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- 13 William Rollins, “Heimat, Modernity and Nation in the Early Heimatschutz Movement,” in *Heimat, Nation and Fatherland: The German Sense of Belonging*, ed. Jost Hermand and James Steakley (New York: Peter Lang, 1996), 87–112.
- 14 Boa and Palfreyman, *Heimat*, 74–85; Eric Rentschler, *West German Film in the Course of Time* (New York: Redgrave, 1984), 103–28.
- 15 Robert G. Moeller, “The Politics of the Past in the 1950s: Rhetorics of Victimization in East and West Germany,” in Niven, *Germans as Victims*, 26–42; here 32.
- 16 For a discussion of the realities of life as an expellee in West Germany, see Rainer Schulze, “Growing Discontent: Relations between Native and Refugee Populations in a Rural District in Western Germany after the Second World War,” in *West Germany under Reconstruction: Politics, Society and Culture in the Adenauer Era*, ed. Robert G. Moeller (Michigan: U of Michigan P, 1997), 53–72.
- 17 Fehrenbach, *Cinema in Democratizing Germany*, 158.
- 18 See Bill Niven, *Germans as Victims*, Aleida Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit: Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik* (Munich: Beck, 2006); and Fuchs et al., *German Memory Contexts*.
- 19 See, for example, Paul Cooke, “The Continually Suffering Nation? Cinematic Representations of German Victimhood,” in Niven, *Germans as Victims*, 76–92; here 91–92.
- 20 Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials*, 18.
- 21 See Matthias Uecker, “Fractured Families — United Countries? Family, Nostalgia and Nation-Building in *Das Wunder von Bern* and *Goodbye Lenin!*” *New Cinemas* 5.3 (2007): 189–200; here 196–97.
- 22 By comparison, the rabbit-eating episode in *Das Wunder von Bern* melodramatically symbolizes the pathos of Richard’s failure to understand Matthias, the family’s hardship, and Matthias’s isolation and loneliness. In *Wer früher stirbt, der explodiert* rabbit is eaten by the family, with Sebastian’s older brother calmly explaining that eating the rabbit will allow it to live on in them.
- 23 Moltke, *No Place like Home*, 111.
- 24 Rachel Palfreyman, “The Fourth Generation: Legacies of Violence as Quest for Identity in Post-unification Terrorism Films,” in *German Cinema since Unification*, ed. David Clarke (London: Continuum, 2006), 11–42.

## 8: Resistance of the Heart: Female Suffering and Victimhood in DEFA's Antifascist Films

Daniela Bergbahn

LONG BEFORE NATHAN STOLTZEUS coined the phrase “resistance of the heart,” making reference to the successful protest of the women of the Rosentrasse in Berlin’s Jewish quarter in 1943, whose intervention may have saved their interned Jewish husbands from deportation, and more than twenty years before the West German filmmaker Margarethe von Trotta paid tribute to these courageous women in her film *Die Frauen von der Rosenstraße* (The Women of Rosenstrasse, 2003), East German cinema emotionalized the representation of resistance by focusing on women in two antifascist films of the 1980s: *Die Verlobte* (The Fiancée, Günter Reisch 1980) and *Die Schauspielerinnen* (The Actress, Siegfried Kühn 1988).<sup>1</sup> These two films belong to the small number of antifascist films with female protagonists produced by DEFA (Deutsche Film Aktiengesellschaft), as the GDR’s state-owned production company was called. Antifascism through a female prism results, as I shall argue, in a perspective that emphasizes the emotional motivations for joining the resistance rather than the ideological ones. In this respect, Reisch and Kühn’s films signal a new departure for DEFA’s antifascist genre, which I shall consider in the broader context of the critical reappraisal of the GDR’s foundational narrative of antifascism during the 1980s.

Framing DEFA’s antifascist genre in terms of gender, this chapter explores how these two films construct and deconstruct gender stereotypes, including the intersection of race and gender in the image of the feminized Jew. How do the films’ protagonists Hella Lindau and Maria Rheine compare to women in earlier antifascist films? What do these antifascist heroines, if we may refer to them in such terms, have in common with the socialist women featuring prominently in DEFA’s *Gegenwartsfilme* (films about contemporary society), another significant genre of East German film production? And finally, to what extent do these two East German films about female resistance, suffering, and victimhood anticipate the discourse on wartime suffering that has dominated German cinema since unification?

## DEFA's Antifascist Films

In East Germany's nationalized film industry, antifascism was a perennial theme. From its very first feature film, *Die Mörder sind unter uns* (The Murderers Are Among Us, Wolfgang Staudte, 1946), until 1992, when DEFA ceased to exist, around one hundred antifascist feature films were produced. This represents roughly 13 percent of DEFA's entire feature-film production, with organized communist resistance being by far the most common thematic angle taken. This is unsurprising, of course, given the foundational narrative of the German Democratic Republic as a state founded by antifascist resistance fighters, which, in turn, served to legitimize the Party state. But the antifascist genre also includes films that examine the political and economic causes that led to the rise of fascism and the Second World War, war films, and a comparatively small number of films about Jews during the Third Reich. In the early 1990s, DEFA's antifascist tradition came to an abrupt end, when the memory contest on the silver screen became dominated by representations of the Third Reich that reflected the West German normalization debate rather than a critical reappraisal of the East German anti-fascist discourse.<sup>2</sup>

DEFA's antifascist genre was closely aligned to the GDR's official historiography and reflected changes in the Party's political agenda and strategic priorities. Frank Beyer's *Nacht unter Wölfen* (Naked Among Wolves, 1963), based on Bruno Apitz's best-selling novel (1958) of the same title, is a canonical text. The film provides a fictionalized account of the GDR's antifascist myth of origin, which centers on the alleged self-liberation from fascism, and the Buchenwald Oath, sworn by a group of political prisoners (but by no means all communists), in which they committed themselves to the "annihilation of Nazism at its very roots," and the creation of a world of peace and freedom.<sup>3</sup> Since *Nacht unter Wölfen* details on the one hand the plight of the political prisoners while on the other hand celebrating the victory of communist resistance, the film's narrative encapsulates the paradoxical notion that the GDR's founders and leaders were both the victims of and victors over fascism.

In particular during times of conflict and crisis, the production of antifascist films was prioritized by the DEFA studio management, since antifascism was harnessed to create a sense of consensus among East Germany's disillusioned citizens. In his memoirs, *Wenn der Wind sich dreht: Mein Leben, meine Filme* (When the Wind Turns: My Life, My Films), Frank Beyer suggests that the incarceration and suffering of the GDR's founders and leaders prevented the kind of radical de-Stalinization that occurred in other Eastern bloc countries during the post-Stalinist thaw and that paved the way for an artistic renaissance and the East European New Waves:

Weil es Antifaschisten waren, die den Sozialismus stalinistischer Prägung bei uns eingeführt haben. Man hätte Antifaschisten bekämpfen müssen, um den Stalinismus zu bekämpfen. Das wollten viele nicht. Es gibt einen großen Respekt im Lande vor denjenigen, die viele Jahre ihres Lebens in der Emigration oder in Gefängnissen und Lagern verbringen mußten.<sup>4</sup>

[Because it was anti-fascists who had introduced a Stalinist type of socialism in our country. In order to fight Stalinism, one would have had to fight antifascists. Many people were not prepared to do so. Those who had to spend several years of their lives in emigration, in prisons, or in camps are held in high esteem in our country.]

