kinemathek

4.3. Toxi as a 'footloose' window-shopper in the new consumer society.

out adult supervision along bustling streets filled with shopping women, vagrant children, and socially marginal figures, she also becomes conterminous with the anxiety their presence evokes. It is no coincidence that this confluence of femininity and urban space (presumably Hamburg) is marked by a stylistic shift from classical cinematography to techniques associated with Weimar cinema to the accompaniment of dissonant modernist music. Low-angle close-ups of Toxi's face as she scans the streets in search of Theodor recall the lone woman of the 'street film,' who usurps the male prerogative of moving freely through public space, while automobiles cutting across the frame at a diagonal are reminiscent of the city films of Dziga Vertov and Walter Ruttmann, and the canted angles of expressionist cinema evoke a world askew. Also pertinent would be Fritz Lang's *M* (Germany, 1931),

TOXI - BRD 1952
Regie: Robert A. Stemmle
Quelle: Deutsche Kinemathek

4.4. Perusing the Perlon stockings.

in which a serial child molester/murderer lures little girls by playing upon their desire to consume, be it a balloon or an ice cream cone. The shot of Toxi perusing the plastic mannequin legs is shot from the storefront interior, mimicking an analogous shot in Lang's film, where it is the murderer who is mesmerized by a storefront display of cutlery knives assembled into perpendicular lines that form a square reflected in the window in such a way as to 'frame' his face and thereby anticipate his demise.

The references to Weimar cinema signal 'the autonomous and potentially uncontainable, irrationally or illicitly consuming woman' (Carter 1997, 145) as a source of continuity between pre-war and postwar discourses. As Carter explains, 'Women's numerical preponderance in public life was … often noted as a cause for alarm, as, for example, in the protracted postwar debates on the so-called *Frauenüberschuß*, or

"surplus of women"' (145). Within East and West Germany women outnumbered men by about 7 million (Kolinsky 1989, 25). Apprehension and indignation surfaced in the press regarding the public dangers caused when women stampeded the annual department store sales, or when East German women crossed the border in streams to take advantage of such events. Concern was also raised over the higher incidence of shoplifting in the dense crowds. However, Carter concludes that what was ultimately so threatening about consuming women, aside from their sheer numbers, was the fact that they were 'footloose, fluid, removed (temporarily at least) both from the bounds of private life and familial authority and from patriarchal state or managerial regulation' (145).

Moreover, within the unstable arena of public consumption (i.e., of shopping), the otherwise stabilized figure of the bourgeois housewife became visually indistinguishable from women whose social status was unstable: namely, travellers from the GDR and the vast numbers of refugees and displaced persons in transit throughout both Germanies. Of the latter Carter (1997) writes, 'These refugee women shared with the female consumer a capacity to elude existing structures of cultural authority: they were migrant figures, elusive and often of necessity highly resourceful and independent' (146). Toxi's indeterminate familial and geographical origins, yet to be ascertained by the police as she moves through the public streets, recall the so-called 'unofficial refugees' (*die Nichtanerkannten*), that group of refugee applicants (primarily politically or economically driven migrants from the East) whose application for citizenship was turned down and who were to be housed in the so-called 'B-camps' in Berlin while their cases were under appeal. Because these refugees had no official right to legal employment, they were prone to seek work on the black market. According to an eighty-page report prepared by the Berlin Senate in 1953, spies from the communist sector often recruited these individuals as informants or even as kidnappers. Another contemporaneous sociological account attributes to the unofficial refugee a point of view that easily accords with Toxi's petition for familial belonging, itself metonymic for membership in a community of consumers: 'Unemployed, and lured by the pleasures of window-shopping, they wander restlessly through brightly lit city streets; and surely the envy they experience should come as no surprise to us? Trapped as they are on an island cut off from the rest of the world by a totalitarian sea, these vulnerable thousands of unoffi-

cial refugees represent a problem of serious political and psychological dimensions.'[20]

Toxi's alignment with social groups that threaten West Germany's precarious social fabric and carefully calibrated social market economy also becomes evident when she encounters someone described in the film script as 'a boy with strong southern European features' (*ein junge, der stark südländisch aussieht*) playing the xylophone for a crowd of onlookers. Without any prompting, she picks up the cap he has left lying on the ground before him and circulates among the crowd collecting donations, creating a pairing discomfitingly analogous to that of organ grinder with monkey. When the boy spots a policeman in the distance, he swiftly packs his instrument, grabs Toxi's hand, and runs with her through the dispersing crowd. Toxi's association with unregulated 'black market' practices becomes a didactical example for child viewers of what happens to those who venture too close to marginal social circles. The description of the little boy as bearing Mediterranean colouring may very well serve as a shorthand for Sinti or Roma, two ethnic groups with a nomadic and unpropertied lifestyle who were also persecuted during the Nazi era as 'asocial' and unable or unwilling to conform to the fixed residential norms and labour practices of industrialized societies. The little boy leads Toxi to his parents' trailer; passing his earnings to his father, he explains that they are higher this time because *she* was there. The mother scrutinizes Toxi warily but offers her a bowl of soup after she has sung a few stanzas of the film's theme song and performed a winsome dance. The father nods his assent for her to accompany their circus troupe, scheduled to leave town that same evening. Her virtually instant assimilation into circus culture reinforces the historical pre-war association of African and African-American artists with the entertainment industry, and anticipates Moni's fate in Fiegert's second and third roles for respectively: *Sterne über Colombo* (1953) and *Der dunkle Stern* (1954).[21]

Forbidden Pleasures, or '*Das Schmuggelwesen an der Westdeutschen Grenze*'

Toxi's press reception displays continuities with earlier anxieties about the boundaries of class and gender identity in the Weimar Republic and those of racialized difference under National Socialism. However, Cold War politics in themselves heightened sensitivity to what I will loosely

refer to as 'border traffic.' The drive of the Allied occupiers to uphold the integrity of West Germany's national borders can be attributed to insecurity about the still semi-permeable economic and territorial boundaries between occupied zones, most particularly the Soviet-occupied zone, and their external borders with neighbouring nations. Competitiveness between communist and capitalist systems heightened national concern for leakage of data about advances in technology, military power, and scientific knowledge, and for elicit smuggling of material goods that could undermine industries and national economies. The feature film Robert Stemmle directed immediately prior to *Toxi*, titled *Die Sündige Grenze*, for example, thematized the involvement of children in a coffee smuggling ring in Aachen near the Belgian border. Situating *Toxi*'s controversial topic relative to that of Stemmle's previous film, one journalist observed:

> Director Stemmle was already tackling the problems of our time in his earlier flick, which addressed the matter of smuggling [*das Schmuggelwesen*] along the West German border. He deserves a lot of credit for that. But one shouldn't overlook the fact that, once again, he has not mustered the courage to do the issues full justice. The whole story [*Toxi*] has been overly trivialized, and the bitter seriousness that underpins the situation has been packaged in sugar-coating. The end result is a cute little film embellished with many charming episodes. It will surely find its audience – not least, because this coffee-coloured little girl truly is entertaining and charming – but the real problem is neither addressed nor a solution presented. At the close of a story too obviously scripted towards its happy end, one wonders how a de Sica, a Rosselini, or a Carol Reed would have tackled such a subject. What a pity![22]

The reviewer reproaches Stemmle for minimizing the earnestness of the social problem at hand, but he also assigns the dilemma of Afro-German children a valence coeval with that of the black market goods in Stemmle's earlier film by employing a vocabulary that renders their respective political controversies contiguous. Phrases like 'packaged in sugar-coating' (*zu sehr in einen wohltemperierten Zuckerguß verpackt*) or yet another reference to Toxi as 'this coffee-coloured little girl' both metonymically and literally recall the issue of coffee smuggling and of a population seduced by the lure of illicit commodities. Afro-Germans, too, could be regarded as 'slipped into' the country rather than openly invited. If Stemmle had similarly 'smuggled' a difficult social topic into

an entertaining feature film, the story's ending ensured that border controls would be upheld and that these illicit goods (i.e., Toxi and other children like her) would be confiscated (i.e., 'returned' to America).

Toxi's diegesis foregrounds this equivalency of discourses in a dialogue between the family housekeeper and the detective assigned to track down Toxi's parent(s). Sitting in the Rose kitchen sampling coffee and cake, he boasts to the housekeeper that he will have no trouble solving the case – after all, he recently cracked a smuggling ring of thirty-one men! Initially, it appears he has few clues to work with, for as family members determined when first rummaging through Toxi's suitcase upon her arrival, there was 'nothing but hand-made stuff, no name-brand clothing – so no tracks to follow.' Toxi's lack of brand-name clothing from a specific store and geographical site makes it harder to trace her origins and represents one of the ways in which she falls below the radar of social norms shaped by commercial consumption. Ultimately, it is the printed text on the newspaper inserts tucked inside her shoes for insulation that betray her humble regional background.

Further pursuant to the metaphorical framing of the emerging Afro-German population as either sugar-coated pill or contraband, it may be worth revisiting the point I made earlier in this chapter to the effect that the extracted pleasure or value of an illegal substance generally directly correlates with the degree of its official interdiction. Allianz-Film's press book goes so far as to imply that it is the forbidden object itself that exerts irresistible magnetic powers of attraction upon German citizens:

> Amid shooting in the studio, a disease previously unknown to medical doctors seems to have broken out. It has been named 'Toxismus' and appears to be contagious. Fortunately, those stricken with the illness are able to continue working. The cause of this disease is – yes, this is no joke – a five year-old 'lady' with brown skin, dark eyes, frizzy hair, and speaking authentic Munich dialect. In fact, she's the main star, in person, and everyone calls her Toxi. All personnel in the studio, especially men, seem to be coming down with this disease. Even this reporter realized the moment when he, too, became infected. So what are the symptoms? Anyone who meets Toxi will start showing the following signs. They will be overcome with a sudden need to buy this lovely little child chocolate candy, a small flower bouquet, cake, or cookies, and shower her with these gifts. Demand for sweets in some neighbouring shops has risen as much 200 per cent. And there just doesn't seem to be any remedy for the illness. As soon as

> one comes in close proximity with Toxi, one is stricken anew. Toxi is a bewitching [*bezaubernd*] girl; one simply can't resist her. And all of you will succumb to the same fate after you see her in her first film role.[23]

The above description is fully congruent with how film marketing builds up the film personality, artificially cultivating what Walter Benjamin in his essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' refers to as 'the spell of the personality.' The artificial enhancement of the star personality beyond the confines of the studio performance effectively compensates for the loss of any aura of authenticity in the mechanically reproduced film commodity (1968, 231). However, the appeal of the above rhetoric also derives from its capacity to accommodate a progressive discourse of anti-racism, while also invoking tropes familiar to the racist unconscious. The metaphors at work evince the impossibility of uncoupling race from gender in racist discourse. Since flowers and sweets are items that have traditionally been purchased by men for women, and the purchasers in this instance are categorically all men, the implication is that this is not merely about childlike charm; at some level it is also about an exaggerated sex appeal. The slogan that resurfaces several times within the Allianz-Film promotional materials reads, 'To see Toxi, is to love Toxi' (*Wer Toxi sieht, muss Toxi lieben*). It is implied that Elfie is responsible for the reaction she provokes in others, and that this attraction is mediated via vision and is implicitly attributable to her skin colour, whose significance itself is a construct of the white gaze. Accountability gets redirected from 'white' spectators or readers and the cultural inheritance of racist or sexualized fantasies and, instead, is attributed to innate qualities of the Afro-German subject.

The zeal with which Toxi's screen persona is embraced in the above passage displays parallels with the fervent philo-Semitism by means of which individuals, institutions, and groups avowed their consent to the restructured postwar society and distanced themselves from the ideological platforms of the Third Reich. Frank Stern (1992) writes:

> In the public sphere during the late 1940s and the early 1950s, philo-Semitism had an impact through taboos and generally accepted connotations of social facts, by means of symbols, linguistic signals, tacitly agreed-upon modes of speech and response. It was a system of 'encoding' that masked everything Jewish, but in such a way that one could be confident the message would be decoded in philo-Semitic terms. What

> philo-Semitism often involved was not the content of what was said, but the manner. (408)

In some instances, encoding involved a merely superficial reterritorialization of connotative images previously circulating during the Third Reich. According to Stern, once a seemingly positive charge had been attached to certain images, these could nevertheless be read against the grain to reveal anti-Semitic attitudes. Thus, for example, the coquettish description of Elfie Fiegert as bewitching (*bezaubernd*) gains further mileage from the neologism,*Toxismus*, to imply that viewers are overcome by the actress's 'intoxicating' charm or spell. But when the author describes her popularity as evidence of a contagion (*ansteckend*), the association uneasily recalls anti-Semitic propaganda such as that disseminated in the Nazi film *Der ewige Jude* (Fritz Hippler, 1940), which compared Jews to vermin, to carriers of disease (this being one of the pretexts for raiding the Jewish ghettos and deporting their inhabitants). Another insidious anti-Semitic myth perpetuated at the fin de siècle was the 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion,' a published tract claiming to be authored by a secret group of elders and offering guidelines to be followed by those of Jewish faith. Later proved to be a forgery, the document included data maintaining that Jewish elders possessed viral agents they were scheming to inoculate into non-Semitic populations as part of a wider extermination plan. In 1935, the Nazi publication *Weltkampf,* furthermore, claimed that the medical procedure known as inoculation had been invented by Jews with the intention of contaminating Aryan blood (Mosse 1985, 117–18).

One has to wonder if it is merely coincidental that Theodor Jenrich is also the owner of a pharmaceutical company and thus aligned with chemical products whose function, among others, is to combat infectious disease. This would explain the concern he expresses early in the film that the stranger at his doorstep 'could be carrying contagious diseases.' While the family doctor declares Toxi to be perfectly healthy, he hastens to add that Susi, on the other hand, is still recovering from the mumps. Perhaps it is merely Grandmother Rose's eagerness to welcome Toxi that blinds her to the alternate possibility that her granddaughter could infect and endanger Toxi, as she dismisses the doctor's concerns in that regard with the comment, 'But Toxi is just so sturdy!' However, a later scene in which Toxi wears a scarf tied over her head and under her chin dispels any underlying superstition that disease might only spread unidirectionally. As the previously mentioned examples reveal,

pleasure and danger are intimately bound up with the way that both diegetic cast and national audiences alike relate to Toxi's screen role. The next chapter explores this close relationship further, introducing a further psychoanalytical dimension in order to elaborate a theory of historical enjoyment specific to the Adenauer era.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Reterritorialization of Enjoyment in the Adenauer Era

Historical Spectatorship, Visual Pleasure, and the Mise en Scène of Desire

In *Toxi*'s reception, we have witnessed the stenotopic perpetuation of terms such as 'dark Sarotti-eyes' (*dunkle Sarotti-Augen*), 'coffee-brown girl' (*kaffeebraunes Mädchen*), 'chocolate doll' (*Schockoladenpuppe*) – terms that perpetuated a colonialist iconography rendering the eponymous protagonist a kind of 'spice,' to borrow bell hooks's term (1992, 21). The ongoing reterritorialization of signs and symbols of imperial Germany in postwar popular culture may be tantamount to what anthropologist Renato Rosaldo (1989) has described as 'imperialist nostalgia.' The term refers to the peculiar yearning colonial agents often display 'for the very forms of life they intentionally altered or destroyed,' paradoxically mourning 'the passing of what they themselves have transformed' (107–8). West Germany in the 1950s could be said to similarly possess a nostalgia for an era prior to the widespread devastation and ensuing national humiliation which National Socialism had wrought – an era when colonialism seemed to promise another means to participate in European hegemony and reinforced a sense of innate cultural and civilizational superiority.

One finds evidence for this in popular films of the 1950s that utilized the scenery of tropical climes and their exoticized inhabitants as backdrop for the dramatic adventures or comedic antics of German protagonists. In *Jonny rettet Nebrador* (Jonny Saves Nebrador; Rolf Jugert, 1953), for example, popular Nazi-era lead actor Hans Albers continues the adventure roles – here, as a world traveller visiting a South American banana republic (the shooting location was actually Italy) – for which

he first gained popularity in the 1930s. Actors and actresses whose skin tone offered evidence of African heritage sometimes appeared in these films as members of interchangeable cultures and geographies south of the equator or, alternately, as diasporic subjects, that is, African-Americans, whose alterity similarly limned the contours of White community and became a loose shorthand for Americanization processes associated with jazz, big band music, 'rock and roll.' Al Hoosman, who played Toxi's father, also appeared in *Jonny* and in the later film *Tante Wanda aus Uganda* (Aunt Wanda from Uganda; Geza von Cziffar, 1957), which also featured Elfriede Fiegert. Afro-German Marie Nejar sang and performed roles in *Salto Mortale* (Viktor Tourjansky, 1953), where the circus tent becomes the locus for exoticism within the national fold, as well as in the musical *Die süssesten Früchte* (The Sweetest Fruits; Franz Antel, 1953).

Of course, these loose re-enactments of the colonial or post-colonial encounter engaged only indirectly with the 'local' subaltern, if at all, and staged fantasies of power, desire, and seduction displaying a further critical difference from earlier historical encounters between peoples and cultures. Cultural theorist bell hooks (1992) offers a line of reasoning whose object relations may bear some relevancy here:

> The desire to make contact with those bodies deemed Other, with no apparent will to dominate, assuages the guilt of the past, even takes the form of a defiant gesture where one denies accountability and historical connection. Most importantly, it establishes a contemporary narrative where the suffering imposed by structures of domination on those designated Other is deflected by an emphasis on seduction and longing where the desire is not to make the Other over in one's image but to become the Other. (25)

This only loosely formulated trope of 'becoming the other' will gain historical and cultural specificity in my ensuing exploration of the politics of identification between postwar German spectators and the phantasmatic figure of the Afro-German orphan. The psychology of 'consuming' images in the era of the economic miracle must take into account that the historical spectator qua consumer was still reeling from the various psychological effects of surviving the war. Historian Volker Berghahn (1985) cites philosopher Karl Jaspers on the mood of the time: 'One simply does not want to suffer any more. One wants to escape the misery [and] to live, but does not wish to ponder. The

mood is as if one expects to be compensated after the terrible suffering or at least to be comforted; but one does not want to be burdened with guilt' (185). Although exotic backdrops, improbable adventures, and comedic antics might offer escapism, *Toxi*'s plot offers a different level of pleasurable identification. The fictitious character Toxi and, by extension, the broader socio-historical population for whom she served as delegate, were arguably seized upon as a cathected object for allaying a wounded moral conscience. Among a nation of people coming to terms with abhorrent events undertaken within their territorial borders, the rescue fantasy that could be played out upon orphaned Afro-German children offered a libidinal consolation similar to that offered through other consumer products, temporarily appeasing what were, at heart, psychical rather than material needs. Central to this fantasy among viewers and readers was recovery of the idea that Germans could again occupy a heroic role, yet one less akin to the neo-colonial framework Rosaldo elsewhere refers to as 'a sense of mission, the white man's burden, where civilized nations stand duty-bound to uplift so-called savage ones' (108). Instead, it bears more affinity with psychoanalytic theories of primal seduction and everyday relations of childcare and nurturing. These are captured in the words of one journalist who wrote: 'Where problems arise in the ability of different peoples to co-exist, the "problem film" is likely to soon follow … Thus, the problem has been given prettily packaged … with Toxi's presence and participation, which demonstrates in a child's captivating way: there are as many endearing Negro children as there are white "mommy's and daddy's darlings" and they equally deserve our affection.'[1]

My exploration of pathways of identification among historical spectators is indebted to a broader genealogy of psychoanalytic approaches to the cinema. Metz (1975) and Baudry (1975) laid the groundwork for spectatorship studies by suggesting that the screen and exhibition space replicate psychological processes of projection. Later theorists (Cowie 1984; Doane 1984; Mayne 1993; Penley 1985) shifted the focus to the relationship between discursive positions structured into the film text and historically variable processes of identification that take place among discrete viewers. Particularly helpful have been two classic essays of psychoanalytic theory that thematize the structure of fantasy. In 'Fantasy and the Origins of Sexuality' Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis ([1964] 1986) posit fantasy as essentially a form of mise en scène and stress that it is about the 'staging' of desire rather

than about its linear pursuit. The notion of staging herein delineates how particular subject positions are occupied within a tableau, such that 'fantasy … is not the object of desire, but its setting. In fantasy the subject does not pursue the object or its sign: he appears caught up himself in the sequence of images' (26). Freud's 'A Child Is Being Beaten' ([1919] 1956), in turn, has been instrumental in the development of a definition of spectatorship that rejects unilateral paths of identification in favour of a triadic oscillation between the positions of voyeur, active subject, and passive object.

The trope of adoption in Stemmle's film constitutes the overarching mise en scène not only for the diegetic characters but also for the media that critique this national allegory. A Bielefeld news headline, for example, reads: 'Frage um einen fünfjährigen: "Farbige Toxi" soll Adoptionsziffer steigern: Selbstsicherheit gegen strohblonden Affront' ('Regarding Five-Year-Olds: "Colored Toxi" Raises Adoptions Rates: Confidence Is Called for against the Blonde Tide') and reports: 'Two families want "Toxi" in Bad Oeynhausen. To advertise the Stemmle film, "Toxi," a little mulatto girl made an appearance just before every screening at a cinema in Oeynhausen. She is so endearing that, so far, two families from Löhe have promised to take in a little negro child.'[2] While I was unable to locate data indicating whether a dramatic increase in the adoption of Afro-German orphans did occur during 1952–3, available sources imply that the overall number adopted within the FRG was minimal throughout the 1950s, with most adoptions solicited from the U.S. or Denmark.[3] Furthermore, if an increase in adoption rates did occur in 1952, it would be difficult today to distinguish the grounds, for example, whether this simply related to an overall rise in the documented Afro-German baby population in 1952, which statistics indicated rose from 215 in 1951 to 520 in 1954 (Lemke Muniz de Faria, 2002).

Although the diegesis thematizes an orphaned child's petition for acceptance within a family, what is more broadly under contestation is the extent to which children of visibly foreign patrimony should be understood to bear equal claim to citizenship within a nation still defining membership along ethnic or racial lines. With only a small percentage of Afro-German children actually available for adoption, the cinematic mise en scène of adoption may have ultimately served a more strategic function in the public eye, facilitating historical repression of the origins of Afro-German children in the fraternization between German women and occupation soldiers.[4] It is critical to this particular mise en scène that the German mother be absent; by extension, this

trope of adoption rendered all parentless Afro-German children a priori exterior to German familial structures and, in turn, extracted a unique form of spectatorial pleasure from the drama positing their benevolent (re)incorporation into the national fold. In this regard, Toxi's petition is compelling primarily for the resonances it set into motion with regard to the desires and yearnings of historical spectators.

This may best be demonstrated in the example of Elfie Fiegert's adoptive mother, whose own biography was frequently mentioned in press reviews. According to those accounts, Gertrud Fiegert had fled Silesia during the Soviet invasion at the close of the war, trekking across Germany to reach Bavaria. Her own two-year-old child died shortly after their arrival and she was told that her chances for having another were slim. As a solution to her resulting depression the doctor recommended adoption, explaining: 'You need another child you can care for. Then your melancholy will subside.'[5] Another article takes this implicit discourse of object relations a step further, framing Gertrud Fiegert's account of her first encounter with her future adoptive child in a manner that implies that the experience of trauma and dislocation experienced by many Germans during and immediately following the war finds its specular correspondence in the abjection of orphaned Afro-German children:

> Her [Toxi's] home was an orphanage in Upper Bavaria, where seventy white and mulatto children lived. The majority are still there today. Fate had other plans for Elfie-Toxi. A married couple from Silesia, whose child died following the trek to Bavaria, adopted the little one in 1948. 'She seemed so forlorn, lying there in that little orphanage bed as I walked through the hall of sleeping children, and she reached her arms towards me with such complete trust,' explains the new mother, Gertrud Fiegert. 'So I thought: why not a moor child?! She surely hasn't had an easy life and needs lots of love and someone to help her.'[6]

It is significant that the citizen permitted to speak for herself in this excerpt is framed as a refugee from the consequences of the war (and by implied extension, of Nazi Germany) rather than as a perpetrator or accomplice. The resulting specularity mapped via the gaze of the nine-month-old Afro-German orphan exemplifies the line of reasoning established by Alexander and Margarethe Mitscherlich in their classic psychological study on postwar German society, *The Inability to Mourn* ([1967] 1978). Identification with the victim, they maintain, perpetuates

a narcissistic pattern and circumvents the painful task of mourning complicity in the losses inflicted under fascism. As Eric Santner (1990) later paraphrases this dilemma, 'The capacity to feel grief for others and guilt for the suffering one has directly or indirectly caused, depends on the capacity to experience empathy for the other *as other*' (7) – in effect, as bearing a history of loss that is distinct from one's own. The misidentification with Afro-German children is predicated upon their status as 'orphans with a difference,' a critical difference that facilitates suture. This point is captured by another journalist paraphrasing the oft-cited story of Gertrud Fiegert's encounter with Toxi thus: 'An uncanny instinct drew Mrs. Fiegert to a 9-month old dark-skinned child lying among the beds of children of all nationalities. Wenn the nurse laid the child in her arms she knew, "This is the one and I will take and no other!"'[7] Framing the encounter in these terms facilitates a mirroring in which both Elfie and her adoptive parents become casualties within a broader postwar context – that is, socially, culturally, and politically displaced persons seeking to recover a sense of stability and adapt to the rapid ideological and economic changes.

