

AMERICANIZATION  
AND ANTI-AMERICANISM

The German Encounter  
with American Culture after 1945

*Edited by*  
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## CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	viii
<i>Alexander Stephan</i> Introduction	1

### PART 1: POLITICS OF CULTURE

<i>Russell A. Berman</i> Anti-Americanism and Americanization	11
<i>Michael Ermarth</i> Counter-Americanism and Critical Currents in West German Reconstruction 1945-1960: The German Lesson Confronts the American Way of Life	25
<i>Bernd Greiner</i> Saigon, Nuremberg, and the West: German Images of America in the Late 1960s	51

### PART 2: POPULAR CULTURE

<i>Jost Hermand</i> Resisting Boogie-Woogie Culture, Abstract Expressionism, and Pop Art: German Highbrow Objections to the Import of "American" Forms of Culture, 1945-1965	67
<i>Kaspar Maase</i> From Nightmare to Model? Why German Broadcasting Became Americanized	78

# ANTI-AMERICANISM AND THE COLD WAR

## On the DEFA Berlin Films



Sabine Hake

Sustained by well-established anti-American stereotypes and clichés, the romance between German and American culture has been a key ingredient of German cinema since its inception. The encounter with American mass culture produced compelling stories of infatuation and seduction, but also of conquest and surrender. Almost always, this encounter is coded in gendered terms, with the provocation of Otherness thematized through the generic conventions of musical comedy, social drama, and, most frequently, heterosexual romance. Two basic scenarios seem to predominate, with the German-American coupling leading either to the regeneration of German *Kultur* through American optimism and vitality or to the corruption of German *Innerlichkeit* by American materialism. The characters identified with the American way of life may initially antagonize their families and friends but eventually convince them to accept mass culture and consumer culture as indispensable parts of any modernized middle-class society, German style.

From the 1910s to the 1940s, German filmmakers responded to the continuing process of Americanization with alternately humorous and serious treatments that, no matter how difficult the initial process of adaptation and incorporation, always allowed for the assertion of local, regional, and national differences against the powerful forces of modernization. After 1945, the dissemination of American mass cultural products and the permeation of everyday life by American tastes, attitudes, and sensibilities gave rise to more complicated scenarios that reflected the changing balance of political power in postwar Europe.<sup>1</sup> As Marshall Plan aid brought economic and political reconstruction, the filmic responses to postwar Americanization became at once more antagonistic and more ambivalent. On and off the

screen, the myth of “America” began to infiltrate many areas of youth culture, from fashion styles, consumer products, and recreational activities to the habitually evoked trinity of jeans, jazz, and rock ‘n’ roll. Through stock characters like the rebellious young man and oversexed young woman, the phenomenon of Americanism assumed a highly symptomatic function in the spheres of mass entertainment as well as political debate—and did so primarily through interpretative patterns developed during the Weimar phenomenon of *Amerikanismus*.<sup>2</sup> But whereas the cultural and political elites denounced Americanization as an agent of social disintegration and cultural leveling, the young generation enthusiastically embraced all things American as an agent of social mobility and cultural opposition, thus also confirming the underlying antagonisms as a struggle among competing definitions of sexual, social, and national identity.

The controversy over American mass culture during the postwar period revolved around specific consumer products and the attitudes, values, and personalities acquired through them. The provocation of the American way of life typically took place on three levels: in the form of specific products associated with Americanization (e.g., jeans, jazz, rock ‘n’ roll); through the representation of American culture in German and American feature films (e.g., most famously, in the rebel films); and as part of more complicated discursive processes that turned Americanism from a reaction to cultural products into a cultural production with its own independent rules of engagement. Directly or indirectly, the negative qualities attributed to American mass culture and consumer culture articulated more pervasive concerns about the crisis of traditional middle-class society and the future of national culture and identity. Serving largely symptomatic functions, the phenomenon of anti-Americanism represented both a response to Americanization and a function of that very discourse. It would therefore be shortsighted, if not misguided, to read the symbolic practices associated with “America” merely on the level of surface phenomena and to dismiss any critique of mass consumption as a predictable contribution to the high versus low culture debate in its various elitist, racialist, and nationalistic manifestations. In particular, the widespread fears about the corruption of bourgeois individualism by possessive individualism (McPherson) can only be understood through their strategic function as part of the political antagonisms of the Cold War and in relation to the new collectivities organized under the opposing systems of capitalism and communism.

