ISSN 0146-0013 QRFVEF 12(1–2) 1–162 (1990) Volume 12, Numbers 1–2

QRFV

Quarterly Review of Film and Video

Parody

Ronald Gottesman
Guest Editor

harwood academic publishers
chur london paris new york melbourne

Quar. Rev. of Film & Video, Vol. 12, pp. 73–103
Reprints available directly from the publisher
Photocopying permitted by license only

©1990 Harwood Academic Publishers GmbH
Printed in the United States of America

Ideological Parody in the New German Cinema: Reading *The State of Things, The Desire of Veronika Voss*, and *Germany Pale Mother* as Postmodernist Rewritings of *The Searchers, Sunset Boulevard*, and *Blonde Venus*

Marsha Kinder

In "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," where Fredric Jameson defines pastiche as a neutral postmodernist form that imitates dead styles without parody's ulterior motive of satire, he ends with the question of whether there is a way in which postmodernism might resist rather than reinforce the logic of consumer capitalism.[1] This essay describes a postmodernist form of ideological parody characteristic of the New German Cinema which achieves such resistance by retaining the ulterior motive of satire and by choosing as its primary target not the artistic works or dead styles being imitated but the ideological inscription they carry.

This form of parody is particularly characteristic of Wim Wenders, who in film after film obsessively rewrites Ford's *The Searchers*, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, who parodies a wide range of styles, genres, and texts within the superregime of Hollywood classical cinema, and feminists like Helma Sanders-Brahms, Helke Sanders, and Margerethe von Trotta, who parody an even wider selection of patriarchal forms, including fairy tales, poems, classical films and genres, and even progressive works by male auteurs in the New German Cinema. This ideological parody demonstrates that such stories and genres can be rewritten and revitalized to show how the inscription of patriarchal capitalism constructs subjectivity in individual characters, filmmakers, and spectators.

While Jameson can be useful in defining the key problematic for this kind of ideological parody, Linda Hutcheon provides the broader cultural context in which it can be positioned. In her comprehensive survey, *A Theory of Parody: The Teaching of Twentieth-Century Art Forms*, which traces parody from classicism to postmodernism and proposes a broadly inclusive definition (" a repetition with a difference . . . whose pragmatic ethos can range from scornful ridicule to reverential homage"),[2] she cites Brecht as one of the most influential twentieth-century models for

MARSHA KINDER *is professor of Critical Studies at The University of Southern California School of Cinema-Television, contributing editor to* Film Quarterly, *and is currently writing a book on Spanish cinema.*

the use of parody to satiric ends—a model that was most powerfully applied to film by Godard, who in turn exerted a strong influence on the German filmmakers whose works I discuss here. Though Hutcheon carefully distinguishes between parody and satire, unlike Jameson, she sees their close interaction as characteristic of both modernism and postmodernism and essential to the latter's surviving radical potential. Most pointedly, she notes the trend in recent German criticism to define parody as *Ideologiekritic*, "which can be used at the expense of the original text's ideology" (p. 103). Though her remarks concerning German parody are limited here to literature, they provide a valuable context for the type of ideological parody I describe in the New German Cinema.

This essay will show how ideological parody works as strategies of resistance in three specific textual systems: Wenders's *The State of Things* as one of his many parodic variations on John Ford's *The Searchers*, Fassbinder's *The Desire of Veronika Voss* as a parodic reinscription of Billy Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard*, and Sanders-Brahms's *Germany Pale Mother* as a feminist parodic dialogue with several patriarchal texts including Josef von Sternberg's *Blonde Venus*, Fassbinder's *Marriage of Maria Braun*, Brecht's poem *Deutschland*, and fairy tales like "*The Robber Bridegroom*" and "*Sleeping Beauty*." By positioning these three German films within the context of ideological parody, I am foregrounding the classical Hollywood texts they rewrite, making them far more visible than they would otherwise appear in another kind of reading and enabling us to see the kinds of resistance that can be achieved through a range of parodic strategies.

By reflexively calling attention to the signifying system within the texts being reinscribed, ideological parody makes it possible to use the same signifiers to generate new meanings, creating (as Bakhtin observed) an opposition between two signifying systems. By directing the spectator's attention to the gap between these two meanings, the parody opens a fissure for radical change. Though talking about literary parody, Julia Kristeva provides a useful description of how this form of radical parody functions:

> Murder, death, and unchanging society represent precisely the inability to hear and understand the signifier as such—as ciphering, as rhythm, as a presence that precedes the signification of object or emotion. The poet is put to death because he wants to turn rhythm into a dominant element; because he wants to make language perceive what it doesn't want to say, provide it with its matter independently of the sign, and free it from denotation. For it is this *eminently parodic* gesture that changes the system.[3]

Despite their different strategies of resistance, the three parodic textual systems I describe all use parodic gesture in this way. In the process of resuscitating Hollywood texts whose sign systems are being appropriated and opposed, each of the new texts sacrifices at least one of its central characters through castration, murder, or suicide. Like the texts being parodied, such characters are presented both as victim and embodiment of the destructive ideological forces to be resisted. They function as double agents of the parodic project; rather than unified subjects who invite emotional identification, they are ambivalent signifiers whose meanings slide between the two signifying systems, revealing both the continuity and distance between them. The sacrifice of these characters opens a space for radical change, not necessarily within the diegesis but within the signifying system.

THE STATE OF THINGS: THREE VARIATIONS ON *THE SEARCHERS*

Wim Wenders is not the only filmmaker who has shown his great admiration for John Ford's classic western *The Searchers* (1956) by obsessively rewriting it. In fact, Stuart Byron has called *The Searchers* "the Super-Cult movie of the New Hollywood" and has traced its influence on Paul Schrader, John Milius, Martin Scorsese, Steven Spielberg, George Lucas, and Michael Cimino.[4] But no one has returned to Ford's text as relentlessly as Wenders—never striving for fidelity to the original story but always seeking to show its transportability to a wide variety of contexts, styles, and intentions and thereby proving the superiority of his own parodic usage of Ford's legacy.

Wenders's obsessive project is made most explicit in *The State of Things* (1982), a work that immediately followed his bitter experience in Hollywood directing *Hammett* (1982), a genre film produced at Zoetrope which was taken away from him and recut by Francis Ford Coppola. While *The State of Things* expresses Wenders's extreme disillusionment with the new Hollywood and its ideological constraints, it nevertheless relies on *The Searchers* to rescue its director from an artistic deadend so as to make a swan song for the Euramerican crossbreed. Wenders's parody creates a dialogic confrontation between old and new Hollywood and between European and American modes of filmmaking. This ideal of the international crossbreed was always at the center of Wenders's work and ironically was shared by Coppola, who also saw himself following in the tradition of Ford along with other masterful international auteurs as diverse as Eisenstein, Welles, and Kurosawa.

After *The State of Things*, Wenders claimed he wanted to stop quoting from other movies to avoid that ubiquitous postmodernist reflexivity that Jameson calls pastiche.

> I've made quite a number of films that were more concerned with reflecting themselves than reflecting anything that exists apart from movies. . . . And I see lots of movies and was getting frustrated not only by my own work and the reflexiveness of it but with other movies, too, because it seemed there was no more way out. Whatever film you went to see, it had its nourishment or its life or its food, its roots, in other movies. . . . I didn't see anything anymore that was really trying to redefine a relation between life and images made from life. And I think that's a really serious dead end. . . . At the end of *The State of Things*, there was no other choice than to redefine, or find again, or rediscover what this is: to film something that exists. . . quite apart from movies.[5]

In his next film *Paris, Texas* (1984), Wenders claims that he abandoned reflexivity and turned back to reality, relying on Sam Shepard to drive the movie forward in a straight line. Yet, one wonders whether Wenders was not really returning to the Hollywood classical cinema as a means of defining the relation between life and images, for the story is still rooted in *The Searchers* and repositioned in its original context of Texas and the Western genre. Though *The State of Things* may have been a reflexive dead end, it still possessed a stronger ideological resistance than his more recent crossbreed, *Paris, Texas*.

The State of Things is divided into three sections representing three contrasting kinds of filmmaking, each loosely adapting *The Searchers* in a different way. Such an approach demonstrates the pluralism of readings that Ford's germinal text can generate, helping to explain why Comolli and Narboni in their historic 1969 editorial

in *Cahiers du Cinema* had cited Ford as an example of a filmmaker whose works interrogated the dominant ideology from within the system.[6] Yet, despite the differences in these sections, all three feature homeless, restless characters who claim to be survivors of the current state of things—of a poisoned planet, of an aborted international co-production, or of the suicidal risks involved in the high-finance game of commercial filmmaking; all three are structured around a quest for survival that is driven by death and that includes at least one person dying along the way; all three are highly reflexive, with characters toting cameras and shooting footage, as if recognizing that the process of signification is a primary tool of survival.

The Survivors: A New Breed of Genre Film

The first section, an inset film called *The Survivors*, is another version of what Wenders was originally attempting in *Hammett*—the adaptation of the basic quest plot of *The Searchers* to another commercial genre (this time science fiction rather than noir). Yet both projects are aborted by the withdrawal of support by the maverick mogul (Coppola in the case of *Hammett* and his fictional counterpart Gordon in *The State of Things*) who had hired a German auteur noted for his visual style to direct an American genre film, hoping to produce a new crossbreed that might subvert the current state of international filmmaking.

Despite its desolate black-and-white landscapes and its melancholy music, *The Survivors* is far more optimistic than the glossy, studio production of *Hammett*. It projects hope for its searchers even though their quest for survival is set within a world of nuclear contamination—a historical context that is far more threatening than that evoked either in *Hammett* (the stylized re-creation of the late 1920s just before capitalism's Great Crash, which was partly caused by the "big rich" featured in this movie) or in Ford's own *Searchers* (the Supreme Court's historic 1954 decision on desegregation, against which Brian Henderson has offered a convincing reading of this post-Civil War story of miscegenation and the fear and hatred it arouses).[7]

Though *The Survivors* keeps the emphasis on the dangerous journey, as in *The Searchers*, two main characters are foregrounded by their extraordinary capacity for change. Like the John Wayne character Ethan Edwards, the strong-willed, emotionally distant Mark (the patriarchal leader of the search) is capable of killing those he loves if he suspects they have been contaminated (in fact, we see him smother a sick child), but his perseverance enables him to undergo a profound change of character that the other adults aspire to and that ensures his survival. Like the Natalie Wood character Debbie Edwards, the young surviving sister Julia is subjected to traumatic shifts in circumstance, but her youthful plasticity and female receptivity make her capable of remarkable transformations. In *The Survivors*, the search is not for the girl but for a new home, which they find by the sea, where the remaining members of the decimated family can live. Though Mark leads the way, Julia is the one to confirm that "now we've got a place to stay." The last shot of this film (before the crew runs out of film stock and money) is a close-up of Julia, who has a strange gleam in her eyes, revealing that she has become a superwoman—a new breed for this dangerous nuclear age and a reflexive signifier for the kind of Euramerican film that Wenders seeks to make anywhere in the world.