A similar crossover of identificatory processes occurs in the lyrics of Michael Jary's theme song 'Ich möcht' so gern nach Hause geh'n' (written by Jary's collaborator Bruno Balz), which was also performed by regional orphan choirs at local theatrical premieres, and which I reprint in my translation here:

I would so much like to go home, ay-ay-ay.
My homeland I would see again, ay-ay-ay.
But alone I will not find the way, ay-ay-ay,
Who will love me, and take me home? ay-ay-ay.
I feel so forlorn, hearing not one kind word,
These streets seem so foreign, why can I not just leave?
Does no one understand my heart, ay-ay-ay
I would so much like to go home, ay-ay-ay.

(*Ich möcht so gern nach Hause gehen, ay-ay-ay.*
Die Heimat möcht ich wiedersehn, ay-ay-ay.
Ich find allein nicht einen Schritt, ay-ay-ay.
Wer hat mich lieb und nimmt mich mit? Ay-ay-ay.
Ich bin so verlassen und hör kein liebes Wort,
So fremd sind die Gassen. Warum kann ich nicht fort?

Kann niemand denn mein Herz verstehen, ay-ay-ay?
Ich möcht so gern nach Hause gehn, ay-ay-ay.)

The melody alone constitutes a subtly recurring leitmotif woven into the overall orchestral score, including the sweeping opening title track. It first appears in the film diegesis sung by children at the orphanage where Grandfather Rose visited Toxi, with excerpts also repeated by Toxi in key later scenes. While the song title expresses the orphaned children's most literal yearning for an adoptive home, the phrase can also be understood to insinuate that the true 'ancestral' home for Afro-German children resides in the United States or in the African nations of their patrilineal forebearers. For the prepositional phrase 'nach Hause' is not arbitrary; it implies a pre-established relationship between person and place, and a return to the already familiar. At the same time, within the multiple connotative levels of address, the second verse, 'My homeland I would see again. Ay-ay-ay,' could also bear unique resonance for Germany's broader population. Whether the yearning is for the social order represented by the National Socialist era or for another era viewed as retrospectively prelapsarian, prior to the catastrophes of dictatorship, ethnic genocide, and global warfare, the lyrics and the minor key clearly impart nostalgia for some earlier spatio-temporal realm. I would suggest that these lyrics were moving for postwar German audiences because they gave the most basic expression to prevalent feelings of acute abjection and disorientation. The subtext of national loss of status and esteem within the global community following military defeat, the experience of cultural dislocation and constricted freedom of movement during Allied occupation, as well as individual self-doubt, guilt, or confusion in relation to the political past can all be retraced in the phrases, 'Who will love me and take me home? Ay-ay-ay. I feel so forlorn, hearing not one kind word. These streets seem so unfamiliar. Why can I not just leave?' This simultaneously spatial and social demarcation of boundaries between the familiar and the irreconcilably foreign has been identified by Willi Höfig (1973) as a feature of films of the 1950s, most particularly of the so-called *Heimatfilm* (388) – that genre of sentimental film always situated in an idealized regional setting. However, as Johannes von Moltke (2002) provocatively points out in his revaluation of inherited historiographies of the genre, these cinematic negotiations between tradition and modernity can at best 'serve to hide the erosion, or absence,

of precisely the pre-modern, "safe," "uncontaminated," or otherwise mythological sense of place that the term home (*Heimat*) is often taken to convey' (24).

It is worth exploring in greater detail how cross-identifications are spatialized through both camera work and the acoustic realm in the sequence where the Toxi theme song is introduced for the first time. It is first introduced diegetically, sung by the children in the orphanage as they gather around Grandfather Rose. They appear to be only mouthing the lyrics, which seem too rich in sound quality to be identified solely with the interior space, instead emanating from what seems to be a wider community of orphans outside and beyond the film. Among the blended children's voices is also the studio-recorded voice of the Afro-German singer Marie Nejar, a local of Hamburg who would have been about twenty-one years old. She had gained increasing public attention while touring clubs and theatres throughout Germany and was 'discovered' around this same time period by the German entertainer Peter Alexander, with whom she performed many popular songs such as 'The Sweetest Fruits Are Only Eaten by the Largest Animals' and 'Don't Make Such Sad eyes,' under the star name Leila Negra. Although she was nearly a generation younger than Elfie Fiegert, Nejar's experience of being Afro-German in the 1950s displayed certain affinities.[8] Her recently published autobiography, *Mach nicht so traurige Augen, weil du ein Negerlein bist: Meine Jugend im Dritten Reich* (Don't Make Such Sad Eyes Just Because You Are a Little Negro: My Youth in the Third Reich) (2007), references in its title one of her more melancholy songs; she makes a point of mentioning that it held special meaning for the many Afro-German children and their mothers who heard her performances, but also consistently evoked tears and emotive responses among a wider audience of young couples, the elderly, and women widowed during the war (198).

Since Michael Jary had scored lyrics for some of Nejar's previous public performances, she may have been the perfect choice for *Toxi*'s soundtrack, where her more mature voice served to add melodic definition to the otherwise thin and reedy chorus of children. However, synchronizing specifically the acousmatic voice of an Afro-German singer to images of Afro-German orphans also suggests an anxiety reminiscent of that in early American sound cinema. Within racist production codes, the already existing challenges of intermingling performers of varying race backgrounds in the silent studio was complicated by the emergence of synchronized sound, which lent the audio-visual medi-

um the potential to function as a 'technology of miscegenation' (Egger 1992, 17), matcing voices with bodies across racial divides. Nejar, as a singer of mixed heritage, may ventriloquize the voices of white and Afro-German children living together in the heterotopic space of the orphanage, but when Gustav Rose and Toxi leave the building, the sound fades and is replaced by sweet melodic violin strains, signalling the pair's increasing distance from the diegetic sound 'source.' But as they approach the gate leading out of the orphanage, the fading choir voices also signal the approaching threshold across which integrationist discourse in both the aural and visual fields, as yet, cannot pass. At the gate, the elderly man slips through, while Toxi playfully climbs atop its horizontal grating, creating a two-shot across this divided space. Toxi is positioned slightly higher, which correlates with her position of, in a sense, moral reproach. As they gaze at each other, she murmurs, 'What a pity you're already leaving.' The grandfather replies with chagrin, 'It's pretty late. But I will still bring you back, my child.' As he slips back through the gate and traverses the yard with her a second time, the children's choir – an acoustic space of hybridized identities – returns on the phrase 'Ich möchte so gern nach Hause gehen,' which somewhat ironically underscores the fact that the orphanage is now her 'home' but also conveys a yearning shared by both Toxi and Gustav for a utopian 'home' where the segregationist discourse that divides them has already been overcome. The repeated countershots signal the exchange of mutual affection, while the sunlight dappling through the trees overhead effects a chiasmatic alternation of lightened and darkened faces – a veritable allegory of the cross-identifications at work.

Good Object Choices: Symbolic Identification and the German-Worthy-of-Love-Again

According to Laplanche and Pontalis (1973) identification may be understood as the 'psychological process whereby the subject assimilates an aspect, property or attribute of the other and is transformed, wholly or partially, after the model the other provides' (205). Arguably the identificatory processes set into motion by *Toxi* do not set out to trigger any sort of lasting transformation in racialized perceptions; rather, the film solicits a form of identification that necessarily results in a misperception. The study by University of Hamburg psychologist Klaus Eyferth et al. (1960) sought to facilitate public understanding of

the Afro-German population on the basis of a similar misidentification, one discernible in the Foreword to his study:

> Many people will be able to relate closely to the fate of coloured children in Germany precisely because they themselves once experienced rejection by their fellow citizens or belonged to a persecuted minority. I'm thinking of, for example, refugees, former prisoners of war, those persecuted by the Nazis, even Nazis themselves, who were reviled after the war, and of many others. From them, we anticipate a particularly sympathetic response, as we submit to the public this modest publication on mixed-race children. (7)

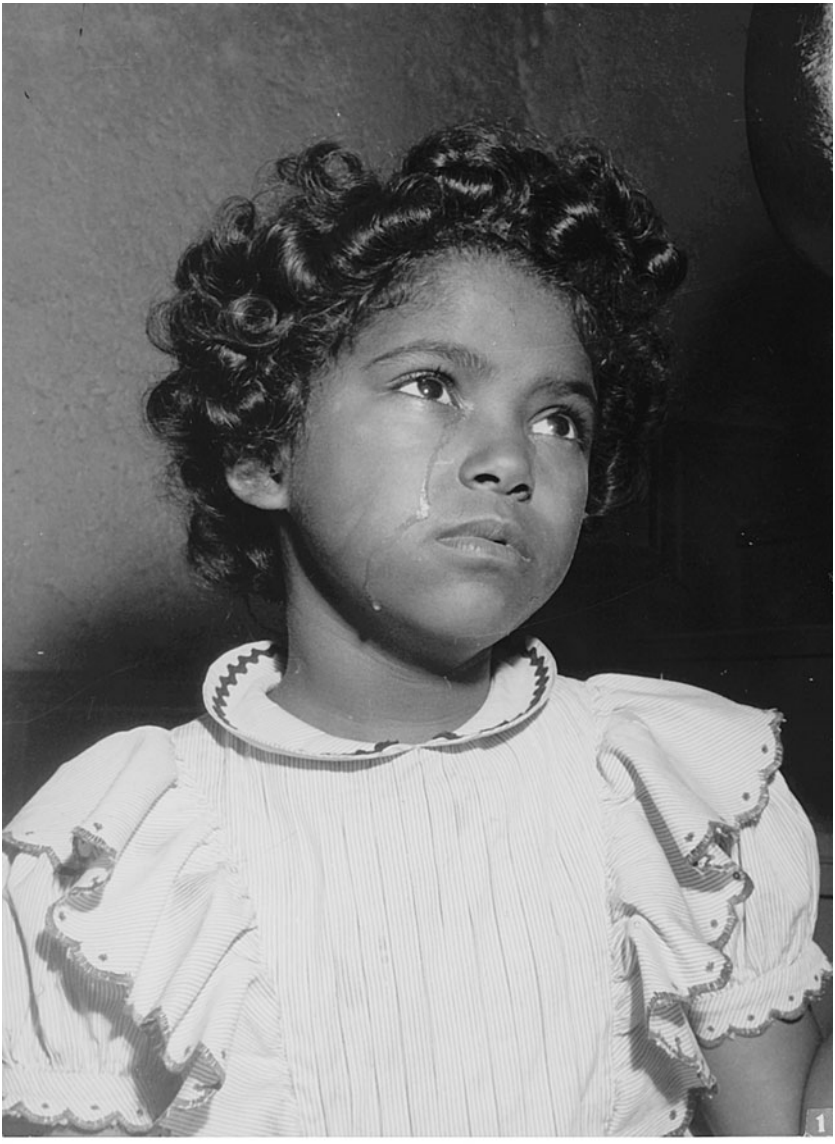
I would question the extent to which the difficulty experienced by Afro-German children on the basis of their skin colour is psychologically and historically equivalent with other forms of hardship associated with postwar trauma or scarcity of material resources. I do not mean to establish a hierarchy in terms of whose trauma is more compelling or profound. It is quite simply a matter of qualitatively different forms. The social ostracism experienced by Afro-German children generally projected ahistorical tropes upon them on the basis of an arbitrary corporeal feature, and thereby predefined the parameters of their identity, isolated them from peers, and in some instances resulted in their rejection or abandonment by parents or extended family. Other forms of trauma experienced by civilian survivors of the war could, in contrast, be said to have often involved quite severe physical manifestations (extended environmental stresses, malnutrition, physical injury, abuse, traumatization) accompanied by dysphoria and ideological or political confusion. However, these experiences could be located within material circumstances bound to historical events; they were not causally linked to features of the corporeal self perceived as ineradicable and irrepressible.

Even as German citizens empathized with the screen figure Toxi or with the highly cathected hagiography of Afro-German orphans depicted in print media, misrecognizing in their plight their own sense of dislocation, they did not actually wish to share the same fate. It is precisely the fact that this identification was grounded in misrecognition that made it safe and gratifying. In fact, these children offered the ideal point for identification at a moment in national history when the category of victimhood, whether among Jews, Sinti, and Roma, Communists, or Christians had become highly politically charged (Moeller

2001). They were non-threatening not only because their youth marked them as untainted by earlier historical realities, but also because they occupied a social status with which few Germans had any practical experience.

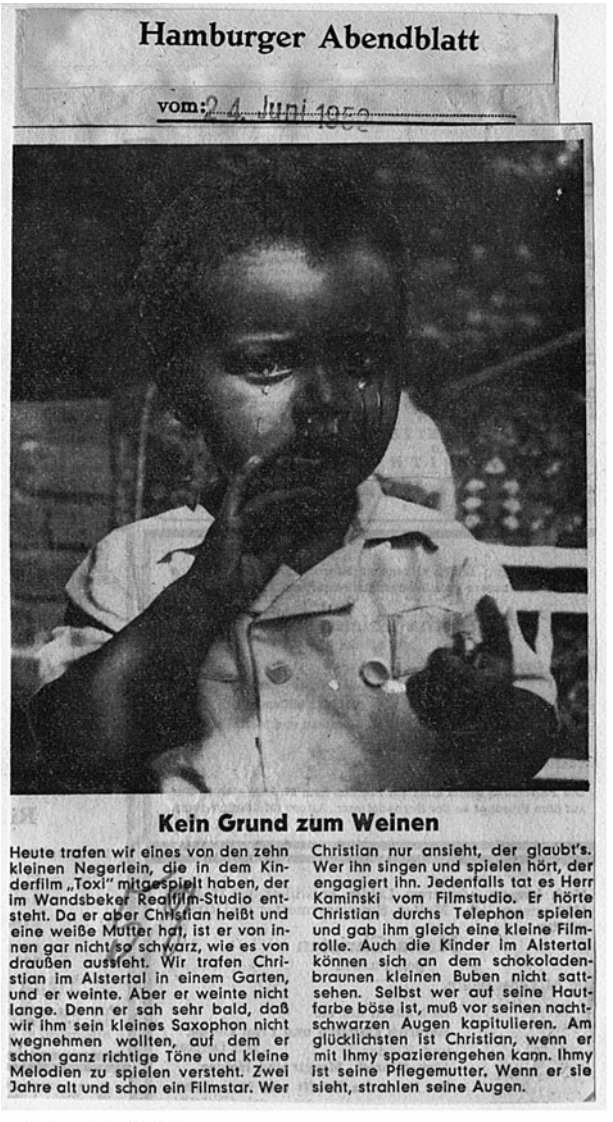
In 1963, a news column announcing Elfie Fiegert's return to acting for a minor role in Helmut Käutner's remake of *Das Haus von Montevideo* reminisces about her childhood film role in a way that confirms that a certain iconography had coalesced out of the many photographs of Afro-German children circulating in the media in the early 1950s-– an iconography I will rhetorically subdivide into 'the abject gaze' and 'the adoring gaze.' The journalist reminisces: 'This lovely little occupation child captured the hearts of movie-goers full force back then, most especially because of her "sweet sad gaze."'[9] The use of paraphrasing implies that Toxi's melancholy or 'abject' gaze had achieved the status of a cliché during the early Federal Republic – a surmise corroborated in further contemporary newsclippings and in the opening and closing montage of Afro-German children's faces in the documentary film *Toxi lebt anders*, discussed in chapter 1. The *Hamburger Abendblatt*, for example, ran a feature story on local Afro-German children because several were utilized as 'extras' for *Toxi*'s orphanage scene shot at Real-Film studios in Wandsbek. Titled, 'Kein Grund zum Weinen' (No Cause for Tears), the article includes a photo of an Afro-German boy looking soulfully into the camera as tears stream down his face (apparently he thought the photographer was going to take away his toy saxophone). Commenting on this same child, the writer observes: 'Even the children in Alstertal can't get enough of looking at the chocolate-brown little boy. If someone were to get cross about his skin colour, they would surely have to melt at the sight of his pitch black eyes. Christian is happiest when Ihmy takes him for a walk. Ihmy is his foster mother. When he sees her, his eyes light up.'[10]

Christian's tearful face exemplifies what I have coined 'the abject gaze,' while the accompanying textual description captures 'the adoring gaze.' In both instances, this identification is solicited through the sense of vision, offering textbook evidence of subject positions that Jacques Lacan (1978) has elaborated via the distinction between the ideal ego and the ego ideal (44).[11] The ideal ego could be crudely defined as the subject position or quality of character in another person that displays to us aspects we believe or desire to also be present in ourselves. It is a relatively simplistic form of imaginary identification, in contradistinction to the degree of symbolic identifi-



TOXI - BRD 1952
Regie: Robert A. Stemmle
Quelle: Deutsche Kinemathek

5.1. The classic gaze of abjection.



Hamburger Abendblatt

vom: 24. Juni 1952

Kein Grund zum Weinen

Heute trafen wir eines von den zehn kleinen Negerlein, die in dem Kinderfilm „Toxi" mitgespielt haben, der im Wandsbeker Realfilm-Studio entsteht. Da er aber Christian heißt und eine weiße Mutter hat, ist er von innen gar nicht so schwarz, wie es von draußen aussieht. Wir trafen Christian im Alstertal in einem Garten, und er weinte. Aber er weinte nicht lange. Denn er sah sehr bald, daß wir ihm sein kleines Saxophon nicht wegnehmen wollten, auf dem er schon ganz richtige Töne und kleine Melodien zu spielen versteht. Zwei Jahre alt und schon ein Filmstar. Wer Christian nur ansieht, der glaubt's. Wer ihn singen und spielen hört, der engagiert ihn. Jedenfalls tat es Herr Kaminski vom Filmstudio. Er hörte Christian durchs Telephon spielen und gab ihm gleich eine kleine Filmrolle. Auch die Kinder im Alstertal können sich an dem schokoladenbraunen kleinen Buben nicht sattsehen. Selbst wer auf seine Hautfarbe böse ist, muß vor seinen nachtschwarzen Augen kapitulieren. Am glücklichsten ist Christian, wenn er mit Ihmy spazierengehen kann. Ihmy ist seine Pflegemutter. Wenn er sie sieht, strahlen seine Augen.

TOXI - BRD 1952
Regie: Robert A. Stemmle
Quelle: Filmmuseum Berlin - Deutsche Kinemathek / Schriftg

5.2 'No ground for tears.'

cation inhering in the ego ideal, that virtual realm pertaining to the way we would like to believe others regard us. The mutual encomium posited between Afro-German orphans and German citizens establishes imaginary equivalences between their unhappy and misunderstood fate. Symbolic identification, in turn, is evoked through the orphans' adoring gaze, which metonymizes that wider international audience in whose eyes the German citizen wishes to be recognized as having a moral conscience and a democratic orientation. In effect, the adoring gaze hails a crucial subject position for members of the Federal Republic – one I shall coin 'the compassionate German-again-worthy-of-love.'

Enjoyment as Political Factor: Žižek Revisited

While the mechanisms of identification I previously outlined may seem all the more innocuous when assigned the status of 'mere' fantasy, philosophers Renata Salecl and Slavoj Žižek have elaborated extensively on the structuring role which mechanisms of fantasy play in economic, political, and psycho-national discourses. Indeed, 'the success of a political discourse depends not on offering us direct images with which to identify but on constructing a symbolic space, a point of view from which we can appear likable to ourselves' (Salecl 1994, 73). In essence, there is an inevitable and even necessary gap between the ideological platform of a given political discourse and the unspoken fantasy, that is, the promise of enjoyment which functions as its often illicit surmise. This gap can be explained through Lacan's concept of the inherently split subject (outlined in 'Analysis and Truth, or the Closure of the Unconscious'), who by definition cannot fully master the unconscious motivations spoken through his speech and actions or, for that matter, anticipate the intersubjective effects these set into motion (1978). Salecl subdivides the speech acts of such a subject, who speaks from a place outside the self – that is, from the place of the Other – into three aspects: rhetorical elements of the proposition itself, its presupposition (underlying cultural assumptions or empirical knowledge), and its surmise (the underlying motivations for the assertion, which herein correspond to the level of fantasy) (35).

Toxi's public acclaim arguably relied upon precisely such a distance between, on the one hand, the democratic ideology the audience recognizes the film is supposed to disseminate and, on the other, the level of (racist, sexual) fantasy underpinning the filmic discourse. The epilogue

to the study by Eyferth, Brandt, and Hawel similarly evinces this discrepancy between proposition and surmise, which pervaded so much of the era's reshuffled signs and ideological valences:

> The success or failure of the effort to implement full equal rights and social integration for these coloured children in Germany is of undeniable political import. Having experienced the collapse of humanism and common sense under the assault of the National Socialist race mania, we really can't afford – among ourselves, but also before the peoples of the world – to behave in ways that once again undermine the ideals and laws we have so emphatically embraced, by denying members of our people [*Volk*] their entitled place just because they bear traits of a different race. We would have to question our political maturity as well as the validity of the humanitarian and Christian principles we espouse, and those would, in turn, lose all credibility in the eyes of others. (109)

While Eyferth overtly critiques racism and discrimination because they violate the ideals of democracy, humanism, and Christianity, at the level of surmise it becomes the vigilant gaze of other nations for whom the Federal Republic needs to exhibit its reformed attitude (the German-worthy-of-love-again). He moreover reinstates rigid categories of alterity by identifying the Afro-German population as bearing traits of 'a different race.'

Within *Toxi*'s narrative plot, it is Theodor Jenrich, owner of a pharmaceutical firm and father of two small children, who becomes the didactic vehicle for underscoring the necessity for this disparity between ideology and fantasy. The film conveys the sense that the problem with Theodor's racism is that it is too zealous and too literal, too faithfully aligned with earlier versions of fascist rhetoric. When Theodor resists Toxi's presence in the Rose household on the basis of personal sentiment, Grandfather Rose queries: 'And your first sentiment is racist?' By instead encouraging a path of reconciliation and pointing out that 'We've learned to view things differently,' he reveals that a learned shift in perception need not actually call the very designation of differences into question. As Žižek (1996) reasons, 'an ideological edifice can be undermined by a too literal identification, which is why its successful functioning requires a minimum of distance towards its explicit rules' (83). Other figures in the film, such as Hertha, Robert, Theodor's wife, and their children Ilse and Susi, are presented as successfully transforming xenophobia into xenophilia by mastering the distinction

between identification at the symbolic/imaginary level and the kernel of the real, which can only transpire as a result of distancing oneself from the 'official' rhetoric. In a typical strategy for engendering suspense in the melodramatic mode, the audience is poised from the beginning to expect that Theodor must undergo this development 'from Saul to Paul,' a change of heart towards Toxi that complies with the ongoing reterritorialization of desire along the new coordinates of consumerism and neocolonial nostalgia. In more vernacular terms, we all know that Theodor really does desire Toxi – when will he realize it? The turning point in the film is therefore not the arrival of Toxi's father, which ultimately serves as little more than a narratological afterthought, but rather the point when Theodor accepts the same relationship towards Toxi as sustained by the other characters, one in which the silent conviction that Toxi is different is yoked to an accompanying agreement to disavow this publicly. It is this perception that unites the extended Rose family, the doctor, the detective, and other participants within the community. To draw upon yet another Žižekian aphorism, 'a shared lie is an incomparably more effective bond for a group than the truth' (1997, 22).

In this respect, both the fictional Rose family and historical spectators addressed by the film become implicated in a peculiarly subtle form of historical repression: the Afro-German child at once held responsible for impeding the possibility of successful collectivity, while at the same time making the unified nation conceptually possible. If I have argued that symbolic identification with Toxi's adoring gaze hails the commendable German citizenry into being and thus plays an important role in constructing the illusion of national coherence, Žižek's discussion of the supplementary concept of Enjoyment is also highly relevant here. He maintains that what holds together the members of a given community cannot be reduced simply to the level of symbolic identification. That bond is also forged through 'a shared relationship toward a Thing, toward Enjoyment incarnated. This relationship toward the Thing, structured by means of fantasies, is what is at stake when we speak of the menace to our "way of life" presented by the Other' (1990, 51). National identification, then, is forged through the nature of our relationship to seeming intangible qualities, accessible to us only 'as something "they," the others, cannot grasp, but which is, nonetheless, constantly menaced by "them"'(52). That elusive 'Thing' appears as what gives plenitude and vivacity to our life, and yet, Žižek maintains, if we try to sum it up more precisely, 'all we can do is enu-

merate disconnected fragments of the way our community organizes its feasts, its rituals of mating, its initiation ceremonies – in short, all the details by which is made visible the unique way a community *organizes its enjoyment*.' (52; italics in original). Žižek adopts this notion of 'the Thing' from Lacan's *Seventh Seminar* and utilizes the latter's definition of enjoyment (*jouissance*), which is not to be confounded with pleasure. He is careful to point out that enjoyment is precisely 'pleasure in unpleasure,' a 'paradoxical satisfaction procured by a painful encounter with a Thing that perturbs the equilibrium of the "pleasure principle." In other words, enjoyment is located "beyond the pleasure principle"' (52).