In almost all films from the postwar period, the narrativization of Americanization involves a process of successfully adapting and incorporating American elements into German texts and contexts. Rarely are rejection and expulsion of the other considered—except in the well-known Berlin films produced by the East German DEFA studio during the height of the Cold

War.<sup>3</sup> Their radical difference from standard (western) accounts of German cinema and postwar Americanization is reason enough in my opinion to take a closer look at the central role of anti-Americanism in the mapping of ideological differences across the divided topographies of the 1950s. Three guiding principles should inform such an undertaking. First, the causes, mechanisms, and effects of anti-Americanism extend from actual cultural *and* political differences to the structure of their mutual instrumentalization in the rhetoric of Cold War cinema; understanding these differences requires close textual analysis. Second, a critical assessment of the contribution of cinema to the articulation of political anti-Americanism cannot be achieved through traditional definitions of politics alone but must extend to the role of fiction, narrative, and fantasy in constructing identities, especially those related to gender and sexuality. And third, the attraction of the American way of life can be reconstituted most effectively through a closer look at the highly politicized contemporary dramas made during the early 1950s, a period of considerable uncertainty and instability in all areas of culture and ideology. Accordingly, anti-American positions are found not only in DEFA's famous antifascist dramas but also in the contemporary dramas that focus on the reorganization of public and private life, the changing relationship between work and leisure, the emergence of new forms of association and community, and the gradual transformation of cultural tastes and preferences in accordance with an emerging socialist culture.

In the following pages, I intend to show how these films relied on highly gendered divisions to first problematize the pursuit of individual happiness under capitalism and then enlist the same libidinal structures in proclaiming socialism as the only valid alternative. The underlying struggle over the place of individual desire in socialist societies was typically articulated through the romantic yearnings, artistic ambitions, and consumerist needs of the female main protagonists. In tracing the central role of anti-Americanism in this (gendered) conceptualization of the individual under socialism, I focus on Kurt Maetzig's *Roman einer jungen Ehe* (1952, *Story of a Young Couple*), Slatan Dudow's *Frauenschicksale* (1952, *Women's Destinies*), and Gerhard Klein and Wolfgang Kohlhaase's *Eine Berliner Romanze* (1956, *A Berlin Romance*), three films that captured both the optimism of the reconstruction years and the paranoia of the emerging Cold War. Unlike the Berlin films made after 1962 to justify the building of the "anti-imperialist protective rampart," these early contributions used the Americanization of cultural and social life as a negative foil for the emergence of the New Socialist Man. Their highly didactic narratives described—or, rather prescribed—the obligatory journey to be made by ordinary people from the false promises of individual self-realization in capitalist societies to the convergence of individual and collective desire in socialist societies. Maetzig and Dudow relied on the

old gendered scenarios of Americanization for formulating the new oppositions of individualism versus collectivism, consumerism versus productivism, materialism versus idealism—in short, of capitalism versus communism. Articulating the question of gender through the aesthetics of socialist humanism and socialist realism, respectively, allowed these two famous DEFA directors to redefine the relationship between public and private sphere in accordance with the overlapping ideologies of antifascism, antimilitarism, and anti-Americanism. But the equation of Americanization with feminization, though not necessarily with women, also perpetuated a uniquely German pattern—that is, a bourgeois reaction formation—in the public response to modern mass culture that, in the end, helped to subordinate the building of socialism to the demands of Cold War politics and cultural nationalism.

Since the end of the Cold War, the divided topographies of postwar culture have attracted growing attention as a subject of critical inquiry. Under the influence of new approaches in cultural studies, scholars have used the category of gender to shed new light on the official cultural policies implemented in the name of Americanization and Sovietization and to examine the various strategies of aesthetic resistance and adaptation developed in the context of high culture, folk culture, and, most importantly, popular culture. Recent studies by Heide Fehrenbach, Erica Carter, and Uta Poiger on the society of the *Wirtschaftswunder* (Economic Miracle) have drawn attention to the highly gendered nature of popular and critical responses to American mass culture and consumer culture.<sup>4</sup> The alternately paranoid and hysterical fantasies about a feminization of postwar culture have allowed these scholars both to connect the crisis of masculinity to the emergence of mass consumption as a new cultural paradigm and to examine the return to traditional gender roles and family structures as a rather problematic solution to the perceived crisis. However, as Poiger has implied in her comparative studies on youth culture, and as I will argue in my analysis of the DEFA Berlin films, the equation of Americanization with consumerism and of consumerism with feminization arguably served very different functions in the GDR because of its heightened ideological significance within the Cold War.