Reflexive European Filmmaking: Documenting the Space between Characters

The long, slow-paced central section takes place in a small beach town called Sentra just outside Lisbon—"the far Western corner of Europe"—where *The Survivors* is being shot. It focuses not on the plot or quest but on characters and the space between them—what the director Friedrich later will claim is the European alternative to the story demanded by Hollywood and what Wenders had foregrounded in earlier works like *Alice in the Cities* (1973), *Wrong Move* (1974), and *Kings of the Road* (1976). The characters in question are the international cast and crew of the inset science fiction film—survivors of the shoot who now must wait for Friedrich to get the money from the American producer Gordon so that they can finish the production. This plotless section stretches like a wide open space between the two narrative posts provided by the action-packed sections 1 and 3.

Though clearly the most blatantly reflexive of the three, this second section comes the closest to documentary and realism. Wenders has said:

> I've always been very attracted to documentaries but have always thought that feature films are in a way the true documents of our time. . . . I think it's extremely healthy, a kind of therapy for anyone who tries to tell stories to go out and have nothing to tell, no story, no fiction, and try to find the right way to represent something. I very much insist that this is part of my work.[8]

It is this documentary aspect that saves Wenders's reflexivity from being a dead end—a strategy he had already pushed to its furthest extreme in *Lightning Over Water* (1981), a reflexive film documenting the death of Nicholas Ray. In *The State of Things*, he carries that documentary impulse back inside the house of fiction. Friedrich repeatedly tells his cast and crew, "Stories only exist in stories, whereas life goes by in the course of time without the need to turn into stories." This credo implies that the Sentra section is more realistic than the other two precisely because its actions develop character rather than plot. When Friedrich tells his cast that they have run out of film, he says, "This breathing space will give us time to think about the movie and perhaps make it better," which leads one actress to remark, "I would love some time to work on the characters." The second section is a long interruption in the story which gives both the characters and the audience time to reflect on the material character of cinema—on its economic determinants, its apparatus, its intertextuality, and its signifying practices.

Early in this section when Friedrich gives the French actress Anna a copy of the Alan LeMay novel *The Searchers* (1954), we actually see the printed page. Not only are we reminded that Ford and his screenwriter were also adapting the story, but we are forced to directly experience it through two different signifying systems. Moreover, some of the passages quoted from the novel which were omitted by Ford explicitly call attention to the process of signification, for example, the powerful description of the "twisted remains of the juniper" which resemble "the withered corpse of a man" and become "some kind of a sign, an evil prophecy." Wenders dramatizes this passage in Sentra when a blackened form "vaguely the shape of a man" is violently flung by the surf into Friedrich's hotel room. This blatantly symbolic incident helps call attention to Friedrich's status as a signifier and also prophesies that this Ethan figure will not survive the quest. (Though Ethan survives in Ford's film, in the novel, he is shot down by a Comanche woman whom he

mistakes for Debbie.) Two other passages from the novel quoted in the film describe the courageous perseverance and the homelessness that lie at the heart of both Ford's characters and Friedrich's cast and crew—the very qualities that probably drew Wenders to *The Searchers* in the first place because they were so essential to his own postwar generation of Germans. Though the characteristics remain constant in all four signifying systems, their transposability to different historical contexts is foregrounded:

> Nothing ahead seemed to offer any hope. She had no home to which she could ever go back. No such thing was in existence anymore on this earth.
>
> These people had a kind of courage that may be the finest gift of man; the courage of those who simply keep on, and on, doing the next thing, far beyond all reasonable endurance, seldom thinking of themselves as martyred, and never thinking of themselves as brave.

In Sentra, Friedrich replaces Mark as the Ethan Edwards figure; he even wears a cowboy hat and uses Western lingo like "hombres." He is the film family's surviving patriarch who "doesn't believe in surrender" and who pursues the search on his own in Los Angeles. Once there, he will describe his homelessness in a way that echoes the passages just quoted from the novel: "I'm at home nowhere, in no house, in no country."

His lover Kate, the script girl (played by former Andy Warhol star Viva Auder), is the strong Fordian matriarch, who boasts, "My family crossed the country in covered wagons. They settled the west." She evokes Mrs. Jorgensen, the strong, intelligent ex-school marm who takes in Debbie Edwards after she is recaptured from the Indians. In one scene, Kate's daughter Jane gives a playful mythic account of how she searched for the ideal mother and home and out of all the women in the world finally picked Kate.

The Martin Pawley figure (the crossbreed nephew played by Jeffrey Hunter whom the Edwards family had adopted and raised and who accompanies Ethan on his five-year search for little Debbie) is here replaced by the American cinematographer Joe, played by Sam Fuller, the veteran director of Hollywood B movies who was adopted as an artistic model both by the French New Wave and New German Cinema and raised to the pantheon of world-class auteurs. Fuller had previously played cameo roles in Godard's *Pierrot Le Fou*, Dennis Hopper's *The Last Movie*, and Wenders's own *American Friend* (along with Hopper, Nicholas Ray, and Jean Eustache)—all three texts exemplifying the kind of crossbreed filmmaking that Friedrich and Wenders are pursuing in *The State of Things*. In assisting Friedrich on his quest, Joe (like Martin) has to separate himself from the woman he loves; while he is working on the shoot, his wife lies dying in a hospital in Los Angeles. Before flying home for her funeral, he drowns his grief in a Lisbon dive called the Texas Bar.

The other members of cast and crew are all restless and isolated, qualities that are accentuated in a series of rhythmically spaced, leisurely paced vignettes that document what the characters do when alone and that are punctuated by moody shots of the sea or the surf washing across the desolate hotel. The British actor Mark narcissistically takes Polaroid shots of himself in the bath—the definitive action of the alienated Wenders hero. Dennis, the American screenwriter (played by John Paul Getty III) performs vigorous calisthenics, guzzles whiskey as he types, and complains, "This making movies is suicide!" The American actress Joan sleeps to

the soothing beat of a metronome, practices her violin, and makes long-distance telephone calls in which she defines home as "where they send the bills." Covering her mirror with a scarf to prevent being distracted by the Imaginary, the French actress Anna immerses herself in the symbolic world of patriarchal discourse; she reads *The Searchers*. The American actor Robert provides comic relief with a description of his California childhood, during which he was isolated by his physical freakishness. This anecdote demonstrates the American allegiance to storytelling; anticipating Gordon, Robert warns Friedrich, "Life without stories isn't worth living."

In Sentra, even the couples are emotionally isolated from each other. Despite their loving relationship, Kate (like all women in Freidrich's life) accuses him of having no feelings. Like the other crew members, Kate spends most of her time alone—drawing or painting or recording one-way conversations on a tape recorder. Her strongest emotional tie is with Jane, who is her daughter both on– and off-screen. Only the children Julia and Jane (the counterparts of Debbie and Lucy Edwards) feel at home in Sentra and seem deeply connected with each other and with the adults. They have intimate, earnest conversations on death and television and are the only ones who say good-bye to "Uncle Joe" when he leaves for Los Angeles.

The space between characters is foregrounded by the reflexive attention to framing and black-and-white composition. In one sequence, Kate presents a feminist critique of Polaroid portraits taken by Friedrich's daughter Julia, who reveals her absorption of the sexist assumptions of the dominant ideology that also controls Hollywood. The men are clearly centered in the frame, while women's bodies are fragmented and marginalized. If we apply a similar critique to Wenders's film, we find that females have a central position in the first two sections; the close-up of Julia is the last shot of *The Survivors*, and in Sentra, both Kate and the girls gain access to the controlling mechanisms of patriarchal discourse—to the gaze and the voice—both in front of and behind the cinematic apparatus. In fact, all the females are artists: Anna writes, Kate paints, Joan plays the violin, and the young girls act, sing, tell stories, and take photographs. Only in the third section set in Hollywood are women marginalized and totally subordinated to men. The only females we see there are Gordon's secretary who lies and Dennis's girlfriend who never gets out of her car. In contrast to Los Angeles, which is dominated by man-made structures, Sentra is visualized as a cluster of flimsy buildings perched "on the edge"—and described as "the hole where the land runs out and the sea comes in." It is a mediating location associated with Women and Nature, a setting watched over by the moon.

In these moody landscapes, which also figure prominently in westerns like *The Searchers*, Wenders's painterly visuals provide a sensory pleasure that helps to substitute for the missing plot. When Friedrich asks Dennis why Gordon hired him to direct *The Survivors*, Dennis replies, "Because you have style . . . European framing." We see what this means in the scene where Joe starts his trip home. He walks behind a dark fence comprised of alternating panels of vertical and horizontal posts, whose high-contrast graphics give a dynamic impact to his movements, even though he soon gets bogged down at Lisbon's Texas Bar.

This scene also demonstrates why Friedrich and Wenders chose black-and-white photography instead of color—a decision that Gordon will claim prevented him

from getting the financial backing they needed to finish the film. In Sentra, we see and hear the reasons for that artistic decision. Describing his own experiments with black-and-white photography to Joe, Mark says, "You can see the shape of things." The cinematographer replies, "Life is in color but black and white is more realistic." In one scene where Catherine is painting a seascape, she tells her daughter, "It's all a question of lights . . . that's what gives it form." While clearly articulating Wenders's stylistic credo, this scene interrupts another sequence that presents a different signifying system.

It is the sequence where Friedrich breaks into Gordon's Lisbon house and finds not the producer but Dennis with Gordon's computer. Dennis tells him, "This is a piece of Gordon's mind . . . the movie's all in here." The computer contains Friedrich's biography and filmography, the production budget for *The Survivors*, and predesigned images for the mise-en-scène (the printouts of which Friedrich doggedly burns, insisting, "A movie's not like a prefab house, it has a life of its own!"). The computer reveals the industrialized model of filmmaking dominated by advanced technology and economic efficiency. Historically linked to Coppola, who helped pioneer this kind of cinematic application of computer technology at Zoetrope, this new Hollywood model is antithetical to Wenders's European sensibility, which specializes in painterly visuals and loose, leisurely paced narratives.