Not only does *Toxi* similarly instrumentalize its eponymous film character in the service of organizing enjoyment, it does so in a manner inextricable from the discourse of capitalism as it was situated in the newly reconstructed civil society of the Federal Republic. Žižek (1990) suggests that the psychological underpinnings of consumer capitalism are essentially grounded in the discourse of hysteria, of a permanent state of imbalance, a vicious circle of desire in which the satisfaction of desire only leads to more dissatisfaction (59–60). For capitalism can only survive through ever greater production output, which in turn necessitates the artificial inducement of new needs and desires in the consumer. In effect, capitalism banks upon the promise of enjoyment, moreover deploying the dialectics of envy, wherein the subject desires an object insofar as it is the object of another's yearning, as expressed in that ubiquitous Lacanian mantra, 'desire is the desire of the Other' (1978, 235). Analogously, Toxi covets access to relations and goods that remain just beyond her grasp: for example, a bourgeois familial relationship (as illustrated when she stands before the garden gate outside the Rose family home in the very first sequence); a particular place marker in the historiography of Christianity (when she plays the white king in the nativity scene); and consumer goods (gazing wistfully at the delectable *Mohrenkopf* pastry at the birthday party, or at the stockinged mannequin legs in a storefront window). Because it is her yearning that creates the mirage of imagined community for the spectator, it is important that she ultimately remain barred from actually accessing these items. This brings new meaning to one child's cruel taunt at the birthday party: 'Toxi doesn't need a moor's head (*Mohrenkopf*) – she already has one!' In order for her to *embody* the promise of fulfilled desire, her own access to it must effectively be barred.

TOXI - BRD 1952
Regie: Robert A. Stemmle
Quelle: Deutsche Kinemathek

5.3. Between being or having: Toxi ponders the term *Mohrenkopf*.

Toxi's wistful stance renders all the more desirable an entire way of life constituted through the nuclear Euro-German family, strictly assigned roles along the axis of gender, and participation in the capitalist pursuit of economic prosperity and purchasing power. Her desire reinvests the spectator with pride in German identity and confidence in the potentialities of the West German economy. That even very young children internalize this way of organizing community is evinced in a telephone game played between little Susi and one of her friends at the birthday party. Having constructed a phone by means of two paper cups and some string, they engage in the following dialogue:

> 'Hello, this is Frau Jenrich.'
> 'Oh, Frau Jenrich, it's you! How are you?'
> 'Very well, thank you. And yourself?'
> 'Much worry about business these days. My husband is up in arms about it all. When are you coming for tea again?'
> 'Soon, but I can't seem to keep up with all this work. But here's Toxi, Toxi wants to speak with you.'

When the paper cup is extended to Toxi, the other girl immediately breaks off the game, exclaiming that the phone is not for her and she shouldn't touch it with her black hands. The telephone game mimics the same concerns about labour (both domestic and waged) expressed earlier by adult members of the household and evinces the logic in which a foreign presence can simultaneously undermine and make possible the enjoyment of the collectivity. Embodying the structural alterity necessary to this model of community, Toxi constitutes the external auditory and visual witness for whom it is constructed; when she picks up the 'telephone' to actually join in, the conversation loses its point of origin and meaning.

To somehow sustain the illusion of a social fabric of mutual interdependency and caring amid the instrumental operations of capitalism involves negotiation across a series of complex ideological contradictions that can only achieve illusory reconciliation at the price of a repression. This repression operates not so much by holding modernity at bay, but rather, as von Moltke (2002) has argued in the context of the *Heimatfilm*, by naturalizing modernity's effects. If many scholars have dismissed films of the 1950s as escapist, they have overlooked 'the fact that the escape routinely contains elements of the world from which viewers were allegedly escaping' (24). The Rose family, as I

have argued earlier, stands for a return to the bonds of a putatively organic community, a people conjoined through their whiteness and their Christianity rather than bound by the purely financially driven interdependencies of the newly reconstructed capitalist economy that hold together civil society. Žižek (1990) has proposed that in Germany during the 1920s and 1930s it was precisely this tension between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, to use Ferdinand Tönnies's (1887) sociological terms, which helped fuel the fascist dictatorship and organized the hopes of disenfranchised social groups. Under fascism the inherent structural imbalance of capitalism was projected onto the Jew as someone whose perceived excessive accumulation of capital (and hence of potential enjoyment) are the cause of social antagonisms (60). Through the expulsion of the Jew it was thought that a stable social fabric could be recovered. Although Stemmle's film appears to reverse the valence of this discourse in the form of a plea for a new concept of civil society or *Gesellschaft* based upon formal relations of equality regardless of 'racial' and/or national origin, the narrative ending forecloses this possibility and restores the 'organic' sanctity of the white nuclear family: in essence, capitalism-*cum-Gemeinschaft*. The political conservatism underpinning this film and so many texts of the 1950s consists, as von Moltke aptly points out, not so much in an anti-modern stance as 'in the selective embrace of the modern and in the mythologisation of modernization as a process that ultimately does not threaten the underlying sense of continuity and *Gemeinschaft*' (24). Toxi, with her mixed lineage and bearing no direct blood relation to the Rose family, is conveniently removed from the national stage. If citizenship is, moreover, achieved through wielding consumer power, Toxi stands a slim chance, for as I have argued earlier, she is repeatedly barred from accessing any coveted goods, literal or metaphorical in nature. In other words, if she is to be the object around which enjoyment is organized, then she cannot be integrated into civil society, for that would empty out the space she occupies as a source of pleasure. In effect, she cannot occupy both positions without completely undermining the way that community or the fantasy of national identity is organized in the film.

CHAPTER SIX

Intertextual Echoes

Race and Reconstruction in American Film and Literature

At earlier junctures, I have elaborated upon the syncretic nature of the racial stereotype. Stereotyping can be understood to be ultimately about character and characterization. According to Steve Neale (1979–80), what renders those characterizations stereotypical is the key element of repetition, which links the text in question (and the characterizations it includes) with other texts and other discursive forms. In other words, a stereotype is a stable and repetitive set of traits whose verification depends first upon comparative analysis of a range of texts, and then, closer study of those elements in each text that contribute to the formation of a characterization, in order to, finally, determine which modes are constant across texts. Within a comparative transnational framework, striking resonancies can be discerned between *Toxi* and key American literary and cinematic texts of the preceding century. I will frame this investigation in terms of what I refer to as 'intertextual echoes,' seeking to capture the manner in which images, characterizations, and relationships in Stemmle's film may call forth the spectre of earlier representations at both iconic and symbolic levels. I am not interested in second-guessing the possibility of direct citations intended by a German director or his fellow screenwriter, both now deceased; I further hope that I am able to avoid a too-facile mapping of correspondences between texts. For to simply amass a list of icons, tropes, and relations that accord with American popular culture is an exercise that can easily redouble the labour performed by the stereotypes themselves by overlooking the specificity of the texts, underestimating the multiplicity of their operations, and thereby reducing the textual process to 'a single, homogeneous (and

repetitive) function' (Neale, 1979–80, 33). I intend to recast the analysis of racism so that it does not remain a mere study in repetition but also accounts for the many implications of difference. As Neale points out, 'a character or character type always assumes its identity and its meaning insofar as it is distinguishable from other characters and character types. It assumes its identity and meaning insofar as it is different, and insofar as the differences are marked – textually – as pertinent ones' (36). It is important to recall that racisms identifiable within a text or across a series of texts are not innate or ontological; they are the result of reading those elements through concepts, meanings, functions, and desires imbricated in contiguous discourses of that era or of the present one.

Most particularly the stylistic mode and tenor of what Linda Williams (2001) coins 'racial melodrama' will enable me to situate *Toxi* within a genealogy that includes Harriet Beecher Stowe's abolitionist novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1851), D.W. Griffith's early American film epic *Birth of a Nation* (1915), and several Hollywood productions from the 1930s featuring child star Shirley Temple. Williams maintains that melodrama as such – across the media of literature, film, television, theatre, and vaudeville – continues to be one of the fundamental modes with which American culture works through questions of good and evil, that is, of morality, as they pertain to personal character, deeds and accomplishments, and citizen status (43). Unique to Williams's project is her recognition that the country's conflictual legacy of both slavery and democracy have caused the categories of race and ethnicity (in complex tandem with gender and class) to become 'a primary and enduring moral dilemma,' with melodrama becoming the conduit for 'the stories about race that American popular culture has long been telling itself' (43). In many of these stories, she concludes, portrayals of suffering bear the function of rendering moral virtue explicit or visible. Virtuousness, in turn, becomes the trump card with which marginalized participants in a given socio-political scenario gain acceptance and citizen status. In support of this line of reasoning, Williams relies on the psychological concept of *ressentiment* developed by nineteenth-century German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. In *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887), he outlines how frustration, aggression, or hostility experienced by disempowered subjects – that is, those whose desire has been thwarted – can become a significant factor in generating moral frameworks and value systems that, in turn, shape personal identities, social practices, political ideologies, and institu-

tional policy. Although Nietzsche's study is actually anchored in the ancient world, specifically seeking to explain the conflictual dynamic between the Roman warrior class and the Palestinian priestly class, his philosophical exegesis has been highly influential, prefiguring Freud's study of the ego in conflict as well as contemporary studies in political theory, both of which I draw upon in the following discussion of intertextuality in *Toxi*. The suffering subjects – both Black and White – of American racial melodrama arguably resurface in *Toxi*'s reconstruction-era narrative to take what Williams refers to as 'a moralizing revenge upon the powerful, achieved through a triumph of the weak in their very weakness' (43).

Resurrecting *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

If there is a classic urtext of racial melodrama to be found in the modern world, it may well be Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which itself is heavily indebted to conditions and experiences recounted in antebellum African-American literature and culture, particularly the autobiographical narratives of escaped slaves. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was first published in forty installments in the weekly abolitionist journal *The National Era* (Washington, DC) beginning in 1851. Following its appearance one year later as a two-volume novel, it sold more copies than any other book in the world, excepting the bible, and was translated into innumerable languages. Both the characters that inhabited her novel and the dialectics of racialized victim and oppressor woven into its anti-slavery narrative came to assume a highly mutable status, inspiring any number of variations upon the original story and its protagonists in the following century of American cultural production in music, theatre, literature, dance, and film. These responses were in part reactionary, as exemplified in Thomas Dixon's revisionist southern response *The Clansmen: An Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan* (1905) or D.W. Griffith's filmed version thereof, with its menacing anti-Tom portrayal of Gus. An entire sub-genre of black American literature has also emerged, offering a robust counterweight to Stowe's portrayals of black identities, male and female alike.[1] It is this astonishing mobility across different media, social contexts, and historical eras that led Henry James (1913) to refer to Stowe's work as a 'wonderful leaping fish,' adding: 'If the amount of life represented in such a work is measurable by the ease with which representation is taken up and carried further, carried

even violently furthest, the fate of Mrs Stowe's picture was conclusive: it simply sat down wherever it lighted and made itself, so to speak, at home' (160). It is precisely this adaptive power of Stowe's tale that Williams (2001) systematically revisits, exploring its capacity to map cross-racial identifications and both emancipatory and reactionary potentials bound up in 'the Tom' and the 'anti-Tom' – typologies she maintains have shaped more recent television broadcasts and the public reception of American court trials during the 1990s, most particularly those of Rodney King and O.J. Simpson, and the Anita Hill testimony against Justice Clarence Thomas.

Although Stowe's novel and its intermedial successors originate in American social and political history, this has not prevented textual travel across national, linguistic, and cultural borders. While 300,000 copies of the novel sold in America during its first year, over one million were sold in the same time period in Great Britain alone (Robbins 2007, 114). Its immense appeal for readers in Great Britain and France, in particular, may be attributable to the controversial pursuit of colonial policy by those nations, which heightened popular awareness of similar social, economic, and ethical issues at stake in the American debate on slavery. However, within a year of its release the translated novel also appeared in thirteen different German editions, with an adaptation for young readers in 1853. In 1866, Stowe even undertook a book tour through Germany, travelling first in the south (Heidelberg, Frankfurt, Mainz, Koblenz, Bingen) and then the north (Berlin and Wittenberg); there is evidence that by 1908 at least seventy-five separate editions of her book had appeared in Germany (Maclean 1910, 23). A recent comparative study (Hoffmann 2005) of editions generated across a century of German history interprets differences in language use and abridgement of specific scenes correlative to a given historical era's ideological stance on race relations. Thus, some Wilhelmine editions foregrounded class conflict that resonated with populist yearnings for political reform after the failed revolution of 1848, while others stressed Stowe's preoccupation with miscegenation in racial terminology such as 'Mulatto' and 'quadroon,' which accorded with phytogenetic studies of those of mixed heritage in the German colonies; during the Nazi era, the novel was deemed too Christian and its characterization of Blacks too positive, but the book was never banned; editions published in the 1950s tended to perpetuate the inherited racial terminology of the original English while downplaying political elements and stressing adventure (George and Eliza's

journey to the North, for example); editions during the 1960s stressed the emancipatory spirit of revolution; and contemporary editions display a multicultural sensibility, replacing pejorative terms such as 'Neger' with 'Schwarze,' for example.

To date, a transhistorical and intertextual investigation of the impact of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* on wider cultural production in Germany has yet to be pursued. Robert Stemmle's West German film, for one, seems to have drawn some discursive scaffolding from Stowe's foundational narrative, and a later German film by Hungarian Géza von Radványi (*Onkel Tom's Hütte*, 1965), which blends German dialogue with African-American spirituals sung in English, shows that the icon continued to hold currency for German audiences in the postwar era.

Although Stemmle's story never reveals the etymological origins of its protagonist's name, there is a striking phonetic proximity between 'Toxi' and 'Topsy,' the latter referring to the unruly and seemingly incorrigible slave child whom Eva, daughter of the benevolent slave owner Augustine St Clare, befriends and teaches about the need for prayer and faith to overcome her weaker character traits.[2] The film figure Toxi, by contrast, is cast as a consistently docile child; her connotative association with unruliness nevertheless prevails, as her arrival sets in motion a series of interpersonal misunderstandings among other film characters, and her presence in the Rose family necessarily represents a disruption to dominant assumptions and patterns of thinking about race, belonging, and national identity. The narrative outcome in both texts seems overdetermined, with both characters departing their country of birth for one where it is implied individuals displaying any African ancestry more properly belong: Toxi accompanies her father to America, and Topsy heads north to receive a proper education that will prepare her to emigrate – like the ex-slave couple George and Eliza – and serve as missionary and teacher in Liberia, a nation founded in 1821 by the American Colonization Society on the coast of West Africa.[3]

Precisely because her character condenses multiple historical stereotypes, Toxi also displays affinities with the figure of Uncle Tom himself. Both protagonists undergo forms of abjection that deprive them of agency and community belonging. In the nineteenth-century novel, the benign but morally spineless slaveholder George Shelby has fallen upon hard times and is compelled to sell off his most loyal slave. In the postwar German context, Toxi's frail and destitute grandmother resorts to depositing her grandchild on the doorsteps of her former

employer. In the Stowe saga, Tom eventually comes under the ownership of the kindly Mr St Clare, who in due time cedes to his young daughter Eva's Christian conviction that slavery is an evil business. However, he dies tragically in an accident before he is able to grant Tom his freedom. His wife, Marie St Claire, is staunchly unsympathetic to her late husband's wishes and thus sells Tom to the nefarious Simon Legree, under whose abusive ownership Tom eventually dies. Toxi's initial trajectory invites comparison: her arrival triggers internal familial dissension, and the grief-stricken Grandfather Rose must cede to the ungenerous sentiments of his son-in-law, who sends Toxi away. In both instances, a kindly patriarch exemplifies humanity's capacity to overcome prejudicial behaviour, yet the fateful hand of ill-health prevents him from delivering on his good intentions and, as a result, the racialized other is once more reduced to an object of symbolic exchange. While Tom's status as commodified labour is quite explicit within the context of Southern slavery, the commodity character of both Tom and Toxi within their respective diegeses undergoes redoubling among a historical readership and spectatorship for whom they offer the lure of sentimentality and a collective conduit for effusive expressions of Christian tolerance of difference, while failing to embrace that difference as constitutive of either nineteenth-century American or postwar West German identity.

The politics of identification at work in both cases involve racial romanticism, such that characters displaying African ancestry become the virtuous locus of a resilient selflessness that inspires compassion among readers and spectators. In a line that resounds in the later qualifying remarks of Allianz-Film GmbH when marketing *Toxi*, Stowe once explained in her prologue, 'The object of these sketches is to awaken sympathy and feeling for the African race' (xiii); existing power differentials among characters and also within antebellum America are hereby not so much dismantled as simply transposed into the realm of affect or feeling, in line with the standard conventions of both sentimental literature and melodrama. Significantly, the intense emotions elicited among spectatators and protagonists alike remain strictly non-sexual in both textual scenarios, with the friendship between Uncle Tom and Little Eva becoming a highly cathected locus for cross-racial affection and solidarity. The extreme age difference between the two erases their sexuality and thereby enables an equivalency between characters of the opposite gender dwelling in either the pre- or post-sexual stage of life. That equivalency also pertains to their

common humanist orientation and their immanent status as victims at the hands of a society as yet unprepared to fully embrace enlightened principles of equal sovereignty for all people. Stemmle's film employs the same dynamic, but with a chiasmatic reversal of racial roles. Grandfather Rose assumes the paternal role of Uncle Tom, while Toxi occupies, quite literally, the place of Little Eva: when she stands beside Grandfather Rose sitting at his desk in his study, the iconography of the benevolent elderly man and innocent young child bonded across societally inscribed racial divisions recalls countless illustrated versions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in which Eva stands at the knees of the sitting Uncle Tom, engrossed in conversation about God and the injustices of the world. In both instances of this cross-racial fealty of mutual affections it is the white character who enlightens the racial other about God's covenant with his people. How fatefully ironic that this same character will also be prevented from coming to the aid of the dispossessed in their hour of need on account of jeopardized health located, not insignificantly, in that region of the body metaphorically pertaining to the assertion of personal will – Little Eva afflicted with tuberculosis and Grandfather Rose with heart failure.

Both racial melodramas self-consciously link up with larger moral questions in the public sphere in a manner that recalls the rhetorical structure known as 'the jeremiad,' which I also invoked in chapter 3. The form draws its name from the Hebrew prophet Jeremiah of the late seventh and early sixth century B.C., who warned Israel of its impending doom at the hands of the Babylonians and urged the nation to repent its sins so that it might be restored to God's good graces. According to Sacvan Bercovitch (1978), key themes of Jeremiah's prophecy resurfaced in the seventeenth century and helped shape a particular form of public discourse emerging in the political sermons of Puritan immigrants from Great Britain to the American colonies. That structure generally begins by first outlining God's promise to the Puritans, then detailing the ways in which their moral deeds have fallen short of their intended destiny, and finally closes with a reaffirmation of the mutual convenant to be fulfilled. The jeremiad served as a means to 'cultural revitalization' (179) that gradually permeated secular contexts and questions of morality in public affairs. African-American scholar David Howard-Pitney (1990) maintains: 'No belief has been more central to American civil religion than the idea that Americans are in some important sense a chosen people with a historic mission to save and remake the world' (6). In secularized form, the

jeremiad offered a redemptive rhetoric with which to instruct audiences on appropriate policies and practices for realizing that special mission. Its legacy is discernible within such diverse contexts as the environmental movement, African-American protest (Martin Luther King's famous 'I Have a Dream' speech in August 1963), and the national speeches of numerous American presidents. Harriet Beecher Stowe, for one, makes explicit her broader moral mission when she writes in the foreword to her novel: 'The poet, the painter, and the artist, now seek out and embellish the common and gentler humanities of life, and, under the allurements of fiction, breathe a humanizing and subduing influence, favorable to the development of the great principles of Christian brotherhood' (xiii). Yet many contemporary critics and theorists of the jeremiad maintain that its rhetorical structure, which blends promise, decline, and redemption, also tends to render impotent any subversive forces that arise within it; by advancing notions of both 'progress' and 'continuity,' it reconciles potential antagonisms and effectively serves the interests of cultural hegemony (Bercovitch 1978, 71). Thus, in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and in *Toxi* alike, the invocation of a common spiritual and humanistic ethos only precariously upholds the illusion of unity and equal terms of citizenship among otherwise highly conflictual and heterogeneous national constituencies. Moreover, as another scholar of the jeremiad has observed, its rhetorical form 'deflects attention away from possible institutional or systemic flaws and toward considerations of individual sin' (Murphy 1990, 402).

In their day, both cultural texts nevertheless achieved a degree of popularity that has rendered them part of the collective memory associated with a particular era of national history, offering timely interventions into charged political and social debates on racial identities and national membership. Stowe's novel, written as a troubled response to the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, which required all citizens north or south to turn in runaway slaves and thereby implicated all citizens in the institution of slavery, was a significant factor in mobilizing public opinion in support of the Civil War. Since then, her book – whether hailed as an example of women's authorial intervention in the public sphere (Douglas, 1977; Tompkins 1985) or derided for its benevolent perpetuation of a number of racial stereotypes (Baldwin 1949; Reed 1976) – has assumed an indisputable place within the American literary canon. Both historical and contemporary reception of Stemmle's *Toxi*, among critics and scholars alike, has been charac-

terized by similar ambivalencies. Its release nevertheless constituted a direct and timely intervention prior to the school enrolment of the first wave of Afro-German children, and it remains a film many West Germans raised in the 1950s are still able to recall.

It is ironic that two cultural icons produced exactly a century apart to contest the objectification of human life through, respectively, slavery and racism, should themselves have so readily succumbed to both ideological and economic commodification. Both texts evince the peculiar reality that 'race sells,' that moral indignation about racism need not be mutually exclusive with marketable popular culture. Within a year of its publication, Stowe's novel had been rendered by playwright George Aiken into a six-act drama with thirty scenes and eight tableaux, which held one hundred performances at the Troy Museum in upstate New York. Actor George Howard and his family troupe then took the play to New York. From there, it enjoyed thirty-five years of touring success in the United States and in Europe. During its eclectic history, the plotline and characters have been musicalized, minstrelized, filmed, broadcast, and even choreographed. By way of example, the innumerable film transformations include Edwin S. Porter's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1903); Shirley Temple's mise-en-abyme performance of Eva St Clair in scenes from *Dimples* (William Seither, 1936); Judy Garland's brief appearance as the elfish Topsy in blackface in at least a couple of films (*Everybody Sing* – Edwin L. Marin, 1938; and *Babes in Arms* – Busby Berkeley, 1939); numerous animated cartoons of the 1930s and 1940s (*Uncle Tom and Little Eva*, a Jungle Jinks cartoon from 1932; *Uncle Tom's Bungalow,* a Merrie Melodies production from 1937; *Eliza on Ice* a 'Mighty Mouse' cartoon from 1944; Tex Avery's *Uncle Tom's Cabana* of 1947); and, more recently, Spike Lee's *Bamboozled* (2000).

Stemmle's film could never have submitted to the same breadth of reinscription. Released within an emergent film industry in economically and politically precarious times to a comparatively small national population recently halved through the establishment of two Germanies, the film nevertheless ranked eighth among combined domestic and foreign productions in the third quarter of 1952. Some film reviews of the time betray hopes that Elfie Fiegert might become the German equivalent of the child actress Shirley Temple – a fantasy scenario to which I will return later in this broader discussion of intertextuality. Sketches of Elfie Fiegert in various poses from the film transposed into print media a specific iconography that circulated

in schools, churches, and movie theatres. That iconography, and the manner in which the name 'Toxi' came to denote all Afro-German children, encouraged a reified relationship to racialized differences.

In both historical cases, marketing strategies colluded with political agendas: the young actress Elfie Fiegert came to serve as spokesperson not only for Stemmle's film but also for Afro-German children generally, as repeated media interviews in her later childhood and adolescence verify. While the comparison operates on a more global scale altogether with author Harriet Beecher Stowe, she similiarly became a spokesperson – in this case, for the abolitionist movement – invited to the White House, and journeying on three separate occasions to Europe to offer public speeches and readings from her book. While acknowledging Stowe's important contribution, many critics in her time, as today, cede that it would have been more desirable if an African-American had been the spokesperson for the issues in question. One literary historian sums up the commercial phenomenon as 'a white author appropriated by white business for white consumers' (Levine 1992, 75). Although intended to aid African Americans, at the level of address, the book constituted an appeal to a population of European descent. In this respect, both texts have structured into their reception an identical ego-ideal – one that subsumes not only hegemonic White citizenry at home, but also a watchful audience abroad. As a representative of the abolitionist movement, Stowe invoked liberty and egality as enlightenment ideals that the United States should be upholding for the world. The circulation of the novel as far as Moscow, Paris, and Glasgow was intended to ignite international indignition about slavery and inspire support for abolition. Towards this end, Frederick Douglass regularly reprinted in his newspaper diverse formal testimonials from international anti-slavery groups inspired by *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Levine 1992). Precisely a century later, *Toxi*'s release to the West German public was seized upon as evidence that the spirit of tolerance was finding fertile ground in the new Federal Republic. Some media reviews invited the public to contemplate the institutionalized segregation still firmly entrenched in the American South and exhorted West Germans to demonstrate that their newly founded nation would be able to avoid similar agonistic struggles and achieve true integration.