At first glance, a comparison of East and West German postwar cinema would yield remarkable similarities in the filmic representation of American mass culture. These extend from the close attention to the problems of women in postwar society to the eroticizing of consumer products and the equation of consumption with feminization. Such female-dominated narratives and gender-specific forms of identification can be explained through two related factors: the large number of women in the audience and growing concerns over sexual mores and gender roles in a society with a significant *Frauenüberschuß* (surplus of women). On the level of narrative structure and character development, the elevation of women to symbols of community on



both sides of the Iron Curtain follows very similar strategies of narrative containment known from classical Hollywood cinema. These include a shared preference for moralistic endings that transform rebellious young women into responsible members of society, whether as wives, mothers, or working women. Even the identification of strong women with the rebuilding of post-war society and of weak men with the corrupting effects of German class society and American-style capitalism can be found in East and West German productions; the same holds true for the demonizing of an Americanized youth threatening to destabilize all social and sexual hierarchies. The differences became most apparent in the narrative resolution of this kind of gender trouble. While the West German versions substitute the romance of the nuclear family for the eroticized spectacle of the commodity, the East German versions end up offering a political alternative in the fantasy of the socialist collective. Even more important, the conflation of cultural and political arguments in the east motivates very different strategies of division and exclusion aiming at a political rather than social or cultural solution to the threat of Americanization. The resultant discursive effects on the level of fantasy production can only be understood through an acute awareness of the different function of American mass culture as signifier and as signified in the depoliticized responses to Americanization in the west and the highly politicized responses to the same phenomena in the east.

The gendered division between the capitalist west and the socialist east did not remain limited to the products and rituals of modern mass culture but extended to the divided topography of Berlin as the center of the Cold War. Allowing for the uncontrollable movements of goods, tastes, and ideas across borders, West Berlin provided East Berliners with the public settings—train stations, department stores, nightclubs, and the infamous border cinemas—for indulging in escapist fantasies and succumbing to consumerist pleasures. Taking advantage of these transgressions, the Americans openly used mass cultural products in their own political offensive, for instance through the many Hollywood films shown to East German youth in the cheap border cinemas; the American-financed radio stations and various cultural events taking place in West Berlin, and the Berlin Film Festival founded in 1951 as a showcase for western film production.<sup>5</sup> The various efforts by the East German regime to control this dangerous traffic in ideologies began with the 1949 Blockade and culminated in the 1961 building of the Berlin Wall. In the interim years, the contemporary urban dramas instructed East German audiences in the importance of political vigilance, responsibility, and commitment. The filmmakers achieved this goal by showing “the divided city of Berlin as reflected in the emotional world of the protagonists,” to cite one influential critic.<sup>6</sup>

In articulating the east-west romance in spatial terms, DEFA films present the decadent west and its mindless diversions through well-known attractions

from Kurfürstendamm, including the Hotel am Zoo, Cafe Kranzler, and Astoria-Kino. As the capital of the GDR, East Berlin remains identified both with the historical center around Unter den Linden and Gendarmenmarkt and with the first monuments to an emerging socialist identity, Alexanderplatz and Stalinallee. Whether juxtaposing the meeting of lovers near Friedrichstraße station with the gatherings of criminals at the Zoo station in West Berlin or moving from the peaceful movement of workers across Warschauer Brücke to the threatening presence of American soldiers at Checkpoint Charlie, all of these films end up confirming politics as the determining factor in the organization of contemporary life. To underscore this point, the successful integration of mass cultural practices into socialist cultural practices is promised, if not already achieved, through the inclusion of official events such as the 1950 Whitsun Meeting of the Free German Youth (FDJ), the 1951 World Youth Festival, and, in an extensive documentary sequence from a much later Berlin film, the 1962 May Day Parade.

