

Have Dialectic, Will Travel

The GDR Indianerfilme as Critique and Radical Imaginary

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It is almost impossible these days to conjure the GDR, the German Democratic Republic of 1948–1989, without the primary memory being that of surveillance, of an out-of-control police state, a drab, gray world of spies, counterspies and keeping tabs on your neighbor. Films such as the post-GDR *The Lives of Others* (2006), along with Western triumphalism, have effectively obliterated in the popular Western imagination any positive contribution of the GDR to its people and to present-day Germany as a whole. Rather than recalling exemplary social programs, a pronounced antifascism, and a vision of equality (cited as rationales for the existence of the GDR in Dorpalen, 1985), the best expression that memories of the former socialist republic are allowed is “*Ostalgie*,” a packaged, commodified “nostalgic” reduction of the principles of the GDR to a few of its artifacts. One of the most enduring brands of *Ostalgie* comprises books, merchandise, and festivals, particularly the annual event at Bad Segeberg, celebrating that campiest of East German relics, the *Indianerfilme*. Starring Yugoslavian hunk Gojko Mitic, these consisted of twelve films produced between 1965 and 1983, each from the perspective of different Native American tribes, detailing two centuries of their battles against the expansive power of the English Crown and the United States. The films were critically derided at the time, although they were popular successes, with crowds swarming to see them at huge, open-air summer festivals, and with their East European locations, directors, and casts standing as the Second World equivalent of the Hollywood global blockbuster. Three *Indianerfilme* have been released in the West over the past few years – *The Sons of Great Bear* (1965); *Chingachgook: The Great Snake* (1967); and *Apaches* (1973) – and have generally either been derided as protonationalist projections onto the Hollywood Western of a German colonial and racist past (Gemünden, 2001) or have been damned with faint praise as models

of popular dissent, focusing around a yearning for national unity that the West and East could not permit (Dika, 2008).

This chapter will propose alternate readings of the *Indianerfilme*, preferring to see in their popular expression of Native American values and ways of life not a dangerous Socialist Utopia but the glimmerings of a shedding of dictatorship and the beginnings of a socialist democracy that were expressed at the time of the tearing down of the Berlin Wall and that were effectively demolished by the rapid unification and swallowing of East Germany whole by the capitalist West. On this reading, the *Indianerfilme*¹ will be seen as pointing the way toward the potential for social democracy in Eastern Europe, and the struggles they ostensibly project onto the Western as having been aimed first and foremost against the capitalist West and secondarily against the Russian colonizer to the East, thus giving the films much more currency in the present. This attempt at an alternative reading of these films, however, will begin by doing something that has apparently been considered outrageous by their extant interpreters: taking seriously their avowed intention to rewrite the Western from the perspective of the Native American, something that could only have been done in bits and pieces in Hollywood (as both Vera Dika and Gerd Gemünden point out), where the US foundational myth (and its rationale for future incursions) depends on a heroic story of freedom-loving “settlers” conquering “virgin” territory (Stam and Shohat, 1994).

This attempt to reposition the *Indianerfilme* takes Elsaesser and Wedel’s dictum that any serious history of DEFA, or Deutsche Film Aktiengesellschaft (German Film Corporation), the East German film studio located on the grounds of the famed Weimar studio, UFA, or Universum Film Aktiengesellschaft, see that studio’s production not as a complete exception in film and industry terms but as part of a continuum, in a dialogue with the West (and, I would add, with other countries to the East). To do otherwise is simply to accept a retrospective and teleological, Western triumphalist reading of GDR film history that always reduces cinematic and cultural expressions in the former Eastern bloc to “descriptions of a society longing for change” (from a West German telecast on the day of reunification, quoted in Elsaesser and Wedel, 2001: 5), and constitutes no break from the standard history that, in Walter Benjamin’s terms, “is always written by the winners” (Elsaesser and Wedel, 2001: 7).² Hence this chapter will first position the *Indianerfilme* in relation to the Hollywood Western as a more complete form of that genre, one which appeared during the same period that the generic transformation of the Western, termed the Revisionist Western, was taking place in Hollywood as part of what was later referred to as Hollywood’s New Wave, exemplified most seminally by Abraham Polonsky’s *Tell Them Willie Boy Is Here* (1969), Arthur Penn’s *Little Big Man* (1970), and Robert Altman’s *Buffalo Bill and the Indians* (1976). Placed alongside Hollywood deconstruction of the Western, the *Indianerfilme*’s adoption of a Native American perspective can be understood in relation to the subset of those revisionist films which Steve Neale (1998) calls “Pro-Indian Westerns.” Although they are not as sensitive as their Hollywood

counterparts at rewriting the codes of Western action, they go much further in outlining the political economy of the West, in their emphasis, apropos of Native American cultural critic Ward Churchill's (2001) critique of the genre, on the various tribes and alternative histories of Native Americans, in their devaluation of the cowboy as a lumpen profiteer, and in their corresponding heightening of the power and strength of the Native American as guerilla and resistance fighter.

With respect to German film history of the period, the *Indianerfilme* will thus be seen as making a two-pronged contribution. The first is their rewriting of the West German Karl May, or "Isar," Westerns which preceded them, by offering a challenge to romantic notions that Indian nobility is affirmed only by conversion to Christianity, the religion and civilization of the West, and by critiquing Western political economy through the adoption of Brechtian and Eisensteinian distancing devices, which helped break through the veil that transformed the May Westerns from imperial primers during the Hitler years into elaborate adolescent (and capitalist) fantasies during the denazifying postwar period (Schneider, 1998). Their second contribution, of *Indianerfilm* and GDR cinema as a whole, was their consistent rewriting of popular West German genre films, for example *Fünf Patronenhülsen* (Five Cartridges, 1960), which, with its seldom explored setting during the Spanish Civil War (Bock, 1998), rewrote West German adaptations of the British, Edgar Wallace spy novels.

The most interesting way to see *Indianerfilme* as part of a German cinematic continuum would be to read them against the grain of their frequent interpretations as the degraded, popular East German statist flipside of the *Verbotfilme*, 12 films made in the GDR during 1965 that were suppressed by the regime and that likely would have become the East German equivalent of New German Cinema, sometimes also referred to as the "Rabbit Films" (Elsaesser and Wedel, 2001: 7). One might instead see these films as aligned with the more avant-garde aspects of the New German Cinema, one of the New Wave movements in the West. In that case, the *Indianerfilme* might be considered that cinema's popular expression in the East, one that also drew from the European addition to the Revisionist Western, the "spaghetti Westerns" of Sergio Leone. Both the East and West German cinemas were highly concentrated on reworking genres that were popular during the fascist period by inserting reworked Hollywood strains – for example, Fassbinder's reinvention of the fascist and postfascist *Heimat* film, using tropes from the genre's Hollywood insertion by Douglas Sirk (Detlef Sierck) of those elements into the melodrama. In addition, both East and West elaborated respective versions of the Native American as source of resistance. Gemünden (2001: 36) notes that in the West the Native American was translated into a model of resistant *Stadtindianer* ("City Indians"), which for the New Left served as an attaché to the urban guerilla. Although Gemünden discounts it, this is no less true for the (less industrially developed) East, where the Native Americans of the *Indianerfilme* were presented as a model for Third World peoples in their more rural struggles; guerilla wars of independence that were still raging for most of the series' production period. Thus the *Indianerfilme*

carry a double articulation; one, in their reexamination of the West as represented in Hollywood cinema, and two, in their proposing a new German imaginary in the process of rewriting the Western in light of its West German appropriation.

Finally, this chapter argues, via Gramsci, that, by referring to the *Indianerfilme* as the popular expression in the East of New German Cinema in the West, one is furthermore suggesting a cultural alliance of the precise sort that is forming – and which is much needed – in Germany today, where an attempt is ongoing to resuscitate the Left, grounded in *Die Linke* (The Left) party. That party, which now has the potential to join the government, is comprised of the former West German New Left faction – led until his recent illness by Oskar Lafontaine (a.k.a. “Red Oskar”), who is still the most prominent government representative of 1960s radicalism – as well as the remnants of the evolved social democratic element of the former GDR, led, also until recently, by Gregor Gysi, the former head of the reconstituted, hoped-for evolution of an Eastern democratic socialist and workers party. Thus the cultural-historical bloc formed by suggesting a continuum between the *Indianerfilme* and the New German Cinema, which marks a blending of a 1960s avant-garde, radical activist cinema with a more working-class-centered, popular cinema, is the imaginary currently being activated to counter the center- and hard-right’s domination of a Germany which, after several years of experiencing a neoliberal destruction of its social welfare policies, is perhaps as “longing for change” as the West German media once declared East German citizens to be.