This foregrounding of the computer makes us think back to the title sequence of the film, which was positioned between sections 1 and 2 and which first divided the two kinds of filmmaking that had been synthesized in *The Survivors*. In one shot, the camera pans left from an iconic landscape (presumably a painted backdrop for Friedrich's inner film) to an indexical filmic representation of the terrain. A little later, we see a long shot of the film crew by the sea, setting up for the next shot. Onto this image, the frame of a computer screen is invisibly superimposed; we become aware of its presence when we see the printed titles and credits for *The State of Things* spelled out from left to right and from top to bottom, filling the entire movie screen. As if to escape the material frame of the computer and all the ideological baggage it carries, the camera moves right, separating the two frames, displacing the titles and restoring the indexical tracing of two survivors leaning against a crashed plane by the sea.

The structural positioning of the computer at the end of the first two sections suggests that it threatens the survival of the Euroamerican synthesis. Though not as strong as in *The Survivors*, the synthesis is still evoked in this central section by means of intertextuality: through the use of many languages; through the international casting, particularly of Sam Fuller and Viva, who are both associated with American forms of alternative cinema; and through the wide range of film allusions—to a subversive surrealist classic like Buñuel's *L'Age d'or*, which helped inspire the American avant-garde (after Friedrich makes his speech against stories, Viva quips, "O Darling, you're such a poet, let me suck your toes"), to a popular work in the European reflexive genre like *Day for Night* (which, in contrast to *The State of Things*, still stresses the story both in the inset melodrama and the frame), and to postwar Hollywood melodramas and westerns by Sirk and Ford which proved so influential in the New German Cinema (Friedrich jokingly says of his crisis, "At times, it feels like *The Magnificent Obsession* and the next minute it's more like *My Darling Clementine*.").

Showdown in Hollywood: The Death of the Story

The fast-paced Oedipal trajectory of the final section brings narrative closure to the parodic adaptation of *The Searchers*, moving it back within the industrialized mode of filmmaking and shifting it to the popular genre of noir (the same genre Wenders had used in *Hammett* while collaborating with Coppola). As if to invest new energy in this project, "John Ford's *The Searchers*" is prominently displayed on the marquee of a repertory movie theater, which is ironically called the "Nuart." This section positions the adaptation within its historical framework, showing how Ford's legacy is now being narrowed in New Hollywood, a city that specializes in commercial exhibition.

The Hollywood adaptation focuses on the searcher's final confrontation with his chief antagonist, who is no longer Scar, the Comanche chief, but an independent producer on the run. When Friedrich finally catches up with Gordon, he tries to do business not in a village tepee but in a mobile home. The war in the background is not the Civil War but World War II, which foregrounds the racial dimension of the conflict—not between white Southerners and men of color but between Germans and Jews. Gordon tells Friedrich, "I never thought I'd live to see the day when I'd be working with a German director. Right? A Jew from Newark, New Jersey, and a German picked up at Chateau Marmont. What the fuck are you and I doing with each other, huh?" The World War II background also gives new resonance to the nicknames of Friedrich and his cinematographer—Fritz and Joe (as in G.I. Joe). Though Friedrich has pursued his search to Los Angeles on his own, his crossbreed cameraman went on ahead like a good scout and now provides information on Gordon's desperate situation. At the end of the long quest, both Friedrich and Gordon are overtaken by anonymous mobsters, who, like the Union soldiers in *The Searchers*, are the common enemy of these antagonists.

This section's dramatic shift in pace is immediately announced by the hard rock on the radio of the rented convertible that Friedrich drives in from LAX Airport. Before any dialogue is uttered, the visual images quickly delineate the shift to a location totally dominated by consumer capitalism—the constant, forward-driving movements of planes, cars, and oil rigs; a shopping cart abandoned on the highway; the extreme upward and downward camera angles of omniscient surveillance that accentuate shifts in power and justify paranoia; a series of rearview mirror shots that reflect a regressive Imaginary; the positioning of transactions on street corners, parking lots, and freeways; and the recurrence of oversized phallic structures like power towers, skyscrapers, and rooftop giants. On the star-studded streets of New Hollywood, even the former giants of Old Hollywood have been transformed into commercial signs—like John Ford's name on the theater marquee or Fritz Lang's sidewalk star at the corner of Hollywood and Vine. Lang's name may make the new Fritz pause to consider this German émigré who received a more positive reception in an earlier era of Hollywood and who still remains one of the most powerful examples of Euramerican synthesis, but he still races to the final showdown with Gordon. As seen through Wenders's eyes, the whole city looks like a series of fake studio sets just waiting for Oedipal shootouts with guns, cameras, and phalluses. Unlike the section set in Sentra, we no longer have a long wait.

In this exhibitionistic setting, the space between and around characters is always

occupied by blatant signifiers. In the upward angle two-shot of Friedrich and Gordon's lawyer (who is played by Roger Corman, another crossbreed associated with alternative commercial cinema within Hollywood), both men are positioned in front of phallic skyscrapers. Without listening to the dialogue, we can tell from the visuals that this confrontation is going to be a standoff. Later, there is a similar two-shot of Friedrich and Gordon in the Tiny Naylor's parking lot. Positioned between them is a huge statue of a giant Ali Baba assassin carrying an upraised saber—a menacing figure that prefigures their murder by evoking that evil omen from *The Searchers* (the twisted shape of a man with one arm upraised). The confrontational pattern is broken in the two-shot with Sam Fuller, who may be smoking a phallic cigar and positioned under a power tower, but who is seated by a pool, which stirs memories of Sentra by the sea. The arrangement of the two men in the frame prevents us from reading their encounter as a confrontation.

The gender coding of power relationships is also made explicit in the dialogue. One of Friedrich's main discoveries is that it was Dennis who laid out the $200,000 for the Portugal shoot; that is how he got "fucked" by Gordon. In this phallocentric setting, the fact of his being a victim immediately puts him in the position of the female. Similarly, Gordon reminds Friedrich that he picked him up at the Chateau Marmont out of a swarm of European directors, all desperately seeking to make their first film in Hollywood. Not only does this description parody Julia's playful account of how she chose her mother but it also casts Friedrich in the role of whore and all European filmmakers dealing with American businessmen as naive female starlets trying to attract a sugar daddy.

Thomas Elsaesser claims that most Wenders heroes are pre-oedipal creatures who, instead of pursuing an Oedipal rivalry with other males, are desperately seeking a center that they identify with a mother figure, who sometimes (as in *Alice in the Cities*) is an innocent young girl.[9] The homeless Friedrich certainly fits this description: in Sentra, he finds his center both in the matriarchal Kate and in his daughter Julia. His last name, Munro, links him to Marilyn Monroe, who is brought to mind by an anecdote told by Sam Fuller in which he describes her at a banquet with twenty men on her left and twenty on her right and with forty guns facing her. Friedrich finds himself in a similar predicament once he reaches phallocentric Hollywood. He is thrust into an Oedipal confrontation with Gordon and his mobsters from which there is no escape.

The central encounter between Friedrich and Gordon in his friend Herbert's mobile home is the prime example of the Euramerican synthesis in this final section of the film. Friedrich finds Gordon by recognizing his Dachshund, a German breed popular in America. In a wonderful performance by Hollywood actor Allan Goorwitz (aka Garfield), Gordon proves to be a quite likable, funny antagonist—both the embodiment and the victim of the New Hollywood and its ideological constraints.[10] Even though he turns reflexivity into a movie trivia quiz and reduces the archetypal forces of Love and Death into cheap commercial formulas ("Death, Friedrich, that's what it's all about. It's the biggest story in the world, second best only to love stories!"), he is still smart enough to love Friedrich's European style. Despite their mutual losses, he calls Friedrich his "friend," a term that should make Wenders fans nervous, especially if they have seen *American Friend*. Yet Gordon

never equivocates on the issue of the story, which he defines as the sine qua non of cinema: "You got to have a story, Friedrich. Without a story, you're dead."

Wenders's use of parodic dialogism is most powerful in the key shot where these two "survivors" sit next to each other while each performs a monologue on the state of things in European and American filmmaking. After Gordon claims that "cinema's not about life going by, people don't want to see that," he stops listening to Friedrich and starts singing, "Hollywood, Hollywood, never been a place people had it so good, like Hollywood." Meanwhile, Friedrich babbles on about his own career and aesthetic:

> The space between the characters can carry the load. . . . I made ten movies, Gordon . . . . In the beginning it was easy because I just went from shot to shot. Now I know how to tell a story . . . as the story comes in, life sneaks out—everything gets pressured into images, mechanized. Death, that's what stories contain. All stories are about death.

While Gordon dominates the sound track with his lyrics, Friedrich's aesthetics dominate the visuals. The "space between these characters" is occupied by the mobile home's rear window, through which we see "life going by" without any stories. Yet the mobile home is driving them to the final shootout—a climax typical of action genres like the western, noir, and the gangster film and one that would satisfy even Gordon's loan sharks. Though this ending validates Fritz's point that stories are about death rather than reality, Gordon has the last word: "Time for survivors to say good-bye." Both Friedrich and Gordon ("the most dangerous men alive") turn out to be the victims of this shootout—the ambivalent signifiers or unknowable double agents who, despite their efforts to change the New Hollywood, are drawn into complicity with its commercial ethos—partly because of their attraction to former patriarchal giants like John Ford. This final death of the story actually proves both of them right: it is a reflexive dead end for the Euramerican crossbreed, a perfect swan song for Wenders's obsessive ideal.

THE DESIRE OF VERONIKA VOSS AS A PARODIC REINSCRIPTION OF *SUNSET BOULEVARD*

In comparison to Wenders, Fassbinder is considerably more ambivalent about Old Hollywood, particularly the postwar period of the 1950s when both *The Searchers* and *Sunset Boulevard* were made. In *Veronika Voss* (1981), Fassbinder implies that precisely because *Sunset Boulevard* (1950) was a German-American crossbreed, it carried the ideological inscription of multinational capitalism so powerfully and transparently—an inscription that his own parodic rewriting seeks to make visible. *Sunset Boulevard* is held up to the spectator as an object, neither of admiration nor of scorn but of ideological scrutiny.