The Rebirth of a Nation

The consolidation of national identity through both specific political

structures and imagined community underpins all the fictional narratives to be examined in my investigation of *Toxi*'s intertextuality. National reconstruction enacts a particularly self-conscious form of nation-building following the devastations of war – a phenomenon Wolfgang Schivelbusch (2003) sought to conceptualize in his comparative study of Western nations that succumbed to military defeat in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He charts a taxonomy of common psycho-social archetypes that characterize these so-called 'cultures of defeat' as they undergo political reconstruction and social rehabilitation. Choosing the example of the American South following the Civil War, France in 1870, and Germany after the First World War, the author charts discrete stages of recovery through which vanquished nations progress following the trauma of defeat. The merciful cessation of violence and deprivation associated with the war triggers a temporary 'dreamland' of euphoria, which, however, gradually progresses to a perception of the victor's triumph as illegitimate. Despite an emerging inclination among the recovering populace to thereupon regard itself as morally superior, the push towards renewal is invariably shaped after the example set by the victor.

Schivelbusch's conceptual model will inform my own comparative endeavour, as I take up an analytic only peripherally addressed in his project – that of race as social practice – which was centrally implicated in political and social reconstruction in two historical settings: the American South in 1865 and Germany following the Second World War. Both the early West German film *Toxi* and the early American classic, David W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), I shall argue, testify in pivotal ways to the influence of racialization processes upon the national imaginary under reconstruction. Whereas Griffith's controversial epic purports to re-enact documented historical events, Stemmle's fiction film is firmly situated as a dramaturgical treatment of contemporary social issues. Both films nevertheless constitute modes of cultural and historical intervention equipped to reflect upon and refract versions of the lived past and present. The cinematic apparatus serves to 'mummify' (Bazin 1967, 9) particular modes of perception in a given era, producing what Robert Rosenstone (1995) describes as 'history as vision' (15). Film's technical reproducibility enables these documents to continue to intervene in history, influencing how present and future spectators understand the past as both history and discourse.

Stemmle's film bears some genealogical relation to Griffith's film not on the basis of explicit citation, but on account of racialization

practices already entrenched within American popular culture, historical discourse, and the social sciences, which infiltrated West German media culture and public discourse in the postwar era. To negotiate cultural practices of race across historical and linguistic contexts is to confront, of course, a certain incommensurability between German notions of *Rasse* and the American term 'race.' Both must ultimately be understood not as empirical objects but, rather, as cultural practices, whose parameters and targeted populations evolved throughout the respective histories of these two nations. I am less interested in positing facile forms of equivalency or translatability between these culturally distinct terms and more concerned to harness their potential frictions productively.

Under Nazi Germany, notions of racial difference had coalesced most explicitly and to most lethal effect around Jewishness. In the early postwar era, the desire within the public sphere of radio, film, and press to gain distance from the genocidal discourses of the Nazi regime coincided with the emergence, or perhaps resurgence, of other categories of difference, such as those which coalesced around the growing population of German children fathered by foreign occupation troops stationed in West Germany. Fehrenbach's research (2005, 74) indicates that by 1949 West German officials had tallied some 94,000 children fathered by Allied soldiers, of which an estimated 3,000 were documented to be of biracial background, presumably (although not necessarily) tracing African-American paternity. The Afro-German children comprised a tiny percentage of broader postwar birth statistics, but their foreign paternity was often more visibly recognizable, not unlike that of the even more minuscule percentage of perhaps 600 children fathered by French North African occupation soldiers following the First World War. Fehrenbach maintains it was under the influence of American racial classifications that 'West German federal and state Interior Ministry officials explicitly constructed the postwar problem of race around skin colour and, even more narrowly, "blackness"' (78). As a result, binaries of black and white that emerged in the United States in the 1920s and 1930s were appropriated to collectively produce what she regards as 'a new, and peculiarly postwar, taxonomy of race' (75). I understand this new taxonomy to constitute only one of several emerging ways of configuring 'difference' and negotiating principles of exclusion and belonging in the new Federal Republic; the later recruitment of migrant labour from southern nations such as Italy, Yugoslavia, and Turkey, for example, also led to further heterogeneity in the national populations.

This postwar taxonomy of 'blackness' is evident in the only known West German film of the early postwar era to explicitly address issues of race and integration. The enrolment of the first wave of Afro-German children in the public schools was a timely, if unprecedented, issue not only for the new Federal Republic, with its democratic mandate, but also for the United States, where the first legal contestations over segregated public education reached the American court system in 1951 (Brooks 1974, 94).[4] In both the United States and in occupied West Germany, the parameters of the discourse of integration were shaped by what one might, following Mary Louise Pratt's ([1992] 2008) lead, refer to as mutually informing 'transculturation processes' generated in the 'contact zone' between civilian and military populations and social institutions. Historian Maria Höhn's (2002) interviews and archival research indicate that the German-American encounter brought complex pressures to bear upon domestic race relations in the United States and shaped German perceptions of how integration should work in their own country. How were Germans to understand the implications of the New Basic Law forged in 1949, which assured equal rights regardless of race, when the American army supervising Germany's political and economic reconstruction enforced Jim Crow segregation of its own military barracks? Both the Soviets and the East and West German Communist parties exploited this blatant ideological contradiction to point out the hypocrisy underlying the American mission of 'defending democracy abroad.' Seeking to deflect this negative publicity, the Secretary of State in Washington exerted pressure upon the Army, so that by April 1953, 83 per cent of Black troops were deployed in integrated units. Many White soldiers, particularly those from the South, nevertheless resisted integration in off-duty hours, and violent skirmishes between Blacks and Whites were not uncommon even into the 1960s (MacGregor 1981, 57).

Within German civil society, however, Black GIs frequently testified to experiencing a degree of freedom that had been unavailable to them at home. Drawing from the data culled, Höhn (2002) concludes of the initial encounter beginning in 1945: 'Germans were stunned at how well the black soldiers treated them, but black soldiers were equally amazed that most Germans approached them with much more tolerance than did white American soldiers' (90–1). I would, however, point out that this encounter, in all its complexity, must also be understood in the context of a German citizenry who regarded the military occupation as a temporary measure, meaning that the soldiers, including African Americans, would someday return to the States. Never-

theless, surveys by military officials, as well as reports published in the African-American press, reinforced the conclusion drawn by the Department of Defense in 1954 that 'it is paradoxical that the Negro citizen in uniform has frequently been made to feel more at home overseas than in his hometown' (cited in Höhn 2002, 92).[5] That experience enabled many Black veterans to reimagine their place in the world, rendering all the less tolerable the social restrictions re-encountered upon return from military duty and lending critical momentum to the civil rights movement. Earlier aspirations towards integration had been officially shattered with the Supreme Court ruling in the case of *Plessy vs Ferguson* in 1896. The ensuing years of legal segregation in the southern states and elsewhere led to massive civil violence, which came to a head with the U.S. entry into the Second World War, at which point the apparent hypocrisy of fighting racism abroad while sanctioning 'Hitlerism at Home' became fully evident (see Klimke 2008). The civil rights movement – America's veritable 'Second Reconstruction' (Marable 1991) – thus coincided with endeavours within the Federal Republic to come to terms with race paradigms influenced by U.S. popular culture, politics, and social science discourse in the context of its own national reconstruction.

It is worth considering what cinematic antecedents may have shaped West Germany's singular film about racial integration, given that director Robert Stemmle presumably would have had little experience in or precedent for such an endeavour. If anything, one would presume he and other colleagues who cut their teeth at German film studios during the 1930s were more conversant in an aesthetic ideology that explicitly or implicitly racialized certain ethnic groups through lighting, costume, speech, and acting style, and enforced their social segregation or expulsion at the level of narrative plot. With his proven versatility in a mass culture form, Stemmle was indubitably exposed to and influenced by a wide arsenal of international films, including some produced in Hollywood. The precedent for this type of stylistic and thematic exchange across national cinemas was already in place among transnational silent film co-productions of the 1920s. Even after stringent distribution and exhibition policies and censorship of content under National Socialism chased most American films from German theatres, private screenings arranged by minister of propaganda Joseph Goebbels occasionally brought select films into the country.

Michael Rogin (1996) makes a case for mapping affinities between

several state-sponsored Nazi film productions and select American films that foregrounded race relations in the American South (159–62). For example, Goebbels apparently sought repeatedly to match the success of David Selznick's Hollywood blockbuster *Gone with the Wind* (1939), first with *Ohm Krüger* (Hans Steinhoff, 1941), then with Germany's first Technicolor epic, *Die goldene Stadt* (Veit Harlan, 1942), and finally with the last Nazi film made under the Third Reich, Veit Harlan's *Kolberg* (1942) (Hull 1969, 182–218). Rogin maintains that Harlan's depiction of the central European countryside as the agricultural heartland of an expanded Reich in *Die goldene Stadt* visually cites the panorama of Southern cotton fields in the opening credits of *Gone with the Wind*. He also suggests that Harlan's earlier anti-Semitic propaganda film *Jud Süss* (1934) may be debted to D.W. Griffith's American epic *Birth of a Nation* (1915), pointing to the analogous use of rape as a metaphor for racialized notions of national defilement. However, I have not been able to find corroboration among other scholars of Nazi cinema for this claim or for Rogin's passing assertion that Griffith's film was Hitler's favourite American film.

It is conceivable that, in preparing what was to become one of the top ten grossing films at the West German box office in 1952, Stemmle similarly sought inspiration from Hollywood's virtually unsurpassed capacity to reconcile the competing identificatory claims of heterogeneous audiences. American cinema was uniquely conversant in promulgating populism, democratic ideals, and utopian aspirations for even society's most marginalized figures, while simultaneously reinforcing status quo social stratification in class-based, racialized, and gendered identities. Indeed, its narrative syntax and visual grammar were fundamentally forged out of a dialectic of black and white involving not only the literal play of light and shadow but also, in many instances, the racial juxtaposition of American settlers of European heritage with African-American descendants of the slave trade to create facile binaries of virtue and vice, of victimhood and aggression.[6] Granted, the very earliest exemplars of moving pictures not only in the United States but also in Europe constituted what Tom Gunning (1990) has coined a 'cinema of attractions' (57) that revelled in the new technology's magical display of presence and absence and, moreover, used it to heighten the visibility of ethnic, cultural, gendered, and racialized alterities.[7] But it is specifically the early American director D.W. Griffith to whom film scholars attribute the development of a vernacular mode of storytelling, one in which the sequencing of

images maps the spatio-temporal coordinates of a Manichean moral universe. This was most vividly exemplified in Griffith's ideologically burdened historical epic *Birth of a Nation* (1915), which was prefaced with a 'Plea for the Art of the Motion Picture,' in which the director demanded 'the liberty to show the dark side of wrong, that we may illuminate the bright side of virtue' (Lang 1994, 43). In many regards, then, the gestation and birth of American cinema was shaped by the same racial and ethnic divisions that also informed discourses of national identity and belonging.

In exploring affinities between Griffith's film about the Civil War and its aftermath and Stemmle's film about changing conceptualizations of race and citizenship in postwar Germany, I cannot take recourse in the film historian's usual arsenal of archived letters and professional correspondences, work journals, or comments scrawled on the film script; nevertheless, I can let the pictures speak for themselves. To set the stage for that comparison, one might consider that one of the prevailing issues for which both the antebellum South and Nazi Germany were criticized by members of the international community was their racialization of conditions for membership in the nation, such that those deemed to fail the reified criteria were coerced into the role of unpaid labourers – plantation slaves or concentration camp inmates. Following military defeat of these racialized political regimes, reconstruction in both cases involved the establishment of a federal constitution asserting the supremacy of the nation-state – forged by reunification of America's northern and southern states and, in Germany's case, division into two separate democratic states based upon differing political economies. At stake for both the southern States and the Federal Republic was to be the equal claim of all its members to the rights, privileges, and immunities deriving from citizenship, including the sovereignty of labour – subject, it must be noted, to the demands and disciplining forces of a free market economy. Common to both historical contexts was the manner in which the seeming humiliation of military defeat involved some degree of inversion of previous racial (and racist) hierarchies: triumphant northern 'Yankees' of both black and white heritage imposed the terms of southern reconstruction, and postwar Allied occupation forces of diverse ethnic heritage were tasked to oversee the political restructuring of the new Federal Republic. Moreover, for considerable portions of the respective populations, the terms of national 'defeat' also con-

stituted, in their own right, the terms of 'liberation' from oppression, from black slavery or from the genocidal mission and totalitarian rule of National Socialism.

In Griffith's notorious rendition of U.S. history, the defeated South is overrun by northern opportunists and freed slaves who disrupt the previous labour hierarchies of plantation culture. Robert Stemmle certainly does not match Griffith's historical revisionism, one involving the imputed martyrdom of the South in the face of abolitionism and civil war; nor does Stemmle's modest melodrama share the epic scope and virulent militarism of Griffith's saga. Rather, he limits his portrayal to forms of ideological reorientation to which the German nation under reconstruction must submit in order to master the syntax of a newly installed democratic order. Yet both narratives achieve closure through deus ex machina interventions that not only reinstall status quo racial dynamics, but invoke a higher moral authority to do so. In this regard, these celluloid fantasies fulfil at least one of the characteristic collective behaviours Wolfgang Schivelbusch (2003, 19) attributes to defeated nations, summarized under the slogan 'Losers in Battle, Winners in Spirit' (19).

In both films, the nuclear family struggling for domestic equilibrium replicates the drama of national reconstruction. The initial 'space of innocence,' which Peter Brooks (1995, 29) considers central to the melodramatic form, is architecturally localized in the family 'homestead' in an exterior shot early in the plot. In *The Birth of a Nation*, Griffith introduces the viewer to the Stoneman and Cameron families, who allegorize the respective ideological positions of the northern and southern states of the Union on the issue of abolitionism. He establishes affinities between their antebellum way of life by matching shots of the Stoneman family in jovial conversation outside their Pennsylvania country home with an ensuing sequence on the front porch of the Cameron mansion in Piedmont, South Carolina. Dr Cameron reads the newspaper with a kitten in his lap, Mrs Cameron rests in her rocking chair, and daughter Flora reads a book. The use of foreshadowing will signal that this domestic equilibrium is vulnerable to intrusion, an intrusion that assumes racialized form. In part two of *The Birth of a Nation,* which offers a selective view of reconstruction following the Civil War, a pointed shot of a 'room for rent' shingle nailed to one of the porch columns of the Cameron family mansion signals the onset of Southern scarcity and anticipates the arrival of House Leader Austin

Stoneman to oversee reconstruction, accompanied by his mixed-race political protégé, Lieutenant Governor Silas Lynch, and housekeeper, Lydia, also of mixed-heritage.

These circumstances find their echo in *Toxi*'s opening exterior shot of a two-storey patrician home nestled on a quiet, tree-lined street. Subsequent interior shots of the family gathered at a birthday dinner for Grandmother Rose are accompanied by pointed dialogue that alludes to the postwar austerity measures: with three generations packed into one house, they will most certainly be exempted from having to rent out extra rooms to accommodate the national housing shortage. The later arrival of an Afro-German child on their doorsteps and her integration into their household certainly do not accord with the raucous invasion of the bucolic town of Piedmont, South Carolina, in Griffith's film, but nevertheless represent an analogous challenge for a defeated nation to accept the changing terms of citizen belonging.

In both cases, the animating concern about the entry of these characters into the community is their living embodiment of the consequences of what, in arcane terms, would be referred to as 'miscegenation.'[8] Griffith's portrayal recalls the literary trope of 'the mulatto' or 'mestizija,' which American literature and popular culture of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries all too often invested with alternately malevolent or tragic connotations.[9] Griffith scholar Robert Lang frames this in formalist terms, observing: 'Neither white nor black, the mulatto is a living embodiment of a disturbance in the melodramatic field, in which one is *either* white *or* black. The order of things is confused by this merging of opposites' (20). The German term *Mischling* betrays a similar preoccupation with the notion of *mélange*, even as its genealogy crosses the ideological gamut in the course of the twentieth century. During the 1930s, the term referred to offspring of unions between Jewish and non-Jewish Germans, as well as to the Rhineland children of mixed African and German heritage – two groups subject to persecution under the Third Reich (Lusane 2003; Campt 2004). In the postwar era, Heide Fehrenbach (2005) observes, the term *Mischlinge* gradually found sanction of another kind among liberal organizations such as the World Brotherhood/Society for Christian Jewish Cooperation, which felt this embraced the children's dual heritage more accurately than terms foregrounding their foreign paternity, for example, 'black (or colored) occupation children' (95). Nevertheless, the postwar resurrection of the term also reinforced the already-extant

American perception of pre-existing essentialized racial differences that become fused within one individual.

In both films under study here, characters of mixed heritage connote a sense of sexual betrayal, undermining the perceived purity of the nation qua white community by threatening the integrity of (white) female virtue past or present and, by extension, also undermining male authority. In Griffith's character portrayals, it is the lascivious housekeeper Lydia who tries to seduce House Leader Austin Stoneman, while Silas Lynch harbours the ambition to marry Stoneman's daughter Elsie. Similarly, Toxi's innocent presence among Theodor Jenrich's two biological daughters instils in him the anxiety that Toxi will jeopardize his patrimony and the honour of his wife and sister-in-law by raising public suspicion that one of the two women engaged in relations with an African-American soldier.

Anxiety about miscegenation is introduced early in each story. Griffith will first use the editing technique of alternation to introduce the respective Stoneman and Cameron families and establish affinities between their moral character and bourgeois way of life. Initially, domestic harmony and contentment are signalled through the northern daughter Elsie Stoneman standing before the family home affectionately petting a white cat, to be matched several shots later by the Southerner Dr Cameron, also with a cat in his lap, as he sits on his front porch. The putatively amicable nature of race relations in the South in that early phase of the story seems, in turn, to be metonymized in two puppies the film script explicitly identifies as 'one black, one white': in a lingering shot, the camera tilts downward to reveal the two animals sleeping nestled at the feet of 'the kindly master of Cameron Hall.' He stoops to pet the white one, a gesture followed by an interior shot of daughter Margaret coming down the stairs to glimpse a letter lying on the table – the letter in which the Stoneman brothers announce their upcoming social visit to Piedmont. The disruptive consequences of that visit and the decline of their friendship are prefigured in the cut to Dr Cameron, who, in reaching for the letter Margaret delivers to him, drops the kitten onto the white puppy. The ensuing tussle between kitten and puppy, underscored by the intertitle 'Hostilities,' foreshadows the negative impact that abolitonist politics will have upon relations between the Stoneman and Cameron families and, by extension, on relations between the North and South.

A similar use of alternation culminating in black and white sym-

bolism occurs in the opening sequence of Stemmle's film, where preparations for Grandmother Rose's birthday dinner are underway. As family members discuss the growing guest list amid the bustle of activity, the dinner table becomes metaphorical for the nation's expanding membership. The cook's plaintive remark, 'If things continue like this, there won't be enough roast to go around!' presages the orphaned Toxi's arrival on the family doorsteps in the following sequence. When cook and maid reach into the oven to pull out a large marble cake, we are offered a lingering close-up of the freshly risen swirl of black and white dough, only to witness its collapse when it is prodded by the maid's finger. Like Griffith's close-up of the kitten and puppies, this seemingly unmotivated shot gains retroactive significance in connoting the non-viability of miscegenation or of a nation composed of citizens of diverse racial heritage.

Some readers might reasonably interject that racialized perceptions in Germany derive out of an entirely different historical context, one in which the racist American trope of 'the mulatto' bears neither a relevant nor a legitimate basis for comparison with Stemmle's postwar German portrayal of the Afro-German orphan. In response to such objections, I would recall the assertion with which historian Maria Höhn (2002) introduces her comprehensive research on the impact of American GIs on postwar (West) German culture: 'German racial attitudes after 1945 can be understood only if they are examined in light of their face-to-face interaction with those of the American military' (13). The conclusions Wolfgang Schivelbusch (2003) reaches in his comparative study of American and European cultures of defeat in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries further corroborate this point of view. He remarks with a mixture of both cynicism and pragmatism: 'Losers imitate winners almost by reflex, as shown by the New South's emulation of the Yankee model, the reforms of the French army and educational system along Prussian-German lines, or the imitation of America by Germany after 1918 and 1945' (33). In Allied-occupied Germany, this arguably included adoption of the ambivalent attitude towards racial integration displayed in American popular culture. The confused signals with which the Germans were confronted extend to American social policy implemented by incoming U.S. President Harry Truman – a policy that recalls the ambiguous platform held prior to and during the Civil War by earlier U.S. President Abraham Lincoln. One historian describes him as 'able simultaneously to appeal to people who were hostile to slavery (he said it was wrong and must

someday die) and to people who were hostile to blacks (he said he was opposed to their becoming socially or politically equal to whites) by insisting with regard to slavery and implying with regard to blacks that the territories not be ruined by either' (Forgie 1979, 184–5). Neither President Lincoln nor his successor, President Andrew Johnson, considered making the ex-slaves full citizens, vacillating instead between deportation to Africa (i.e., Liberia) or a veritable 'stateless' status. It is certainly one of the great ironies of the American anti-slavery movement that many of its most committed supporters were also opponents of legal equality for ex-slaves. That same double standard operated among the supervising American military personnel who supposedly arrived to liberate Germany from the racial ideology of Nazism only to erect segregated barracks and perpetuate Jim Crowism upon vast acres of land in Rheinland-Palatinate and on the outskirts of urban centres such as Berlin, Wiesbaden, and Munich. What Stemmle's film so deftly emulates is precisely the contemporaneous American rhetoric of 'separate but equal,' promoting a discourse of newly rehabilitated German tolerance for perceived racial others, delivered via a plot trajectory that ensures segregation will ultimately prevail.

The ideological challenge both these directors must confront is how to narrativize the birth of the new nation out of the old. Both engage varying degrees of wish fulfilment and achieve narrative closure through a confusing array of redemptive Christian iconography, improbable rescues, and facile reconciliation. Whereas Griffith's diegesis restores the prevailing moral and racial order by means of an armed cavalry of clansmen riding to the rescue of an imperiled white citizenry, Stemmle's tale involves a non-violent, ideological readjustment for which Grandfather Rose's attitude is illustrative. He sagely responds to the anxiety his son-in-law Theodor Jenrich voices about 'the race problem' with the advice, 'Yes, that still exists, but we've learned to view it differently.' The Federal Republic, when compared with the American South, seems better equipped to negotiate the new terms of membership in a civil society founded upon formal relations of equality that are – significantly – also the terms for a free market economy. The mythologized parameters of organic community, of *Gemeinschaft* based upon *ethnos*, herein yield to the modern terms of *Gesellschaft*, to interdependencies negotiated by money as a neutral medium of transaction. Historians of the American Civil War maintain it was the failure of the South to adequately negotiate the tran-

sition from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*, from mono-crop plantation culture to the diversified terms of industrialization prevalent in the North, which led to its economic and social demise, nearly reduced to an agricultural colony of the North. Griffith indulged a nostalgia for the mythologized 'Lost Cause' through a stylistically uncharacteristic use of anti-realist, Mélièsian spectacle that signalled how cathected the Old South remained for this director. This entailed superimposition of the figure of Jesus gazing benevolently upon the tumultuous scene below him, apparently risen from the grave not unlike the fallen South left for dead. The southern folk soon waltzing in jubilant circles, in turn, exemplify the 'dance mania' which Schivelbusch (2003) maintains constitutes a libidinal discharge of emotion frequently witnessed among defeated populations delivered from wartime suffering (12).

Griffith's invocation of the risen Christ to signify Southern redemption finds a corollary in *Toxi*'s narrative denouement involving the Christmas nativity scene staged in the Rose family living room, with Susi and Ilse Jenrich and Toxi acting out the procession of the three kings to simple guitar accompaniment. Within Christianity, the birth of Jesus is associated with broader forms of spiritual renewal and rebirth out of the greatest darkness, but when invoked in the historical context of this German film, it may also connote democratic structures rising out of the ruins of fascism and the rebirth of the (West) German nation. That these political structures link a White community becomes evident in the pageant of the three kings, which underscores racialization as a masquerade staged in terms of Whiteness and its deviation. When Susi elects to play the role of 'Moor' in blackface and Toxi, in turn, applies whiteface, the arbitrary nature of signifiers of epidermal difference is foregrounded in a manner surely intended as progressive. However, it also recalls the function of blackface in *Birth of a Nation*, where white actors play the role of freed slaves, thereby literalizing the extent to which black caricature becomes an arbitrary construct, a mirage that may be conjured out of the white imaginary in a particular era. As such, scenes of racial mimicry in both films recall the spectre of nineteenth-century American minstrelsy, which, as Michael Rogin (1996) has pointed out, 'claimed to speak for both races through the blacking up of one' (5).