Although the conflation of antifascism and Stalinism legitimized the Party state well into the 1980s, a critical reappraisal of antifascism gradually emerged in the 1970s. In the words of Heiner Müller, the attempt was made "die deutsche Geschichte bis auf die Knochen freizulegen, um zu verhindern, daß die Schuld und Unterdrückung des Verbrechens überlebt" (to strip history to its very bones in order to prevent the survival of guilt and the suppression of crime) and to reveal the ordinariness of fascism. Heiner Müller provocatively remarked in 1975: "Heute ist der gewöhnliche Faschismus interessant. Wir leben mit Leuten, für die er das Normale war, wenn nicht die Norm. Unschuld ein Glücksfall" (Today we are interested in everyday fascism. There are people among us for whom it was normal, if not the norm. Innocence was a happy coincidence).<sup>5</sup>

DEFA's antifascist films of the late 1970s and 1980s set out to challenge state-prescribed antifascism by breaking taboos and approaching an old theme from new vantage points. Orthodox accounts of the antifascist myth were losing currency as the focus gradually shifted from action-driven narratives about heroic male resistance to detailed introspective portraits of conflict-ridden, wavering, and passive protagonists.<sup>6</sup> Narratives of resistance, hitherto depicted as a collective effort, increasingly centered on isolated or lonely individuals. Women, generally of marginal significance in DEFA's antifascist films, took center stage, at least in a small number of films. Established gender dichotomies became more fluid in what had, until the 1980s, been an overtly masculine discourse (see Sabine Hake's comments on masculinity in the antifascist genre in her contribution to this volume).

Women had not been completely absent in antifascist narratives of previous decades, but in accordance with the genre's gender bias they were depicted as the helpmates of their heroic husbands or lovers rather than as autonomous agents in their own right. The chief function of women in the films' narrative economy was to heighten the trope of self-sacrifice around which the antifascist genre is structured. Whereas men tend to sacrifice their lives, women merely sacrifice their personal happiness.

There are hardly any couples that survive together. Generally the male partner, as the agent of resistance, dies, leaving his lover, fiancée, or wife behind to mourn his loss. Slatan Dudow's *Stärker als die Nacht* (Stronger than the Night, 1954) is a typical example. The film eulogizes the heroism of male communist resistance, in particular that of the larger-than-life antifascist fighter Hans Löning, while his wife's chief function is to provide moral support and to preserve his memory. At the end of *Stärker als die Nacht* Gerda Löning reads out her husband's farewell letter, in which he urges her to remember their life together and their common goals, to a group of fellow communists. Yet her voice falters, and she hands over the letter to her young son, who continues to read it out loud. Gerda is shown literally to pass on the legacy of antifascism to the next generation. She assumes the role of mediator between the GDR's heroic antifascist past and the bright future of socialism for which Hans Löning and thousands like him sacrificed their lives. Gerda, as wife and mother, ensures that the memory of resistance survives. By the end of the film Hans's sacrificial death has already become a legend, as fellow communists in prison quote from his farewell letter and tell each other with great admiration about his heroic death. *Stärker als die Nacht* concludes with a montage sequence, accompanied by the funeral march "Immortal Victims," which cuts from images of nationally owned factories to East Berlin's Humboldt University, from vast expanses of cornfields swaying in the wind to the young Hans and Gerda by the sea. This montage equates the socialist way with nature's way, thus tracing and legitimizing East Germany's trajectory from antifascism to socialism.

Though made only a few years later, Konrad Wolf's *Lissy* (1957) presents a far less conventional portrait, assuming a female subject position and granting the title heroine a degree of psychological depth atypical for a film of the 1950s.<sup>7</sup> It was Konrad Wolf's intention to explore, "wie der deutsche Faschismus es fertigbrachte, in die Seele und den Verstand von Millionen und aber Millionen Deutschen Eingang zu finden" (how German fascism succeeded in penetrating the soul and mind of millions and millions of Germans).<sup>8</sup> Focused on *Lissy* and her *petit bourgeois* husband Freddy Fromeyer, Wolf's film examines how mass unemployment and the recession during the Weimar Republic made the Germans susceptible to Nazi propaganda. *Lissy* initially enjoys a life of luxury at the side of her husband who, upon losing his job, joins the Nazi Storm Troopers and quickly rises in their ranks. Yet she eventually realizes that the Nazis are murderers and responsible for the death of her brother. This realization transforms her love of Freddy into contempt and impels her to leave Freddy. She returns to her proletarian roots and joins the antifascist resistance. In line with prevailing gender stereotypes, *Lissy*'s decision is motivated by an intense emotional experience (the assassination of her brother), albeit one that induces her political reflections. As she turns her

back on the Nazis and purposefully walks down a straight, tree-lined avenue towards the camera, the offscreen voiceover commentary reaffirms the protagonist's decision:

Ja, ein jeder muß sich entscheiden. Und Lissy wußte jetzt, man kann einsam sein und doch nicht verlassen. Sie wußte jetzt, es gibt einen Weg, eine schweren und mühsamen Weg, aber einen ehrlichen Weg. Jeder geht ihn für sich allein, und doch geht ihn keiner allein.

[Yes, each of us has to make up his mind. And Lissy had come to realize that one could be lonely without being abandoned. She knew of a path, a difficult and laborious path, but it was an honest path. Everyone takes this path alone, and yet nobody follows this path alone.]

In Frank Beyer's *Königskinder* (Star-crossed Lovers, 1962) we encounter a heroine who makes her lover's political mission her own. When Michael, Magdalena's sweetheart of long ago, is arrested, she joins a resistance group, escapes to Moscow, and from there sets off on an exploratory mission, which takes her back to her fascist Heimat. The film's final scene shows Magdalena and Michael being almost reunited on an airfield in Russia. After more than fifteen years apart Michael recognizes Magdalena boarding an airplane that will take her back to Germany, but she is oblivious of his presence and takes off. As the film's title song, the German *Volkslied* "Es waren zwei Königskinder" (Once upon a time there were two royal children) suggests,<sup>9</sup> these star-crossed lovers are never to meet again, yet they are united through the antifascist cause, which is regarded as ultimately more important than romantic ideals.

### *Die Verlobte: Antifascism as a Tale of Star-crossed Lovers*

Against this background I wish to consider *Die Verlobte*. Set between 1934 and 1944, the film tells the story of Hella Lindau, who is betrayed by a traitor from within the ranks of the communist resistance group for which she and her fiancé Hermann Reimers work. On an errand she runs for Hermann, she is arrested by the Gestapo. During the trial (which is not dramatized in the film) she refuses to betray her fiancé and is sentenced to ten years in prison. The film is first and foremost a psychological investigation of how Hella retains her dignity and hope in a women's prison among murderers, prostitutes, and corrupt guards and suggests that this is achieved not primarily because of her political convictions but because of her love for her fiancé and the pledge they made to each other immediately before her arrest: "Du bist mein Mann, ich bin deine Frau, was auch



Fig. 8.1. Hella and Hermann's personal pledge in *Die Verlobte* (1988).  
DVD capture.

kommt" (You are my husband, I am your wife, whatever may happen.); whereupon Hermann replies: "Du bist meine Frau, ich bin dein Mann" (You are my wife, I am your husband), sealing their promise with a chaste kiss on each other's entwined hands.