In arguing for an expanded place for the *Indianerfilme* in German consciousness, where they might become part of a radical imaginary that far surpasses *Ostalgie*, I want to refer to Dagmar Jaeger’s interview with the Alfred Döblin prizewinner, Ingo Schulze, about his 1998 book, *Simple Stories*, a series of fictional accounts of East German characters who feel themselves, after the fall of the Wall, rapidly (dis)integrating into a commercialized West, perceived as being in the “midst of America” (Schulze, quoted in Jaeger, 2007: 145). Schulze expresses a certain strain of East German sentiment. He believed in 1989 that “we would build here a quite wonderful GDR” apropos of what at the time was termed the “Third Way” (Jaeger, 2007: 152). That possibility was quickly erased, he says, because the big power players surrounding the GDR, including the USSR, Britain, France, the United States, and West Germany (as he puts it: Gorbachev, Thatcher, Mitterand, Bush, and Kohl), would never allow it. After this *realpolitik* became clear, East Germans, Schulze reports, then went on about the reunification, until “one day people began to realize that major problems were emerging in everyday life that had not existed in the same form in East Germany” (Jaeger, 2007: 153). For him, many of these problems centered around the question of private property in a society that seeks at each moment of its everyday activity “to maximize profit” (he gives the example of a dentist about whose care he is never sure isn’t primarily benefiting the dentist rather than the patient). What Easterners also found, he claims, is that in the new Germany there is no discussion of these fundamental principles: “This system is not willing to talk about certain things, meaning private property” (Jaeger, 2007: 153).

The West defines and defends itself as “natural,” he says, which leads him to aver that “the GDR changes every year and becomes more important every year” (Jaeger, 2007: 148), and to declare, famously, “Only in the 1990s Did I Become East German.” All of this points clearly to the contemporary relevance and importance of the *Indianerfilme* as a potential source of a radical imaginary, a site of remembering GDR culture that can point the way forward to a place where the fundamental values not only of neoliberalism but of capital as a whole may be questioned. The continued popularity of the *Indianerfilme* above and beyond *Ostalgie* may also be a sign of the ongoing need for questioning an ever more rapidly neoliberalizing Germany.³

This reading goes against the grain of much contemporary scholarship on the GDR, the role of DEFA, and its relationship to “building socialism.” These studies range from characterizations of the GDR as, on the one hand, the bearer of an irrelevant legacy to, on the other hand, a seat of absolute and utter repression. Leonie Naughton’s *That Was the Wild East* seems to find impractical the East German Left’s deliberations at the time of the tearing down of the Berlin Wall over “what kind of society they wanted to build.” She views this handwringing as putting the brakes on unification, a much desired phenomenon for the country as a whole, since East Germany was “a picture of indolence and decrepitude” (Naughton, 2002: xv) and “a technologically backward region” (Naughton, 2002: 5). Nevertheless, she admits that subsequent West German films about unification view the process positively while films that originate in the East are more negative (Naughton, 2002: 9).

In a more ideologically slanted appraisal, Joshua Feinstein argues, in *The Triumph of the Ordinary*, that the history of DEFA in the GDR begins and ends with the repression of what amounted to a whole year’s production of films (the *Verbotsfilme*) at the Eleventh Plenum in 1965. This is a “TINA” study (following Thatcher’s phrase that, with respect to Western capitalism, There Is No Alternative) that describes the GDR as a place of “stagnation and arrested development” where the “only factor that remained constant was massive political oppression” whose “significance lies only in its deficiency and aberrance” because it is not “a model Western democracy [which] embodies national progress” (Feinstein, 2002: 4). Given this view, then, it is not surprising that all film production culminates in the Eleventh Plenum suppression, with subsequent production consisting mainly of a reaction to the suppression and whose end result is a stagnation that lifts only when the films are finally shown in 1989. The “gap” from 1965 to 1989, in a monolithic characterization of the output of one of the primary production facilities of Eastern Europe, is seen as a “Rip Van Winkle sleep” (Feinstein, 2002: 4). One of the few more critical studies is Anke Pinkert’s *Film and Memory in East Germany*, which argues that GDR films from 1945 to 1960 were involved, even if at times only marginally, in recounting, keeping alive, and mourning the “historical experience of war, death and mass murder” (Feinstein, 2002: 7), experience that was largely absent from the films in the West.

How the West Was Revised

The *Indianerfilme* can be viewed both as a lost branch of the Hollywood Revisionist Western, albeit one that adds significantly to the goals of that subgenre, and, within German cinema as a whole, as a kind of revisionist German Western. The films were a response to the Karl May films made from 1962 on by West Germans and shot on some of the same Yugoslav locations (using some of the same sets and extras). In that respect they followed the Hollywood model in which the Revisionist Westerns, also shot on the same locations as their 1950s predecessors, reworked the themes and contexts of the earlier films' dramatic actions. The shared sets and locations perhaps illustrated the degree to which Eastern Westerns were by no means an isolated phenomenon but instead stood in dialogic relation to their West German predecessors, especially in their critical reversal of the dramatic action played out against the same landscapes.⁴

While the Hollywood Western accounted for one quarter of all studio production up to 1960, the genre then began to fade, although by 1972, in what Jim Hoberman (1998: 90) calls the peak year of the Revisionist Western, the form still accounted for 12% of studio productions. But there were major differences. The Western, once the imperial genre par excellence, its films set mostly during the era of manifest destiny (1865–1885) when the United States was still expanding its domestic space through conquest (Churchill, 2001) and often concerned with the Indian Wars, could be seen as a backward projection onto the previous century of US postwar empire-building during the era when the United States, as the single most dominant world power, had declared the “Pax Americana.” John Ford's independent production company, Argosy, which had investment ties to US intelligence (Saunders 2001: 286) and produced the trilogy comprised of *Fort Apache* (1948), *She Wore A Yellow Ribbon* (1949), and *Rio Grande* (1950), might stand for this moment most prominently.⁵ But in light of a general questioning of US history, led by William Appleman Williams during the 1960s and brought on by reflection on the goals and means of empire *pace* Vietnam, the Western began to change. This was perhaps pioneered by Ford's own *Cheyenne Autumn* (1964) and marked by Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch* (1969), whose opening scene, an ambush, was famously discussed as duplicating the US combat experience in Vietnam, and *Little Big Man*, where the Indian Nations massacre similarly recalls military endeavors like Operation Phoenix, the aim of which was to attack and kill somewhat indiscriminately in a Vietnamese village in order to discourage peasants from aiding the Viet Cong. The period ends apocalyptically with the ultimate Revisionist Western, *Heaven's Gate* (1980), which, through the figure of the Scandinavian immigrant, questions the whole history of how and by whom the West was built.

Little Big Man, directed by New Wave stalwart Arthur Penn and starring *The Graduate*'s (1968) Dustin Hoffman as an unlikely John Wayne, was shot the year after Penn's validation of the mores of the counterculture, *Alice's Restaurant*. It projects

a sixties movement and youth culture ethos onto the Western and uses this ethos to deconstruct many of the clichés of the genre. As such it stands as a kind of answer across the decades to Ford's assembling of those codes in *Stagecoach* (1939). However, Penn's sixties movement critique, while striking (witness the contrast at film's end of Old Lodgeskins' (Chief Dan George) playful death in tune with nature versus Custer's (evoking Nixon or Westmoreland) delusional ramblings as he makes his case for becoming the next president while leading his men to ruin), lacks grounding in the West's material aspects and, though it is one of the strongest onscreen depictions of Indian massacres, still deploys the old trope of positioning that massacre from the perspective of a (necessarily more detached?) white onlooker, thus still not registering full force the effects of a policy of genocide.