While Susi may play 'the Moor' for a day, Toxi seems preternaturally destined to perform black identity according to codes that uncouple blackness from German nationality. The film score reinforces her

deracination when the simple melodic accompaniment to the children's singing modulates back into a solo refrain of Toxi's theme song, 'Ich möcht' so gern nach Hause gehen.' The lyrics assume a double meaning, as the yearning for home can also be understood as the yearning for restored order, so central to achieving narrative closure in the melodramatic form. That order is predicated upon the restoration of racial hierarchies and divisions, which – as in Griffith's historical fantasy – can only be achieved through deus ex machina interventions: in place of galloping horses carrying clansmen draped in white sheets, we have the unforeseen but fortuitous arrival on the Rose family doorsteps of Toxi's biological father in a white cashmere coat. His jovial explanation, 'I've come to take Toxi home,' serves to foreclose the racial integration the narrative has worked so hard to inculcate. The striking parallelism displayed between the two films remains discernible despite the fact that *Toxi* is a family film disseminating liberal discourses about racial integration, while Griffith's historical epic promotes intolerance, hierarchy, and segregation. This would seem to suggest the pervasiveness of exclusionary notions of racialized belonging across divergent political ideologies, distinct historical eras, and national settings.

Shirley Temple's Legacy: Sentimentality, Cuteness, and the Commodity Fetish

Any comparisons drawn between two child actresses – the Afro-German Elfie Fiegert and the 'All-American' Shirley Temple – born twenty years apart on different continents, would appear on first glance to offer limited traction. And indeed, their biographies bear little resemblance, for Fiegert never catapulted into international fame as did Temple. The latter was the top box-office moneymaker and the most valuable asset for Twentieth Century-Fox between 1934 and 1938, necessitating the hiring of personnel to keep her healthy, exercised, and protected from public assault or from being taken hostage (Hammondtree 1998, 7). A postwar and divided Germany could never have provided either the scale of mass audiences available to American productions, nor could its low-budget productions compete with the lavish style cultivated by the vertically integrated studios of Hollywood's classical era. However, even if such purely commercial and logistical considerations overdetermine and limit the destiny of a 'child star' such as Elfie Fiegert, her

uncanny appeal, like that of Shirley Temple, can be understood as conjunctural and historically contingent. Since Temple quickly came to figure for international audiences as *the* child star non plus ultra, it is more than probable that Robert Stemmle, a director with extensive experience in shooting films for and with children, studied her performances for clues to their success. Temple's legacy seems discernible in Fiegert's characterization and casting and merits investigation for the ideological and moral resonances associated with the American star icon. The Temple films constitute a genre unto themselves, as the child prodigy's performances were iconographically very stylized; once the studios had hit upon a formula for her success, they adhered to a predictable pattern of plot scenarios and modes of mapping spectatorial identification. No doubt, Elfie Fiegert's wardrobe assistants had Temple's signature hairstyle of sausage curls in mind when they straightened and organized her hair into closely cropped locks for her screen performances. In select scenes, Fiegert's short dresses mimic those of Temple, by falling just below the crotch line and thereby enacting a regression to the presexual clothes of infancy while also eroticizing her legs, which, like Temple's, had obviously advanced beyond infant pudginess. It is precisely this 'cuteness' factor that facilitates a closer inquiry into the two actresses' popular appeal, an investigation that broaches continuities and discontinuities in how race, class, and gender were imbricated in their respective performances.

Particularly salient may be the relationship Lori Merish (1996) establishes between the social construction of cuteness and the rise of commodity aesthetics in turn-of-the-century American popular culture. In trying to discern what is characteristically cute, she concludes that it encompasses certain aesthetic features associated with smallness or miniatureness and various attributes relating to human infants – their round and thick limbs, a large head in proportion to the body, and, very importantly, their powerlessness and need for adult care. Part and parcel of cuteness is the emotional response the object or person engenders in the onlooker, which is predicated upon an ability to recognize what is adorable and lovable and to respond with proper maternal or paternalistic feelings. In effect, the onlooker desires to assimilate the other according to the logics of adoption (186). In the contemporary marketplace, this identificatory process is all too consistently exploited not only in the unfortunate sale of baby animals as house pets that grow to unwieldy maturity and seek their freedom, but also in any number of seemingly incongruous fetish objects 'seek-

ing' adoption: from Cabbage Patch dolls, to Beanie Babies, to 'pet rocks' and other peculiar objects. Merish links this propriety desire, 'the desire to care for, cherish, and protect'(188), back to the sentimentalization of childhood in the Victorian era, when the status of the child within a liberal-capitalist order was submitted to revaluation. Societies were established to protect children from abuse and exploitation, since many children under capitalism were treated as labourers and objects of use. While Merish is specifically preoccupied with the moral and aesthetic ramifications of 'cuteness' in the American context, her observations also bear relevance for societies undergoing industrialization across late nineteenth-century Europe. Enacted is an ambivalence about the radical otherness of the child's body within the broader project of modernity, where the status of labouring bodies was reconfigured in relation to a diversification of forms of both physical and mental labour during the ascent of the middle class. The child occupies a liminal zone not only due to an extended transition from infantile corporeal dependence to the inevitable stage of sexually reproductivity, but also because his or her citizen status remains indeterminate – located somewhere between that of consenting 'subject' of Enlightenment humanism and propertied 'object' under the jurisdiction of parental authority. This reconceptualization of the parameters and nature of childhood has had the lasting effect of remapping the 'ideal' relation between adult and child, such that the purported 'innocence' of the child and the civility of the adult are each upheld. Merish understands this as a form of 'erotic regulation' (189), one that de-emphasizes the sexuality of children and encourages the sublimation of any possible erotic feelings of adults towards them.

When considered in the context of Shirley Temple's astonishing career trajectory, the discourse around 'cuteness' herein coalesces elements of the fetish in both its Freudian and Marxian iterations. Temple's screen roles map specific gender relations that compensate for sexual anxieties and fractured family relations widespread in the post-Depression era; simultaneously, the crass commercial marketing of these scenarios for screen consumption was concealed by her numinous star aura. From the very commencement of her stage 'career' at age three, it was the cuteness factor that served to disavow the actually highly erotically charged scenarios depicted in the *Baby Burlesks* film series featuring children performing 'adult' roles. In *'Kid' in Hollywood* (1933), for example, Temple was featured in classic outfits 'citing' earlier star appearances by femme fatales such as Mar-

lene Dietrich and Mae West and involving such adult attire as a black bra, garters, fur stole, and high heels. These performances were often overdetermined by the scatological and vulgar taste of the producers Jack Hayes and Charles Lamont of the (ironically misnomered) Education Films Corporation. In *War Babies* (1932), which was a parody of Raoul Walsh's *What Price, Glory?* (1926), Temple plays a French barmaid fought over by First World War soldiers, at one point, embracing one while also kissing the other. In *Kid 'in' Africa* (1933), her sexualization is even more explicitly signalled in her character's name, Madame Cradlebait, and in another routine, a boy bites into a pickle that spurts juice into Temple's face. Little wonder that British novelist Graham Greene, reviewing *Wee Willie Winkie* (1937) for London's entertainment weekly *Night and Day*, should describe Temple as 'a complete totsy,' remarking, 'Infancy with her is a disguise, her appeal is more secret and more adult' (cited in Wood 1994, 33).[10] Even the later films of the mid-1930s display, if in more restrained form, this peculiar amalgam of childhood innocence and coy performance of adult femininity, which became the trademark of Temple's child acting career and spelled its demise when her cherubic cuteness inevitably yielded to the onset of puberty. As I elaborate in the concluding chapter, Elfie Fiegert's own aspirations for an acting career lost momentum once her endearing petition for adoption in early screen appearances had morphed into those of the more sexualized *mestiza* in later minor roles.

Elfie Fiegert's childhood performances took place in a production climate of greater moral restraint than did Shirley Temple's earliest appearances, but their respective stage appeal bears comparison. Both correlate with a cultural and historical climate of self-conscious retrenchment regarding gender roles. Temple's early performances entered Hollywood at a time when certain films were gaining notoriety for their crass portrayal of the material realities of survival amid economic depression: most notably, instrumentalized teen sexuality in Alfred Green's *Baby Face* (1933), in which Barbara Stanwyck portrays a girl whose father encourages her to offer sexual favours to patrons of his saloon. Also heavily criticized was Mae West's portrayal of Tira, an independent woman who uses her sexuality to advance through life without regrets in Wesley Ruggles's *I'm No Angel* (1933). The Hays Production Code of 1930, a set of guidelines established by the Motion Pictures Producers and Distributors Association (MPPDA) under the leadership of Republican lawyer and former U.S. Postmaster General

Will H. Hays, had been established in response to organized public complaint about perceived immorality, disrespect for human and other life forms, violence, miscegenation, adultery, insult of religion, or disregard for the law. However, it did not carry clout until the Catholic Church was enlisted to spearhead boycotts and blacklists throughout the country. As a result, Hollywood – preferring self-censorship to governmental, state-initiated, or public censorship – agreed in 1934 to the establishment of the PCA (Production Code Administration), which required a certificate of approval for any film released in Hollywood (Black 1994, 21–49). Childhood cuteness, as it coalesced in the Temple films, thus offered a novel means to circumvent restrictions placed on the portrayal of sexuality or even its allusions in dialogue, costume, or dancing. Its deployment, moreover, exemplified the dual function of the fetish – simultaneously exaggerating the defining contours of female sexuality through its stylized imitation by a child, but also discharging its castrating potential precisely through its incongruous projection onto the immature female body.

Those concerns are reduplicated in Elfie Fiegert's performance within a postwar era of self-conscious censorship by the Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle der Filmwirtschaft (FSK) introduced in 1949. Reconstruction of the German film industry in the western occupied zones was roughly pursued on the same model as the American, despite resistance from the French and British occupying forces and from German interest groups such as the clergy, educational ministries, and members of state who wished to restore to the *Länder* the autonomy they had enjoyed prior to nationalization of the film industry under the Third Reich (Fehrenbach 1995, 77–89). Tensions were most evident between German film producers, who recognized the advantages of self-censorship, and local officials, who sought greater input in shaping popular culture and its impact on moral values and lifestyles.

Common to both national contexts of industry self-censorship were the fraught negotiations about the portrayal of gender relations. The aforementioned anxiety about women's autonomy – financial and sexual – correlates with the jeopardized status of masculinity and the paternal signifier in two eras of acute austerity, high unemployment, and downward social mobility. Following the Great Depression in the United States, men found themselves competing with women for any form of waged labour, while in the early years of Germany's reconstruction, precarious market stabilization was compounded by the

humiliated and defeated status of German men, who returned from war psychologically disillusioned and/or physically maimed. For many reunited families, the re-encounter between husband and wife was disorienting, as women had, by necessity, grown self-reliant and were not necessarily prepared to surrender their independence and authority. In the early crisis years, which also came to be defined as 'the Hour of the Woman' (Heineman 2001), selective recollections of, alternately, women's heroicism (as rubble women, for example) or victimization (through rape or the burden of raising children alone) often came to stand in for Germany's national status generally. And, indeed, by 1950 nearly one-third of West German households were headed by divorced or widowed women, and in those households to which a husband or father had returned, he was often physically or psychologically scarred, unable or unwilling to work, or even barred from jobs because of his previous Nazi loyalities (Moeller 1989). Fehrenbach (1995) aptly observes of this inversion of gender roles: 'The war had emasculated men and masculinized women' (97).

Among films produced in the early Federal Republic, these gender anxieties were perhaps nowhere so scathingly condensed as in Willi Forst's *Die Sünderin* (1951), where Hildegard Knef plays the role of a young urban woman who prostitutes herself in order to buy her disabled lover the operation that would restore his eyesight (a scenario strikingly similar to the Depression-era Hollywood film, Josef von Sternberg's *Blonde Venus* (1932), in which Marlene Dietrich's character beds a gambler to finance an operation for her dying husband). Distressing to conservative political and religious leaders was the inversion of the traditional dynamic of active man and helpless woman, in which the woman uses her sexuality to achieve economic mobility and agency on behalf of others – a tactic to which some women, in fact, resorted during and immediately following the war. The story coalesces anxieties about the decline of the nuclear family, sexual independence of single women, sexual misuse of conquered peoples in war, the corrupting influence of urban life, and the erosion of men's social, sexual, and economic standing.

Hollywood's dream factory, on the other hand, developed a narrative panacea during the early years following the Great Depression that bypassed the marital couple, with its strained gender relations, in favour of the stylized father-daughter relations that underpin Temple's most successful films. Even indirect implications of female sexuality are often eliminated by absenting the mother figure (usually

through mortal illness), to be supplanted by a spectrum of desexualized women: aging and misguided school mistresses, helpless grandmothers, and southern 'mammies.' Marriage gets replaced by an affectionate alliance between daughter and father, with a narrative arc that maps their separation and then stages a rescue fantasy culminating in two-shot camera work more reminiscent of that between husband and wife. This formula seems to have found currency in the writing of *Toxi*'s screenplay as well: recall that the orphan's fate is very much bound up with her ability to win the affection of the various men she encounters, herein iconographically replicating scenes of successfully won mutual affection in the Temple films: for example, Toxi approaching Grandfather Rose at work at his desk is evocative of Temple's character 'Virgie Cary' similarly approaching the dignified national patriarch Abraham Lincoln at his desk in the civil war saga *The Littlest Rebel* (David Butler, 1935). The president peels an apple and shares slices with Virgie as she stands beside him – an exchange that gets inverted when Toxi later feeds Theodor an éclair at the local cafe.

The trope of reuniting father and daughter like lost lovers in a cherished embrace is evident in the closing sequences of several Temple films and finds its more emotionally restrained corollary in the arrival of James Spencer at the Rose family home. It is worth observing that he, like the fathers in several Temple stories, was separated from his biological daughter through circumstance pertaining to war, only to re-emerge seeking ratification for his paternal status through a daughter's affectionate ministrations. In *The Little Princess* (Walter Lang, 1939), Miss Sara Crewe is sent to a British private school for young ladies while her father is serving in the Boer War. Loyal to her father's heartfelt promise to return soon, she refuses to believe the later news that he has been killed in battle. When she learns that a batch of injured returning troops are rumoured to be housed in the local hospital, she enters the building illegally and discovers him languishing in a remote room, where the staff had left the mystery man, who could not identify himself because he had lost his memory from a head injury. At the sound of her happy cry of recognition (she invokes the paternal signifier 'Daddy!'), he recovers his memory and the two are reunited in a closing embrace. Toxi also undergoes a sort of 'reunion' with her 'false father,' Theodor Jenrich, after the two become separated in Café Süsse Ecke. The two-shot of Theodor embracing Toxi also evinces his moral conversion and the rehabilitation of properly paternal behaviours. However, when Toxi is united with her biologi-

cal father, James Spencer, a black American, former occupation soldier, and current owner of a petrol station, it is not actually *his* patrimony that is at stake; indeed, when he obligingly takes out his passport to identify himself, Grandfather Rose brushes it away (evidently, his skin colour supersedes more official modes of personal identification). Restoring Toxi to her biological father delicately removes from the national stage any evidence of miscegenation and with it restores to German men their centrality within a white patriarchal society.

The recurring trope of loss and recovery can be understood as an exchange that not only is libidinal but also implicates aesthetics and capital, such that the child star's mediation among diegetic characters metonymizes other levels of both use value (material) and exchange value (symbolic) within socio-political modernity. It is not just that the luminosity of childhood innocence serves as a form of 'phony aura,' to use Walter Benjamin's term (1968, 231), disavowing the mechanical reproduction of the film print itself and the non-conterminous presence of larger-than-life actors merely projected as two-dimensional images on the screen of the movie theatre. Rather, in two historical eras in which the crasser realities of capitalism threatened to overshadow its appeal, both Toxi and Temple's characters also function like a lodestone circulating between needy peoples, destined to be orphaned, exchanged, and adopted in order to come into contact with and touch the lives of primarily male protagonists, but also other economically, politically, or socially dispossessed figures – other orphans, the unemployed, or indigent strangers. In *Dimples*, Temple's grandfather is an educated man who has hit hard times and become a pickpocket and thief; in *The Littlest Rebel,* set at the close of the Civil War, her father is a Confederate soldier fighting to maintain his home and 'way of life'; and in *The Little Colonel*, Temple's character helps to reconcile her embittered and estranged grandfather, a former colonel in the Confederate army, who continues to live in disgruntled solitude on his southern plantation, gruffly barking at his Black servants as if the Civil War and slave emancipation had never taken place.

What Charles Eckert (1987) maintains of Shirley Temple applies also to Toxi: 'She always wound up in the possession of the person who needed her the most. And he who possessed her owned the unique philosopher's stone of a depressed economy, the stone whose touch transmuted poverty to abundance, harsh reality to effulgent fantasy, sadness to vertiginous joy. All of this works as a displacement of the

social uses and efficacy of money' (173). Toxi similarly socializes those she encounters into acquiescent genuflection towards ideological and political aspects of the Americanization of Germany, upon which economic survival in the postwar era was, in fact, contingent. Theodor Jenrich urgently needed to reform his relationship to the ideology of social inclusion under democratizing Germany, and once this has been accomplished, funds miraculously emerge just in time to stabilize his pharmaceutical ventures; Robert Peter's encounter with Toxi inspires a new advertising concept for the sale of chocolate and moreover draws his fiancée Hertha closer to him; Grandfather Rose's enlightened remarks about 'the race problem' offer a means to performatively purge his generation of 'guilt by association' under National Socialism and also reclaim the prestige associated with the intellectual elite (always coming up with new patents for inventions, as we learn in an early dialogue).

Questions of class also play a central role, since both *Toxi* and the Temple films are overdetermined by bourgeois morality and work to maintain that order. While the child protagonist in each case advocates on behalf of the lower classes, their interventions by no means undermine existing class hierarchies. The moral journey negotiated by Toxi's grandmother, Frau Berstel, for example, is that of learning her place within Germany's new social order. A member of the working poor and the family's former housekeeper, she claims responsibility for the whole series of misunderstandings when she introduces Toxi's father, James Spencer, to the Rose family at the close of the film. Germany's changing ethnic landscape, it appears, is to be attributed to the fraternizing behaviours of the lower classes. Frau Berstel admits her complicity when she asserts, 'I am Toxi's grandmother.' Grandmother Rose's perplexed query, 'Ah, so it was you that put Toxi on our front steps? But why did you do this secretly?' shifts attention from the alarm that Toxi's arrival triggered and instead emphasizes the covert nature of the former housekeeper's actions. In this Foucauldian model of truth production, Frau Berstel in turn accepts her moral position as the transgressor when she confesses, 'I was afraid you'd be angry with me. It was wrong of me to just leave your employ without giving advance notice.' It is Frau Berstel who also is to blame for putting an abrupt end to what is implied to be really existing racial integration within their household. Helene Rose seems incredulous as she asks, 'And now you want to take Toxi away again?' and Charlotte Jenrich

self-righteously declares, 'After so much time, we can't just tear the children away from one another again!!'

This patronizing attitude towards the poor also accords with Charles Eckert's convincing reading of those Temple films produced between 1934 and 1936, the most acute years of the Depression, which he maintains replicate reigning attitudes towards unemployment and towards charity to the poor. Whereas President Hoover perceived federal relief aid to the poor as morally corrupting (as encouraging sloth), his successor, Franklin D. Roosevelt, who entered office in 1933, regarded support of the indigent as a necessary step to restoring labourers 'to be an economically useful unit in the community' (Eckert 1987, 169). Temple's performances replicate the relief experience, mediating between society's poor and marginalized, on the one hand, and members of the established and ruling order, on the other. Of the acts of love Temple's characters perform for others, Eckert observes:

> Not only do they function as condensations of all of the mid-Depression schemes for the care of the needy, but they repress the concepts of a *duty* to give or a responsibility to *share* (income tax, federal spending). The solution Shirley offers is natural: one opens one's heart … and the most implacable realities alter or disperse. We should also note that Shirley's love is of a special order. It is not, like God's, a universal manna flowing through all things, but a love that is elicited by *need*. Shirley turns like a lodestone toward the flintiest characters in her films – the wizened wealthy, the defensive unloved, figures of cold authority like army officers, and tough criminals. She assaults, penetrates, and opens them, making it possible for them to *give* of themselves. (172)

Such transubstantiation of material relief into symbolic capital and back into the material again redoubles itself in real life beyond the studio lot. Temple earned $10,000 per week during her early career, and received an estimated 3,500 letters per week from her fans. In response, many hopeful American parents during the Depression brought their little girls to talent scouts in the hopes of 'discovering' an unknown goldmine waiting to be plundered for its worth. If a rise in the adoption of Afro-German orphans took place following the screening of *Toxi*, as some newspapers seemed to imply, it was unlikely to have been motivated by pecuniary ambitions so much as either symbolic capital (e.g., in which adoption of an Afro-German orphan evinces a family's morally rehabilitation) or the allure of cuteness, in which 'Toxis' become

commodities instilling a sentimental desire to possess and care for those more helpless.

Lori Merish's (1996) exegesis on cuteness and commodity aesthetics also suggests that cuteness served to enact 'a drama of socialization' (187) in an era of intensified migration to the United States from various regions of the world. Through the trope of adoption, cuteness becomes a highly theatrical way of enacting familial allegiances, domesticating those groups that display cultural (or other) differences and thereby accepting the Other (particularly in the form of the uncivilized or unruly child) into the social fold of the nation. Both Toxi and Temple's characters condense forms of national and class difference that must undergo complex (and highly contradictory) forms of commutation in order to instantiate this illusory national wholeness. Questions of racial identity also figure centrally in their dramas of assimilation, which metonymize a broader crisis regarding the terms of national membership. Moreover, while the figure of the child may generally condense (sub)alterities of class and race, in these two historical cases, it also condenses subalterities of the defeated nation as Other.

Both characters negotiate identities located at once outside and within the nation. Toxi, for example, is associated with defeated Germany through birth, linguistic performance, and her orphaned (i.e., abject) status; yet, through her African-American father, she also represents the trace of the occupation forces and of racial differences previously seldom associated with the German nation. In Shirley Temple's 'civil war' films, her characters similarly hold 'dual memberships' – for one, in the defeated American South, a region the film narratives depict as reluctant to cede a way of life predicated upon racial hierarchies. But Temple's characters also display a bivalent racial and political identity that facilitates reconciliation of the South with the North. In *The Little Colonel*, she plays the role of Lloyd, whose androgynous name befits her tomboy behaviours. Her status as the offspring of a southern belle married to a northerner, or 'Yankee,' invites comparison with Toxi as the offspring of a German *Fräulein* who similarly fraternized with an African-American Yankee. Lloyd's southern grandfather, played by Lionel Barrymore, is a former colonel in the Confederate army who remains cantankerous and resentful, unable either to change his boorish ways towards his Black servants or to forgive his daughter for her betrayal of the South. His character profile recalls Theodor Jenrich's initial recalcitrance towards Toxi, which was predicated as much upon racism as upon the implied political betrayal enacted by her mother in

sleeping with 'the enemy.' Just as little Lloyd ultimately wins over her grandfather with her affection and reconciles him with both his daughter and the northern 'occupiers,' so also does Toxi win over Theodor and reconcile him with Grandfather Rose and with the politics of racial integration modelled after American democratic principles.

In both national-historical contexts, race factors into the possibilities and pitfalls of reconciling the nation. If Toxi occupies a liminal position both within and outside the nation on account of her dual racial and national heritage, so too does Temple negotiate racial crossing or 'race changes,' to use Susan Gubar's term (2000), between different constituencies within America's imagined community. In one scene in *The Little Colonel*, she inadvertently covers herself in 'blackface' while playing in the mud with the children of Black servants; later they participate together in rituals specific to the Black community through make-believe enactment of a riverside baptism; and, of course, she is most famously aligned in a form of kinetic, if not epidermal, blackface in the renowned staircase sequence, in which Bill 'Bojangles' Robinson teaches her to tap dance. Indeed, in several films co-starring Temples and Robinson, the latter, in his role as butler and mentor to her, enacts a form of tutelage that enables interracial mirroring and identification reminiscent of that between Little Eliza and Uncle Tom. This is literalized most particularly in the dance routines, where she mimics Robinson's shuffling step and tapping feet. Temple's multiple alterities authorized her to cross various boundaries: those of gender, as she marched with a stick resting over her shoulder in imitation of the military drills at the nearby barracks; those of political affiliation, since she herself constitutes a hybrid of northern and southern 'stock'; those of rural plantation life and urban social relations; and those of Black and White.

The nature of these race changes is sometimes vertiginous, exemplifying the carnivalesque and ephemeral nature of overturned hierarchies. Central to Temple's 'masked identity,' according to Susan Gubar (2000, 190), is the fusion of two representations of childhood, Topsy and Little Eva, from that allegory of American racial integration, *Uncle Tom's Cabin.* As foil for anxieties about 'miscegenation' that would have been ongoing also in the era of Temple's performances, the two tropes exemplify opposing forces in the struggle to be 'civilized,' through, alternately, the comical and the tragic, but never the fully human. The penultimate scene in *Dimples*, for example, features Temples in a vaudeville performance of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* where she harnesses tropes of

both Black unruliness and virtuous White femininity in one body. 'Cutting it up' in tap performances with Black boys her age, the scruffy orphan in blonde curls at once evokes the piccanniny associated with Topsy, only to surface moments later as the impossibly saintly Little Eva on her deathbed.