Telling the story from the point of view of a female protagonist, *Die Verlobte* introduces a new agenda to the antifascist discourse by emotionalizing and depoliticizing the antifascist narrative. Hella's most intense moments of grief are those when she is denied visits from her fiancé and, when shortly before her own release, Hermann is arrested and sentenced to death. The experience of separation and the eventual loss of Hermann trigger a momentary loss of self-control and hysterical outbursts of crying in Hella.

The film's chief premise revolves around the contrast between Hella's unwavering loyalty to her fiancé and the betrayal in the political sphere, namely the Hitler-Stalin pact, a political event that was generally glossed over in the GDR's official historiography. When Hella finds out about this agreement, she is shocked by what she perceives to be an act of treason and she questions her belief in communist solidarity.<sup>10</sup> In this way *Die Verlobte* challenges the tenets of the state-endorsed memory of communist solidarity and idealizes instead the moral integrity of Hermann and Hella's personal pledge.

Reisch's historical film corresponds with a trend, manifested in DEFA's *Gegenwartsfilme* from the 1970s onward, that featured female protagonists.<sup>11</sup> While East German women's films of the 1950s and early 1960s are underpinned by the firm belief in the socialist utopia, in which the common good and individual happiness are in perfect harmony, those of the 1970s and 1980s no longer extol the virtues of collectivism. DEFA's most famous screen heroines, including Paula in the *Die Legende von Paul und Paula* (The Legend of Paul and Paula, Heiner Carow, 1973) and Sunny in *Solo Sunny* (Konrad Wolf, 1980), embody what Marc Silberman aptly calls "the emancipatory power of desire (. . . that) undermines society's rules."<sup>12</sup> These disillusioned heroines disassociate themselves from the ethos of collectivism and either withdraw into a private niche of romantic love or seek fulfillment through asserting their individuality.

*Die Verlobte* pursues an agenda similar to that of the socialist woman's film during that period. Female subjectivity goes hand in hand with a focus on personal relationships and a critique of the ideological principles of socialism and antifascism. In fact, according to Regine Kühn, one of DEFA's most successful women scriptwriters, the representation of women's lives and female subjectivity provided filmmakers with a certain amount of ideological latitude and made it possible to breach taboos that might have been censored in male-centered films.<sup>13</sup>

Despite conflating Hella's commitment to Hermann with her commitment to the antifascist cause, *Die Verlobte* unmistakably prioritizes the personal over the political. Even its reception did not attempt to ascribe a political pathos to this antifascist love story. In the popular East German magazine *Filmspiegel*, *Die Verlobte* was advertised as "Die Geschichte einer großen Liebe" (the story of a great love), while the headline of a film review in *Neues Deutschland* reads: "Stark geliebt durch Liebe und unerschütterliches Vertrauen" (Empowered by love and unshakable trust).<sup>14</sup>

Arguably DEFA's most apolitical antifascist film, *Die Verlobte* was what East German audiences, oversaturated with narratives of heroic resistance, wanted: the film attracted over one million viewers, which is a remarkable box-office figure for the 1980s. While part of the film's success was due to the popularity of Jutta Wachowiak in the role of Hella Lindau, the focus on enduring love doubtless contributed to its popular appeal. As scriptwriter Günter Rucker explained in a Q & A session with the audience and with Eva Lippold, on whose autobiographical novel *Haus der schweren Tore* (House of the Heavy Gates, 1971) the film is based, "Wir haben versucht zu erzählen, wie geföhlt wurde, und wir haben versucht, dieses Gefühl über die Zeit nahezuzubringen" (We tried to capture the emotional experience and we wanted to convey what it meant to live in those days).<sup>15</sup>

The feminization of the antifascist narrative was certainly a novelty in the 1980s; nevertheless, *Die Verlobte* perpetuates rather outdated gender



Fig. 8.2. The star-crossed lovers are briefly reunited in prison before Hella is released and Herrmann is sentenced to death in *Die Verlobte* (1988). DVD capture.

roles, reminiscent of *Stärker als die Nacht*. Like Gerda, the loyal wife and comrade of Hans Löning, Hella is first and foremost her fiancé's helpmate rather than an active resistance fighter in her own right. She gets caught acting as a messenger for Herrmann. She sacrifices her own freedom and goes to prison for ten years so that Herrmann can be free. In other words, she chooses the passive role of biding her time in prison, thereby enabling her fiancé to pursue actively the goals of the resistance. However, in contrast to *Stärker als die Nacht*, *Die Verlobte* focuses on Hella, who is rendered politically inactive in prison, providing little insight into the resistance activities of Herrmann and his cell. In this sense *Die Verlobte* disavows the political pathos that governed the antifascist narratives of the 1950s and 1960s and replaces it with the emotional pathos of individual grief and suffering.

Furthermore, in contrast to Lissy, who is expected to assume a role in the collective effort of the antifascist resistance, Hella is depicted as an isolated figure after Herrmann's death. On the day of her release from prison she puts on the necklace and applies the lipstick Herrmann gave her on the day of their engagement. The next shot shows her crying and forlorn on the large staircase in the prison, pressing a large bundle of letters from her fiancé against her chest. Revisiting the site where she was for just

a few moments reunited with Herrmann in prison, she sings a few lines of the *Volkslied* "Wohl heute noch und morgen?":

Der Liebste ist gekommen  
Und rückt durch's Tor herein  
Da schneit es rote Rosen  
Da schneit es rote Rosen  
Und regnet kühlen Wein.<sup>16</sup>

[The beloved has arrived  
And proceeds through the gate  
Then it snows red roses  
Then it snows red roses  
And rains cool wine.]

The lyrics reflect Hella's romantic yearning and thereby once more underscore the priority of her personal pledge to Herrmann over her political commitment to antifascism. What is more, the lyrics also point toward a morbid longing on Hella's part: the young girl in the song waits for her lover and eventually dies, or even kills herself. The roses snowing upon her are the roses falling off the wreath her lover, who finally returns, lays on her grave. The subtly expressed death wish alluded to in Hella's song stands in stark contrast to the future-directed determination expressed at the end of *Stärker als die Nacht* and *Lissy*. While Konrad Wolf's film ends with a bird's-eye view of the bustling street life of Berlin, where the title heroine will find her place in the resistance, *Die Verlobte* concludes with a static shot of a lonely Hella, mourning the loss of her fiancé.