While *Sunset Boulevard* clearly foregrounded reflexivity and evoked psychoanalysis by featuring a demented ex-movie queen addicted to stardom and desire, it repressed ideology. *Veronika Voss* rearticulates these three poststructuralist discourses so that ideology is revealed as the structuring absence of *Sunset Boulevard*. The former star is presented as a bourgeois artist deluded into thinking she is free and unique, when she is actually the captive pawn of patriarchal capitalism. She is

the ambivalent icon who will be sacrificed to the parodic reinscription. The film explores the lucrative dreams manufactured and distributed by Hollywood—dreams that dominate the world market, especially in Adenaur's postwar Germany of the 1950s. This is the decade when *Sunset Boulevard* was made and in which *Veronika Voss* is set; according to Jameson, it is also the seminal period when multinational capitalism and postmodernism were spawned.

Veronika Voss places film noir in dialectic tension with the women's film, exaggerating and historicizing four stylistic codes that help to distinguish the two genres. These foregrounded codes not only evoke reflexivity but they also help to reveal the submerged discourses of psychoanalysis and ideology that overdetermine the melodrama. First, the highly stylized lighting so characteristic of noir deconstructs the cinematic representation of the world into light and shadow (what Veronika calls "the two secrets of film"). Second, the flamboyant segmentation created by flashy wipes, odd angles, complex intercutting and unexpected flashbacks constantly disrupts the seamless flow of classical linear construction so characteristic of the woman's film. Third, the meticulous framing through distancing glass or clouded surfaces that obscure part of the image blatantly divides the cinematic space into background and foreground, suggesting the presence of a latent subtext. Finally, the emerging dominance of the radio on the sound track, which literally broadcasts the symbolic discourse of multinational capitalism, gradually overpowers the cinematic and psychoanalytic worlds of the Imaginary.

The Immediate Foregrounding of Reflexivity

The opening of *Veronika Voss* exaggerates the pattern of articulation found in *Sunset Boulevard*. Though reflexivity is unmistakably in the foreground, a latent content of psychoanalysis is immediately evoked; ideology remains submerged yet clearly functions as a structuring absence.

The first sequence contains both an inset film and a subjective flashback, combining film history with personal memories and implicitly situating both within the larger context of German-American relations. These relations were also a factor in *Sunset Boulevard*—primarily through the participation of Billy Wilder and Erich von Stroheim, both émigrés from the German film industry yet with contrasting fates as winner and loser within the Hollywood marketplace. In *Sunset Boulevard*, the flashback structure of noir typically limited to personal experience was enlarged to include film history—the relationship between the silent cinema of the 1920s and the postwar cinema of the 1950s, a comparison that implicitly suggests the connection between German expressionism and Hollywood noir. This stylistic legacy is exaggerated in the stylized light and shadows of *Veronika Voss*, which extends the comparison to the postmodernist pastiche of the 1980s while providing an ideological perspective on these aesthetic connections.

The sequence opens with a scene from *Creeping Poison*, a German melodrama made in 1943 when Veronika was at the peak of her career and the Third Reich at the peak of world domination. *Creeping Poison* serves a function parallel to that of *Queen Kelly* in *Sunset Boulevard*, only Fassbinder has fabricated this scene rather than using footage from an actual period film. Instead of casting a former star like Gloria

Figure 1. Rosel Zech in the title role of a fading film star: Rainer Werner Fassbinder's Veronika Voss.

Swanson, he casts a contemporary actress, Rosel Zech, to play a character modeled on real-life UFA star Sybille Schmitz, who committed suicide in 1955 and was believed to have been the mistress of Goebbels. In this way, Fassbinder switches the historical referent from the reflexive context of film history to the political context of fascism, while strengthening the connection between the two. Veronika is constructed as a double agent with respect both to fascism and to Fassbinder's ideological parody.

In the inset film, Veronika signs away her possessions in exchange for a fix, telling her maternal connection, "Now you own me and everything that's mine. All I can give you now is my death." Like a fragment from a recurring dream, this excerpt captures the primal contract of masochism to be compulsively replayed like a refrain in all three registers: as the seductive pleasures of spectator identification and plenitude so vital to the construction of movies as the opiate of the people; as the erotic obsession and sexual vampirism so basic to romance; and as the consumerist addiction to material goods and success so essential to capitalism. In all three discourses, Fassbinder uses the same vocabulary of possession and addiction to reveal the articulation of death and desire.

The inset film is being watched by Veronika Voss (who closes her eyes to contemplate her own Imaginary) and by Fassbinder, her director/double seated behind her, who also identifies with the masochistic victim projected on the screen. This primal scene takes them back not only to the misrecognition of subject formation during the Mirror Phase but to earlier screen memories (Veronika's career

at UFA where the film was shot, a process we glimpse in her brief flashback); Fassbinder's previous masochistic texts like *Petra von Kant*, which this scene almost parodies; and Hollywood classics like *Sunset Boulevard*. It also prefigures the respective fates of Veronika and Fassbinder as suicidal victims of the dream factories within consumer capitalism.

The Psychoanalytic Space at the Center of the Text

At a specific moment in the text, psychoanalytic discourse captures the foreground. It occurs in the second sequence where Veronika has her first romantic encounter with the Bill Holden figure, Robert Krohn, a sports reporter who writes melancholy poetry. She is standing alone in the woods crying in the rain when this stranger approaches and gallantly offers her his umbrella.[11] At first, the scene operates in the romantic realm of the woman's film. But once Robert leads her onto the slick urban pavements and into the confining space of a trolley, they move into noir. As soon as Robert tells her his name, a sudden cut to a slanted angle announces the shift to the misogynist perspective of noir where a woman like Veronika is inscribed as a dangerous siren carrying the threat of castration. She even tells Robert, "I like to seduce defenseless men." As Laura Mulvey has explained, this female icon is not only to be desired, but also investigated and eventually rescued or punished.

When the film switches to Robert's noir perspective, we begin to suspect that Veronika is crazy. At that moment, psychoanalysis becomes manifest and continues to hold the foreground with the love triangle that develops between Veronika, Robert, and his young girlfriend and with the central location of the neurological clinic—the realm of the Imaginary where Veronika seeks drugs and plenitude. The clinic operates as a surrogate for the mother's body—a connection established primarily through the visual codes of the mise-en-scène: its dazzling overexposed whiteness; its curved contours and oval windows; its long narrow corridors and small claustrophobic spaces; its fragile glass doors and illusory mirrors. The clinic appears to be ruled by the matriarchal Dr. Marianne Katz, whose very name evokes both the Madonna and female sexuality. In one scene where Robert waits outside the clinic in his car, Dr. Katz's assistant brings him two bottles of milk, which she holds at her breasts as she invites him inside for breakfast. Dr. Katz is fetishized as the maternal provider of "shelter and protection" (what Veronika also sought from Robert and his phallic umbrella) and the guide to pleasure and death. Eventually, Veronika will repeat to Dr. Katz the same lines she uttered in *Creeping Poison*—implying that all poisonous addictions can be traced back to mother love. In linking psychoanalytic discourse with the misogynist perspective of noir, Fassbinder's text reveals (as does Mulvey's analysis) that both carry the ideological inscription of the patriarchy.

The Emergence of Ideology, the Ultimate Latent Discourse

As soon as psychoanalysis captures the foreground, ideological discourse emerges as the primary subtext. This discourse focuses on those ten years of intense

postwar pain when West Germany, as half of a divided nation, sought "shelter and protection" from America with a new partnership in multinational capitalism—the material base for the drug trade, mental clinic, movie industry, and other institutions that traffic in lucrative dreams. This subtext is made manifest in three primary ways: through a shift in hermeneutics, through the icon of the American soldier, and through radio broadcasts on the sound track.

Once Robert enters the clinic, a new hermeneutic distracts him and his girlfriend from the love triangle. They begin to investigate Veronika, not as an object of desire or as a sexual threat but as a victim of a political plot. The ideological subtext becomes the controlling enigma that reveals the "dirty business" within Adenauer's government. We discover that his minister of health is distributing morphine through the clinic and that the matriarchal power of Dr. Katz is as illusory as the pleasure she sells her clients. Grounding his argument in Alexander Mitscherlich's *Society without the Father*, Thomas Elsaesser claims that fascism also exploited an illusory image of mother worship by promoting Hitler as a surrogate not for the missing father but for the primary love-object, Mother.[13]

Inside the female world of the clinic, we frequently see a black American soldier. This incongruous phallic figure is the only male member on the staff. Though he is presumably the American connection in the drug trade and black market, his comings and goings within the clinic remain mysterious. This soldier is a blatant signifier of the latent ideological discourse—indicating the controlling presence both of the patriarchy and of multinational capitalism (forged during the American occupation of West Germany). This icon of German-American relations also points to the intertextuality with Fassbinder's previous parodic ventures with noir. One thinks immediately of *The American Soldier* but more significantly of *The Marriage of Maria Braun*, where a black American soldier is murdered by the German heroine, inverting the typical plot of noir (where adulterous lovers conspire to kill the husband) and linking itself generically with the woman's film (where *Veronika Voss* begins). The multinational success of *Maria Braun* helped generate the trilogy to which *Veronika Voss* belongs (along with *Lola* and *Lili Marlene*), all of which are focused on female performers who easily survive the war but are more severely challenged by the painful postwar period and (according to Elsaesser) all of which present a "probing meditation on show business, German fascism, and their relations to the nature of desire."[14]

The ideological discourse is most clearly articulated on the sound track, which carries radio broadcasts from the station serving the American forces in Germany. This voice of America gradually emerges from the background, growing louder and clearer as it repeats news and songs that reveal how the three discourses are intertwined.

The recurring songs include a ballad celebrating Andrew Jackson's victory over the British at New Orleans in the War of 1812, sentimental country tunes promoting nostalgia and erotic yearning; the current hit "Sixteen Tons" that articulates the dynamics of capitalism with its refrain, "I owe my soul to the company store," which is altered to "I *lost* my soul" by the American soldier who sings as he prepares the morphine; and an old nostalgic favorite, "Memories Are Made of This," which Veronika performs as a swan song at her farewell party. Not only do these songs demonstrate how the mass media conflate nostalgia, militarism, territorial expan-

sion, consumerism and erotic desire but they also remind us reflexively that popular music, like movies, is another vehicle for America's cultural imperialism.