Michael Rogin (1996) has suggested that theatrical performances of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the post-bellum era promoted national reconciliation by celebrating the plantation as a unique heritage of the United States. In effect, the United States becomes a contradictory site for the phantasm of both 'a *Herrenvolk* republic, where racial subordination hides class inequality within a capitalist society permeated by longing for a lost, preindustrial, feudal home' (42). According to Ralph Ellison in his essay, 'Change the Joke and Slip the Yoke' (1964), minstrelsy comes to play a unique mediating role in such fantasies. In a nation of former colonial settlers and immigrants, minstrelsy played with the process of upwardly mobile identity changes that could transform the poor into affluent, daughters into wives, immigrants into Americans, boys to men: 'The declaration of an American identity meant taking on a mask,' he writes, and national self-consciousness thus assumed the form of 'an ironic awareness of the joke that always lies between appearance and reality' (53). It is in this regard that Shirley Temple's performances enact an illusory reconciliation of the nation, in which 'the darky act makes brothers of us all' (55). Indeed, Temple's consistent filmic persona would be inconceivable without the literary precursor of Topsy, in particular. Gubar (2000, 190) goes so far as to suggest that Temple offers Black performances in whiteface. Her performance of the so-called 'darky act' does not always require burnt cork or shoeshine, as her spunky and mischievous personality and her occasional affectation of a southern Black dialect are sufficient to set racial mimicry into play.

Temple's uncommon mutability of corpus and character reveals that cuteness can be closely akin to what in vernacular parlance would be referred to as 'the freak' – someone with non-normative anatomy, as exemplified in midgets, whose body size replicates that of children while enacting the social behaviours of adults. Merish (1996) observes, 'There was indeed something "freakish" about Shirley Temple's prodigious capacity to absorb, apparently without effort, what her roles required' (191). The remarkably disciplined comportment of her little body appeared out of sync with her known age: alternately too mentally precocious, too coordinated in the movement of her limbs, or too

morally virtuous to be fully plausible as a child, she seemed to embody the original definition of the term 'prodigy,' meaning monster, freak. But whereas Temple's location within the regime of cuteness arguably always domesticates her Otherness at story's end and assimilates her into the national fold, for Elfriede Fiegert's character it is the inverse: the freakish elements attributed to her will overrule society's capacity to assimilate her. One need only recall the nude shower scene in *Toxi* or Moni joining other anatomical deviants at the circus in *Der dunkle Stern* to recognize that Fiegert has been cast as an immutable freak at a corporeal level linked to race and to miscegenation. Elsewhere, public responses to images of cuteness conform to the double logic that governs identification processes, such that 'being and having are synthesized: the cute is identified as part of the 'family,' indeed part of the self; the pleasure of the cute involves 'recognizing' it as such' (187). Embracing the cute – which is enacted in every Temple film – involves a ritualized performance of maternal (or paternal) feeling, what Merish describes as a form of 'emotional tutelage and emotional performance that have been principal disciplinary features of middle-class sentimental culture since the mid-nineteenth century' (186).

That not all members of multi-ethnic societies participate with equal willingness in the identificatory logic that governs responses to cuteness is, moreover, underscored in a more contemporary work of African-American literature. Toni Morrison's first novel, *The Bluest Eye* ([1970] 2007), is set in a black working-class American neighbourhood in the 1930s and 40s. Among three African-American girls coming of age, Frieda and Pecola adore Shirley Temple and want to possess the 'big, blue-eyed Baby Doll' (20) that resembles the mass icon. Claudia, on the other hand, responds with hatred, wanting to destroy the doll. Merish reads her resistance as 'specifically a refusal to "love" the cute – that is, to feel culturally normative emotions. By hating Shirley Temple, Claudia is refusing to participate in the national ritual of emotional display that transformed a little girl, Shirley Temple, into the pop culture phenomenon of "America's Sweetheart"' (186). Her response, 'What was I supposed to do with it? Pretend I was its mother?' (20) may reveal a subconscious resistance to playing the role of the mammy, but also a recognition of the institutionalized segregation that would bar an African American from the act of familial incorporation that cuteness demands. An African-American child who has already experienced racism may be able to see beyond the ephemeral race changes enacted by Temple's characters to recognize that she herself will never be per-

mitted the same mutability of identity, nor be attributed the status of cuteness accorded Temple.

By contrast, Afro-German Marie Nejar recalls adoring Shirley Temple as a child (2007, 53). She watched each of her films as they became available in the 1930s and also enjoyed acting out her roles in staged scenes with playmates. In adulthood, she felt disconcerted about her youthful obsession with the child star, but attributes it to the fact that she herself did not consciously identify as Black at the time and had no role models after which to model herself. Stemmle's film also weighs in upon this issue of cuteness and race in the birthday party sequence. The children are playing the game in which a coin (I use the archaic translation, 'farthing,' to match the archaic German *Taler*) is passed among those walking in a circle around Susi, who stands in the middle and must guess who has it. Toxi enters the room as they sing the peculiar verse:

> Farthing, Farthing, you must wander, from the one place to the other,
> O how lovely, O how lovely, has two eyes and cannot see.

Standing outside the circle and barred from entering, Toxi is really the one destined to wander: the camera dollies to follow her as she dejectedly moves away, lingering only a moment at the nearby parlour table where a glorious birthday cake with lighted candles awaits, screen right. Perched directly beside it is a near life-size naked white baby doll (presumably one of Susi's gifts), sitting up with its pudgy plastic arms reaching out, as if inviting maternal affection. Whereas Toni Morrison's character Claudia actively resists occupying that maternal role, Toxi either 'has two eyes and cannot see' the doll, or simply ignores it out of a subconscious recognition that the logic of incorporation solicited by a racialized version of 'cuteness' does not extend to her either.

Indeed, although Toxi makes a bid for Whiteness reminiscent of the same impossible virtuousness and loving kindness also associated with the 'whitely' character of Little Eva, she cannot ultimately pull off the types of race changes to which Shirley Temple's characters consistently remained privy, even as the penultimate nativity scene with the three kings gestures towards American minstrelsy. For one, Germany in that era of its national history could not sustain the mythos of cultural and ethnic pluralism enacted already for over a century in American minstrelsy. For another, minstrelsy itself, even in the American tradition, enacts only a unidirectional mobility of identity. Whereas blackface

played with racist stereotypes about Black Americans, whiteface never involved the stereotyping of White American culture; indeed, the power differentials arguably bar whiteface from enacting any sort of political intervention. *Toxi*'s closing scene evinces a similar truism. As Toxi approaches her biological father, she points to the cold cream on her face and reassures him, 'This comes off,' while the orchestral score to the theme song 'I want to go home' swells forth, and the screen phantasm of racial integration slowly fades to black.

Conclusion

Life Imitates Art: Elfriede Fiegert Revisited

Toxi's closing scene makes a powerful statement about the deracination of Afro-German children during the 1950s. The psychical alienation of the young heroine is not made explicit but, rather, is inferred through a synaesthesia of speech, music, and image: she wears a white mask and counts in a foreign language, while the instrumental motif from the theme song contrives an emotional attachment to her father's homeland incommensurable with the ambivalence any child would likely feel towards a total stranger. As such, she is made to internalize her perception of herself as a foreigner, demonstrating the insidious manner in which representation and domination collude to colonize the consciousness of stigmatized social groups. Naturally, there is a deconstructionist sense in which we are all colonized subjects, our consciousness inherently 'occupied' and scripted by the big Other, the Symbolic. However, Toxi's self-perception is differently colonized insofar as the film script expropriates from her even the illusion of self-identicalness permitted the other film characters, and does so with her acquiescence. Earlier scenes may self-consciously highlight the constructed nature of Toxi's racial identity – for example, the scene of Robert sketching Toxi with a bar of chocolate or the 'minstrelsy moment' in the nativity scene – but they also fetishize her as an object of inquiry. 'White' identity, on the other hand, is never subjected to this level of interrogation. Arguably, public fascination with Elfie Fiegert 'performing' her fate as an Afro-German child on the celluloid screen was, in part, fuelled by the manner in which the fragile boundaries between her lived subjectivity and her interpellation by historically conceived colonial imagery and icons seem to merge within the film story.

Reminiscing years later about working with children in the movie business, including with Elfie Fiegert, seasoned film director Stemmle seems similarly preoccupied with the nature of Fiegert's encounter with her screen persona:

> Toxi saw herself on screen for the first time during a premiere in Frankfurt. She sat beside me and laughed so hard her belly ached, laughed so hard that she fell out of her theatre seat. But then she became earnest, as she watched herself confronting injustice on screen, and her eyes filled with the same genuine tears she herself had cried in the story, and she prompted her shadow self up there with any lines she could still recall, and, finally, clapped louder than anyone else when the curtain came down on the words 'The End.' Afterwards, she looked at me with her big black eyes, in amazement. Amazed at her story, which she had just seen unfold before her very eyes. Amazed at herself.[1]

Stemmle's anecdote captures the very process of subjectivization I framed in chapter 4 in terms of the Lacanian mirror stage. However, when 'race' is factored into this account, it becomes clear that Elfie's subjectivity has been purchased at the price of an internalized alterity. Stuart Hall (1994) has elsewhere identified this process as having

> the power to make us see and experience *ourselves* as 'Other.' Every regime of representation is a regime of power formed, as Foucault reminds us, by the fatal couplet 'power/knowledge.' But this kind of knowledge is internal, not external. It is one thing to position a subject or set of peoples as the Other of a dominant discourse. It is quite another thing to subject them to that 'knowledge,' not only as a matter of imposed will and domination, but by the power of inner compulsion and subjective conformation to the norm. (395)

That this colonization of consciousness was not limited to Elfie Fiegert's screen persona but also permeated her childhood and early adulthood is corroborated by articles in illustrated journals and newspapers that endeavoured to measure the overall welfare of Afro-Germans in German society according to developments in the life of a single child actress.

Elfriede Fiegert played other minor roles in the types of exoticist narratives prevalent in West German films of the 1950s and early 1960s. *Toxi*'s co-screenwriter Maria Osten-Sacken also had a hand in the script

for *Sterne über Colombo* (Veit Harlan, 1953), an adventure film set in Munich and Ceylon that borrowed liberally from earlier film versions of *Das Indische Grabmal*. Fiegert has a minor part with actor Gilbert Houcke, who was also an animal trainer, in scenes involving the Busch Circus. In 1955, she also assumed the lead role in *Der dunkle Stern* (Hermann Kugelstadt). Here, Osten-Sacken was given licence to develop the circus narrative she had originally hoped to incorporate into *Toxi*, building upon what she describes as 'the incredible instinct of this race, their natural talent for music, for dance, for theatrical performance.'[2] Cast in what essentially remains a thin variation on her earlier role – that of the Afro-German in search of a social niche – Fiegert is described in the press captions accompanying photos of the actress in circus costume as 'Moni, a mixed-race child from a Bavarian village, finds a new home with the circus.' During shooting, the ten-year-old actress explains the story to a reporter:

> Moni in the movie is a girl like myself. When children mock her because she wants to become a farmer, she gets really sad. But the teacher from her class helps her. She takes her into town to some artists from the circus. There she befriends a little boy, Manuel, the blind grandchild of Caspar the clown. Sometimes Moni still feels like crying about not becoming a farmer. But everything works out fine because everyone at the circus likes her a lot!'[3]

Fiegert's hauntingly facile formulation evinces the extent of her internalization of societal racism, since she does not appear to recognize that Moni has been coaxed (with the assistance of the local veterinarian, no less) into a career perceived to better suit her 'natural instincts,' yet one that actually exploits her skin colour as source of spectacle. Osten-Sacken rationalizes her fate: 'Thus, Moni arrives at the circus, gets assigned an "act," and gradually finds her place as a "dark star" in this world that knows no racial prejudices.'[4] Moni finds acceptance with two dwarves and becomes a loyal companion to a blind young circus artist. What binds them all is their anatomical deviation from normative humanity; and, of course, the blind Manuel cannot discern that Moni's skin colour deviates from that of the Caucasian majority. Certainly, there is a long tradition that dates back to the 'cinema of attractions' in which the circus is seen as an ideal setting for overturning social hierarchies; in Weimar cinema alone, there is *The Cabinet of Caligari* (Robert Wiene, 1920), *Variety* (Ewald Dupont, 1925), *Salto Mortale* (Ewald Dupont, 1931), and

The Blue Angel (Josef von Sternberg, 1930). That tradition continues in the 1950s with remakes of *Salto Mortale* (Viktor Tourjansky, 1953) and Max Ophüls's *Lola Montes* (1955), among others. Yet these same films achieve narrative resolution by foreclosing precisely the mobility they set out to celebrate; the geographically circumscribed space of the circus tent contains and segregates social deviants from a society destined to merely glimpse that *demi-monde* in recurring nightly performances.

Elfie Fiegert later assumed a minor role as a homeless ruffian in Africa in the obscure *Zwei Bayern im Harem* (Joe Stöckel, 1957) and then did not resurface in the public eye until 1963, when the women's journal *Brigitte* published an interview titled 'Toxi: Alle Menschen sind nett zu mir' ('Toxi: Everyone Is Nice to Me') that revisits the former child actress as she stands on the threshold of choosing a career. As the first wave of Afro-Germans born in 1946 completed their schooling, sociologists and journalists alike took note in the early 1960s, seeking evidence either verifying or refuting that population's full integration into society as they pursued trade or career options and proceeded with the business of earning a living. In 1963 Elfie Fiegert gave notice at her internship with an insurance agency in order to accept a role in Helmut Käutner's remake of Curt Goetz's *Das Haus in Montevideo* (1951). This light comedy utilizes a German family's trip to Latin America to titillate audiences with an exotic cultural backdrop and voluptuous 'Latinized' German actresses. Fiegert plays a minor role as the mestiza servant girl Belinda, who exudes gracious charm and an intense, warm smile and is in constant attendance to her German guests in a philanthropic house for orphaned young women. In an ideological contradiction characteristic of West German films in the 1950s (and indeed of Hollywood films in the same era), the exaggerated moral prudery is repeatedly counterpointed by double entendres that invite a more sexualized reading. Thus, when the Germans arrive at the Spanish villa and find themselves surrounded by nubile young women lounging casually in flamboyant attire amid the rococo furnishings, they begin to suspect that the institution is really a brothel and proceed to interpret the women's ambiguous gestures and comments as sexual innuendos. In *Montevideo* Fiegert is yet again destined to play an orphan; but as she assists the German family in getting settled, her role also becomes contiguous with that of the black servant in American films of earlier decades. Her casting later the same year in the cross-dressing comedy *Unsere Tolle Tanten in der Südsee* (Rolf Olsen, 1963) similarly builds upon her growing association with cultural cross-over or mixed heritage. Dressed in a straw skirt as

Ley Leni, the daughter of a Polynesian chieftain, her character comes to the aid of stranded musicians of a German band, Sonnyboys, whose plane has crashed in the South Seas (in reality, the Canary Islands) and who resort to dressing and performing as women to avoid becoming the prey of local cannibals. Clichéd and marginal though Fiegert's roles in these two films were, one gains the impression in the *Brigitte* interview that she regards them as important steps towards regaining a foothold in the film industry and that she wants to devote herself to acting full-time.

About her social life, the seventeen-year-old comments, 'It's strange. I don't have any girlfriends my age, except one Greek girl. My best friends have always been adults.'[5] Such remarks give me pause to wonder about Fiegert's social integration among her schoolmates, and whether she encountered the type of ostracism described by Afro-German women in the 1986 anthology *Farbe Bekennen*. Yet, when asked directly, 'Have you ever encountered any difficulties on account of your skin colour?' she responds, 'No, never. Quite the opposite; people were always very nice to me' (72), and goes on to add that in the village where she lives, she knows everyone, and they all greet her by the name 'Toxi.' With regard to the difficulties that some Afro-Germans encounter, she even postulates, 'I think that may have to do with one's upbringing. Many [Afro-Germans] are afraid or feel inferior, and withdraw from the very start. As a defence, without really meaning to, they often become arrogant and abrasive, and then people respond in kind. I always tell myself: because of my skin colour, I'm just going to stand out more, so I'll just have to be especially friendly and nice' (72). From her remarks I would infer that she has internalized the dominant societal view on racism, therein evincing the colonized consciousness alluded to by Stuart Hall (1994). When asked about romantic interests, Fiegert offers a more ambiguous answer, mentioning that she is seeing a political science student from Nigeria and that she doubts she could ever marry a white man: 'I don't even think it's appropriate. The race problem [*das Rassenproblem*] is not that simple. Segregation of the kind that exists in America is wrong, of course, but having everyone marrying each other is also not the solution. That only works in countries where intermarriage has always existed. Naturally, if you are a successful artist like Josephine Baker or Dorothy Dandridge, then skin colour is no longer an issue' (73). Most likely, Elfie Fiegert is also choosing her words carefully, reluctant to offend the German public with accusations of racism and well aware of the need to tactfully negotiate a self-image

that will advance her acting career. As in earier reviews of *Toxi* and *Der dunkle Stern*, portions of Fiegert's remarks seem to be selectively printed to corroborate extant racist viewpoints or allay public anxieties. For the renewed media interest in the situation of Afro-Germans beginning in 1960 also relates to a broader anxiety sociologist Eyferth (1960) has articulated, namely, 'that the oldest coloured girls and boys will soon reach that age where they will start forging relationships with the opposite sex.' (8). Moreover, 'in a few years, we will no longer be dealing just with coloured children, but also with young men and women, even hooligans [*Halbstarken*] and provocative teens, who happen to be dark-skinned.' (103). Among members of *Brigitte*'s readership who might harbour anxieties about such developments, Fiegert's remarks would have offered some degree of reassurance, if not outright relief.

Even as Fiegert decries the segregationist politics of the United States, she also presents herself as being reconciled to limited social tolerance within German society towards mixed marriage. Later in the interview, she expresses the wish to migrate to one of the settler nations in Latin America, where she believes people of differing ethnic background can live together without social stigma. Only a year later, another article reports that she has married the thirty-five-year-old Nigerian Christopher Nwako and plans to work as a physician's assistant while her husband completes his studies in economics and political science in Munich.[6] She has abandoned her acting career and plans to accompany him back to Nigeria. It appears that Fiegert has become convinced that her personal development can only properly proceed outside the confining socio-cultural milieu of the Federal Republic. Coverage of her marriage in *Stern* magazine carried the title 'Einen Deutschen hätte ich nie geheiratet' ('I would never have married a German') and includes Fiegert's comment, 'German men are not as sensitive as foreigners. They only find me outwardly attractive, to the neglect of my inner qualities.'[7] The accompanying photos of Fiegert and her husband in a rowboat, or hovering together before a boutique window, or standing in a garden – he in a traditional Nigerian tunic and she in slim skirt – paint a different picture than the accompanying text, which portends potential conflicts that may accompany this pairing of cultures. Elfie explains of her future life in Nigeria that she wants to have a two-storey house designed by an architect, with four decorated rooms in Japanese, English, French, and German styles. Her husband, standing beside her,

laughs at this prospect and warns that his mother will not be pleased to know that he has married without her knowledge, because she has already picked out a local bride for him.

Six years later, she resurfaces in the press, apparently divorced and ready for a comeback.[8] Her husband's parents had cut off all financial support upon learning that he was marrying a German rather than Nigerian woman. To support her husband's continuing university studies, she worked in shoe sales and as a secretary at the Bavarian Ministry of Agriculture after her husband forbade her from working in films. Now single again, she regularly leaves her three-year-old son in the care of her own (adoptive) parents, having returned to acting in theatre and television, including the quiz show *Dem Täter auf der Spur* and *Salto Mortale* on ZDF, and a bit part in Harald Vock's *Unser Doktor ist der Beste* (1969).[9]

Fiegert also appeared in documentary films for the U.S. television networks CBS and NBC, and in the German documentary short, *Halb und Halb: Mischlinge in Deutschland*, which aired on ZDF in 1972. The latter film opens with a manifesto pronounced by one young Afro-German man, whose emphatic litany echoes the politics of the U.S. Black Power movement: 'We live in the midst of a white society. We belong neither to the blacks nor to the whites. We have no culture and no tradition of our own. In short, we're "half and half."' Fiegert seems similarly prepared to express herself forthrightly. She recalls an incident while riding a train when she was told by a train conductor, 'We should be making soap out of people like you!' and adds that her ensuing efforts to issue a formal complaint against the Bundesbahn went unacknowledged. Maintaining that the situation for Afro-Germans is worse in adulthood than in childhood, she points out, 'We're no longer small and cute, and we have a mind of our own.'

The most recent article available appeared in the *Stuttgarter Zeitung* in 1986 with the title, 'Inzwischen ist das Besatzungskind Toxi Vierzig,' and the provocative subtitle, 'Elfriede Fiegert hat sich durchgeboxt – In Deutschland möchte sie nicht mehr leben' (Elfriede Fiegert boxed her way through life – She doesn't want to live in Germany anymore).[10] We learn that Fiegert has been living in Mallorca for nine years, has remarried, and rarely visits Germany. She explains that racial hostilities have intensified in Germany and expresses disappointment in the film industry. The journalist paraphrases: 'Many a time film directors, in particular, had advised her: "Don't be so pushy." The audience wants

to be fed "sweets," not "sour drops." But she was never able to take this criticism to heart, because "that would mean denying my own roots."' This reversal of earlier statements made during adolescence indicates that disillusionment has set in and that Fiegert is coming to terms with both her bicultural heritage and German society at a completely different level.

In this regard, Klaus Eyferth's psychological study (1960), despite certain discursive shortcomings, offers prescient insights into issues later faced by many Afro-Germans. He wrote:

> No one knows whether these mixed-race children will have viable options in Germany with regard to future profession, social relations, and, in particular, possibilities for marriage. We also cannot rule out the possibility that economic or political conditions could lead to a new wave of racial mania. Therefore, it is especially important to provide maturing coloured Germans with adequate schooling and training, and support them in becoming self-sufficient, so that they achieve the maximum independence possible. Only then will they be equippd to make their own choices about whether to leave Germany if denied the fundamental conditions for a rich and satisfying life. (109)

Fiegert's marriage to Christopher Nwako deteriorated soon after the birth of their son, who remained with his father in Nigeria and would have been twenty-one years old at the time of the 1986 interview. She has not seen him in fourteen years, she explains, because his father bars her any contact. Seeking for answers to her own fragmented family life, she has developed a renewed interest in understanding her mixed heritage. Whereas earlier articles indicated that she felt no need to seek out her biological parents, she now explains that she has tried to trace her parents, only to find out that her mother, once a doctor in Freising, emigrated to the United States soon after Elfie's birth and appears unlocatable. Of her American father, she could only find out that he was restationed in Korea soon after his military service in Germany came to an end.

It is difficult not to infer a causal relationship between Elfriede Fiegert's recurring casting as social outsider and the actualized trajectory of her adult life, which reads as a narrative of cultural and social dislocation. From the handful of available articles on the former actress, it appears that she came to strongly identify as a child with confining and highly stylized tropes of Blackness, only to realize their constricting

influence at a much later age. Even as a six-year-old, Fiegert expressed a desire to become like Josephine Baker, who possibly offered one of the few images known to her at that impressionable age of a woman of mixed African heritage achieving lasting recognition within the public sphere. Her interview in *Brigitte* at age seventeen, however, reveals that her adoptive parents were concerned that she find practical employment and thus steered her towards an internship with an insurance company. Perhaps they foresaw the barriers she would encounter in her artistic development and sought to spare her disappointment. Fiegert, for her part, was still drawn to an acting career and therefore elated over what were really very minor (and degrading) roles in *Montevideo* and *Unsere tolle Tanten*. All the more eerie, then, was the tone of foreboding with which that same article ended as it quoted Fiegert's manager: 'It's good to be pleased about the present moment, my dear. But you must always bear in mind that there are hundreds out there just like you, and many are prettier than you, and dark types are a much harder sell than blondes – after all, blondes can also be dyed other colours. So what you have achieved up to now is really nothing. Do you hear? You've only just begun!' (73).

Only belatedly was Fiegert in a position to reject the racial iconography of blackness projected upon her in screen roles and in real life and adopt something akin to a 'diasporic' identity. The fact that Fiegert's current whereabouts appear untraceable, and she has not, to my knowledge, surfaced in the media over the past twenty or so years, may be indicative of the extent of her repudiation of the past and, furthermore, speaks to the Greek etymological roots of the term 'diaspora,' as dispersal or scattering. My use of the term circumvents any effort to locate Fiegert's heritage in any particular geographical location or cultural affiliation, whether Germany, the United States, or Africa. In fact, I would acknowledge the impossibility of retroactively fixing the point of her dislocation. Lacking access to her biological parents, raised Bavarian with a local dialect and German cultural values, and seeking recourse in an intercultural marriage to skirt racism in the Federal Republic – Fiegert's various efforts to alternately comply with or contest reified assumptions of her 'difference' from the rest of society seem to have led to an irreversible dispersal of any fixed point of identification. It is this latter quality, Stuart Hall (1994) maintains, that most distinctly defines the experience of diaspora and likens to Derrida's notion of *différance*, that is to say, an ongoing deferral of meaning along an endless chain of differences in the play of signification (397). The bina-

ries upon which the stabilization of identity is so frequently predicated never fully stabilize; instead, acts of geographical and cultural relocation necessitate ongoing recalibration of both the material as well as symbolic terms of one's existence relative to a pre-existing understanding of the world. For Fiegert, geographical mobility became one way of 'slipping the yoke' (Baldwin 1949) and transcending issues of national belonging.