### *Die Schauspielerin*: Reassessing Stereotypes of Gender and Race

*Die Schauspielerin* (1988) is one of a relatively small number of films about the persecution of the Jews in DEFA's antifascist genre. Where the annihilation of the Jews is addressed, it is usually instrumentalized to support the Marxist interpretation of fascism, which "considered anti-Semitism . . . a peripheral phenomenon, one caused by manipulation from above in order to provide a scapegoat for anti-capitalist sentiment, thus displacing the energies of class struggle."<sup>17</sup> It would automatically be resolved through the overthrow of the capitalist order. In the GDR's official memory, those who were persecuted because of their active political resistance were commemorated, while those who were persecuted on account of their race or religion tended to be forgotten, because their fate was less suited to support the antifascist master narrative. Hence, in the GDR's hierarchy of victims of fascism, Jews were accorded only the twelfth position.<sup>18</sup>



The production and release dates of films dealing with Jewish themes and the Holocaust were frequently determined by tactical political considerations.<sup>19</sup> In 1988, the GDR commemorated the anniversary of *Kristallnacht* for the first time, with many public ceremonies, concerts, and publications devoted to Jewish history and culture.<sup>20</sup> The release of *Die Schauspielerin*, alongside Jewish-themed documentaries such as *Die Nacht als die Synagogen brannten* (*The Night When the Synagogues Were Burning*) and *Erinnern heißt leben* (*Remembering Means Living*, both by Rosa Berger-Fiedler, 1988) has to be seen in a cultural-political context in which it seemed wise to play the Jewish card for a number of reasons. According to a film review of *Die Schauspielerin* in the West German *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, the GDR, which had hitherto denied sharing responsibility for German fascism and the Holocaust with the FRG, was trying hard to develop a closer relationship with the Jews, since Erich Honecker was hoping to receive an invitation to the United States and realized that the Jewish influence on politics there was stronger than at home, where the membership of the Jewish community was down to just three hundred in the late 1980s.<sup>21</sup>

But *Die Schauspielerin* is more than just an interesting example of an opportunistic change of the GDR's politics of memory. Siegfried Kühn's film marks a significant departure from gender and racial stereotypes of earlier antifascist films. It exemplifies what Judith Butler has referred to as the interarticulation of gender and race, simultaneously invoking and inverting clichéd images of femininity and the feminized Jew. One of the most persistent stereotypes of the male Jew — and not just in DEFA films — is that of the weak and passive Jew, who is reliant upon a strong Christian/Gentile for her protection. As Judith E. Donelson argues in her discussion of the feminization of the Jew in *Schindler's List* (Steven Spielberg, 1993), this constellation is structured around a gender binarism, whereby the Jew is typically depicted as “the meek female dependent upon the strong male” and thus essentially feminized.<sup>22</sup> The image of the effeminate male Jew has a long history. One of its most influential exponents was the Jew-turned-Christian Otto Weininger, who pursued the homology of male Jew as woman in his infamous study *Geschlecht und Charakter* (*Sex and Character*, 1903).<sup>23</sup> In Weininger's study the male gender represents exclusively positive character traits, agency, control, and potential for genius, whereas the female pole functions as the negative antipode. Misogynist and anti-Semite thinking converge as “the eternal Jew” is conflated with “the eternal feminine” in the attempt “to articulate the male Jew's ‘racial’ difference from his Aryan counterpart through and as ‘sexual difference.’”<sup>24</sup>

*Die Schauspielerin* is pivotal in relation to the exploration of female victimhood, because it critically reassesses these persistent racial and gender stereotypes. The film's opening scene shows the actress Maria in

her backstage dressing room, preparing for a performance of Schiller's *Maria Stuart* (Mary Stuart). As she looks at herself in the mirror, she programmatically states, “Das Weib ist nicht schwach” (Woman is not weak), thus establishing the deconstruction of gender stereotypes as the film's chief agenda.

The film, based on a screenplay by Regine Kühn, tells the story of Maria Rheine and Mark Löwenthal, both actors at a small theater in 1930s Berlin. They fall in love with each other. When the Nazis come to power, Mark loses his job, whereas Maria is offered the part of Johanna in Schiller's *Die Jungfrau von Orléans* (Maid of Orleans) at a large theater in Munich and is celebrated by the Nazis as the “ideal German woman.” Meanwhile Mark has found work at the Jewish Theater in Berlin.<sup>25</sup> After the Nuremberg Race Laws come into effect in 1935, it becomes impossible for Mark and Maria to continue their relationship in public. Maria realizes that she has to make a choice — and chooses love over her career and fame. In order to be reunited with Mark in Berlin, she feigns suicide and assumes the Jewish identity of Manja Löwenthal. Performing Jewish identity is an act of defiance and a form of self-imposed victimhood, which will result, as the film's final scene in Berlin's Jewish Theater implies, in her death.

Before considering the film in detail, I wish to locate it in the context of earlier DEFA films about the Holocaust, notably Kurt Maetzig's *Ehe im Schatten* (Marriage in the Shadows, 1947), Konrad Wolf's *Professor Mamlock* (1961), and Frank Beyer's *Jakob der Lügner* (Jacob the Liar, 1975) in order to establish how *Die Schauspielerin* negotiates the stereotype of the feminized Jew projected in DEFA's antifascist genre. Especially a comparison with the thematically similar film *Ehe im Schatten* reveals how dramatically Kühn's film challenges the notion of passive Jewish victimhood. The popular melodrama *Ehe im Schatten* is about a married acting couple, the Jewess Elisabeth and her Gentile husband Hans Wieland. When the Nazis come to power, Elisabeth is excluded from the theater and confined to the couple's apartment, where she spends her days waiting for her successful actor-husband to come home and share his experiences of life outside. After the couple attends a film premiere together and thereby makes a tacitly tolerated interracial marriage a public provocation, Hans is faced with the decision to either divorce Elisabeth or be banned from acting, like his wife. The couple commit suicide.

Elisabeth is depicted as passive and politically naive, even childlike in relation to her husband, who frequently addresses her as “Kind” (child) or even “Kindchen” (little child). Consistent with the film's gender stereotyping, Hans is in control and assumes almost paternal authority over his Jewish wife. He is the one to determine when and how to end Elisabeth's and his own life, pouring the fatal poison into a pot of freshly brewed coffee. Elisabeth's agency is limited to secretly watching her husband and

to implicitly giving her consent, when drinking the poisoned cup. The portrayal of Elisabeth is in keeping with East German discourses on Jewish victimhood insofar as the film critiques her disinterest in politics and her misconception that the German humanist tradition might prevent the Nazi's genocide of the Jews. In fact, it was Kurt Maetzig's explicit intention to show that Elisabeth and, indeed, the German-Jewish bourgeoisie at large, were "nicht nur Opfer, sie haben auch mitverschuldet, Opfer zu werden" (not just victims, they were complicit in their own victimization) through their indolence and passiveness.<sup>26</sup>

Konrad Wolf's *Professor Mamlock* makes this indictment of the Jewish bourgeoisie even more explicit by contrasting the fate of the assimilated Jewish surgeon, Professor Mamlock, who fails to recognize the early signs of the Nazis' policy regarding Jews and who stays clear of any political involvement, with that of his son Rolf, a communist resistance fighter. Wolf fervently reaffirms the official political pathos of antifascist resistance by concluding the film with the admonishing commentary: "Es gibt kein größeres Verbrechen — nicht kämpfen zu wollen, — wo man kämpfen muß!" (There is no greater crime — than not wanting to fight — when fight one must!). The film attributes Mamlock's suicide to his failure to join the resistance. As Gertrud Koch notes in her discussion of Konrad Wolf's Jewish-themed films: "The German Jews are condemned to their own death — as part of the bourgeois class, they bear part of the blame for it."<sup>27</sup> Framing *Professor Mamlock* in terms of the race-gender-paradigm outlined above, the old professor occupies the feminine pole, being associated with a lack of agency, notably political agency. His son Rolf, by contrast, represents the masculine pole: through his involvement with the communist resistance he transcends not only passive Jewish victimhood but also his bourgeois class background.