The *Indianerfilme*, Gemünden (2001: 35) claims, "did little to question established genre conventions," and while Dika (2008: 17) does acknowledge that *The Sons of Great Bear* "manipulates character, setting, and plot in a manner that sets itself apart as a notable addition to the history of the Western genre," she still claims that by offering blank parody or pastiche without the humor of, say, Penn's film, the *Indianerfilme* re- rather than de-mystify the Western, in a way that speaks not of the American West at all but only of East German experience at the time of the series' production. I would claim instead that the *Indianerfilme*, by centering on the political economy of the West, in a sense completed the project of the Hollywood Revisionist Western, adding elements that the US directors did not have in their repertoire, including discussions of class divisions in the West and of a more resistant, rather than merely victimized, image of Native Americans. In many ways the *Indianerfilme* strangely fulfilled what Ward Churchill (2001) would later call for: a thorough treatment of the various kinds of Native American experience. In the process of rewriting Western clichés, these films deepened the project of the Revisionist Western which, without a grounding in the materialist basis of the West, could only circumvent the ethos of the original Western with parodies which themselves failed to fully illuminate the problems inherent in the genre.

Das Kapital on the Plains

That there was a focus on a different way of viewing the West is apparent in the comments of DEFA Dramaturg (and what Hollywood studio had a dramaturg?) Dr Gunter Karl, who conceptualized the basis for the *Indianerfilme* and worked particularly on the second of the films, *Chingachgook*. Admitting that DEFA would retain some elements of the Western, including action orientation, landscapes, settings, and some character types, which conveyed "a certain romanticism," he explained that the studio would counter these generic tropes with "a different content. Most importantly, we had to assume a historic-materialist perspective of history, and make the focus on the historical truth the guiding theoretical principle" (quoted in Gemünden, 2001: 27). The films' star, Mitic, also displayed an alternative

consciousness of Western history: “The white people invaded the land of the Indians and wanted to take away their habitat because they wanted to live there too ... [they] wanted to build big ranches and have lots of land. When you consider *how the west was won* [the 1962 title of one of the last Hollywood Westerns to unremittingly celebrate colonization of the West, with a segment by John Ford], basically the whites ended up taking over the country” (Mitic, 2006).

Perhaps the most politically sophisticated of the films is *Chingachgook*, a rewriting of both the James Fenimore Cooper novel, *The Last of the Mohicans*, and of a number of its Hollywood adaptations, including a strong allusion to the Indian Wars in John Ford’s *Drums Along the Mohawk* (1939) and, closer to home, a West German version, *Der letzte Mohikaner* [*The Last Tomahawk*], made two years earlier in 1965. The film opens, in a Brechtian flourish, with a Delaware war dance inside a lodge celebrating the rescue of a wounded chief; the music, choreography, and masks blend Brecht’s Berliner Ensemble with the Native American research into a moment that is more alienating than cathartic. The audience, both immersed in and distanced from the story, and thus prepared to learn through Brecht’s idea of combining entertainment with education through spectacle that was the epic theater, is then presented with a historical narrator who describes the political situation that will engender the drama. The voiceover describes the material basis of European invasion in the resources of the land, articulating the core of the *Indianerfilme* argument as to the purpose of the exploitation of, in this case New England and, later on in the series, the West. In 1740, the Indians have become both dependent on the economy of the invaders and in a constant state of war against each other (though of course this latter was also happening before the arrival of the whites) because of the presence of the trading post which created a situation of exploitation, aggression, and dependency. “Indians underestimate the value of hides” and subsequently “are overcharged for horses” and “pay inflated prices for metal goods,” leading both to greater reliance on the trading post as a source of imported (horses) and manufactured (metal) goods and to competition for the goods where “tribal animosity is exploited.” The imperial rivalry of the French and British, each choosing tribes to fight their battles by proxy, has also contributed to the Delaware becoming enemies of the Huron – a major conflict in the film. Part of the trading post’s economy is the bounty paid for scalps, again a practice that existed before the Europeans arrived, but which now is brought into the exchange economy as a source of profit. The Delaware trade Huron scalps, the trapper and trader, Harry, has been forced to accept scalps since the price of furs has declined, and, when the British soldiers argue over whether to slaughter the Hurons, Harry makes the case for doing so by offering the British general and his soldiers equal parts profit in sharing the scalps: “You one-third, the soldiers one-third, me one-third” – here the profit motive explaining at the micro level the direct material basis for the Indian Wars. The British general, the main ideologist in the British camp, in answer to his junior officer’s claim about the role of the British in helping fulfill the “hopes of a native for a better life,” replies that “the crown wants

power and riches.” He sees the British mission as one of clearing the land so it can be looted of its resources; and, as part of that purpose, he recognizes that the European imperial powers, although at war, are colluding nonetheless to accomplish this task. “We pay the Delaware, the French pay the Hurons, and we watch them destroy themselves.” Ordering the massacre of the Hurons on New York’s Lake Ostego, he notes that the lake, where the Mohican Chingachgook is seen paddling peacefully, has “fantastic salmon.”

The economic underpinning of the Indian Wars is also explored in *Sons of Great Bear* and *Apaches*. What underlies the fatal 1876 stabbing of Tokei ihto’s father, the Great Bear, a Dakota chief in the Black Hills, by the cowboy “Red Fox” is the search for gold in those hills and the knowledge that the chief has a cache of the precious metal. Tokei ihto (Mitic) eventually uses that gold to purchase a resting place for his people, converting the metal back into the more enduring commodity of land for subsistence rather than circulating it for profit. In *Apaches*, the breaking by the Mexicans of a treaty with the Apaches, and their famous massacre at Santa Anita as a prelude to the Mexican-American War of the 1840s, is engineered by US advance army scouts, mostly cowboys interested in the Gila Valley area for its copper and silver. The US instigation of the massacre and the subsequent war against the Mexicans is viewed as a pretext for clearing the Indians from the grounds of the silver and copper mines and their more efficient exploitation by the Americans. Johnson, the cowboy scout, tells the Mexican commandant at Santa Anita, “You were content with copper, we want more.” In all three films, the army is seen as the advance corps of capitalism, in league with trappers in the eighteenth, and cowboys in the nineteenth century to clear the Indians from the land in order to more fully exploit its resources. The cowboys and traders (Harry, Red Fox, Johnson) desire individual gain, whereas the army is a more rationalized, institutionalized instrument of long-term capitalist exploitation. This is not a view prevalent in Hollywood cinema.

If there are exploiters in the West, there are also the exploited. Of course, the main class division is the racialized one between Native Americans and Europeans, and while other conflicts are discussed and presented here in terms of class difference, in the American cinema if taken up at all, divisions were more likely to be projected as merely ethical disagreements. There is the division already pointed to in *Chingachgook* between the British commander and his second-in-command over the point of the mission; the younger, thinner officer argues for a civilizing mission; the older, more robust one for keeping paramount the idea of exploitation, of getting fat off the land.⁶ There is a similar disagreement in *Sons of Great Bear*, again between the lieutenant and the commanding officer, over how to treat the Dakota. In *Apaches*, there is a division between the Mexican peasants who have been in Santa Anita working the mines, and the Mexican army which is supposed to be protecting them. The peasants are put in danger and attacked by the Apaches because of a massacre engineered by the Americans and aided by the Mexican soldiers. They are in a desperate situation but are not the helpless peasants of

The Magnificent Seven (1960) saved by the gunfighters. Instead the old peasant woman, Teresa, watches the soldiers deserting them and taking their horses to be slaughtered by the Apaches and says to the Mexican officer in charge, "You'd leave women and children?" The class antagonism reaches its peak when the Mexican commander, in his haste to get away, stabs Teresa's husband, Miguel, and Teresa responds by picking up a rifle and shooting the officer. Ulzana (Mitic) and the Apaches then spare the peasants but warn them "never to return to our land," in this way acknowledging a class similarity between the two groups but also maintaining their distinction while romanticizing neither.