The "awful radio" that Veronika resisted in the 1940s because it brought news of Germany's defeat now broadcasts progress reports on the Americanizing of Adenauer's Germany and on the victories of German teams in multinational sporting events. These reports introduce a discourse of winning and losing: though Germany lost World War II, its new alliance with the winners brings the Economic Miracle as a prize. Now Germany looks forward to victories in the World Soccer match and in the Munich Olympics, where Robert will go after both of his women are lost. As the movie gossip columnist on his paper tells him, "In sports it's the winners who count. I'm only interested in the losers." Robert is advised to forget losers like Veronika and to follow the winners in the postwar game of multinational capitalism.

The radio plays a key role during Veronika's suicide, enabling us to see that it is not merely a desperate act by an individual loser but a "grand exit" that has been carefully designed by the Ideological State Apparatuses. Into the claustrophobic room of the clinic (where she has been imprisoned over the Easter weekend without morphine by Dr. Katz), the radio brings the voice of the pope from Saint Peter's Square. Drawing her away from dreams of her glamorous farewell party (with which this sequence is intricately intercut), the patriarchal voice guides her toward suicide as a reenactment of the central sacrificial passion promoted by church and state. With this masochistic discourse, the pope sanctifies her death as the final gift to her benefactor who has sold her illusory pleasure, a business the church knows very well. The mass reminds her that she owes her soul to the company store.

Though in most films the sound track is subordinate to the image, here the balance is gradually reversed. As the primary enunciator of the Symbolic Order, the radio track eventually overpowers the visuals with its cacophonous audio collage and shatters the illusory harmony displayed in the Imaginary Realms of movies and dreams.

One scene in the clinic clearly demonstrates many of the dynamics I have been describing. It opens with a close-up of a white telephone on which Veronika is trying to arrange her comeback. This close-up literally foregrounds the reflexive discourse by alluding to those escapist "white telephone" melodramas made during the 1930s and 1940s in several nations fighting World War II. Deep in the background, we see the black American soldier preparing morphine ampules as he sings "Sixteen Tons." Into the intervening space between these reflexive and ideological discourses and the foreground and background they respectively occupy walks Dr. Katz, the embodiment of the psychoanalytic discourse.

In contrast to the competing monologues of Veronika and the soldier, Dr. Katz initiates a dialogue with Veronika which relies heavily on puns, evoking the overdetermined language of psychoanalysis and dreams. This dialogue also foregrounds the power struggle between the two women, who visually dominate the frame. Dr. Katz questions Veronika about the key ("Wo ist der Schlussel?") she has given to Robert. Though she literally refers to the key to the house, whose ownership is being transferred from patient to doctor, within the reflexive context it also evokes the hermeneutic key to the plot whose control is being transferred from the

reflexive to the psychoanalytic discourse. Within this same dialogue, the repeated pun on "Angelengenheit" ("affair," translated as "business" in the English subtitles) also functions as the "key" to how the three discourses are articulated. Veronika resists Dr. Katz's pressure by insisting her comeback and her relationship with Robert are "mein Angelengenheit." The doctor responds by threatening to tell him about Veronika's Angelengenheit with addiction. The choice of the word *Angelengenheit* conflates the contexts of business and desire, revealing that the film's controlling discourse is capitalism—a revelation that has steadily been signaled by the black soldier in the image and "Sixteen Tons" on the sound track which gradually emerge from the background. Dr. Katz tries to crush Veronika's rebellion by asking her how she will "pay" for the drugs she will need to support her comeback. Counting on the movie comeback that will never materialize, Veronika replies, "From my salary"; the camera leads us to a different answer by moving into a close-up of the morphine being handled by the American soldier. His song has told us that she has already paid with her soul, just as the close-up reveals that ideology has usurped the foreground that was formerly held by reflexivity at the opening of the scene. From this point on, there can no longer be any question about which discourse dominates the film.

The result of this ideological revelation is to transfer the guilt from the demented spiderwoman (who receives most of the blame in noir texts, e.g. *Sunset Boulevard*) onto patriarchal multinational capitalism—the dominant ideology that constructs both her and the genre. This displacement of guilt also occurs in the reflexive context; in the opening sequence, Veronika and Fassbinder are introduced as narcissistic doubles. This is quite a departure from the master-slave relationship between star and director in *Sunset Boulevard*, where Norma Desmond tyrannizes over her former director/husband who is reduced to a masochistic servant. The casting of von Stroheim intensified the humiliation since Swanson had had him fired from *Queen Kelly*, the film that provided excerpts of her former glory for *Sunset Boulevard*. Thus, the figuration of the male victim and castrating woman appeared not only within the melodrama but also in the reflexive context of film history. There is no von Stroheim figure in *Veronika Voss*. Even Veronika's former screenwriter/husband, whom Robert replaces, is more like Holden's cynical, self-centered screenwriter than von Stroheim's slave of love: he abandons his leading lady when he realizes she is a destructive loser hopelessly addicted to dreams.

In Fassbinder's ideological parody, men and women are equally victimized; misogyny is seen merely as a distraction from capitalist exploitation. A similar displacement occurs within the historical realm. Though Veronika was a known Nazi collaborator (a protégé of Goebbels), in the postwar context of Adenauer's Germany, she is as much a victim as the old Jewish man who survived the death camps. Fassbinder treats her complicity as merely a distraction from his main target. As Elsaesser has written of *Lili Marleen*, the primary target of Fassbinder's parody is "the social text of monopoly capitalism" as the continuing development of fascist aesthetics.[15] Through his ideological parody, Fassbinder tries to alleviate the unique burden of guilt that Germany inherited from Nazism by repositioning that legacy within the common market of guilt developed under multinational capitalism and mythologized by postwar Hollywood cinema.

GERMANY PALE MOTHER: A FEMINIST HYPERTEXTUALITY

Like many German feminist filmmakers, Helma Sanders-Brahms uses several of the same parodic strategies employed by Wenders and Fassbinder but adapts them to serve feminist goals. One difference is the cultivation of a hypertextuality (to use Genette's term) that sets the film against many different works from multiple contexts with which it develops quite varied relations ranging from admiration to scorn, directing the spectator's attention to the specific transformative changes. This form of parody creates the special kind of extrageneric world described by Bakhtin—"to provide the corrective of laughter and criticism to all existing straightforward genres, languages, styles, voices; to force men to experience beneath these categories a different and contradictory reality that is otherwise not captured in them."[16] In this case, the contradictory reality is that of women. Cultivating what Bakhtin calls "heteroglossia," the multiple voices of a given culture, people, and epoch, this feminist parody seeks to resist and destroy the homogenizing power of patriarchal myth over language (p. 60).

Germany Pale Mother (1980) must be read not only against a classical Hollywood film like *Blonde Venus* (1932) but also in critical rivalry with a progressive New German text like Fassbinder's *Marriage of Maria Braun* (1978), in sympathetic alliance with Brecht's ironic poem *Deutschland* (1933), from which it draws its own title and starting point, and as an ironic parallel to fairy tales like "*The Robber Bridegroom*" and "*Sleeping Beauty*." Multiple texts are needed to show the pervasiveness of patriarchal hegemony across the borders of contrasting cultures, ideologies, historical periods, art forms, genres, and superregimes.

Unlike Wenders and Fassbinder, who position their sexual discourse within the larger attack on multinational capitalism, German feminist filmmakers like Sanders-Brahms insist that the patriarchal coding of sexual difference is primary. It antedates capitalism, and that is why the parody of folktales and myths frequently lies at the center of their works, pitting the Germanic feminist sisterhood against the Brothers Grimm. Though their films are also concerned with German-American relations within multinational capitalism, particularly the influence of the dominant Hollywood cinema as the primary guarantor of patriarchal hegemony over the film medium, this issue is less central than in the works of Wenders and Fassbinder, where it sometimes serves to displace the fascist legacy onto Hollywood and to alleviate the postwar generation of German males from national guilt, redefining them as sympathetic sons (like Friedrich and Robert) allied with victimized females against Daddy Warbucks and Uncle Sam. For these feminists, the opposition between women and men is not merely a distraction from the ultimate threat of multinational capitalism (as it is in *Veronika Voss*) but the ultimate infrastructure. The ultimate threat is the patriarchy, for it underlies both fascism and romantic love, two forms of romantic idealism that naturalize brutal acts of repression and drive strong women to embrace masochism and self-castration out of adoration for the father. Whereas in Fassbinder texts like *Veronika Voss* fascism can be embodied in either gender, the German feminists see fascism as a patriarchal construct specifically rooted in the repression of female sexuality, which is still being perpetuated today in Germany by sons who have supposedly renounced their fascist fathers. This

construct is central—not only to *Germany Pale Mother* but also to Margarethe von Trotta's *Sheer Madness* (1982) and to Helke Sander's *Trouble with Love* (1983).

Germany Pale Mother as a Feminist Rewriting of *The Marriage of Maria Braun*

There are many striking similarities between *Germany Pale Mother* and Fassbinder's *Marriage of Maria Braun*, which recently proved to be such a stunning international success for the New German Cinema, both critically and commercially. Both films focus on a female protagonist who functions as an ambivalent signifier for Germany during World War II and the postwar era, a woman who is married during the early stage of the war, who is separated from her husband when he is sent off to fight, and who has sexual contact with American soldiers in his absence. Though she proves to be a strong survivor during wartime, the woman's strength crumbles as soon as she is reunited with her husband; by the film's end, she becomes suicidal. In telling this story, both filmmakers adapt and parody narrative and visual codes from the Hollywood woman's film, which was so popular during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s—a borrowing that helps to make the films glossier and more accessible to their audiences than most other products of the New German Cinema. They both combine their melodramatic fiction with documentary footage of the war; and (as in *Veronika Voss*) they both use the radio on the sound track to carry the symbolic voice of the patriarchy under Hitler's Third Reich and Adenauer's Economic Miracle, implying ideological continuity.

One of the primary distinctions between the two films is the dominating presence in *Germany Pale Mother* of a daughter (in contrast to the mulatto male fetus aborted in *Maria Braun*)—a daughter who not only rescues her mother from suicide but shifts the focus of the film from an attack on multinational capitalism to the common struggle of generations of women against the fascist patriarchy and alters the gender of the film's voice and spectatorial position, making them both decidedly female. In Bakhtin's terms, she embodies the parodic "second voice" that, "having lodged in the other speech, clashes antagonistically with the original, host voice and forces it to serve directly opposite aims."[17] It is the pervasive presence of the daughter both in front of and behind the cinematic apparatus that transforms the story into a hardline feminist text, one of the most powerful yet to emerge in the history of mainstream narrative cinema.