The Difference That 'Race' Makes in West German Cinema

Over half a century ago, the dramaturgy underpinning *Toxi*'s production and reception coalesced some of the fundamental social conflicts of West Germany's political unconscious (Jameson 1981) in a formative moment of its national development. How influential those symbolic frameworks have remained – staging a veritable primal scene that cast for generations of Afro-Germans the moral terms of their origin – is evinced not only in the empirical evidence of Elfie Fiegert's later life choices, but also in ensuing screen renditions of Germany's historical past that strategically or unwittingly engage elements of *Toxi*'s original mise en abyme. In this closing section of my study, I offer a brief overview of several such productions and the role of Afro-German actors in re-articulating elements of that urtext of racialized citizenship.

Of the same generation as Elfie Fiegert, Günther Kaufmann was similarly fathered by an African-American occupation soldier and raised in Bavaria. In the ZDF television documentary (1992) *Damals vor 40 Jahren*, in which Elife Fiegert also makes an appearance, Kaufmann discusses growing up Afro-German and mentions knowing Fiegert through a youth centre in Bavaria founded by African-American boxer Al Hoosman (who played Toxi's American father) for the purposes of cultivating artistic opportunities among Afro-German children. Kaufmann appeared in over a dozen films directed by one of the most pivotal filmmakers of the New German Cinema, Rainer Werner Fassbinder. His roles within the Fassbinder oeuvre fell primarily into two categories: either playing the African-American soldier in an Oedipal restaging of his paternal history, or utilizing to provocative effect his self-evident status as Afro-German in the more experimental countercultural films.[11] Fassbinder's more overtly politicized iconography of 'race' and his use of Brechtian acting techniques is inflected by the social and political aftermath of 1968 and thus invites fruitful contrast to Robert Stemmle's more aestheticized, classical representational strategies.

Like Fiegert, Kaufmann for an extended time chose to live outside Germany, taking up residence in Portugal. However, throughout the 1980s and 90s he also remained consistently involved in German television, offered roles in, for example, the detective series *Der Alte* and in *Derrick*, and also recording vocal performances for the music industry. Indeed, most members of Fassbinder's troupe in the 1970s have managed to maintain a toehold in some branch of the film industry or theatre, perhaps drawing upon the international cachet of their association with the now-deceased director, but also having received among his entourage a most rigorous psychodramatical training for their future ventures. Kaufmann's autobiography, *Der weiße Neger von Hasenbergl* (2004) reveals that his own lifestyle mirrored some of the personal extremes associated with Fassbinder. In 2001, Kaufmann became implicated in what could be described as a stunningly chiasmatic inversion of the O.J. Simpson trial: in order to protect his wife Alexandra, who was dying of cancer, he gave false testimony in court and thereby indirectly claimed responsibility for the murder of her tax accountant. After Kaufmann had spent nearly three years in jail, a witness came forward to testify to the inaccuracy of Kaufmann's claims, revealing that Alexandra had been involved in a conspiracy to cover up shady financial dealings that had been undertaken to procure money for her costly medical bills.[12]

Today, Kaufmann appears to have started a new life far from his native Bavaria – already the setting of several tumultuous earlier chapters of his life – and has now settled in Berlin with his fourth wife. Some of his recent roles speak to the fact that historical knowledge of the black diaspora and, moreover, of black German history, is gradually entering popular culture in Germany. In the winter of 2007, Kaufmann performed in the Berlin musical *Martin Luther King – The King of Love* in the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, playing Dr King's best friend, Reverend Ralph Abernathy, in whose arms King collapsed when assassinated. After a nearly twenty-year hiatus from feature films, Kaufmann also recently appeared in the youth comedy *Leroy* (Armin Völcker, 2007) as the German father of a sixteen-year-old Afro-German boy who is having an identity crisis. Kaufmann seems to be making a comeback in the film industry, recently assuming a minor role as mafia boss Salvatore Marino in Sebastian Niemann's screwball comedy *Murder Is My Business, Baby* (2008). However, most of his roles indicate that, as in the Fassbinder films, he continues to be typecast for his visible status as Afro-German.

During the 1990s, other Afro-German actors emerged on the German film scene, most especially in comedies, leading me to surmise that perhaps that genre has been perceived within industry trends as best suited to establishing ironic distance from the stereotypes that burden minority identities on and off the screen. As Randall Halle (2000) has pointed out, the post-Wall comedy wave 'swept away the decaying structure of auteurist New German Cinema and all its attendant difficult, heavy themes' (1). But these comedies, he continues, have a particular inflection, as their humour derives – in many instances – from a crisis of heterosexuality, one in which gay characters consistently perform a cathartic function within the narrative. Halle's nuanced analysis situates queerness as a therapeutic corrective during a decade of uncommon social and psychological transformation in Germany. Yet, even here, I would maintain that the casting of Afro-Germans often negotiates a fine line between foregrounding the construction of alterities and essentializing it. Pierre Sanoussi-Bliss, an actor trained in the GDR, starred next to Maria Schrader in Dorris Dörrie's *Keiner Liebt Mich* (Nobody Loves Me, 1994) in the role of Orfeo de Altamar, a black, gay, self-declared psychic who becomes a peculiar sort of spiritual counsellor to her during her existential crisis and search for personal fulfilment. Revealing to her that he is actually an extraterrestrial who will soon be called home, he makes his final exit from the roof of her apartment building, mysteriously vanishing without a trace. Not only does Orfeo become the problematic locus of multiple alterities, but one can discern in the evocation of the Orpheus myth a genealogical link back to the figure of Toxi, as both come to serve, in the words of one set of critics, as 'the person of colour who acts as a guide or impetus for a transformation of the White protagonist' (Barnwell and Stanley 2003, 124).

Sanoussi-Bliss resurfaces in several comedies of the 1990s, including two more by Dorris Dörrie – *Bin ich schön?* (Am I Beautiful?, 1997) and *Erleuchtung garantiert* (Enlightenment Guaranteed, 2000). He has also directed and starred in his own feature film, *Zurück auf Los!* (Back to Go!, 2000) produced with funding from ZDF, which offers a partially autobiographical portrait of Afro-German identity in the figure of Sam, a (former) East Berliner who grapples with the discovery that he is HIV-positive. Here, the stress is on quotidian realities and the pursuit of personal happinesss, with the occasional self-reflexive remark on the challenges of being darker-skinned in Germany. This trend is also evident in Angelina Maccarone's *Alles Wird Gut* (1998), whose script was co-written with historian of Afro-German history,

Fatima El-Tayeb, and which consciously emplots Afro-German protagonists as part of conventional if not entirely satisfying urban realities in Hamburg. The two Afro-German women protagonists in this queer comedy lead lives that initially seem worlds apart: Nabou (Kati Stüdemann) as lesbian slacker and Kim (Chantal De Freitas) as a heterosexual workaholic in an advertising agency. Their search for love leads them across incongruous paths to each other. The ending would initially seem to signal the spatial evacuation of the Afro-German from German culture on the same terms as Dörrie's comedy, as the two women abandon an annoying office party held on a boat in the Hamburg harbour by jumping into the water. However, Barbara Mennel (2002) reads their movement within the harbour waters as a positive space of mediation: 'The harbour characterizes Hamburg, but it also connects the city to the world beyond and links the characters to an African diaspora' (59).

More recently, Branwen Okpako's *Im Tal der Ahnungslosen* (Valley of the Innocent, 2003) constitutes a reunification film with a unique twist, using the genre of the crime thriller to investigate aspects of the repressed national past. Afro-German police officer Eva Meyer (in a compelling performance by actress Nisma Cherrat) has relocated from Frankfurt am Main to Dresden's police homicide division. A series of events lead her to seek information from the archives of the former East German secret police, to first put together and then lay to rest pieces of her past – in particular, her experience of being raised in an orphanage in this very region. In some regards, the film can be read as a modern-day reply to some of the motifs that governed Stemmle's *Toxi*. Although set this time in the GDR of the early 1960s, in that low-lying geographical region around Dresden that remained out of range of Western media satellites, the story similarly stages the consequences of an interracial romance, here, between a foreign student from Kenya (Shepard) and the wife (Helga) of one of his professors (Hans). However, whereas in *Toxi* this form of transgressive encounter is relegated to pre-history – a trauma whose etiology will not so much be retraced as emphatically repressed – Okpako's dramaturgy re-enacts that encounter in flashback from the mother's point of view. The one-night affair results in a child (Eva), who is put up for adoption to quell any scandal. Where *Toxi* excised the sexually transgressive German woman from view before the plot had even unfolded, Okpako stages Eva's confrontation with her biological mother, affording a means to air the trauma this familial separation induced from Eva's adult point of view, and the guilt and

loss the mother (played by Angelica Domröse) suffered in surrendering her child. Where Toxi was once questioned about her origins in the Rose living room by the family doctor, a local detective, and a lawyer, here it is the adult Afro-German who is aligned with German law and who systematically uncovers the etiology of her earlier societal abjection.

Another short film of the same year captures the manner in which real life and film history have become interwoven in relation to a small but growing cultural corpus about and by visible minorities in Germany. Shahbaz Noshir-Öz's *Angst isst Seele auf* (Fear Eats the Soul, 2003) is a thirteen-minute homage to Fassbinder's theatrical play of nearly identical title, *Angst Essen Seele Auf*, which also appeared in a screen version in 1974. The original film cast Fassbinder's real-life lover El Hedi ben Salem in the role of a Moroccan migrant worker who becomes romantically involved with a German cleaning woman played by Brigitte Mira. An indictment of German society, the story places two of its social outcasts into temporary solidarity, while also acknowledging the pitfalls of mapping identifications across vast differences of culture, gender, and age. Particularly uncanny, of course, is the way in which the film functions as a mise en abyme of Fassbinder's own troubled relationship with El Hedi ben Salem, who was, in some regards, performing his own fate as a foreign worker from Morocco and who, in real life eventually hanged himself in a Paris jail. Art and life appear to echo each other, creating unforeseen resonancies in the life of Iranian-born actor Noshir-Öz, who performed Salem's role in theatrical performances of Fassbinder's play from 1989 to 2000 at the Meiningen Theater (Thüringia) following the unification of East and West Germany. His ensuing filmic homage to Fassbinder's work, shot in 2003, is actually an autobiographical re-enactment of a series of events he experienced one night on the way to one of his performances of the play. He was attacked by right-wing radicals in the underground pasageway of the train station and nearly missed his stage entry, arriving dishevelled and bruised to act his role in what turned into a particularly heightened performance. In the filmic version of the event, the director of the play lavishes praise upon the actor, here named Mulu, at the close of the performance; as Mulu rides the train home, he stares thoughtfully at the passing nightscape and then tosses his bouquet of flowers out the window. The powerful and recurring relay mapped here between historical experiences and their performative renderings across fully thirty years of film history indicates that racism is still a powerful force requiring acts of political resistance and social intervention. However,

it also testifies to the palimpsestic nature of certain lasting documents of visual culture, whose significance changes over time according to how they interface with the immediate lived realities of a given generation of interlocutors.

If German cinema in the post-Wall and contemporary era has increasingly become a repository for cultural memories of the national past, one strand in that trend has involved plundering the era of National Socialism for stories in the category 'incredible, but true.' Such tales of victims and marginalized figures who survive against all odds include Max Färberbock's *Aimee und Jaguar* (1999), Stefan Ruzowitsky's *Die Fälscher* (2007), and the four-hour made-for-television (ZDF) film *Neger, Neger, Schornsteinfeger* (2006), an adaptation of Hans Jürgen Massaquoi's autobiography originally published under the English title *Destined to Witness: Growing Up Black in Nazi Germany* (2001) and then in German (2008) following release of the film. Born in 1926, Massaquoi was the grandson of Momolu Massaquoi, Liberian consul general to Hamburg, and spent his early childhood in social privilege until his father and grandfather returned to Liberia in 1929. His German mother, Bertha Bätz, chose to remain in her homeland. What followed were years of increasing privation for a single mother earning her living as a nurse, and social ostracization for her son Hans, amid the escalating race mania of the 1930s and 40s. Both of them survived the Second World War, after which Massaquoi earned a living playing saxophone in Allied nightclubs in Hamburg. In 1948, he travelled to Liberia for a reunion with his father and in 1950 to the United States on a student visa, serving two years in the American army and then studying at the University of Ilinois. He eventually became managing editor in 1967 of *Ebony*, where he remained until his retirement, conducting many interviews with notables of African American cultural history.

The film adaptation of his life operates within the prevailing conventions of historical realism, featuring polished period sets, clinically calibrated key and fill lighting, and character portraits that conform a little too closely to stock figures. In the film, Massaquoi's mother, Bertha Baetz (Veronice Ferres), becomes the iconic blond Aryan with a heart of gold, certain Nazi officials seem a little too diabolical, and Dr Abraham Goldstein comes across as too passive and resigned prior to his and his family's deportation. Hans, as well, seems to emerge morally unscathed from every societal injustice meted upon him, herein recalling traits of the eternal sambo/a evinced in the relentlessly resilient Toxi. Stemmle's film also haunts the manner in which Hans's mother's

'back story' is excised from the plot. While the details of her life inevitably predate Hans Massaquoi's own biography and thus may be of secondary relevance, the reader is given no compelling explanation for his mother's relationship to Al Haj Massaquoi – for example, why she fell in love with him and why the two did not stay together – hereby skirting the cultural differences and societal pressures that, even prior to National Socialism, likely burdened and impeded such relationships. The script of *Neger, Neger* can, nevertheless, be credited with working through issues of racism pertaining to Hans Massaquoi's life consciously and systematically; the fact that teaching materials have also been published to accompany this four-hour epic story indicates that its mission is not only to entertain mass audiences, but also to educate school-age young people about the origins of racialized misconceptions by re-enacting on German screens the biographies of individuals whose experiences were previously elided from national history.

Another recent feature film that advances an anti-racist narrative and targets youth audiences is Armin Völcker's *Leroy* (2007), which portrays the quotidian teen realities of its eponymous protagonist growing up in a middle-class biracial family in Berlin-Schöneberg. The film is unique in focusing on the 'second generation,' as it were, whose paternal heritage is already culturally German – in contrast to the children of black GIs or of African nationals evoked in the aforementioned films. In this, his first feature-length production, Brazilian-born German director Armin Völcker uses a playful comic-book approach to character development; the native Berliner, Leroy, sports a generous Afro haircut and cruises the city with his best friend Dimitrios, offering running wisecrack commentaries about German society and about the anxieties and prejudices of some of its citizens. The postmodern style, although not as innovative as in *Run Lola Run* (Tom Tykwer, 1998), involves a similarly relentless pace, abrupt edits, visual elements citing the photo-love stories featured in youth magazines, use of freeze frames or slow-motion, speech bubbles that audibly plop onto the screen to reveal Leroy's unspoken thoughts, and split-screen sequences reminiscent of the blaxploitation films of the 1970s. The soundtrack, as well, recalls 1970s funk, especially Gordon Parks's *Shaft* (1971), and also features contemporary German vocal artists such as Jan Delay, Miss Platnum, and Nico Suave. The film's pop aesthetic takes some of the edge off the serious turn the plot takes when Leroy falls in love with the polemically named 'Eva Braune,' whose father is actively involved in the local chapter of a right-wing political party, and whose brothers are

Nazi skinheads. This convergence of diametrically opposed social and political spheres becomes the motivating force behind Leroy's exploration of a newfound 'Black consciousness' and his search, together with his friends, for creative responses to the prejudices harboured by the Braune family. The film plot and its delivery, while entertaining and witty, also facilitate a reflexive pedagogy, whose viability for classroom purposes is reinforced through teaching materials produced by the Institut für Kino und Filmkultur and available at the film's website.

It seems appropriate to bring this study to a close with a brief discussion of a recent film release that brings us full circle to the 1950s and the original scene of trauma both signalled and skirted in Robert Stemmle's *Toxi*. The plot of Oskar Röhler's *Lulu und Jimi* (2009) postdates *Toxi*'s immediate story line by a few years, taking place in the era of early rock and roll and Cadillac convertibles and touching upon precisely the concerns addressed in Klaus Eyferth's sociological study from 1960 about postwar German youth on the threshold of adolescence. The 'back story' of interracial romance elided from *Toxi*'s script here becomes the story's core, involving Jimi, the teenage son of a Black American GI, and Lulu, the daughter of an upper-class German family. The two fall in love against the wishes of Lulu's parents, more specifically of the diabolically controlling mother, who tries to arrange for an abortion after she learns that Lulu is pregnant. The couple flee to Hamburg in Jimi's Cadillac with tickets booked for a ship headed to America, but their plans fall apart when Jimi gets involved in a bank robbery scheme and is wounded. The story ends with Jimi's miraculous recovery, and the couple reunited following the birth of their child, whom a reverse shot close-up pointedly reveals to be what so many German and American news headlines in the 1950s referred to as a 'brown baby.'

Röhler, whose previous innovative and successful films include *Die Unberührbare* (No Place to Go, 2000) and *Elementarteilchen* (Elementary Particles, 2006), here pays homage to several earlier and contemporary cineastes who contributed to his own artistic formation. The dedication 'For David L.' appearing with the opening titles in bright pink text against black background helps explain why the film's acting, lighting, and composition are so reminiscent of the simulacral hyperrealism of David Lynch's *Wild at Heart* (1990) and his television series *Twin Peaks* (1990). In an interview in the DVD extras, the director himself maintains he wished to evoke the fairy-tale quality of Lynch's productions. Certainly, the characters include such stock characters as the Freudian 'phallic' mother, who has had her roaming husband castrated by

her own mad-scientist lover (whose background in eugenics and Nazi racial theories is patently obvious) and who plots to have her daughter married off to the plump, smug son of a wealthy industrialist to ensure the family remains affluent and Aryan. Surrealist moments include the psychic connection Lulu and Jimi develop while separated, communicating their steadfast love across the sky through symbolic messages that take shape in the clouds themselves. The film also adds the occasional camp touch of ghoulish, implausible violence and retro-kitsch 1950s wardrobe choices reminiscent of John Waters – effects deployed to evoke the garish taste and sordid scruples of the nouveau riche emerging amid the 'economic miracle.' The widescreen cinematography and saturated colours, moreover, pay homage to Sirkian melodrama of the 1950s, which previously also shaped Fassbinder's historical re-enacments of interracial encounters during the 1950s, *Angst Essen Seele Auf* (1974) and *Lola* (1981).

In dramatic contrast to *Toxi*'s classical realism, Röhler's stylistic and aesthetic approach breaks new ground. The director maintains he did not want to operate within the framework of the historical realist dramas that have become so prevalent in the contemporary German film industry. He is also obviously referencing a slightly later historical moment than *Toxi*, namely, the late 1950s, when American-influenced rock and roll culture (featured heavily in the soundtrack to the film), anxiety about delinquent teens that recalls portrayals in Georg Tressler's *Die Halbstarken* (1956), and a heightened consumer culture were more conspicuously in evidence. But Röhler's flamboyant approach and use of gaudy hyperbole, while certainly Brechtian in its distancing effects, also verges on rendering the potentially emancipatory emplotment of German history politically vacuous.

The cracks in the seams of this production arguably also lie, in part, in the casting choices, which result in a performative politics that seemingly contradicts, or perhaps ironicizes all the more, the film's socially progressive critique. The role of Jimi is performed by British actor Ray Fearon, and the role of Lulu by French actress Jennifer Decker. Their chemistry on screen remains, to my mind, regrettably unconvincing. I am also tempted to read the excessive amount of intense smiling by both characters as an attempt to compensate for the vapid dialogue with a forced degree of affect. The simulacral quality of their performance is further heightened by the fairy-tale aesthetic, which lifts their relationship out of the realm of historical probability into that of myth. This is only further underscored by the employment of two foreign actors,

whose presence on the set seems to imply, however inadvertently, that the fictional union of an African-American man and German woman on screen can only be staged by cultural proxy. The evident dubbing of Fearon's lines in flawless German (since Fearon does not speak the language) also enacts a further layer of ventriloquism that renders his character almost otherworldly, an effect heightened by the fact that, as in films of the 1950s, a black character is once again associated with the circus – here, as operator of a carnival ride on the outskirts of a German town. Jimi otherwise remains a man without a concrete social history; it is not even clear whether he was raised in Germany or returned to the United States as a child with his soldier father, and apparently, these details are not considered important to a script in which Blackness is the primary signifying element of Jimi's character.

Röhler maintains that he had to search abroad for someone to play Jimi due to a lack of viable Black actors within Germany. While I cannot lay claim to an insider's knowledge of Germany's Black theatrical scene, I am haunted by the feeling that what underlies such an approach to casting is an unwillingness to really come to terms with the existence of black actors in Germany today. The casting of Alain Morel in *Leroy*, as well as of three different child/youth actors to mark distinct stages of Hans Massaquoi's life at age 5–6 (Luka Kumi), 9–10 (Steve-Marvin Dwumah), and age 14–19 (Thando Walbaum) offer evidence of Germany's growing heterogeneity and a Black German population that spans multiple generations. Such roles on stage and screen play a crucial role in mapping identifications among spectators and (re)inscribing the black diaspora into German social history. However, as actress Nisma Cherrat (2005) compellingly points out, it is equally if not more important that black actors working in Germany gain access to roles on the basis of their talent and ability, rather than always being cast 'on the basis of their external appearance and with the underlying intention of using their skin colour as a means to make a specific statement' (207). Not only do such stenotopic roles limit Black actors in Germany to a narrow repertoire of character possibilities, they are also simply limited in number and thus repeatedly place the same small pool of actors into competition, rather than solidarity, with one another (208).

Within a white-defined society, theatrical roles that unduly stress skin colour moreover place actors of colour under a certain kind of hypervisibility within the implicitly White gaze, while other actors remain neutrally charged or racially invisible. Of the resulting dynamic Tobi-

as Nagl (2005) has observed, 'The looking relations and images that a society produces are neither neutral nor innocent; they are always permeated by power structures' (298). The organization Schwarze Filmschaffende in Deutschland (Black Artists in German Film), founded in 2006 and modelled after the Black Filmmaker Foundation in the United States, is one institutional example of the concerted effort to support actresses, actors, filmmakers, and technical staff of colour within Germany in their professional advancement. Panthertainment, in turn, is a German placement agency representing Black German models and artists, and selectively working only with clients for roles that do not reinforce racial stereotypes. Had an aspiring actress such as Elfie Fiegert lived in a later era of German history and had access to wider networks of institutional and social support, perhaps her options for personal as well as professional development within Germany might have been different. The feature-length documentary *Black Deutschland* (Oliver Hardt, 2006), however, indicates that continuities with Fiegert's experience still remain; in these five portraits, cultural workers residing in Germany speak candidly of the experience of being Black in a White-defined society, and reflect upon their personal experiences, questions of self-image, and their hopes and fears. What is important is for artists, as for all individuals, not to be trapped in roles defined by ossified tropes and discourses of the past that deny them and their publics the truth of the protean nature of cultural identities. This does not mean abnegating the past, but rather developing a dynamic relationship with it, for 'identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past' (Hall 1994, 394). Through the written word, through actions, and through cultural productions on screen and stage, a living archive is emerging that facilitates an ongoing parallax, transforming our understanding of earlier cultural artefacts of film history such as *Toxi*, whose value, in turn, rests not only in capturing in allegorical form social relations of the past, but also in offering a measure against which to assess how German society continues to evolve.

Notes

Introduction

1 See also Carter (1997); Fehrenbach (1995); Fischer (2007); Hake and Davidson (2007); von Moltke (2005).
2 See www.BlackGermans.us.
3 See also recent contributions by Berger (2005), Delgado and Stefanic (1997), Hill (1997; 2004), Jacobson (1999), Rasmussen et al. (2001), Warren (2003), Yancy (2004).
4 See Campt (2004); El Tayeb (2000); Marks (1984); Nagl (2009).

1: A Changing Postwar Landscape

1 See Monroe H. Little, Jr., 'The Black Military Experience in Germany: From the First World War to the Present,' in McBride et al. (1998).
2 Maria Osten-Sacken and Peter Francke were both active screenwriters during the 1950s and early 1960s. Osten-Sacken often wrote coming-of-age stories of young adulthood, including: *Sterne über Colombo* (Veit Harlan, 1953), *Der dunkle Stern* (Hermann Kugelstadt, 1955), *Ein Herz schlägt für Erika* (Harald Reinl, 1956), *Der schweigende Engel* (Harald Reinl, 1954), *Junger Mann, der alles kann* (Thomas Engel, 1957), *Die junge Sünderin* (Rudolf Jugert, 1960). A cross-section of scripts by Peter Francke includes: *Gute Nacht, Maria* (Helmut Weiß, 1950), *Karneval in Weiß* (Hans Albin, 1952), *Sterne über Colombo* (Veit Harlan, 1953), *Die Gefangene des Maharadscha* (Veit Harlan, 1953–4), *Heideschulmeister Uwe* (Hans Deppe, 1954).
3 'German Baby Crop Left by Negro GIs,' *Survey* (1949): 583.
4 'Aller Anfang ist schwer! Schwarze Abc-Schützen kommen jetzt in deutsche Volksschulen,' *Revue*, no. 16 (1952): 5.