Drums along the Danube

A key difference between the *Indianerfilme* and the classical Western (and to some extent the Revisionist Western) is the Native American mode of resistance. All three of the East German films depict the unity of the various tribes against the European threat, and this can clearly be read, as Dika does, as a cry for German unity against the capitalist world, on the one hand, and against the (Soviet) imperialist world hostile to any such unity, on the other hand. But within the context of the Western, it is also crucial in reminding us of the always grand imperial strategy of divide and conquer used against the Native Americans, as, for example, the Hurons are divided from the Delaware in *Chingachgook*. As for the Hollywood Western, even its most enlightened version, *Little Big Man*, still subscribes to the animosity between the Cheyenne and the Pawnee, without seeing both as divided by, and potentially allied against, the US army. The *Indianerfilme* also distinguishes itself by posing an alternative Native American view of the land, stressing the Indian as guerilla fighter, and by engaging an issue much debated in the Third (and former Second) World today: dependence and aid and how each pacifies populations.

In the classical Western, the Indian is simply transgressing on the land. Ford's *Stagecoach* moves from a shot of the stagecoach, as symbol of civilization, rolling peacefully over the plains accompanied by loping "folk" music to a shot of the barbarous Indian "other," all grunts and pockmarked aggression waiting to attack over menacing music, with no indication that the Native American's historical claim to the land might instead mark the stagecoach as the intrusive instrument. *Little Big Man* presents the attack on the stagecoach, opening in media res, without Ford's menacing preview, as humorous and chaotic, as simply parodic, which lightens the racist implications of Ford's image but does not directly address the imbalance. Even the Revisionist Western, when discussing the right to the land, usually claims that no one owns it, that the Native Americans worked the land but that they made no claim to it. The *Indianerfilme* counter this presentation. Here the land is owned by the Indians who do make a claim to it. In *Chingachgook*, the lead character, the Mohican, now without a tribe and, thus, any claim to land, says to the white trappers, "You steal our land and murder our people"; and of the lake

and its surroundings, he says that this was “our land for a long time.” This earliest event in the cycle, then, describes the original moment of capital accumulation as theft and asserts Indian ownership of the land. In the later periods of the West depicted in *Sons of Great Bear* and *Apaches*, the Indians, in both cases stripped of their now segmented land and forced to move to more barren land, must fight to retain their livelihood in land that can support them. The looser idea that the land is shared – the nomad idea that was bound up in the original European entitlement claims in lieu of Indian claims to its actual ownership – is not given credence in these films, which instead present an active struggle over this most valuable commodity.

While there is some trading in the *Indianerfilme* on the notion of the Native American as “Noble Savage,” including a poignant theme in *Sons of Great Bear* concerning a Delaware scout for the army whose own tribe had long been wiped out and who in the end joins the Dakota, there is also much refutation of this image, since what makes the “savage” noble is his or her graceful endurance of defeat. The Indians in the *Indianerfilme* challenge their subjugation much more, and do so in a way that was linked to contemporary Third World struggles at the time. In *Sons of Great Bear*, made a year after John Ford’s *Cheyenne Autumn*, the Dakota are, as in the Ford film, led across the plains to a barren reservation, but the focus here is on exploitation rather than, with Ford, on enduring pain, as a woman’s baby is killed and the Indians are told to get packed and get out. This subjugation is countered, however, by Tokei ihto, who declares that he and his band want to live “as free men of the Prairie.” He joins another tribe, the Sisika, gets outfitted with shirts, horses, guns, and, with this tribe, hides in the trees to attack the cavalry, fighting like a guerilla to take back the land he sees slipping away. The guerilla fighter moment was downplayed in the Revisionist Western as well, since it could be read as favoring Vietnamese independence. Even *Little Big Man*, with its intonations of My Lai and the systematic program to destroy villages in South Vietnam on the excuse that doing so would keep peasants from joining the independence struggle, as dramatized in a handheld, documentary-like scene of Indian Nations women and children being massacred, had to be careful about presenting the Indians as successfully fighting back.

The *Indianerfilme* also protest against the transformation of indigenous and colonized peoples from entirely subsistent to dependent. *Chingachgook* begins with a description of how this dependence was fostered in the eighteenth century, and *Apaches* picks up on its further development more than a century later. As that film opens, the Indians, apropos of a treaty they have signed, are going to Santa Anita for their annual handout of “relief flour” for baking. As an added bonus, one of them says, “Last year they gave me beefsteak.” A central theme in *Apaches* is the awakening of the old man, Nana, who lives for the alcohol that is a part of the yearly feast, having gotten so drunk the year before that he “had to be tied to his horse to get home,” and whose rationale is, “It wasn’t my fault, they filled my glass.” The Apaches are brutally murdered in the town (an actual event) when the white man

breaks the treaty, and Ulzana, the chief who had refused to join the ceremony, sets fire to the “relief flour” and rescues Nana, who then transforms from being immobile to becoming Ulzana’s second-in-command and an extraordinary fighter. This theme of being self-sufficient rather than beholden surely would have echoed with East Germans who saw themselves positioned between the East and West, but it would also resound with other subjugated colonial peoples; it became one of the main themes of Ousmane Sembene’s *Guelwaar* (1993), a film about African dependence on the West for materials and for money to pay its international debt.

In *Fantasies of the Master Race*, Ward Churchill castigates the Hollywood Western not only for its racist portrayal of the Native American but for its limited historical grasp of the Native American, and its indifference to the multitude of tribes and ways of life. He notes that most of the films are set between 1865, the end of the US Civil War, and 1890, the final vanquishing of the Native American and conquest of the continent, with most projecting the Indian at that moment as an impediment to this conquest. By contrast, the twelve *Indianerfilme* cover a wide range of historical periods and tribes giving a much broader sense of the struggle between the Europeans and the Native American. Refusing to concentrate only on the period of the vanquishing, these films see that struggle as having taken place over two centuries, and thus they recount stories that more powerfully relate resistance.⁷ Against Gemünden’s claim that these films “ignore a wide spectrum of historical and regional difference” (2001: 28) is the fact that they include the following periods and tribes: the Delaware, Huron and Mohicans during the period of the 1740 Indian Wars (*Chingachgook*); Tecumseh and the Shawnee in the early 1800s (*Tecumseh*, 1972); the Seminoles in Florida and their linkage to runaway slaves during the 1830s (*Oceola*, 1971); the Apaches and the onset of the Mexican-American War during the 1840s (*Apaches*); the Dakota in the Black Hills at the time of the gold rush (*Sons of Great Bear* and *Spur des Falken* (*The Trail of the Falcon*, 1968)); the Cheyenne and the Dakota in *Weißer Wölfe* (*White Wolves*, 1968); and the Cheyenne in 1864, again before the Civil War and in the aftermath of a massacre by the US army in *Blutsbrüder* (*Blood Brothers*, 1975). Finally, three *Indianerfilme* concern the later period of contending with life on reservations: *Ulzana* (1973), about the Mimbrano near Tucson who fight to keep businessmen from appropriating profits from the reservation; *Der Scout* (1982), about the Nez Percés facing extinction; and *Tödlicher Irrtum* (*Fatal Error*, 1969), set in 1896 Wyoming during the closing of the West, and about illegal oil drilling on Indian land. Even more wide-reaching is *Severino* (1978), which describes life among the Manzaneros of the Argentinean Andes.

Of course, this breadth is balanced by the imposition of a European consciousness on all these varied periods and tribes, but it does seem both spurious and a sort of postmodern posturing to claim, as Gemünden does, that these films failed to capture the so-called radical alterity of the Revisionist films. His example is Robert Aldrich’s *Ulzana’s Raid* (1972), where the Apache chief is a powerful force that is destructive and ultimately incomprehensible to Western eyes. That suggestion is plausible in the film, but the destructive force which eventually wrecks such

havoc can also be read as continuous with Ford's *Stagecoach* Indian, since both are ultimately reduced to a menace which must be annihilated.