Similar gender dichotomies inform *Jakob der Lügner*, DEEA's most famous Holocaust film and the first film to link the representation of Jews with the theme of resistance, albeit a peculiarly unheroic type of resistance.<sup>28</sup> Set in a Polish ghetto, the film centers on Jakob Heym, who finds himself in the Gestapo office one night and overhears news on the radio that the Russians are making rapid advances. When he shares the good news with other Jews in the ghetto, nobody believes that he had been held captive and then released by the Gestapo. He therefore pretends to own a radio (an offense punishable by death) and supplies his companions with regular "news" about the advancing Red Army and the imminent liberation of the ghetto, thereby inspiring them with hope and the strength to survive. Frank Beyer's film reappraises the stereotype of the passive Jew inasmuch as Jakob exhibits a certain degree of agency. Nevertheless, in most respects the portrayal of Jakob conforms to the image of the feminized male Jew: in his role as caretaker of the orphan girl Lina he exhibits maternal qualities, while his endeavor to save lives in the ghetto

is motivated by a nurturing instinct rather than male heroic aspirations. In fact, *Jakob der Lügner* was intended as a critique of heroic antifascist narratives: Jakob is a hero against his own will. He unwittingly stumbles into the role of harbinger of good news and reluctantly continues in this role in order to prevent further suicides in the ghetto, fully conscious of the risks he takes and frightened of them. Ultimately his efforts fail. The film ends with the deportation of the entire ghetto. Nobody can be saved. Perhaps DEEA's antifascist heroes are as ineffective as Jakob, for they too were unable to change the course of history — and yet DEEA's antifascist narratives make us forget this minor detail by glorifying these heroic martyrs and proclaiming them victorious in spite of their death and defeat.

Maria in *Die Schauspielerinnen* has much in common with the male martyrs of DEEA's canonical antifascist films, since she too actively chooses to risk and ultimately *sacrifice* her life when, out of love for Mark, she rejects the racial ideology of the Nazis by assuming a Jewish identity. To fully appreciate the revalorization that Maria's identity change has in relation to gender and racial stereotyping, it is necessary to consider briefly the difference between the concepts of "victim" and "sacrifice." As Aleida Assmann points out, where the English language has two words, the German language has only one, "*Opfer*." While "victim" (lat. *victimina*) denotes the passive, defenseless object of violence, "sacrifice" (lat. *sacrificium*) refers to the self-determined commitment to a religious or patriotic cause and involves risking one's life or choosing death. Thus the term "sacrifice" typically refers to the death of a martyr and, indeed, Jesus Christ. "Sacrifice" connotes agency, whereas "victim" does not, and yet, Aleida Assmann contends, the religious martyr transforms passive victimhood and political oppression into active intervention and religious superiority: "Durch die selbstbestimmte Umdeutung des Todes in eine religiöse Botschaft wird die politische Macht der verfolgenden Staatsgewalt überboten." (By the self-conscious transformation of death into a religious message, the political power of the persecuting regime is vanquished.)<sup>29</sup> In this sense Maria's decision to assume the identity of those persecuted by the Nazis constitutes simultaneously an act of sacrifice and resistance. However, what allows me to claim that Maria, through performing Jewish identity, transforms passive Jewish victimhood into active resistance? She *performs* Jewishness, but she is still a Gentile after all — or is she?<sup>30</sup>

To begin with, the roles Maria plays on stage, in particular, that of Schiller's Johanna and Shaw's *Saint Joan*, underscore her status as martyr. Almost a quarter of the film is devoted to showing Maria on stage performing the role of Joan of Arc, who is not only the most iconic female martyr in Western culture but also renowned for her androgyny.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, the film emphasizes that for Maria life is theater and theater is life. For her there is no clear demarcation between those two spheres. The significance of performing is also indicated in the film's title, *Die Schauspielerinnen*, which

differs from its literary source, Hedda Zinner's *Arrangement mit dem Tod* (Arrangement with Death, 1985).

Through her nuanced performance style Corinna Harfouch, who plays Maria, distinguishes between the "role of her life" as the Jewish Manja Löwenthal, and her role on stage as Schiller's Jungfrau. From the window of her luxurious, light-flooded Munich apartment Maria observes a group of girls in League of German Girls' uniforms, singing and reciting a poem and using body language and oratory reminiscent of Hitler's public speeches. Maria's eyes are fixed on this seemingly idyllic scene, then she closes the window and continues to observe the girls in silence. She studies their abrupt and symmetrical arm and hand movements before proceeding to the mirror to rehearse her role, imitating the fascist performance style she has just studied. Her subsequent performance on stage garners her standing ovations, but Maria is bemused and puzzled about this applause, suddenly realizing that she has become complicit with the fascists through her overtly fascist performance style.

Her preparations for her role of Manja Löwenthal are more methodical and thorough: she literally erases her identity as Maria Rheine, burning photos of her previous self, procuring a forged passport, and enlisting the help of a friend to stage her own suicide. Pretending to research her next part in a play, she pays a visit to a Jewish childhood friend. The Jewish grandfather, who seems to sense that Maria is preparing herself for much more than a theatrical role, alerts her to the futility of her endeavor: "Jude wird man nicht, Jude ist man" (It is impossible to become a Jew, one is born a Jew), he asserts, only to revise his dogmatic views on Jewish identity the very next minute: "Sich wandeln, heißt sich erneuern" (To change oneself is to renew oneself). The renewed or rather reborn Maria/Manja changes her blond hair to black and swaps her light-colored, flamboyant attire for black, inconspicuous clothes. She transforms herself from a figure of light into a figure of darkness. And soon her mood is also shrouded in darkness. Isolated from the world and cooped up in Mark's dark and claustrophobic Berlin apartment, while he plays at the Jewish Theater, Manja cannot bear her clandestine existence any longer and does precisely what thousands of Jews did both in reality and in films about the Third Reich: she tries to commit suicide but is rescued by Mark, who comes home before Manja is able to hang herself.<sup>32</sup>

The contrast between Maria's performance on stage and her performance in Mark's flat indicates that she has become one with her new role as Manja Löwenthal. Her performance of Jewishness is ultimately a performative act through which she makes her role of Manja her new self. In fact, the film questions essentializing notions of race and gender, instead making a case for the social constructedness of identity.

According to Judith Butler, identity categories such as gender — as well as race — are not preexisting essences that merely find their expression

in performative acts. On the contrary, Butler contends, gender identities are effectively *constituted* through "sustained social performance."<sup>33</sup> Over time gender identities are discursively constituted through performative acts that congeal into "the appearance of a substance," which is then mistaken for material reality or a real or true identity.<sup>34</sup> Though primarily concerned with gender, Butler reminds us that sex, gender, and race cannot be theorized separately and that all three identity categories, albeit in different ways, are not ontological but instead discursively constructed categories. Ann Pellegrini, among others, has extended the concept of performative identity to the interarticulation of gender and race, focusing in particular on the feminization of Jewish stereotypes.