Brecht's *Deutschland*: "O Germany, pale mother! / How have your sons arrayed you"

Helma Sanders-Brahms opens her film by quoting Brecht's 1933 poem *Deutschland* (written shortly before he went into exile), which immediately establishes the Woman as the ambivalent signifier for Germany who must be sacrificed for the parodic reinscription (one of the strategies the film shares with *Maria Braun*). Yet Brecht's poem problematizes this act of gender signification by pitting it against Hitler's construct of the Fatherland while simultaneously parodying the patriarchy's

Figure 2. Helma Sanders-Brahms' Germany Pale Mother: *reclaiming the image of the mother and her role in history.*

displacement of guilt onto the female other. The poem begins with the epigraph, "Let others speak of her shame, / I speak of my own," and ends:

O Germany, pale mother
How have your sons arrayed you
That you sit among the peoples
A thing of scorn and fear!

By using this poem as a prelude, the film acknowledges Brecht as the primary model for the New German Cinema's form of ideological parody (a connection implied by Hutcheon), though mediated cinematically through Godard. By having the poem recited in voice-over by a female (who is identified as Brecht's daughter, Hanne Hiob), the film establishes it as a germinal text that invites dialogic response from the feminist daughters of the New German Cinema.[18] The primary project for the female voice in this film is to reclaim the image of the mother and her role in history, to present her story. By citing the year this poem was written, 1933, which is the year Hitler was appointed reich chancellor of Germany, the film positions its own autobiographical history of a patriarchal family against the symbolic field of Nazism where the ideological intersection of sex and politics is so striking.

Since the film's narrator Anna begins her story before her own birth, with the first meeting of her parents (Lene and Hans) and with the birth of the Third Reich, this daughter offers herself as another female signifier for Germany. But unlike her silent mother from Brecht's generation who is constantly being scorned by mankind, Anna renounces husbands and fathers and is therefore capable of clearly articulating the desired feminist transformation. At the end of the film, a title informs us that "this story is, on the one hand, for Lene and, on the other hand, for Anna." It is a history of mothers and daughters, of female victims and victors, and of the loving relationship between them that the patriarchy tries to undermine.

Reconstructing the Primal Scene: From *Blonde Venus* and the Water Nymphs to Black-Haired Lene and the Drowned Puss

The film's opening sequence clearly demonstrates that this feminist transformation is to be read against *Blonde Venus*, the classical film made at Paramount in 1932 by German émigrés Josef von Sternberg and Marlene Dietrich, the artistic team that helped to glamorize masochism on movie screens around the world. Though this Hollywood film was made around the same time that Brecht wrote *Deutschland* and though it opens in the Black Forest and focuses on a marriage between a German woman and an American man, it completely dehistoricizes not only its heroine as the Eternal Female but also German-American relations. What it offers in place of history is myth. The opening of *Germany Pale Mother* resists the ideology inscribed in *Blonde Venus* by foreground history and demystifying myth.

In both films, the opening shot is a reflected image in the waters of a lake set in a German forest—a choice that accentuates the illusionary powers of the film medium and its capacity to generate pleasure. In *Blonde Venus*, the reflection is of leafy foliage in nature, which provides a decorative backdrop for the sinewy body of a lovely blond woman gliding across the surface of the water. Though the reflection

also suggests a beautiful pastoral image in *Germany Pale Mother*, we soon realize that the blurred figure circled in blue is a swastika. Thus, the abstract idea that fascism aestheticizes and naturalizes racism and violence is rendered concrete. Anna's voice-over contextualizes the sign and distracts us from the visual pleasures of the image by introducing the moral issue of responsibility for political acts in history: "I can remember nothing about the time before my birth. No blame can be attached to me for events before my birth. I didn't exist then. I began when my father first saw my mother."

This comment also acknowledges the patriarchal mechanism of the gaze, in which the man's desire turns the woman into a passive object and initiates the action. Yet when the camera tilts up, we see, instead of beautiful water nymphs displayed for the voyeuristic pleasure of the male spectator first in the audience and then on screen as in *Blonde Venus*, two men in a boat, one blond and the other brunette. The dark-haired man says to the young woman in white who is deep in the background, "Hello, young lady," while his blond friend (who turns out to be the narrator's father, Hans) critically observes, "But she's much too fat." In the very first glance, Lene has already begun to be scorned as she is evaluated against an absent mythical ideal. What is foregrounded for *our* attention is not the female object but the mechanism of the male gaze. When Anna's voice-over resumes, she quickly reverses the power dynamics by subjecting the men to the critical gaze of the female spectator and again shifts the context from physical beauty in Nature to moral responsibility in History: "He wasn't the Nazi. That was the other one, his friend." The camera then pans to another boat carrying several men who salute the father's friend Ulrich, who salutes back, "Heil Hitler," forcing us to read the men's meeting with the woman in fascist terms. Like Dietrich's Venus, Lene is part of a spectacle—not a visual display of beautiful nymphs splashing in the water but a violent encounter in which, when accosted by a dog and several Nazis, she raises her hand in a threatening gesture. The spectatorial remarks of Hans and Ulrich reveal their racist and sexist assumptions.

Hans: She didn't scream.

Ulrich: A real German woman.

Hans: With black hair?

Ulrich: She's the only one with black hair. Seven beautiful sisters. Pure Aryan.

Hans: She didn't say a word.

Ulrich: I'm going to the rowing club dance with her sister. She's blond. Corn-colored hair. She's prettier, only she's got black hair.

Hans: Look, a dead cat!

The image of the bloated cat floating in the water prefigures Lene's castration at the hands of the fascist patriarchy, that is, the death of female sexuality. Both men perceive the woman negatively as a Lack—as *not* blonde, as one who does *not* speak or scream, and ultimately as a signifier of castration. Yet Anna had already linked this kind of negative construction with patriarchal fascism when she introduced her father as *not* the Nazi.

The men's explicit allusions to Lene's darkness and silence also evoke the kinds of tensions in *Blonde Venus* that led the *Cahiers du Cinema* critics to include von Sternberg along with John Ford as a filmmaker who critiques the dominant ideology from within the Hollywood system and, more recently, led a revisionist

feminist theorist, Gaylyn Studlar, to give a more complex, more convincing reading of his works.[19] In von Sternberg's mythic prologue, although the water nymphs merely laugh while the men on their "pleasure trip" monopolize the dialogue, Dietrich challenges their control over language. Not only does she address these American students both in German and English but like Anna she tries to turn their attention away from visual spectacle to issues of moral culpability, by telling them that it is the men, not the unclad women, who should feel shame (for looking). Her difference from the other nymphs is marked not only by her speech and by her confronting gaze but also by the fact that she is the only one wearing a dark swimsuit and thus is the only female who is clearly *not* naked. Her challenge to the patriarchy will be continued through the rest of the film—in refusing to feel shame for her sexuality and in succeeding to earn money for her impoverished husband and son. This challenge can be read both on the sexual register and in the context of the German-American economic rivalry during the Depression. (Earlier, one of the students tells the German taxi driver awaiting the nymphs, "We'll pay you well, we're Americans!")

The ending of the opening scene in *Germany Pale Mother* further accentuates Lene's silence and victimization and Anna's verbal and visual control over this feminist discourse. The camera tilts up to give the spectators their first close look at Lene, who is seated with her forehead buried in her hand and her legs slightly spread—as if recovering from the violent assault by the Nazis or striking the symbolic pose of women under patriarchal oppression. In voice-over, Anna speaks directly to her mother for the first time, explicitly revealing that the film's primary spectatorial position is female and that the text is specifically addressed to mothers and daughters of both generations: "Mother, I have learned to be silent, you said. You taught me to speak. My mother tongue." During this voice-over, the camera moves in closer to Lene who suddenly looks up apprehensively as if someone is threatening her and then stares directly into the camera, boldly gazing back at the spectators. Against this disturbing close-up of Lene and against the somber, moody piano music on the sound track, we read, first, the names of Eva Mattes, who represents Lene, and then of Ernest Jacobi, who plays Hans, and then "A film by Helma Sanders-Brahms," who is fictionalized in the daughter Anna. Not only does the delay of these three credits remind us of the process of cinematic signification but they also enunciate the central triangle in the film: not the straight Oedipal version in which father and son (or his surrogate, the young lover played by Cary Grant) compete for the mother as in *Blonde Venus*, or not even the Electra variation where mother and daughter struggle over the father, but the feminist version in which daughter and father compete for the love of the mother and for control of her meaning in history and myth.

A Two-sided Spectatorial Position

As Chantal Akerman once said of her own groundbreaking feminist work *Jeanne Dielman*, this film is presented as a love letter to the filmmaker's mother. Like Akerman, Sanders-Brahms constructs a "two-sided" spectatorial position for the female viewer. On the one hand, she is led to sympathize (yet not identify) with the

masochistic maternal signifier, who is frequently addressed in the voice-overs. On the other hand, the strong feminist daughter is offered as the primary object of identification both for the spectator and for the filmmaker (in contrast to von Sternberg and Fassbinder who both seem to identify with their masochistic heroines). Throughout the rest of the film, the daughter controls the gaze and the voice both on– and offscreen and in multiple developmental stages—as infant, as prepubescent child, and as mature female artist. Thus, to escape the phalocentricism of patriarchal cinema, it is not necessary for the female spectator of *Germany Pale Mother* to regress to a pregenital androgynous stage (as in Studlar's revisionist feminist reading of von Sternberg through the masochistic aesthetic of Deleuze)—a move that is encouraged in *Blonde Venus* by the strong visual identification between Dietrich and her son and by the dissolve from the nymphs splashing in the lake to the shapely white legs of her little boy splashing in his bath. Studlar's masochistic model would extend this androgynous subject position to the male spectator of *Germany Pale Mother*, enabling him to identify with the infantile Anna and with her erotic identification with the powerful Mother.