Doctor Mabuse, Der Cowboy

Any revival of an older form without a thorough questioning is likely to revive the racist and sexist stereotypes of that form. While it is true that the *Indianerfilme* did adopt many of the conventions of the Western and were guilty of resuscitating the residue of a colonial and imperial project, because of their orientation toward a materialist reading of the West, the films also altered and reversed many of those stereotypes. As Dika points out, centering the film around Native Americans reverses the polarity of the Civilization–Wilderness dichotomy, whereas in the classical Western, the Indian was merely a subset of the values of the wilderness. The orientation toward guerilla fighter, however, makes the Native American more than simply the backward-looking representative of a fading wilderness. Rather than being antimodern, the protagonists of the *Indianerfilme* struggle with finding a place in changing societies. In *Chingachgook*, Chingachgook and his white companion, Deerslayer, do return to the wilderness, but at that point the wilderness is still relatively untouched. By contrast, Tokei ihto in *Sons of Great Bear* uses gold, the basis of the white man's economy, to buy land for his people, and Ulzana in *Apaches* employs the tactics of guerilla warfare in his battle to retain control of Apache land. The meaning of landscape, so important in the Western, also changes along with this change in perspective. In Ford's films, the Western landscape connotes open spaces but often for conquest by the European settlers, his most popular image being the army patrol riding across the pristine desert with its beautiful, Death Valley mesas. Landscape in the *Indianerfilme* is often a battleground, as the Native American open space is reduced to the stones and rubble of the reservation of the forced relocation in *Sons of Great Bear*. It is a contested space rather than simply a blank space to be inscribed. To exemplify how perspective is reversed in these films, I will discuss three stereotypes which the *Indianerfilme* rewrite and explain how that rewriting revises notions of the West and the Western: the role of the cowboy; European as opposed to Native American "terrorism" in the West; and the place of alcohol.

Crucial to the conception of the *Indianerfilme* is the image of the cowboy as greedy, profiteering, petit bourgeois or lumpenproletariat scoundrel. The military was the imperial force of capital on the plains, but the cowboy was the advance dragoon. Obviously, this contrasts sharply with the noble image of the gunfighter, the ultimate individual who battled other lusty individuals and whose personal gain could also serve the community (*The Gunfighter*, 1950; *High Noon*, 1952; *Shane*, 1953). In *Chingachgook* the traders, frontiersmen, are the pre-image of the cowboy yet are revealed as reprehensible. The younger trader, Harry, defends taking women and children's scalps, and the older one, Tom, first seen as the loving father of Judith,

the woman on his trading barge, is later revealed as the pirate murderer of her father and dies in front of her as she, after this revelation, stares at him, repulsed at his crime. In *Sons of Great Bear*, Red Fox, a sly reference to the Soviets (Giddins, 2006), murders Tokei ihto's father in the opening scene, when he refuses to turn over his gold in a saloon that is viewed as more funeral pyre than joyful watering hole. That same saloon is later the site of a Weimar-era, dirgelike Marlene Dietrich number that ends by characterizing the lumpen cowboys' lot as "Brandy and baccy, dragoons and damn it. What a shitty place." In a subsequent scene, Red Fox, who has appropriated Tokei ihto's white speckled horse, cannot master riding the horse and is thrown; Tokei ihto then jumps on the horse, and two bystanders erupt in laughter; the scene exposing the cowboy as incompetent in his supposed *métier*. *Apaches* opens with a fearsome band of horsemen galloping menacingly across the plains who then threaten the Indians they encounter. The band are American mercenaries led by the advance guard of the army, Johnson, who engineers the Santa Anita massacre and collects scalps for money as his personal booty. Here the cowboys are less the peaceful protectors of the plains than prototypes of Blackwater subcontractors in Iraq, showing up on the scene as adjuncts to the army who perform the dirty work the army might want to disavow – a pattern that predates the invasion of Iraq but predicts the subsequent privatizing or mercenarization of the imperial army.

Susan Faludi in *The Terror Dream* (2007) describes frontier literature and film as completely bound up in the image of the frightened white family, and particularly the white woman taken by the Indian. She also describes how almost none of the literature or cinematic accounts of these atrocities are based in fact: they are exaggerated and often contradict the experience of the white woman at whose expense the myth is constructed. The Revisionist Western was adept at countering the image of the lone pioneer family overwhelmed by Indians. In particular, *Soldier Blue* (1970) and *Little Big Man* are at great pains to present the more common occurrence (which we know to be true, since the Native American was close to disappearing at the close of the West): the massacre of Indian villages, often those guaranteed safety, as Indian land once deemed barren was found valuable. What the *Indianerfilme* add in their notable depiction of terrorism as practiced by the whites against Native Americans is both the methodical, systematic way this slaughter is accomplished and its "rational" motive as part of increased productivity and profit. In *Chingachgook*, an elaborate ritual with dancing, tomahawks, and arrows, practiced before the slaying of the Mohican Chingachgook by the Huron, is contrasted and broken up by the single-file, uniformed British military marching in unison over a hill and opening fire on the largely defenseless Huron, many of whom are simply slain on the spot. The image is of an efficient killing machine. Likewise in *Apaches*, rifles and cannon are deployed against the Indians, who have come only for their yearly subsistence. Johnson watches the slaughter and later keeps tabs on the number of scalps – his pay for this clearing of the Indian so the copper and silver mines can be exploited more effectively, while a shot of the slaughter's aftermath focuses on the deserted teepees as the few remaining

stragglers limp home. When the Indians subsequently go on the offensive, there is a preindustrial, ludic reversal of a classical Western cliché, highlighting the prowess of the arrow over the gun. In *Stagecoach*, when the Indians attack, John Wayne seems to be firing the mythical single bullet of the Kennedy Assassination. Every time he fires, two Indians fall, as the bullet seems to hit them and their horses. Conversely in *Sons of Great Bear*, when Tokei ihto leads an attack on an army troop wagon train after the whites refuse the Dakota's offer to negotiate, his arrows match Wayne's bullets and often fell more than one soldier at the same time. A final deconstruction of the tropes around the massacre occurs in *Apaches*, when Johnson and his men are surrounded by Ulzana's raiding party, and one of the men sneaks off in the night to ask the cavalry for help. In the standard Western, such a desperate adventure is doomed, as the man frequently is waylaid by "savages." In *Apaches*, he breaks through and reaches the cavalry, pleading for rescue; however, the army commanders judge it more efficient to ensure the long-term objective of capturing the mines, so they proceed to attack the Mexicans in order to steal their territory, and thus no cavalry arrives for the rescue. The bugle blows in the camp, but only to summon the cavalry to a different, more important, imperial mission.

A final cliché the *Indianerfilme* shatter involves the communal feeling around alcohol. Ford never tired of presenting alcohol and inebriation as a character bond, most especially in *Fort Apache*, which is endlessly concerned with the "shenanigans" of three drunken sergeants (Hawks also relished such moments, e.g. the "hilarious" Eddy (Walter Brennan) in *To Have and Have Not* (1944), so debilitated he can no longer tolerate drinking water). Ford's lighthearted notions of drinking did a disservice to Irish culture, as it was often the Irish-American soldier or sergeant who was portrayed as the imbiber, and served to disavow the colonizer's systematic deployment of alcohol to foster dependency and wreak damage on the Native American. The actor Mitic was himself blatantly antidrinking, aware of the damage it has wrought in Eastern European culture as well. His onscreen Indian persona, then, brought to each film a recognition of alcohol not as trivial and humorous but as an instrument of the colonizing project at a moment during the nineteenth century when Native American independence was being stripped, and that in hindsight served as a vivid precursor of the deployment of drugs to ameliorate tensions in twentieth-century urban communities. At the opening of *Sons of Great Bear*, Tokei ihto's father's drinking in the saloon results in his being stabbed by Red Fox for refusing to reveal the source of his gold. Later, at the fort, before a negotiation, alcohol is offered to Tokei ihto, who pointedly refuses. In *Apaches*, the old man Nana has embarrassed himself at the previous year's "relief flour" giveaway and again drinks as the massacre unfolds. He is rescued by Mitic's Ulzana, who refuses the drink and remains on his toes as a warrior. Later, Nana, having put down the drink, becomes Ulzana's trusted adjunct, at one point impersonating a Mexican peasant during a guerilla action meant to gain the Apaches entry to the soldier's camp. This anti-alcohol sentiment echoes that in the Algerian postindependence classic, *The Battle of Algiers* (1966), where the Front

Libération Nationale (National Liberation Front) enforces a clearing of the community's vices, seen as deliberate ways of promoting disorganization, in order to successfully challenge the French colonizers.

The Lives of Other(Genre)s

The *Indianerfilme* also intersect with two moments within West German cinema. They act both as a revisionist cinema vis-à-vis the West German commercial cinema, most prominently in terms of the 1960s Karl May Westerns and, to a lesser extent, the later sexploitative Edgar Wallace "thrillers," and as a popular correlative to New German Cinema, which expressed similar aspects of the youth rebellion, and whose lifecycle, mid-1960s to late 1970s, was roughly concurrent with the Eastern Westerns.