What makes these considerations relevant in relation to *Die Schauspielerin* is that through the aesthetics of performance and performativity, the film deconstructs dichotomies such as Aryan/Jewish, masculine/feminine, and active/passive. Manja's Jewishness is no less real or authentic than Mark's. The film dramatizes this idea by means of color coding and costume: black and darkness are initially linked to Mark and Jewishness, whereas the color white and light are associated with Maria, the embodiment of the ideal Aryan woman. Her Munich apartment is entirely white and so are her opulent clothes — her white feather boa and the grayish-white foxtail she discarded into the river, along with a red scarf (the color of the Nazi flags) when simulating her suicide.

Through establishing the dichotomy between black and white — alongside that of gender — *Die Schauspielerin* first invokes, but subsequently inverts, another common representational strategy for imagining the Jew as Other. Where "colour coding was [used as] the privileged mechanism for 'fixing' Jewish difference, the colour was as likely to be 'yellow' as black."<sup>35</sup> However, the Jew has also been represented as "mulatto" and "half-breed," a racial classification that reflects the Jew's putative racial impurity and that complicates the Jew/Gentile, black/white opposition. Ann Pellegrini, therefore, proposes to "borrow Daniel Boyarin's term — 'off-white' [as . . . ] a kind of third term" to capture the Jew's difference.<sup>36</sup> However, consistent with Siegfried Kühn's agenda to destabilize boundaries of gender and race, Mark and Maria/Manja change colors, as it were. Early on in the film they wander about the streets of Berlin and witness signs of rapidly intensifying anti-Semitism. Both are wearing identical clothes: cream-colored trench coats and Borsalino hats, an androgynous outfit that underscores the fluidity of their gender and racial identities. When Maria returns to Berlin as Mark's Jewish wife Manja, she is almost invariably dressed in black, even wearing a black hat and dark black sunglasses, whereas Mark still wears the light-colored trench coat or a white costume and a white mask when rehearsing a new role on stage. If, then, black and darkness stand for Jewishness,<sup>37</sup> whereas white and light are linked to the "Aryan race," Mark and Maria





Fig. 8.3. Maria's and Mark's identical off-white, androgynous outfits underscore the fluidity of gender and racial identities in *Die Schauspielerinnen* (1988). DVD capture.

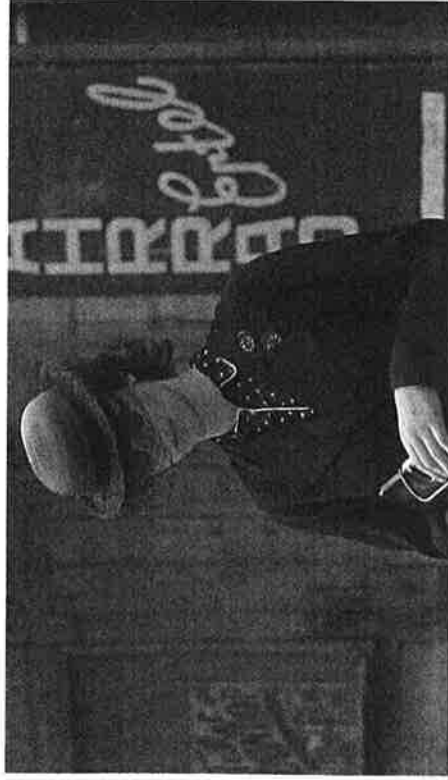


Fig. 8.4. Maria Löwenthal all in black in *Die Schauspielerinnen* (1988). DVD capture.

appear to have exchanged their racial identities. Put differently, if — as Richard Dyer demonstrates in his exploration of Whiteness in Western culture — white represents the hypostatized norm and is therefore normalized and rendered invisible, whereas black (or rather non-white) represents the deviation from this norm, Mark's putative difference as the Jewish Other is rendered invisible through his association with the color

white.<sup>38</sup> By playing with the cultural signification of dark/black versus light/white, *Die Schauspielerinnen* subverts the dichotomies on which the racial hierarchies of the National Socialist regime were based.

Precisely in this disavowal of racial difference we can locate Maria/Manja's resistance: she chooses to give up her identity as the ideal German woman in order to assume the identity of those regarded as racially inferior and persecuted by the Nazi regime. In doing so, she defies the Nazi ideology of the master race versus the Jewish race, unmasking its arbitrariness and absurdity. At the same time her courage and determination prove the stereotype of woman as the weaker sex wrong. Not only is her resistance active: it is also heroic (in contrast to that of Jakob Heym), inasmuch as Maria readily embraces the deadly consequences of her decision. The film's final scene with its suggestive intertextuality anticipates her annihilation in the furnaces of a concentration camp. Manja is shown auditioning for the role of Shaw's *Saint Joan* (rather than Schiller's *Jungfrau*) since in 1937, following a performance of Lessing's *Nathan der Weise*, the Jewish Theater in Berlin was no longer permitted to stage German plays.<sup>39</sup> Dressed completely in black and engulfed or even obliterated by the darkness of the stage, Manja recites one of Saint Joan's monologues, ending with the ominous prophesy of her sacrificial death:

Ich will wagen und wagen und wagen, bis in den Tod . . . Ich will jetzt zu den geringen Menschen hinausgehen und mich von der Liebe in ihren Augen von dem Haß in den Euringen trösten lassen. Ihr werdet froh sein, mich brennen zu sehen. Aber wenn ich in das Feuer gehe, werde ich durch die Flammen hindurch auf immer und ewig in das Herz meines Volkes einziehen — und so sei Gott mit mir!

[I will dare, and dare, and dare, until I die. I will go out to the common people, and let the love in their eyes comfort me for the hate in yours. You will be glad to see me burn; but if I go through the fire I shall go through it to the heart of my people for ever and ever. And so, God be with me!]<sup>40</sup>

## Conclusion

How, then, do *Die Verlobte* and *Die Schauspielerinnen* anticipate discourses of suffering and victimhood in contemporary German cinema? A significant number of recent German films about the Nazi period feature female protagonists. Prominent examples include *Aimée & Jaguar* (Max Färberböck, 1999), a lesbian love story about the Jewess Felice and her friend Lily, who, like Maria, is also depicted as the “ideal German woman”; *Die Frauen von der Rosenstraße*, about Lena, a Gentile married to a Jew, who

saves her husband's life and that of a young Jewish girl through her courageous resistance and compassionate love; *Sophie Scholl — Die letzten Tage* (Sophie Scholl — The Final Days, Marc Rothemund, 2005), a tribute to Germany's most famous female resistance fighter who was executed at the age of twenty-one;<sup>41</sup> and *Anonyma — Eine Frau in Berlin* (A Woman in Berlin, Max Färberböck, 2008), a historical melodrama that translates the suffering of thousands of German women who were raped by Red Army soldiers into a love story between a young and beautiful German woman and a handsome and noble Soviet officer. In fact, as is suggested by the impressive audience figures for *Dresden* (Roland Suso Richter, 2006) and *Die Flucht* (March of Millions, Kai Wessel, 2007),<sup>42</sup> two recent television dramas that also treat love affairs between German women and "the enemy," the conflation of narratives of German victimhood with female suffering and love across the enemy line is proving to be a new and popular formula for German historical imaginaries. Hand in hand with the focus on female subjectivity in these films goes a privatization and a depoliticization of history. This holds true for DEFA's woman-centered antifascist films as well as for the contemporary historical imaginaries listed above. However, the ideological agendas of the East German and the post-unification films are different.