Throughout this film, but most pointedly in the marriage sequence, Anna's voice-overs make us aware that this cinematic representation of her parents' "love story" is being mediated through the biased perspective of a daughter who explicitly opposes marriage (she tells them, "I have not married, I learned that from you"), who censors their sexual union (she says she cannot imagine their embrace or their skins touching), and who sides with the mother and distorts the father's image (she tells us that although her father was actually as young as her mother, she can only remember his face when he returned from the war and was already old). This admission suggests that in her story, all men remain fascist oppressors—whether young or old, whether Nazi or not; it is merely the female perception of them that alters. Despite the clues in the opening scene on the lake, the father at first appears to be a gentle, loving man with socialist sympathies. At the rowing-club dance where they first speak, Lene says, "Perhaps I'll marry him. I don't want a party member." Nevertheless, he proves to be a fascist killer. Anna's process of mediation is also accentuated by the somber piano music on the sound track, which departs radically from the use of music in conventional melodrama, particularly in the first half of the film. Instead of unifying the diegetic space by suturing the sound and image tracks or facilitating the spectator's emotional identification with the characters, it creates a striking emotional dissonance between sound and image. For example, while the image shows Lene and Hans smiling as they dance to a fast tempo, the halting, melancholy, nondiegetic music expresses Anna's awareness of the grim consequences of their incipient marriage. Like the voice-overs, the music expresses a nostalgia—not for the past, but for the future.

The Parodic Use of Fairy Tales: Retelling *The Robber Bridegroom*

Both the process of narrative mediation and the revelation of Hans's murderous nature are most fully expressed in a long inset fairy tale that Lene tells her daughter (reversing their roles as narrator and narratee) as they trudge during wartime through the snowy woods (what Teresa DeLauretis calls "the female domain of the

forest"). The story is "*The Robber Bridegroom*," which is almost a sexual inversion of the misogynist "*Hansel and Gretel*," both of which have been collected by the Brothers Grimm. The key villains are a cannibalistic young bridegroom and a careless father rather than a devouring old woman and a mean stepmother; the primary victim is not the juicy little Hansel but a tender young bride who is rescued by an old woman. Reversing the function that the princess plays in Propp's formulation of the folk narrative (the transfer of power from matriarchal to patriarchal succession), here the daughter (both in the fairy tale and the film) challenges the father's authority as she tries to restore matriarchal succession.[20]

A miller promises his beautiful daughter in marriage to a mysterious young man. One day, the young girl follows him to his house deep in the woods, leaving a trail of peas to find her way back. When she enters his dwelling, she meets an old woman who tells her it is a house full of murderers who rob, kill, and devour their female victims. After witnessing the murder of a young girl, the two women escape together. As in *The Arabian Nights*, it is the act of storytelling that saves the miller's daughter from the same fate. At her own wedding banquet, the young bride repeats the story of the murder, as if it were a dream, and exhibits a ringed finger that had been cut off the victim. The robber bridegroom tries to flee but is brought to justice by the narratees.

As part of their narrative strategy, both Sanders-Brahms and Lene repeat the story of the murder, stressing how the tale is passed on from one generation of women to another, as Anna is now passing it on to us. The fairy tale teaches us not only that all men are killers but also that women must gain control of storytelling, both the voice and the gaze, if they are to transcend their mother tongue of silence and master the world of the symbolic.

Sanders-Brahms boldly interrupts Lene's telling of this story with documentary footage of the war and with a rape—ruptures that help underline the wider applicability of the tale to all men in war and marriage. While the camera focuses on the silent gaze of the young Anna, Lene is sexually assaulted by American soldiers. After the men depart, the child kisses her mother who remarks, almost impassively, that victors in war have the right to take the women of the losers as spoils. This reaction reveals Lene's extreme passivity as well as her assumption that wars are waged only by men and that women bear no responsibility for their consequences. The rape is almost dismissed as merely a distraction from the more important story of the robber bridegroom, which Lene immediately resumes.

The parodic use of this fairy tale also leads us to recall that earlier in the marriage scene, right after Lene and Hans had crossed the threshold, the bride moved to the window and ran her finger along the drape, pricking it on a needle; then the groom sucked her blood. This incident evokes "*Sleeping Beauty*" as well as the myth of the vampire, which (like the tale of "*The Robber Bridegroom*") both prefigure how Lene will be paralyzed, drained, and devoured in this marriage.

The sequences of Hans in war also support his identification with the cannibalistic bridegroom and his murderous gang who ritualistically repeat their crimes. Hans's female victims are repeatedly associated with Lene and are even played by Eva Mattes. In one sequence set in the Polish countryside, when we first see Eva Mattes running away from soldiers, we think it may be Lene's nightmare, but then we realize it is Hans's wartime initiation into the murder of the civilian population.

He weeps over this one particular victim because she looks like his wife—a reaction that distinguishes him from the other, hardened soldiers. Yet the casting of Mattes reflects not only Hans's painful subjectivity but also the harsh judgments of Anna and Sanders-Brahms who use this doubling of Lene not to exonerate him in battle but to extend his guilt to the civilian context of marriage. In the next wartime sequence set in France, the opening shot is a close-up of a vaginal oyster, which Hans devours as he eyes Lene's French double across the crowded room. This time when the victim is shot, he sheds no tears.

The Power of the Female Spectator in the Inner War

Since male signifiers in *Germany Pale Mother* essentially remain static, the story focuses on the developing consciousness of the daughter as female spectator and on the internal demoralization of the mother as female subject. Lene displays great physical and emotional strength during the difficult war years while her husband is away and while she gives birth, love, and protection to her daughter, but as soon as he returns, she is stripped of all authority, independence, and self-worth. As Anna tells us, that is when the "inner war" began—inside the family and inside Lene. First, she suffers a self-imposed paralysis that disfigures one side of her face and then the painful extraction of all her teeth, a symbolic castration executed by a male doctor and authorized by her husband. Just before attempting suicide, when Lene pleads, "I need love," and insists, "I am more capable," Hans replies, "No one believes it—least of all you." Her suicide attempt would have proved him right, except that it is witnessed and interrupted by Anna.

It is only Anna who bears witness to her mother's strength, a testimony the film seeks to document. The birth scene is intercut with documentary footage of Berlin being bombed, visually punning on the dropping of bombs and babies. Not only does this juxtaposition contrast the creative efforts of womankind with the destructive activities of men but it also confers an equal status on the private acts of women within men's public theater of war, confirming that the personal is political. Later, Lene will confess to Hans that raising their child was more important to her than the war, and Anna will describe rhapsodically the fun that she and Lene had as witches flying over the rubble. The child perceives the war merely as a dramatic backdrop for the primal scenes she witnessed, including the listless coupling of her parents in makeshift bedrooms and the brutal rape of her mother by American soldiers, scenes in which Lene emerges with dignity.

Yet Hans will turn such scenes into evidence against Lene in his campaign to crush her ego. Repeatedly, he accuses her of adultery (the crime that in *Blonde Venus*, so quickly segues into prostitution). Hans cannot otherwise explain how Lene could have changed in his absence. He cannot conceive of her strength as having come from within herself. This construct of the phantom lover supports the patriarchal definition of woman as Lack or cipher.

Though Lene denies his accusations, they help to bring on the facial twitching that ultimately leads to her paralysis. Another way he helps to trigger this self-destruction is by attacking the other side of her female sexuality—her motherhood. During one of his wartime leaves, as he jealously watches their baby nursing at her

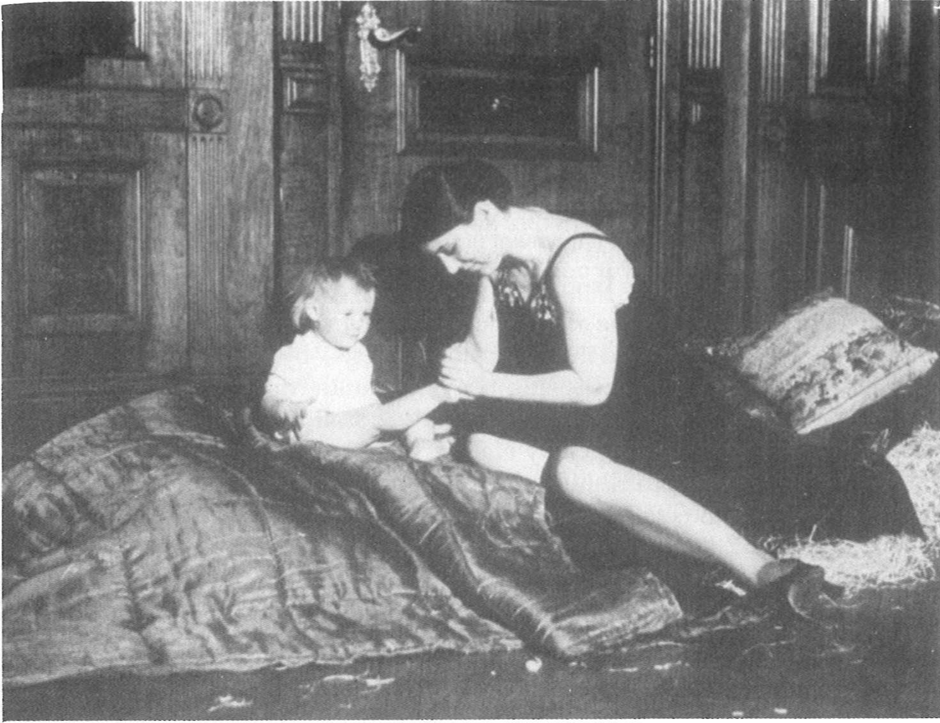

Figure 3. Germany Pale Mother: *the dominating presence of a daughter.*

breast, the cannibalistic Hans tells Lene to stop breast-feeding because the child is devouring her. Not only does this advice imply Lene is weak, it also fosters a rivalry between mother and daughter. Actually, he is motivated by his own infantile need for Lene's undivided attention and by his own fear of losing his patriarchal power over his wife and child, who have thrived in his absence. Nevertheless, his remark succeeds in making Lene withdraw from Anna: she admits it is disturbing to see the child grow fatter as she grows thinner and to think that her child will forget these wartime events that will leave indelible marks on Lene's face. It is at this moment that her facial twitching first becomes visible. Several years later, after her face is paralyzed and her teeth extracted, Lene retreats to her bed, withdrawing from the family struggle. Out of loving sympathy, young Anna brings her a bowl of soup, which Lene angrily flings in her face, as if deeply resenting their complete reversal of roles (as nurturer and nurturee) and bitterly jealous of her daughter's growing strength. At this moment, Lene evokes the many patriarchal fairy tales (like "Snow White" and "Cinderella") that warn young girls against aging wicked mothers who hate them for their virtue, youth, and beauty.