3:10 To Yugoslavia

The Western in German history is, in Benjamin's sense, a constellation that brings together various discursive fields, including historical projections of the colonial, capitalist-democratic, and fascist periods. The earliest German Westerns, shot near Munich during the 1920s were termed the "Isar Westerns" after the river that figured prominently in their landscapes (Schneider, 1998: 156). The so-called greatest moment of the West German film was marked by Cinemascope versions of the Karl May adaptations, beginning in 1962 with *Der Schatz im Silbersee* (*Treasure of Silver Lake*) and totaling 17 in all by 1968. The first film, an attempt to compete with Hollywood, was the most expensive West German film to date (3.5 million Deutschmarks), and achieved financial success throughout Europe (Schneider, 1998: 141). The films capitalized on the prior commercial success of May's adventure novels; May was the most frequently translated German-language author, whose Western novels concerning the relationship between a German settler, Old Shatterhand, and a Mescalero Apache, Winnetou, even outsold Louis L'Amour, the most popular English-language Western novelist (Schneider, 1998: 143). These films were so well-known to *Indianerfilme* audiences (and would have been known equally in the East and West), that the first Winnetou film begins with the narration, "Now we finally meet them face to face" (Schneider, 1998: 159). An American film critic (Allen Eyles, *Film and Filming*, 1965) praised one of the Winnetou Westerns for its "DeMille-like grandeur ... the film revives the legendary West in its magnificent natural setting ... There is respect too for traditional values" (quoted in Schneider, 1998: 146).

Formally, the Winnetou films, and particularly the trilogy *Winnetou I, II, II* (1963–1965), maintained their "respect for traditional values" in their use of the

Hollywood pattern of Western editing which consisted of the following: long-shot reserved for the settlers heroically trekking across the country stressing their communion with nature (going back to Ford's lyrical *Stagecoach* rolling across the plains); more frantic cutting of the battle scenes with the emphasis on the wagon trains under siege in the case of *Winnetou I* by the marauding Kiowas (for whom the shots are shorter and who are not individuated); and, elsewhere, a heavily analyzed standard crosscutting pattern usually from the perspective of the whites and particularly the blond German hero Shatterhand. The *Indianerfilme* employed the Soviet style of Eisensteinian montage (some of its directors having been trained in Moscow), which, when added to the preponderance of Brechtian distancing devices, created space for the Western to become a locus of reflection and a means for socialist political education rather than an affirmation of "traditional" (capitalist and colonial) values.

Sons of Great Bear's concluding sequence, Tokho ihto's battle with Red Fox, completely shuns continuity editing as practiced in the Hollywood Western, looking more in its editing pattern like the storming of the Winter Palace in Eisenstein's *October* (1927) than the gunfight in the hills at the conclusion of King Vidor's *Duel in the Sun* (1946). The final battle emphasizes Tokei ihto's cunning, as he fights barefisted against Red's gun, and Mitic's athleticism, as Tokei ihto is pulled by Red's horse and then pulls himself to the horse and leaps on. The cutting, however, distances the audience from an excessively emotional involvement in the battle, because many shots simply show Tokho ihto riding, and the antagonists are seldom in the same shot. This recalls the battleship gliding through the battalion during the final sequence of *Battleship Potemkin* (1925), where the ship is cut into its component parts and never seen in relation to the other ships in the fleet. *Sons of Great Bear* also frequently cuts without indicating that months or years may have passed in the narrative. The elongated time period of *Sons of Great Bear*, and of the *Indianerfilme* in general (the action of displacing the Dakota from their lands and of their attempt to reclaim a new space for themselves takes years) links these films more to the Melodrama than to the Western, which in Hollywood usually features a very condensed time period. In the melodrama, it is developmental aging within the family that is emphasized and time is elongated (Elsaesser, 1987), while, similarly, in the GDR Western, time is expanded to give the audience a better grasp of the historical situation, which in a materialist view is about, not personal, but historical transformation. In *Sons of Great Bear*, *Chingachgook*, and *Apaches*, the transformation is generally one of tribal land being lost, grabbed, and acquired – and the tribes' fighting back. The use of long-shots and extended takes in the first two films is reserved not for the settlers loping across the prairie, establishing their credentials as sedate civilizers, but rather for the Indian camps, which in this counter to Hollywood (and to Hollywood through the *Winnetou* films) are viewed lovingly as communal centers, places of harmony, which serve to validate an alternative view: that of a "civilization" in the process of being destroyed. *Apaches*, under the influence of the Leone Westerns, uses a more traditional extended long-take during

its opening sequence to depict cowboys moving across the plains, but here they are presented as a destructive force of power and vengeance.

Chingachgook begins with a Brechtian flourish, a veritable catalogue of devices to highlight how the narrative is both story and teaching tool. The startling masks and dance of the Delaware are explained as their celebration of the wounded chief's rescue in a sequence that is part Native American re-creation and part early expressionist musical interlude. It is followed by offscreen narration recounting the socioeconomic moment of the tribe's entanglement in the British–French conflict and then Chingachgook himself acting out his version of the rescue in a way that emphasizes a Brechtian showing (*Darstellung*) with its emphasis within the spectacle on the gestural rather than on merely relating or telling. The combination of the editing and these extradiegetic devices, along with a deliberate editorial tendency to downplay the sensational element of Western violence by excluding it from the frame, make the West less a mythic place than a place of potential reflection – reflection about a colonial trajectory which continues in the present. In so doing, these Westerns counter the idea of myth, which generally works through emotional appeal to a past presumed to be understood as the same by all for all time. Instead, the materialist conception of the past is that it is a constantly evolving, specifically situated series of moments which must be understood rather than merely lauded for their place in leading to an equally unchallenged present.

The *Winnetou* Westerns were an attempt at a global transnational Western, or at least a trans-European one. They brought together a French actor, B-movie stalwart, aristocrat, and Indochine and Algerian War vet Pierre Brice (born Pierre-Louis Le Bris) as *Winnetou*, the Apache, and an American veteran of the *Tarzan* series, Lex Barker, as Old Shatterhand. They were shot in Yugoslavia and credited for creating the wave that led to the Sergio Leone Westerns, beginning with *A Fistful of Dollars* (1964), shot in Spain. The *Indianerfilme*, though, were equally transnational in their coordination of efforts from what at the time was called the Second World. Initially they were shot on the same Yugoslav locations as the *Winnetou* Westerns but soon expanded to locations in Romania, Bulgaria, Uzbekistan, and Slovakia, as well as boasting a Serbian lead actor, Mitic, and were often co-financed by other Eastern European countries; *Apaches*, for example, was co-produced by Buftea-Film in Bucharest and by Mosfilm in the USSR, and edited in the DEFA studios at Babelsberg. While the East and West German films both attempted to globalize the Western, the *Winnetou* films, evidenced by the lineage of their actors, simply localized the Hollywood Western, keeping intact its colonial and class pretensions, while the *Indianerfilme* attempted to employ the popularity of the genre while also questioning many of its basic assumptions, thus participating in a transnational, global dialogue rather than projecting globalization as Americanization.

The Karl May *Winnetou* adaptations also recall the colonialist and fascist associations that May's name conjures. May wrote these "naïve, boyhood version[s] of the classical Western" (Schneider, 1998: 146) with their tacit support for American manifest destiny from 1875 through 1910, at the same time also writing "adventure"

novels about desert Arabs (*The Caravan of Death*, 1892, adapted into a film in 1920) and tales of Latin America Indians and peasants, all at the moment when the saturation of the domestic market at the height of German industrialization was compelling the country to expand its markets and catch up with the rest of Europe as a colonizer. Although the nominal hero is the Apache chief, Winnetou, the books and their West German film adaptations tend to celebrate the exploits, and more thoroughly focalize the narration through, the blond, resourceful German settler, Old Shatterhand. Winnetou may be noble, but his most noble moment in the novels occurs at his death, when he converts to Christianity. As one critic noted, "Winnetou ... combines the highest aspects of otherwise 'decadent' Indian cultures with the natural adoption of the romantic and Christian traits of Karl May's own vision of German civilization."⁸ May also held to the most enduring principle of colonial rule, divide and conquer. From James Fenimore Cooper, he grafted onto his work not only the noble, if unequal, friendship of the Native American and the European, but also the division of the Indian tribes into morally just and unjust, or noble savage and just plain "savage." In keeping with this tradition, the Mescaleros in *Winnetou I* fulfill the noble function of the sadly defeated Indians who accept their defeat gracefully, while the Kiowas, pure evil and allied with the villainous whites, allow the usual colonial stereotyping to go on unimpeded. Against these "traditional values," the consistent message of the *Indianerfilme* was about warring tribes (the state of war being created or exacerbated by colonial rule) uniting to fight "settler" encroachment, and it is this resistance which makes them "noble."