In *Die Verlobte* and *Die Schauspielerin* female subjectivity is employed to reappraise critically the state-endorsed antifascist myth of resistance, which had been remembered in DEFA's antifascist canon with its glorification of male heroism and communist collectivism. By engaging with a specifically female form of resistance, Reisch and Kühn's films mark a new departure during the 1980s. These films suggest that the self-sacrifice of Hella and Maria is no less heroic or admirable, despite being primarily motivated by heterosexual love and feelings of personal solidarity rather than political credos. *Die Verlobte* and *Die Schauspielerin* prioritize emotional over ideology, and yet they eschew the emotional intensity and the visual excess associated with melodrama.

The growing number of female-resistance narratives in post-unification cinema has to be seen in the context of the German normalization discourse. According to Aleida Assmann, contemporary popular memory is dominated by a mode of empathetic identification with those who experienced the National Socialist regime as perpetrators, bystanders, or victims.<sup>43</sup> Prompted by a generational shift and the reapropriation of history from a new vantage point, the Nazi period is no longer predominantly remembered as a time of evil, shame, and guilt but is gradually being reimagined as a time of suffering and victimhood. Film critic Georg Seeßlen refers to films like *Dresden* as "national feel-good movies," because they invite German audiences to reclaim a positive national identity.<sup>44</sup> The ingredients of these national feel-good movies are action, in the shape of war and its concomitant disasters, and romance, in the

shape of a love against all odds. In these historical melodramas German women take center stage, because through their self-sacrifice, suffering, and goodness they are better suited than men to rehabilitate the unified German nation. The good German woman embodies humanity in inhuman times. Her solidarity with the victims of the Nazi regime is based on love. She represents eternal values and virtues that allow her to transcend shifting ideological agendas. That is, perhaps, why an increasing number of filmmakers see the timeless and universal appeal of resistance of the heart as well suited to overcome the ideological divide of East and West German interpretations of fascism and their negotiation on the silver screen.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See Nathan Stoltzfus, *Resistance of the Heart: Intermarriage and the Rosenstrasse Protest in Nazi Germany* (New York and London: Norton, 1996).

<sup>2</sup> See Daniela Berghain, "Post-1990 Screen Memories: How East and West German Cinema Remembers the Third Reich and the Holocaust," *German Life and Letters* 59.2 (2006): 294–308.

<sup>3</sup> Cited in Bill Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past: United Germany and the Legacy of the Third Reich* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 65.

<sup>4</sup> Frank Beyer, *Wenn der Wind sich dreht: Meine Filme, mein Leben* (Munich: List, 2002), 421–22. All translations are my own.

<sup>5</sup> Heiner Müller, cited in Wolfgang Emmerich, *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR* (Leipzig: Kiepenheuer, 1996), 318–19.

<sup>6</sup> For example, Ulrich Weiß's film *Dein unbekannter Bruder* (Your Unknown Brother, 1982) debunks orthodox accounts of heroic communist resistance, tracing its protagonist's internal conflicts and paralyzing fear.

<sup>7</sup> *Lissy*, alongside the two films discussed in this chapter and *Sonjas Rapport* (Sonya's Report, Bernhard Stephan, 1982), about the famous Soviet spy Ruth Werner, are among the few antifascist films that are told from a woman's point of view.

<sup>8</sup> Konrad Wolf, cited in Madina Spoden, "*Lissy* (1957): Gedanken beim neuerlichen Sehen," *Beiträge zur Film- und Fernsehwissenschaft* 31.39 (1990): 29.

<sup>9</sup> For the lyrics see <http://www.volksliedearchiv.de/text261.html>

<sup>10</sup> It is noteworthy that Hella has been deceived by a female comrade from within her own communist resistance group and that communism is doubly connoted with treason: on the level of international and interpersonal relations.

<sup>11</sup> Except for its name the East German "woman's film" has nothing in common with what is normally referred to as the woman's film in the context of Hollywood. It does not subscribe to a melodramatic modality; instead, its aesthetic strategies are firmly grounded in realism. For an extensive discussion of DEFA's *Gegenwartsfilme* about women, see Andrea Rinke, *Images of Women in East Ger-*

- man Cinema, 1972–1982: *Socialist Models, Private Dreamers and Rebels* (Leviston, NY and Queenston, ON: Edwin Mellen, 2006); and Daniela Berghain, *Hollywood behind the Wall: The Cinema of East Germany* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2005), 175–211.
- 12 Marc Silberman, *German Cinema: Texts in Context* (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1995), 174.
- 13 Regine Kühn, cited in Christel Gräf, “Waren Ostfrauen wirklich anders? Zur Darstellung von Frauen im DEFA-Gegenwartsfilm,” in *Der geteilte Himmel: Höhepunkte des DEFA-Kinos, 1946–1992*, vol. 2., ed. Raimund Fritze (Vienna: Filmarchiv Austria, 2001), 108.
- 14 Anon. “Die Geschichte einer großen Liebe,” *Filmspiegel* 14 (1980): 3–7; Horst Knietsch, “Stark geblieben durch Liebe und unerschütterliches Vertrauen,” *Neues Deutschland*, 3 Sept. 1980; Horst Knietsch, “Das Volk soll von dieser Liebe wissen, sie soll aufbewahrt sein für alle Zeiten,” *Neues Deutschland*, 27 Aug. 1980.
- 15 Eva Lippold and Günther Rücker, “Zeit erzählen: *Die Verlobte* im Dialog mit dem Publikum,” *Sonntag*, 19 October 1980, 3.
- 16 For the lyrics see <http://ingeb.org/Lieder/wohlheit.html> and <http://www.scribd.com/doc/6538328/WohlHeuteNochUndMorgen>.
- 17 Thomas C. Fox, *Stated Memory: East Germany and the Holocaust* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 1999), 10.
- 18 Thomas Jung, “Jenseits der Erinnerungspolitik: Oder der schwierige Umgang mit dem Holocaust in der DDR,” in *Kulturelle Repräsentationen des Holocaust in Deutschland und dem Vereinigten Staaten*, ed. Klaus L. Berghahn, Jürgen Fohrmann, and Helmut J. Schneider (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 167–91.
- 19 For instance, in the wake of the Adolf Eichmann trial in Jerusalem in 1961 it was opportune to make Jewish-themed films to maximize their propaganda value. Frank Beyer’s above-mentioned *Nacht unter Wölfen*, released in 1963, is such a film: it links communist resistance to the emotionally charged theme of hiding and saving the life of a Polish-Jewish child. For a detailed discussion of the film’s checkered production history and the controversies surrounding the Polish-Jewish child, see Fox, *Stated Memory*, 113; Berghahn, *Hollywood behind the Wall*, 87–88; and especially Bill Niven, *The Buchenwald Child: Truth, Fiction and Propaganda* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell & Brewer, 2007).
- 20 For a detailed account, see Jung “Jenseits der Erinnerungspolitik,” 190.
- 21 Monika Zimmermann, “*Die Schauspielerin* und die Politik der DDR,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 19 Oct. 1988; see Fox, *Stated Memory*, for a detailed account of the GDR’s shifting political agenda regarding Jews.
- 22 Judith E. Doneson, “The Image Lingers: The Feminization of the Jew in *Schindler’s List*,” in *Spielberg’s Holocaust: Critical Perspectives on Schindler’s List*, ed. Yosefa Loshitzky (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1997), 140–52; here 140.
- 23 Otto Weinger, *Sex and Character: An Investigation of Fundamental Principles*, trans. Ladislaus Löb (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2005).
- 24 Ann Pellegrini, *Performance Anxieties: Staging Psychoanalysis, Staging Race* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 18.
- 25 The Jewish Theater in Berlin was part of the *Jüdischer Kulturbund* in Germany. For the Nazis the Culture League of German Jews functioned as a useful alibi, its existence intended to prove that the Jews were not mistreated.
- 26 Ellen Blauert, ed., *Die Mörder sind unter uns, Ehe im Schatten, Die Buntkarierten, Rotation: Vier Filmersählungen nach den bekannten DEFA-Filmen* (Berlin: Henschel Verlag, 1969), 143–44.
- 27 Gertrud Koch, “On the Disappearance of the Dead among the Living: The Holocaust and the Confusion of Identities in the Films of Konrad Wolf,” *New German Critique* 60 (1993): 57–75; here 68.
- 28 Notwithstanding its thematic focus on Jewish victimhood, *Jakob der Lügner* was promoted as an antifascist film, marking the thirtieth anniversary of Germany’s liberation from fascism.
- 29 Aleida Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit: Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik* (Munich: Beck, 2006), 73.
- 30 Séan Allan’s contribution to this volume also engages with anti-essentialist notions of Jewish identity and suggests that in Dani Levy’s films Jewish identity is performed through “an ethical commitment to a particular set of cultural values and practices.”
- 31 See Marina Warner, *Joan of Arc: The Image of Female Heroism* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1983).
- 32 This scene too remains ambiguous as to whether Maria/Manja really plans to hang herself or whether she is just acting, since she says in relation to her failed suicide attempt “Ist ‘ne tolle Rolle, nicht?” (That’s a great part, isn’t it?).
- 33 Judith Butler, “Bodily Inscriptions and Performative Subversions,” in *The Judith Butler Reader*, ed. Sarah Salih with Judith Butler (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 90–118; here 114.
- 34 Butler, “Bodily Inscriptions,” 115.
- 35 Pellegrini, *Performance Anxieties*, 20–21.
- 36 Pellegrini, *Performance Anxieties*, 21.
- 37 This semantic link is further reinforced in the scene in which Maria visits her Jewish childhood friend, and the grandmother narrates a story about the angel of night enveloping the world in darkness.
- 38 Richard Dyer, *White* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997); for a discussion of the alleged racial purity of the Aryan/Caucasian race, see 20–22; for the skin color of Jews, see 11–12 and 53–54.
- 39 Volker Dahm, “Kulturelles und geistiges Leben,” in *Die Juden in Deutschland, 1933–1945: Leben unter nationalsozialistischer Herrschaft*, ed. Wolfgang Benz (Munich: Beck 1996), 75–222; here 115.
- 40 The last line in Bernard Shaw’s play reads: “I shall go through it to their hearts for ever and ever.” *Saint Joan* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1946), 139. By having Manja recite “in das Herz meines Volkes” instead, the final monologue underscores her voluntary affiliation with the Jewish people, who have become “my people.”