The Deglamourization of Beauty

Lene's facial paralysis symbolically expresses the two-sided nature of the female icon—as object of voyeuristic pleasure and as threat of castration—that Laura Mulvey has theorized in her influential essay, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema."

> Ultimately, the meaning of woman is sexual difference, the absence of the penis is visually ascertainable, the material evidence on which is based the castration complex essential for the organization of entrance to the symbolic order and the law of the father. Thus, the woman as icon, displayed for the gaze and enjoyment of men, the active controllers of the look always threatens to evoke the anxiety it originally signified.[21]

Focusing her argument on the male spectator, Mulvey describes two ways the male unconscious can escape from this castration anxiety—by investigating the woman and then either punishing or saving her as the undervalued guilty object or by fetishizing her beauty in a process of overvaluation that disavows castration. The first path is relentlessly pursued by Hans, as he supposedly saves Lene from the spreading paralysis by punishing her with the painful extraction of her teeth, while actually imposing the castration on her that he himself fears. The second path is pursued by von Sternberg in *Blonde Venus*, an instance that Mulvey herself cites as a pure example of "fetishistic scopophilia." At the end of her essay, Mulvey calls for the breakdown of these cinematic codes of visual pleasure that mainstream film has used to control the representation of Woman.

It is precisely this breakdown that *Germany Pale Mother* seeks to achieve, primarily by shifting its spectatorial position to the female. After Lene's paralysis, one side of her face remains the beautiful fetishized object of desire, like Dietrich in *Blonde Venus*, while the other side explicitly depicts disfigurement and castration. Yet the castration is aimed not at male spectators, as in Mulvey's analysis of the patriarchal unconscious, but at female spectators. The warning is against women's masochistic denial of female power, which invites a sadistic castration projected and imposed by patriarchs. Supported by all the institutions that empower and therefore eroticize the phallic male, romantic love functions as the primary force that drives women to castrate themselves to attain the object of their desire. Like fascist aesthetics (particularly as theorized by Walter Benjamin, who argued that in contrast to communism, which politicizes art, fascism aestheticizes politics),[22] romantic love uses beauty to naturalize brutal acts of repression. That is why the cult of beauty fetishized in *Blonde Venus* is so dangerous. While Mulvey demystified those dangers in the context of sexual politics, she does not make the link with fascism. It is precisely this connection that is emphasized by *Germany Pale Mother*—particularly in a series of shots that are foregrounded by the visual beauty of their surface.

The first is the very opening shot of the film—the soft-focus pastel image of the swastika reflected in the lake, which at first looks like an impressionist painting and which introduces the parody of *Blonde Venus*. Later, the dance sequence is introduced by a huge close-up of what looks like an abstract painting but turns out to be bugs crawling across a Nazi flag. In both instances, these abstract fascist signifiers provide a romantic backdrop for the meeting and coupling of Hans and Lene. Their

meaning is obscured by the lack of sharp focus, the overscaled size of the image, and their total domination of the frame. As soon as these images are contextualized in a larger visual, moral, or historical framework, their danger is clarified.

Even when the fascist insignias are gone, visual beauty still functions as a powerful lure or as a misleading distraction. The marriage sequence opens with a long shot of a stunningly beautiful flower-lined lane (the proverbial primrose path) through which the couple rides on a motor bike (presumably on their first date) and which hypnotically holds the camera's gaze after the couple has left the frame. The next shot is an extreme close-up of a door handle, which opens inward and admits Lene dressed as a bride and Hans as a groom into the marriage that will destroy her. The elliptical cutting accentuates the ceremonial images of transition (the path and threshold) that guide Lene through these traditional rites of courtship and marriage.

The most powerful example of the deglamorization of beauty comes in the sequence set in France, where a group of prisoners (including the woman who looks exactly like Lene) are silently led to the top of a hill, where they are posed (in an upward angle long shot) against a gorgeous blue sky with puffy white clouds. The movements of both prisoners and soldiers (who include Hans) are so graceful that they suggest we are about to witness the performance of an elegant dance rather than the brutal execution that follows. The visual beauty of this sequence almost prevents us from comprehending the violence it depicts. Yet this is the sequence that confirms Hans is a killer in the dual contexts of war and romance.

Daddy Dearest

Since the primary attack is on the patriarchy, it is hardly surprising that Hans is also perceived as dangerous in the role of father. He never wanted to have children and shows no signs of tenderness or affection toward Anna, only jealousy and resentment. He tries to subject his daughter to the same kind of castrating limits that are in the process of destroying his wife. In the scene where he decides to take Lene to the doctor who will extract her teeth, Hans orders Anna "not to move until we get back"—prescribing the same kind of paralysis that Lene has already imposed on herself. Anna sits at the table in quiet self-possession, resisting subject formation under the patriarchy by bearing witness to her mother's suffering and her father's oppression and by continuing to practice her handwriting. She is learning how to enter the world of the symbolic and how to master the gaze and the voice for a feminist discourse. In a later scene, when her family is visiting her father's rich relation, who has successfully made the transition from being a high party official under Hitler to being a high church official under Adenauer, Anna makes her silent protest against hypocritical patriarchal discourse by defecating on the expensive rug (which evokes Lene's earlier spilling of tea on the carpet when learning that Hans must go to war). Lene runs to her daughter's side to offer her comfort and clean up the mess. As soon as the females withdraw, the rich man offers Hans a cigar and quickly lights one for himself to cover the stench, claiming that he is very sensitive to bad smells. One wonders whether he smelled the stench from the death camps, the existence of which his discourse on postwar adaptation never acknowledges.

Anna also casts her critical gaze at her mother, particularly at her passivity—for not helping the Jews and not speaking out against anti-Semitism and genocide and for turning all of her anger and violence inward against herself and her daughter instead of outward toward her fascist oppressors as her opening gesture had promised. As a double agent both with respect to fascism and the patriarchy, Lene bears partial responsibility for her own victimization. Though Anna excuses Lene, since this complicity resulted from female subject formation under the patriarchy, she must nevertheless refuse to identify with her mother if she is to work toward radical change. At the end of the film, when the mother is still trapped in the suicidal structures of the patriarchy, in masochism and romantic love, the daughter stands outside, distanced and alone, yet loving and sympathetic. In transcending her mother tongue of silence and in learning to construct a dialogism through parodic reinscriptions, she becomes the model for the two-sided female spectator and subject both in cinema and history. And she is also the embodiment of the strong postmodernist resistance that has been achieved through ideological parody in the New German Cinema.

NOTES

1. Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (Port Townsend, Wash.: Bay Press, 1983), 114–115.
2. Linda Hutcheon. *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (New York and London: Methuen, 1985), 37. The works of German criticism cited by Hutcheon are Winfried Freund's "Zur Theorie und Rezeption der Parodie: am Beispiel moderner lyrischer Parodien," *Sprache im Technischen Zeitalter* 62 (1977): 182–194, and *Die Literarische Parodi* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1981); Wolfgang Karrer, *Parodie, Travestie, Pastiche* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1977); and Margaret Rose, *Parody/Metafiction* (London: Croom Helm, 1979).
3. Julia Kristeva, "The Ethics of Linguistics," in *Desire in Language*, ed. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 31.
4. Stuart Byron, "*The Searchers*: Cult Movie of the New Hollywood," *New York Magazine* (March 5, 1979): 45–48.
5. Katherine Dieckmann, "Wim Wenders: An Interview," *Film Quarterly* (Winter 1984–85): 7.
6. Jean-Luc Comolli and Jean Narboni, "Cinema/Ideology/Criticism," *Cahiers du Cinema*, no. 216 (October 1969), reprinted in *Movies and Methods*, ed. Bill Nichols (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 27.
7. Brian Henderson, "*The Searchers*: An American Dilemma," *Film Quarterly* (Winter 1980–81): 9–23.
8. Wenders interview, 6.
9. Thomas Elsaesser presented these ideas in a paper read at the University of Southern California School of Cinema-Television in April 1984.
10. In 1985, when I expressed my admiration for *The State of Things* during a formal presentation called "The Female Framed" at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences which was co-sponsored by the American Film Institute and the Screen Actors Guild, Allan Garfield just happened to be in the audience. Afterward, he asked me whether I really had seen and liked the film because he thought that no one had ever seen or heard of it. Yet he claimed he loved working on the film.
11. Robert Stam claims that this scene "recalls Edward G. Robinson's rescue of Joan Bennett in *Scarlett Street* by the émigré director Fritz Lang" (p. 120). He reads *Veronika Voss* as a reflexive "variation" not only of *Sunset Boulevard* but also of several other films made in Hollywood by German émigrés. Stam makes many points similar to those being argued here but does not deal with the articulation of the three discourses. See *Reflexivity in Film and Literature: From Don Quixote to Jean-Luc Godard* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1985), 118–123.

12. Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975), reprinted in *Film Theory and Criticism*, 3d ed., eds. Mast and Cohen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 810.
13. Thomas Elsaesser, "Primary Identification and the Historical Subject: Fassbinder and Germany," *Cine-Tracts* II (Fall 1980): 50.
14. Elsaesser, "*Lili Marleen*: Fascism and the Film Industry," *October* (Summer 1982): 118.
15. Ibid., 121.
16. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 59.
17. Bakhtin, "Discourse Typology in Prose," 185.
18. For a discussion of Brecht's use of the self-sacrificing, deeroticized Mother as a political ideal and how it is being read in the context of the new feminist discourse of the 1980s, see *Brecht: Women and Politics*, The Brecht Yearbook, vol. 12, 1983, eds. John Fuegi, Gisela Bahr, and John Willett (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1985). Of particular interest are Sue-Ellen Case's "Brecht and Woman: Homosexuality and the Mother," 65–73, and David Z. Mairowitz's "Brecht's Women: A Synopsis/Proposal," 207–210.
19. See Gaylyn Studlar, "Masochism and the Perverse Pleasures of the Cinema," *QRFS* (Fall 1984): 267–282, and *In the Realm of Pleasure: von Sternberg, Dietrich and the Masochistic Aesthetic* (forthcoming).
20. For a more elaborate analysis of this point in Propp, see Teresa DeLauretis, *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 113.
21. Mulvey, 811.
22. Water Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," (1935), reprinted in *Film Theory and Criticism*, 694.