The constellation of the Winnetou Westerns also encompasses fascism, not least because they were favorites of Hitler (in 1940, Klaus Mann's famously indicted May as "The Cowboy Mentor of the *Führer*"). During the fascist period, these tales of a solitary band of Indians facing all odds were reedited to align them more solidly with the "chauvinist 'healthy' German literary tradition of people's authors (*Volksschriftsteller*)" (Schneider, 1998: 143), and 300 000 copies were distributed to the German troops on the Russian front as examples of bravery during wartime. They also proved to the *Führer*, as outlined in Albert Speer's 1975 diary that, just as May had never visited the lands about which he was writing, so too, in waging war, "It was not necessary to know the desert in order to direct troops in the African theater of war ... it wasn't necessary to travel in order to know the world" (Speer, quoted in Liukkonen and Pesonen, 2008: para. 7). The *Winnetou* films simply ignore this context, while the New German Cinema, in particular Hans Jürgen Syberberg's collage film, *Karl May* (1974), highlights its repression. Gemünden justly points out that the *Indianerfilme*'s (and certainly, by implication, the *Winnetou* films') focus on the moment of genocide as a moment of resistance assuages German guilt for the genocide of the Jews. While this is undoubtedly a part of the films' appeal, it must also be pointed out that the East German Westerns evoke a historically resistant narrative that was also part of DEFA's avowed antifascist credo: the projection of the experience of partisans and freedom fighters against the Nazis in the countries in which these alternative stories of resistance were

filmed. The films' publicity, for example, emphasized Mitic's lineage as the son of a Serbian partisan (Dika, 2008: 3), and Serbia was the Eastern region most active in resisting the fascists. Thus, in their symbolic layering, this Second World recounting of Indian resistance summons an anti-Nazi, antigenocidal past which did have an (albeit hidden) historical referent throughout the region and was not merely romantic projection or contemporary wish fulfillment.

The most prevalent ethos behind the West German Westerns, however, was not merely providing a diversionary world free of all actual conflict for the fulfillment of boyhood obsessions, as Tassilio Schneider maintains, but rather their distillation of the ruling and managerial ethos of the "economic miracle" that was taking place at the time of the films' conception, and the idea that this power always brought "progress." The films evidence a link to Weimar-era capitalism and depict 1960s West German society as led by a technologically resourceful class that, apropos of the contemporary German bourgeoisie's domination through economic force, entailed more than a hint of the will to power in an unsuccessfully denazified terrain. The bonding of Winnetou and Old Shatterhand in *Winnetou I* is not presented as an equal friendship but instead echoes the conclusion of Fritz Lang's Weimar classic, *Metropolis* (1927), where heart (the workers) and mind (the bosses) are urged to collaborate, though it is here justified as, the latter who control the former.⁹ Winnetou is mostly passive, with Shatterhand, for example, freeing him at one point by figuring out the Kiowa camp's organizational structure, his superior intelligence enabling him to master Native customs to the extent that he knows the tribe better than the tribe knows itself. Shatterhand is an engineer who offers a technological solution to the problems centered around the battle of the Indians against the railroad. When the Kiowas attack his wagon train, he, a kind of thinking man's John Wayne, blows up the ammunition wagon to halt the attack. He later figures a way to dynamite the villainous railroad official and his gang out of their saloon. Finally, in a contest with Winnetou's father involving a boat race, while pursued by the entire tribe and against all odds, he deliberately capsizes his boat, thus abandoning his short-term protection, and, swimming to the chief's boat in order to overturn it, wins the contest by technologically outmaneuvering his opponent. (Is this a parable about the exporting genius of German industry in the Third World?!)

Shatterhand is also, pointedly, a defender of capitalist law, the sanctity of the contract. He believes, and the film validates the notion, that there is a legal solution to all disputes. The main dispute centers around the railroad breaking its compact and building on Apache land, but this dispute turns out to be not an inevitable clash of competing and unequal interests but merely a problem of one greedy local railroad official and his hired gunmen who want short-term profit by taking the Indian lands. Shatterhand and his cohorts defeat this illegal move and affirm the good intentions of the railroad owners, whose original pact preserved the native land, as well as a faith that building a railroad constitutes progress, or at least the best and only way forward. (Of course, their actions also reaffirm a capitalist ruling-class imperative for which long-term profit and stability, which would

eventually involve systematically clearing Apache lands, should not be sacrificed for personal, short-term gain.) Clearly the *Indianerfilme*, with its focalization through the various tribes who witness the confiscation of the land which they inhabit by originary possession (*Chingachgook*), or watch treaties abrogated because the land has been found to contain valuable minerals (gold in *Sons of Great Bear*, copper and silver in *Apaches*) casts doubt on the rule of law as a guarantor of fairness. In *Winnetou I*, law is also backed up by force. The engineer acquires the nickname “Old Shatterhand” after he demonstrates the power of his fists in a bar-room brawl, and his technical solutions to conflict frequently involve dynamite. Thus, beneath the technological know-how of capitalist economic power lies the threat of force should the fallacy of the law as equal guarantor of equality be exposed. In the contemporary context of only partial West German denazification, such power was also linked to a force with a history of exceeding all boundaries.

Beach Blanket Babelsberg: The *Indianerfilme*, the 1960s Youth Movement, and New German Cinema

If we continue to pursue Thomas Elsaesser and Michael Wedel’s (2001: 11) dictum that GDR cinema in general was “less *sui generis* than generally assumed ... in both its mainstream and art cinema idioms,” we will find very tangible traces of the 1960s youth movement in the *Indianerfilme*, which, along with their relation to Hollywood and German popular genres, might also relate them to New German Cinema, in particular Fassbinder’s project in the West. This view is contrary to the more commonplace notion in which the films are seen as counterparts to the *Verbotsfilme*, or Rabbit Films, the twelve films, virtually an entire year’s production, that were banned and shelved by the GDR in 1965, the year of the first *Indianerfilme*, and that would likely have constituted the East German equivalent of the New German Cinema. Rather than letting this repression be the “moral, aesthetic, and historical vanishing point from which GDR cinema could be classified and judged” so that what is hidden is “authentic” and what is overt is necessarily suspect (Elsaesser and Wedel, 2001: 6), one might instead take up Elsaesser and Wedel’s dictum and stress the links between the *Indianerfilme* and New German Cinema, both of which were engaged in rewriting popular West German cinema, questioning basic historical assumptions prevalent in (both) Germany(s), especially regarding the colonialist and fascist past, and using the mediating form of Hollywood genres to accomplish that questioning.

The youth movement was certainly a part of New German Cinema culture. It was also reflected in the *Indianerfilme*. Great change occurs in this respect between 1965’s *Sons of Great Bear* and 1967’s *Chingachgook*, the latter of which opens with Mitic, disallowed a female companion in the former film, now portrayed like a 1960s sex symbol, shirtless before a flower-decked Princess Wahtawah. Later, what Gary Giddins (2006) calls an Art Blakey jazz clarinet buttresses a scene in which

Chingachgook, along with his white companion, Deerslayer, a very hippyish-looking, thin blond student-type, and the trapper's daughter, Rebecca, who wears leather pants, all try on costumes from a treasure chest left by the trapper. A deliberate Haight-Ashbury feel to the sequence renders Deerslayer's and Rebecca's doomed romance closer to *The Graduate* than to *The Last of the Mohicans*.