41 For a discussion of these films see Stuart Taberner, "Philo-Semitism in Recent German Film: *Aimée und Jaguar*, *Rosenstraße* and *Das Wunder von Bern*," *German Life and Letters* 58.3 (2005), 357–72; Daniela Berghahn, "Sophie Scholl Biopics: Wandel im öffentlichen Gedächtnis einer weiblichen Ikone des Widerstandes," in *Ikonen, Helden, Ausenseiter: Film und Biographie*, ed. Manfred Mittemayer, Patric Blaser, Andrea Braidt, and Deborah Holmes (Vienna: Zsolnay, 2009), 105–21; Paul Cooke, "Dresden (2006), TeamWorx and *Titanic* (1997): German Wartime Suffering as Hollywood Disaster Movie," *German Life and Letters* 61.2 (2008): 279–94.

42 According to the films' production company, teamWorx, the viewing figures for *Dresden* and *Die Flucht* were between 12 and 13.5 million.

43 Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit*, 192.

44 Georg Seeßlen, "Neue Heimat, alte Helden," *epd Film*, Apr. 2008, <http://www.filmzentrale.com/essays/neuheimatgs.htm> (accessed 10 Oct. 2009).

## 9: Suffering and Sympathy in Volker Schlöndorff's *Der neunte Tag* and Dennis Gansel's *NaPolA*

Brad Prager

WHETHER WITTINGLY OR UNWITTINGLY, films that depict history play a part in constructing national narratives. Films typically referred to as "heritage films" or "costume dramas" generally rely on presumptions about their audience and therefore about the audience's collective or national past. The memories created by such films — memories that frequently come to stand in place of experience for audience members who were not witnesses, and even for some who were — tend to overwhelm eyewitness accounts. Most viewers, particularly ones born after 1944, recall events such as D-Day through the lens of war films like Steven Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan* (1998) rather than through accounts based on contemporaneous encounters with newspapers or on eye-witness testimony. Apart from the question of whether memory can ever be unmediated, the question of whether historical narratives may be constructed for a population through cinematic representation is a settled score. This type of history writing through cinema is generally accomplished by way of identification: we are meant to experience the past through film protagonists' eyes as though we ourselves had been there.

The success or failure of heritage films, historical films, or costume dramas is generally predicated on their capacity to inspire an affective connection to the past, yet this generally depends on who is doing the connecting and with whom. Presumptions made along these lines become problematic when one considers the range of different possible forms of connection and identification. Writing specifically about the uses and abuses of Second World War memory — memories of both the war and the Holocaust — Marianna Torgovnick posits the necessity of seeking out an appropriate "middle distance" or "a feeling of spatial, temporal, or emotional connection" with victims of the Second World War.<sup>1</sup> She writes a good deal about film in her study, not only because film is a popular medium that reaches many people simultaneously, but also because the very structure of film seems to command strong feelings of identification.



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# Screening War

## Perspectives on German Suffering

Edited by  
Paul Cooke and Marc Silberman

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## Preface and Acknowledgments

THIS ANTHOLOGY IS THE FRUIT of a three-year collaboration that grew out of a project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), "From Perpetrators to Victims? Discourses of German Wartime Suffering from 1945 to the Present." The editors first discussed the rewriting of postwar German film history over beers in Berlin in summer 2006. We invited a trans-Atlantic group of interested colleagues to join us in June 2007 at the University of Leeds for a daylong brainstorming session, where we discussed the project and agreed on preliminary topics. Using a coauthored position paper, we challenged the participants to submit detailed abstracts that were then refined and coordinated over the next half year. Drafts of the essays were presented in November 2008 at the forty-first Wisconsin Workshop in Madison, and based on discussions and feedback from the encounter, the present volume took shape with the goal of exploring ways in which film has contributed to postwar "memory work" in Germany. Along with the AHRC, the editors wish to thank the British Academy, the Worldwide Universities Network, the University of Wisconsin Department of German, the University of Leeds School of Modern Languages, the University of Wisconsin Center for German and European Studies, and the Max Kade Foundation (New York City) for their generous funding of the project. We also are grateful for the careful readings of the manuscripts by two anonymous readers as well as for the support and input from our editor at Camden House publishers, Jim Walker.