5 See, for example, Gran (1994), Hall (1986), Omi and Winant (1986), San Juan (2002).
6 For elaboration on anti-Semitic sentiment among the Allied forces see historian Frank Stern's (1992) monograph, particularly the chapter 'Occupiers and Germans – The Jews Caught in Between,' as well as Joseph Bendersky (2000).
7 Located in the Helmut Käutner Archive, Akademie der Künste, Berlin, folder 133.
8 See Eisenstein's essay, 'Dickens, Griffith, and the Film Today' (1949), in which he acknowledges the film world's debt to Charles Dickens's narrative structure as a precursor to D.W. Griffith's development of parallel montage.
9 Although much film historical scholarship has assigned neo-realism a progressive valence for its apparent anti-fascism, Vincent F. Rocchio (1999) and P. Adams Sitney (1995) have convincingly utilized psychoanalytical frameworks to argue that Italian postwar film is also deeply encoded with regressive anxieties. Narrative closure is often achieved by containing subversive utopian impulses linked with the Resistance and co-opting the former Fascist consensus through other patriarchal-capitalist structures, such as the Christian Democratic Party and the Catholic Church.
10 No comprehensive biography of Stemmle's life and work has been published to date. The above data were culled from the CD-ROM version of Munzinger's International Biographical Archive and press reviews available in the library of the Deutsche Kinemathek Berlin.
11 See Erika Müller, 'Affäre Blum,' *Die Zeit*, Hamburg, 14 April 1949.
12 W. Scott-Deiters, 'Stemmles römische Ballade,' *Abendpost*, 24 August 1950.
13 'Razzia nach jungen Talenten: Erst das Bild, dann der Ton. R.A. Stemmle importierte Südfrüchte der Erkenntnis,' *Westdeutsche Allgemeine*, Essen, 10 March 1951.
14 See the following reviews: 'Marianne an der Grenze,' *Der Spiegel*, 19 September 1951; 'R.A. Stemmle ist für Realismus: Jugendliche "Guaner-Typen" spielen die "Rabbatz-Kolonne"' *Stuttgarter Nachrichten*, 17 August 1951; 'Grenze zwischen Gut und Böse: Stemmle dreht in Spandau – Kahlköpfe vor der Kamera,' *Depesche*, 25 July 1951; 'Razzia nach jungen Filmtalenten: Erst das bild, dann der Ton – R.A.Stemmle importierte Südfrüchte der Erkenntnis,' *Westdeutsche Allgemeine*, Essen, 10 March 1951; 'Welt im Film: Die Themen liegen auf der Strasse,' *Badisches Tagesblatt*, 6 December 1951; 'Versuch am realen Leben: "Sündige Grenze" im Marmorhaus,' *Telegraf*, 13 November 1951.
15 *Die Welt am Sonntag*, Berlin, 12 March 1950.

16 'Die Leute rühren,' *Der Spiegel*, 23 July 1952, 27.
17 *Lexikon des Kinder- und Jugendfilms* (Meitingen: Corian Verlag, 2002), vol. 4: 3.
18 'Immer unterwegs.' *Welt am Sonntag*, 17 January 1952.
19 It is virtually impossible to unearth a succinct definition of the imaginary in Lacan's writing; rather, it has become the sum product of his extensive peripatetic writings over time. In his translation of *Four Fundamental Concepts* (1973) Alan Sheridan provides a glossary of terms in which he roughly sums up the imaginary as part of that trinity of elements constituting human subjectivity, which includes the symbolic and the real. The imaginary is herein defined as 'the world, the register, the dimension of images, conscious or unconscious, perceived or imagined' (281). Imaginary relations then are those between the ego and the various images it has consciously or unconsciously assimilated. In effect, the imaginary is first set into motion through the mirror stage, a process which enables the nascent subject to organize (self-)perception by identifying with images. This process, however, is by no means limited to infancy and is perpetually invoked as a means to renegotiate identity.

2: *Toxi*'s Allegorical Narrative: Adjoining Reality and Fantasy

1 Although it is mere speculation on my part, it seems likely that Elfie Fiegert's biological mother relinquished her daughter to an orphanage on the basis of social rather than financial difficulties, since several newspaper accounts report that her father had left behind money for her upbringing: 'Her film earnings and the money left behind by the black soldier shall ensure that she receives a good education later on.' 'Filmstoff und Wirklichkeit: Die Geschichte des Negerkindes Toxi,' *Film*, Erbach, June 1952.
2 According to Moeller (1993), the sociological approach advanced at that time by such figures as Helmut Schelsky, Gerhard Mackenroth, and Hans Aichinger regarded postwar West German society as a levelled-out petit bourgeois society (*nivellierte kleinbürgerlich-mittelständische Gesellschaft*) resulting from the the various equalizing forces wrought by the war. Under such circumstances, the family, rather than social class, was understood to be the means to personal and financial stability and upward mobility (119–22).
3 Another pastry that metaphorizes racial integration is the so-called 'Amerikaner': half of this round shortbread cookie is brushed with vanilla icing, the other half with chocolate. They supposedly appeared in Germany after the Second World War, having been introduced from New York, where the same cookie was referred to as a 'Black and White.'

4 *Aktuelle Film-Nachrichten* 3.1 (Allianz Film GmbH Zentral Presse Abteilung, 1 August 1952), 4.

5 The study conducted by Eyferth, Brandt, and Hawel in 1958–9 assesses the sociological conditions under which Afro-German children were raised and attempts to measure the level of their assimilation into family, school, and society, as well as any psychological constraints these conditions may have inflicted upon them. The study remains steeped in many of the ideological blind spots endemic in the 1950s, as exhibited in references to the Afro-German population as 'a small group of the differently natured' (*andersartig*). Such expressions neglect to contextualize the difference as discursive rather than ontological. Nevertheless, it is also evident that the authors are developing a nascent awareness of the ultimate indeterminacy of the inherited racial categories they are working with, as they concede, 'In our experience, very different criteria may be understood to be at work in the term "children of coloured descent" (*Kinder farbiger Abstammung*)' (12). At other times, their evident epistemical limits resurface, as in the following qualifying statement, which situates difference in the realm of visual appearance rather than ontology, yet can only do so via an inadvertent return to fixed ontological categories of race: 'If we subsequently make reference to "coloured children" or occasionally to "mixed-race children (*Mischlingskindern*), we mean foremost those, whose visual appearance clearly marks them as alien (*fremdartig*) relative to other German children. This discernible foreignness (*Fremdartigkeit*) is a greater factor in determining their place in the social landscape than is their stronger or weaker affiliation with one race or another' (6).

6 On the function of the state in regulating social, economic, and geographical mobility through identification papers such as the passport, see John Torpey 2000.

7 The words offer his mother's view of her son:

> Dirty Hands, dirty face
> Leads the neighbors a chase
> But his smile is as cute as can be
> Making noise, breaking toys
> But his eyes, they're a vision to see.

8 According to Frank Stern (1992), *Persilscheine* encompassed, for example, 'attempts to show one had Jewish ancestors, the mention of Jewish neighbors, fellow workers, bosses and reference to assistance one had given to Jews – these became eagerly documented components of official files. With

their aid, the intention was to create an "officially documented" non-Nazi identity for use in dealings with the occupational and new governmental authorities. The attempt to prove one had been a friend of the persecuted now replaced the former "proof of Aryan descent"' (285).

9 Freud ([1920]1961) makes the following observation about his young grandson's game: 'The child had a wooden reel with a piece of string tied round it … What he did was to hold the reel by the string and very skillfully throw it over the edge of his curtained cot, so that it disappeared into it, at the same time uttering his expressive "o-o-o." He then pulled the reel out of the cot again by the string and hailed its reappearance with a joyful "da." This, then, was the complete game – disappearance and return' (9).

10 *Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages. Stenographische Berichte. 1. Wahlperiode 1949–53* (Bonn 1949): 6697ff. Cited and elaborated upon in Stern (1992, 369).

11 Stern (1992) writes 'The *economic anti-Jewish stereotype* was transformed into a somewhat peculiar hope: namely that Jews in particular, on the basis of their special economic 'gifts' or their access to 'international Jewish capital,' might make a contribution to German economic recovery and thus help to spur German reconstruction over the longer term' (396).

12 Lester (1982) writes: 'The myth of the German's special talent for colonial rule, in contrast to the widespread "kolonialen Schuldlüge" spread by the Allied occupiers, was fuelled by sentimental stories about elderly Askaris [native soldiers serving in the German colonial army] lingering around German embassies first established under Wilhelmine Germany and reminiscing in their old colonial uniforms. It is surely no coincidence that the longest Lettow-Vorbeck retrospective ever, running seven weeks in the *Deutsche Illustrierte*, appeared in 1953. For earlier in that same year, extensive and repeated updates appeared about the extenuating difficulties encountered by the British colonial powers during the so-called Mau-Mau Rebellion' (234).

3: Geneaology, Geography, and the Search for Origins

1 Hildegard Knef's performance of a good-hearted prostitute who poses nude for her lover (a fatally ill painter whom she later spares prolonged death by poisoning first him and then herself) caused unprecedented scandal, and incited fans and opponents alike to join demonstrations at movie theaters throughout West Germany. Naturally, this secured the film's status as box-office success of the year.

2 According to historian Kenneth Baxter Wolf (1994), the word 'Moor'

derives from the Greek adjective 'mauros,' literally meaning black or very dark. The Romans adopted the term 'maures' to refer to the inhabitants of a territory now known as the Maghreb, but which the Romans named Mauretania, 'land of the black-skinned.' When these same people became converts to Islam in the seventh century amid a parallel invasion of the Hispanic peninsula (modern-day Spain and Portugal) starting in 711, the term 'Moor' came to be used interchangeably with the word 'Arab' to describe Africans of Muslim faith (458).

3 In addressing the impact of the Second World War upon U.S. society and Hollywood's response, Connelly (2000) points out: 'While the war may have seemed far away to many in the United States, it nonetheless caused a massive upheaval in the lives of most Americans. Sixteen million served in the armed forces, and even those who did not serve overseas were usually sent far from home and to distant military camps and posting. The war effort also required the mobilization of civilians, including married and single women, who were called upon to work in war-related productions plants. This not only drew many out of the home and into the workplace for the first time, but also required them to move away from their hometown to production centers in distant cities and states. Some twenty-seven million Americans moved a distance of at least one county during the war years, and most moved from rural to more urban areas. Amidst these upheaveals, one of the few sources of comfort and constancy was the cinema, and box-office admissions rose to unprecedented levels in the mid-1940s. Hollywood provided its war-weary audiences with a steady diet of escapism, and this took a wide variety of forms. One of these forms was the Christmas film, which during the war years offered what must have seemed to be impossible but very potent scenarios of family unity, reunited lovers, and a return to the customs and traditions of an idealized past' (60-1).

4 Alston James Hoosman (1918–68), an American born in Waterloo, Iowa, enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1940 and served throughout the Second World War in Mount Isa, Queensland, Australia. An amateur heavyweight boxer before the war, he also won several tournaments during his tour of duty. Following the war, he was stationed in Munich, Germany, where he remained for the rest of his life. He played minor roles in a total of twenty-two mostly German but occasionally Italian or U.S. films, beginning with *Toxi* (1952). He eventually left the army, owned a bar, and served as mentor to children fathered by American servicemen through the organization Hilfe für farbige und elternlose Kinder. In 1958 he founded his own organization, Cause, for fatherless children of mixed heritage. See 'West

Germany: A Champion,' *Time*, 27 April 1959, 27; 'Al Hoosman, Crusader for Mixed Babies, Dies,' *Jet*, 14 November 1968, 55; and the website dedicated to him at http://home.st.net.au/~dunn/usarmy/boxermtisa.htm (last visited 29 September 2009).

5 Social Welfare History Archives, Minneapolis, box 3, folder 2, Intercountry Adoption Committee-Reports, Principles and Procedures and Correspondence, 1954-1958, lecture of Elinor Burns, 'Four Thousand Orphans' (New Haven, March 1954). Cited in Lemke Muniz de Faria (2002, 98).

6 'Toxi, das Mulattenkind,' *Sieben Tage*, Konstanz, 26 September 1952.

7 *Afro-American*, 11 May 1949, 1.

8 *Pittsburgh Courier*, 4 April 1949, 7.

9 'What to Do about Brown Babies?' *Afro-American*, 11 May 1949, 1.

10 According to Sieg's (1955) published findings on the sampling case of 100 Afro-German orphans, 25 per cent were given up due to 'either the mother's illness or full-time employment,' while 45 per cent were attributable to 'withdrawal of custody rights on the basis of the mother's anti-social behaviour' (24). The wording of these accounts tends to locate the blame squarely on the mother's lifestyle or her lack of maternal competence, hereby deflecting attention from the very real concrete economic deprivation and social ostracism many encountered.

11 Eyferth et al. (1960, 45), citing research of Sieg (1955, 24).

12 There are striking similarities to the way the memory of Anne Frank functioned in the postwar German imaginary. Selective reading and interpretation of her diaries rendered her a martyr whose forgiving attitude towards her oppressors was seized upon as evidence of collective national absolution. In 1950, the 'Week of Brotherhood' (an annual postwar event staged to publicize Jewish-German solidarity) was devoted entirely to her memory. One astute writer in *Die Zeit* (13 March 1950) criticized the event, reasoning, 'That is the power of legend: the martyrdom of a single creature, whom we mourn, absolves us from responsibility for the death of millions.' Cited in Stern (1992, 330).

4: 'Black' Market Goods, White Consumer Culture

1 'Realfilm: "Tanz mit Bonn,"' *nacht-depesche*, Berlin, 5 April 1952. See also Michael Töteberg's lengthy description in *Filmstadt Hamburg* (1997).

2 'Chef der Real-Film in Kreuzverhör,' *Blick in die Woche* 4.13 (2 March 1952). No page number is provided in news clipping in the Robert Stemmle Estate, Berlin Film Museum.

3 It was director and producer Alfred Hitchcock who popularized the term

and also the technique. He illustrated its etymology in an interview with François Truffaut: 'It might be a Scottish name, taken from a story about two men in a train. One man says, "What that package up there in the baggage rack?" And the other answers, "Oh, that's a MacGuffin." The first one asks, "What's a MacGuffin?" "Well," the other man answers, "it's a device for trapping lions in the Scottish Highlands." The first man says, "But there are no lions in the Scottish Highlands," and the other one answers, "Well then, that's no MacGuffin!" So, you see, a MacGuffin is nothing at all.' (138)

4 See letters addressed to Robert Stemmle by Real Film GmbH (15 December 1951) and from Fono Film GmbH (10 May 1952) in the Stemmle Estate, Berlin Film Museum.

5 Only three of these ten films were foreign, thus already foreshadowing the imminent success and popularity of the Heimat film genre, with Hans Depp's *Grün ist die Heide* placing first and Veit Harlan's *Der Förster Christl* placing third.

6 *Aktuelle Film-Nachrichten* 3.1 (Allianz Film GmbH Zentral Presse Abteilung, 1 August 1952): 1.

7 Maria Osten Sacken, 'Wie ich Toxi entdecke …,' *Aktuelle Film-Nachrichten* 3.1 (Allianz Film GmbH Zentral Presse Abteilung, 1 August 1952): 8.

8 'Immer unterwegs,' *Stadt am Sonntag*, 27 January 1952.

9 Christian Ferber, *Neue Zeitung*, 18 August 1952.

10 Maria Osten-Sacken, 'Wie ich Toxi entdeckte …,' *Aktuelle Film-Nachrichten* 3.1 (Allianz Film GmbH Zentral Presse Abteilung, 1 August 1952), 8.

11 Volker Hoffmann, 'Füngjähriges Negerlein spielt sein Schicksal,' *Frankfurter Rundschau* 30 (May 1952).

12 Sieg points out that similar studies conducted among African-American children reveal ailments of the lungs and throat as the most common health problem (21). One might speculate whether the different conclusions of the two studies are attributable to the higher concentration of African Americans in urban areas where air pollution is more prevalent.

13 Eberhard von Wiese, 'Das Schicksal eines Besatzungskindes: Vierhundert standen zur Wahl,' *Hamburger Abendblatt*, 6 May 1952.

14 Stefan Schwarter, 'Toxi auf Raten,' *Sie*, 31 August 1952.

15 'Toxi-logische Weisheiten,' *Aktuelle Film-Nachrichten* 3.1 (Allianz Film GmbH Zentral Presse Abteilung, 1 August 1952): 9.

16 Ibid.

17 'Toxi kritzelt für ihr Leben gern,' *Lübecker Nachrichten*, 29 August 1952.

18 Throughout the long history of cinematography, a variety of solutions were tried for lighting film casts of diverse skin hues. The recommenda-

tions outlined by Spike Lee's cinematographer, Ernest Dickerson, appear to be exemplary for disembedding these recommendations from any implicit bias of racism. See Malkiewicz (1986).

19 I was not a little astounded to read among Erica Carter's (1997) findings that an estimated 50 million pairs of synthetic stockings were imported from East Germany and the United States in 1949 alone. Moreover, in August 1950 nylons comprised two-thirds of all registered air cargo from the United States to Europe (165).

20 Senat von Berlin, 'Flüchtlinge überfluten die Insel Berlin,' MS, Berlin, 1953, p. 65. Cited in Carter (1997, 148).

21 There was a precedent tracing back to Wilhelmine Germany of employing Africans from the colonies and Afro-Germans for musical bands, jazz clubs, and circuses; their representation in the entertainment industry was disproportionately higher than in other professions, due to their exclusion from other trades and professional pursuits; under fascism, the entertainment industry afforded virtually the only gainful employment for Afro-Germans. See Oguntoye (1997) and the autobiographical account of Maria Nejar (2007).

22 'Filme der Woche: Toxi,' *Westdeutscher Rundschau*, Wuppertal, 23 August 1952.

23 *Aktuelle Film-Nachrichten* 3, no. 1 (Allianz Film GmbH Zentral Presse Abteilung, 1 August 1952), 10.

5: The Reterritorialization of Enjoyment in the Adenauer Era

1 Gerda Richter, 'Der Film Toxi,' *Hannoversche Presse*, 27 August 1952.

2 Ellen Geier, 'Frage um einen fünfjährigen: "Farbige Toxi" soll Adoptionsziffer steigern: Selbstsicherheit gegen strohblonden Affront,' *Westfalen-Blatt*, 2 December 1952. The title of this article in itself is somewhat cryptic; I understand it as roughly translating as 'Regarding Five-Year Olds: "Colored Toxi" Raises Adoption Rates: Self-confidence Wins Out Over Blonde Affrontery.'

3 See Eyferth, Brandt, and Hawel (1960, 45); Fehrenbach (2005, 136–7); Lemke Muniz de Faria (2002, 82–7).

4 Less than 13 per cent of German mothers of Afro-German children were willing to surrender custodial rights and put them up for adoption (Fehrenbach 2001, 184).

5 'Filmstoff und Wirklichkeit: Die Geschichte des Negerkindes Toxi,' *Film*, Erbach, June 1952.

6 Volker Hoffmann, 'Toxi spielt ihr eigenes Leben: ein Film vom Schicksal der Besatzungskinder,' *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 30 May 1952.

7 'Toxi: Ohne Mutti geht es nicht!' *Westfalisches Volksblatt*, Paderborn, 2 October 1955.
8 Nejar was born to a German mother, a native of Hamburg, and only infrequently saw her Ghanaian father, a ship's captain living in Liverpool. Her mother gave her up to an orhanage after her birth, but three years later she was retrieved and raised by her grandmother in the St Pauli neighbourhood. Her status was precarious during the Nazi era, as was that of many Afro-Germans – notably Hans-Jürgen Massaquoi, who has also published an autobiography – but she found bit parts in two Ufa productions in Babelsberg: *Münchausen* (Joseph von Baky, 1943) and *Quax in Africa* (Helmut Weiss, 1944) and emerged as a pop singer in the 1950s, only to move by decade's end into nurse's training.
9 'Das ist "Toxi" heute: Wieder eine Filmrolle für Elfie!' *Das grüne Blatt*, Hamburg, 20 June 1963.
10 'Kein Grund zum Weinen,' *Hamburger Abendblatt*, 24 June 1952.
11 See also 'From Interpretation to Transference,' 244–60.

6: Intertextual Echoes

1 For example, Frederick Douglass, *The Heroic Slave*; Martin Delaney, *Blake, or, the Huts of America*; William Wells Brown, *Clotel; or, the President's Daughter;* Richard Wright, *Uncle Tom's Children*
2 I have been told by the Nigerian-German Katharina Oguntoye that this also happens to be a Nigerian name, spelled 'Toksi.' Speculatively speaking, if this were the scriptwriters' intended origin for the name, it would certainly reinforce the film's overall inclination to associate Toxi more closely with Africa than with either West Germany or the United States.
3 By the close of the Civil War in 1865, 15,000 immigrants from the United States had settled in Liberia.
4 In particular, the case of *Brown vs. the Board of Education* in Topeka, Kansas, led to the landmark decision by the U.S. Supreme Court to outlaw racial segregation of public education facilities.
5 U.S. Department of Defense, *Integration in the Armed Services: A Progress Report*. (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 1955), 7.
6 On the influence of racial discourse on early cinema, see Bernardi (1996); Cripps (1977); Lang (1994); Lott (1993); Williams (2001).
7 Examples from early international cinema relevant to a discussion of racial and ethnic alterity include: *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Edwin S. Porter; U.S., 1903), *Tehin-Chao: The Chinese Conjurer* (George Méliès; France, 1904), *Ali Baba*

and the Forty Thieves (Ferdinand Zecca; U.S., 1902–5); and *Aladdin or the Marvellous Lamp* (Ferdinand Zecca; US,1906). For further discussion of how photography and film dovetailed with the birth of anthropology, see Rony (1996) and Oksiloff (2001).

8 According to Werner Sollors (1997, 287), the word was made up in 1863 (from the Latin *miscere*, 'to mix,' and *genus*, 'race') by George Wakeman and David Goodman Croly for a political pamphlet published during the Lincoln re-election campaign.

9 More recent studies of the American literary trope of 'mixed race' include: Hiraldo (2003), Ifekwunigwe (1999), Sollors (1997), and Wald (2000).

10 Greene (1998) continues: 'In *Captain January*, she wore trousers with the mature suggestiveness of a Dietrich: her neat and well-developed rump twisted in the tap dance: her eyes had a sidelong searching coquetry. Now in *Wee Willie Winkie*, wearing short kilts, she is a complete totsy.'

Conclusion

1 'Meine Erfahrungen mit Filmkindern: Regisseur R.A. Stemmle erzählt von den 'Rabbatzern' und von Toxi,' *Lübecker Freie Presse*, 6 June 1955.

2 'Ein Negerkind hat Heimweh: Toxi film wieder,' *Neue Post*, date illegible, 1955, 20.

3 Ibid.

4 'Maria Osten-Sacken dreht: Der dunkle Stern,' *Star-Revue*, March 1955. Osten-Sacken's disingenuous explanation seems particularly invidious in light of the rumour I found in one newspaper to the effect that Afro-German children were allegedly abducted or purchased from orphanages for circus work. The article in the *Westfalenblatt* (Bielefeld, 4 May 1953) with the proleptic title 'Menschenhandl in Deutschland? Toxi wurde ein Zirkuskind' states, 'Aggressive managers are said to use implausible offers to "purchase" children for spurious purposes. According to information from the union, even the child star "Toxi" was approached for hire by a circus.'

5 Helga Leeb, 'Toxi: Alle Menschen sind nett zu mir,' *Brigitte*, 1963, 68–73 (exact date not legible).

6 'Filmkind Toxi geht nach Afrika,' *8-Uhr Blatt*, 4 August 1964.

7 'Einen Deutschen hätte ich nie geheiratet,' *Stern* 34 (1964).

8 Claus Höhne, 'Der einstige Kinderstar sieht für die Zukunft nicht Schwarz,' *Lübecker Nachrichten*, 17 January 1969.

9 'Vor 18 Jahren tobte sie als "Toxi" temperamentvoll durch die Ateliers,' *Aachener Volkszeitung*, 30 January 1970.

10 'Elfriede Fiegert hat sich durchgeboxt – In Deutschland möchte sie nicht mehr leben,' *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, 2 August 1986.
11 Kaufmann appeared in the following Fassbinder films made for television or commercial release: *Gods of the Plague* (1969), *Niklashauser Journey* (1970), *Kaffeehaus* (1970), *Warum läuft Herr R. Amok?* (1970), *Baal* (1970), *Whity* (1971), *Pioneers in Ingolstadt* 1971), *Rio das Mortes* (1971), *In a Year with 13 Moons* (1978), *The Marriage of Maria Braun* (1979), *The Third Generation* (1979), the television series *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1980), *Lola* (1981), *Veronika Voss* (1982), *Querelle* (1982), *Kamikaze '89* (1982).
12 Wolfgang Bayer and Sven Röbel, 'Liebe, Lüge, Tod,' *Der Spiegel* 46 (October 2003): 84–90.

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