Besides their cognizance of the 1960s youth movement, the projects of the East German popular and West German avant-garde films shared deep-structural similarities. Fassbinder's melodramas, for example, complexly negotiated a politically charged genre. Melodrama had been one of the primary Nazi genres and after the war became, along with the domestic *Heimat* ("Homeland") dramas, the dominant cinematic genre, constituting almost 30% of total genre output during the 1950s and 1960s (Schneider, 1998: 152). In terms of the continuity, for example, Veit Harlan, director of the infamous antisemitic *Jud Süß* (1940), after being cleared of Nazi sympathies by a judge who had previously ratified Hitler's purge of the Ukraine, went on to direct ten even more flamboyantly emotional *Heimat* films, mainly during the 1950s.¹⁰ Fassbinder, however, in a Brechtian move, employed the melodrama but somewhat distanced himself from its German variant, instead adopting Sirk's Universal Melodramas as his overt source. Fassbinder deconstructed the genre by deploying its own techniques against itself, as exemplified by his critique of the still idealized Nazi past (*Lili Marleen*, 1981), his figuring of the colonial traces of the industrializing era (*Effi Briest*, 1974), and his dissatisfaction with both the drive to domination that accompanied the "economic miracle" (*The Marriage of Maria Braun*, 1979) and the psychical devastation commodification heaped upon German workers (*Mother Küsters Goes to Heaven*, 1975). The *Indianerfilme* was equally a corollary to the already antifascist thrust of GDR filmmaking; its first move being the funding of *Murderers Among Us* (1946), Germany's veritable *Open City* (1945), which examined the psychological effects of a fascism that had failed to dissolve at war's end. In its critique of the colonial and fascist associations of both the (West) German and the Hollywood Western, the *Indianerfilme*, like Fassbinder, also deployed a Hollywood form, yet distanced itself from it in order to make a point in the popular cinema arena, while Fassbinder made his on the art and festival circuits¹¹ (even as he also often expressed a desire to engage the popular, as evidenced by his persistent work on television).

One way the two forms are linked, as Elsaesser points out, is that the radicalized films which flowed from the 1960s youth movement in the West and the overt antifascist, anticolonial, and anticapitalist popular films of the East have both disappeared from the screen in today's Germany. The linking of these two cultural formations though suggests an alliance that is present and growing stronger today not in the cultural but in the political realm, and that is the alliance in *Die Linke* of the remnants of the 1960s youth movement in the West and of a reconstituted democratic socialist and workers party in the East.¹² Thus far the mainstream German Social Democratic Party (SPD), an ostensible workers party, has resisted bringing *Die Linke* into such an alliance and for that reason may have lost the 2005

election at a crucial moment when a Left coalition including *Die Linke*, the SPD, and the Green Party would likely have resulted in a Left parliamentary majority of forty seats (Anderson, 2009: 252). Instead, a largely do-nothing Christian Democratic Union (CDU)-SPD “grand coalition” of four years resulted in an ousting of the SPD from the government with the CDU joining forces with the overtly neoliberal Free Democratic Party (FDP). New Left alliances are starting to form nonetheless. In Berlin, the SPD mayor, Klaus Wowereit, has held power for seven years due to *Die Linke* support, and Germany is edging ever closer to challenging “the taboo” of its centrist parties forging alliances with the radical Left, the taboo having already been “broken in a Western *Land* (legislature) [election]” with this victorious coalition opening the possibility that “it could be replicated on the federal level” (Anderson, 2009: 253). If such alliances move into the mainstream, they will have been prefigured by the cultural Left’s amalgamation of New German Cinema and popular GDR cinema. This was not an alliance that could have been discussed at the time it occurred because of the Cold War, but it is one that is fruitful to reconstruct as existing in essence in a crossborder formation that history, “written by the winners,” has buried and not subsequently acknowledged; in that sense the Wall itself, once a physical enforcement, continues its existence as an enduring symbolic political and cultural blockade. (In which case, the relationship between the *Indianerfilme* and the Revisionist Western stresses a kind of global resistance and rethinking of embedded colonial and imperial concepts in both the former East and West and is important in continuing to dismantle this Wall.) If the cultural in the first instance prefigured the political, the political may yet prefigure a cultural renewal of a critical popular and avant-garde cinema that will take up a forward movement of Germany’s workers and intellectuals in a way that continues to question its colonial and fascist past and posits a future free of the onerous and rapacious trappings of the capitalist present.

Notes

- 1 The sobriquet itself was not, as in the case of Leone’s “spaghetti Westerns” or the term applied to the West German Karl May Films, “Kraut Westerns,” an unflattering critical label imposed from outside the industry. *Indianerfilme* was the name DEFA assigned to the series (Bock, 1998), and, even in its contemporary US release, distributors have respected the intention of that name, terming the films, in highlighting their focalization through the Native American, “Westerns with a difference.”
- 2 The quote is from Benjamin’s 1939 essay, “Theses on the Philosophy of History” (Benjamin, 1968). The teleological reading is a trope of German film history much maligned in its application to Weimar Cinema by Siegfried Kracauer in *From Caligari to Hitler* (1947). For the primary critique, see Budd (1990), and for a formalist re-reading of the period, see Guerin (2005).

- 3 This moment, a general attack on what had been a strong German social welfare state, began with the SPD, the Labor Party, imposition of balancing the budget as an absolute priority. The reaction against the changes was negative but given the constraints of what amounts to a multiparty, two-party system, the country swung right and elected Angela Merkel but with an SPD, minority. In the 2009 election, though, Merkel won without the SPD, and with her new allies, the Free Democratic Party (FDP), an out-right neoliberal group, she has continued the assault on workers rights and benefits.
- 4 The shared sets and locations also illustrate that the West is today as much a discursive field as a site of history and what matters is how and for what purpose the “authentic” sites are used, especially in this context, where the “authentic” locations themselves are chosen supposedly for their similarity to the original “authentic” sites, but even these are the sites of not the history of the West, but of the shooting, and history, of the Western.
- 5 For a treatment of how two other contemporary Westerns, *Red River* (1948) and *My Darling Clementine* (1946), accomplish this task, see Corkin (2000), and for a more extended treatment of the Western as empire building, see Corkin (2004). Corkin contends that both Westerns, though made when expansion was just beginning, are concerned with this expansion.
- 6 Zola makes a similar distinction between Florent, the thin prole revolutionary in the French Second Empire who has returned from Devil’s Island and is hungry and thirsty for justice, and Beautiful Lisa, the robust self-satisfied shop owner who wants nothing to upset her prosperity in *Le Ventre de Paris* (The Belly of Paris).
- 7 What the *Indianerfilme* does not do, and what no Hollywood film has ever done, apropos Churchill (2001), is recount moments that occurred before the time of the European arrival which would even more validate Native American culture and traditions and more solidly establish the claim to the land.
- 8 The quote appears as part of a series of notes on an exhibition of Karl May’s books at <http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/Exhibits/nativeamericans/27.html> (accessed May 22, 2011).
- 9 For a consideration of the antiworker aspect of *Metropolis* as clarified in the expanded 2010 version, see Atkinson (2010).
- 10 Information cited in the documentary *Harlan: In the Shadow of Jew Süss* (Felix Moeller, 2008).
- 11 Yet to be explored is the *Indianerfilme*’s links not only to the contemporary Revisionist Hollywood Westerns but also to what might be called “The Popular Front Western” which forms the basis of what Steve Neale (1998) discusses as “The Pro-Indian Western.” (Blacklistee and Cultural Front stalwart Albert Maltz, for example, wrote the screenplay for *Broken Arrow*, 1950.) In this intertextual association, a feature such as Mitic’s athleticism would place him as an actor in a relationship with actors like Burt Lancaster, also a non-Method actor from the Popular Front period who credited his acting ability to his early years as a circus performer (Buford, 2001). This establishes a further link between Mitic’s Ulzana in *Apaches* and Lancaster’s equally athletic *Apache* (1954), suggesting as well, in subjects for further research, a reexamination of Popular Front director Nicholas Ray’s anti-McCarthy Western *Johnny Guitar* (1954).
- 12 Currently now giving way to a new generation led in the West by Klaus Ernst, a metal worker who will hopefully increase the party’s working-class base, and in the East by a female linguist, Gesine Loetzsch, who has been adept at forming coalitions in her home district of Berlin.

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