Through the double crisis of urban space and gender identity, the specter of Americanism provides a convergence point for two very different discourses within postwar cinema: the ideological divide introduced by the Cold War and the cultural divide among the generations opened up by postwar Americanization. In this context, anti-Americanism functions above all as an instrument for connecting the formation of the romantic couple to that of the work collective and enlisting both in the larger project of socialist nation building. This triangulated affair involves three participants—the German Democratic Republic, the Federal Republic, and the United States—and three corresponding paradigms of culture: East German proletarian culture, West German bourgeois culture, and American mass culture; the Soviet Union remains an absent fourth referent. Central to all negotiations are the processes of identity formation, and of identification, structured around gender and sexuality. Both operate as transmission belts, as it were, in the making of a socialist identity beyond traditional bourgeois individualism and American-style individualism. These libidinal investments around the category of gender and sexuality offer a point of departure for new desires and fantasies within the highly contested terrain defined by traditional working-class culture, an emerging socialist culture, and the actually existing Americanized mass culture.<sup>7</sup>

In *Roman einer jungen Ehe*, director Kurt Maetzig turned to the standard Marxist critique of autonomous art in order to uncover the alliances that linked the representatives of bourgeois culture both to the legacies of the Third Reich and to the forces of US imperialism. In focusing on the story of a young couple, he relied on well-trying dramatic conventions—first tested in the German-Jewish pairing from *Ehe im Schatten* (1945, Marriage in the Shadows)—of narrating the antagonisms of German history in marital terms.

In the director's own words, the film collective aimed at an artistic treatment of "one of the greatest problems for all true Germans today, the division of our fatherland and the possibility of its reunification."<sup>8</sup> Characterizing the protagonists as actors allowed the director furthermore to thematize the relationship between art and society through explicit references to then-ongoing debates on socialist literature and film that articulated the project of democratic socialism in aesthetic terms. At the same time, the many economic references took up anticapitalist positions articulated first in the critically acclaimed *Rat der Götter* (1950, Council of the Gods), a documentary drama about the wartime collaboration between Standard Oil and IG Farben.

Told from the woman's perspective, the flashback story recounts the personal and professional difficulties of two aspiring young actors during the early reconstruction years. The confrontation of capitalism and socialism, as well as its resonance in competing definitions of art and politics, almost destroys their marriage. Agnes and Jochen fall in love during a production of Lessing's *Nathan der Weise* at the Westend Theater in West Berlin. But disagreements over the social responsibility of the individual artist soon threaten their happy union. Their opposing views become clearly identified with three prominent colleagues: an idealistic theater owner who still believes in the autonomy of art; an opportunistic producer who espouses an American business approach to art as entertainment; and a communist director who advocates the transformation of art into a political weapon. The stereotypical greedy producer functions mainly to establish an elective affinity between antifascism and anti-Americanism, for instance by showing his willingness to support both the political goals of the Marshall Plan and the artistic plans of an old UFA director, referred to in the film as the director of *Jud Süß* (i.e., Veit Harlan). As a stand-in for Maetzig, the idealistic theater director from the east performs the opposite role by overseeing the political education of Agnes from naive actress into socialist activist. Already during their first film shoot, he responds to her characterization of art as a distraction from daily life with his utopian dream of art as "a bright torch on the difficult path to the future."

The highly didactic narrative can be summarized through its stark ideological oppositions. The Cold War first enters the couple's life in the form of wedding gifts, including a large CARE package and a smaller package from, in the words of the communist director, "our Russian friends." These external influences become more noticeable after the NWDR broadcast of a radio play based on Anna Segher's *Das siebte Kreuz* that coincides with the announcement of Marshall Plan aid and the currency reform. Agnes is outraged by the introductory commentary that reclaims this famous antifascist novel as an anticommunist work and, for the first time, sides with the communist against her apolitical husband and their bohemian friends. She

becomes even more aware of the close connection between bourgeois art and imperialist aggression after Jochen defends his stage appearance as a Nazi officer in Zuckmayer's *Des Teufels General* as a great artistic challenge. Indignantly, Agnes rejects the offer of a lead role in Sartre's *Les mains sales*, calling its existentialism "cold and heartless ... disgusting." Thus while Jochen still recites love poems for RIAS Berlin, Agnes already prepares for her lead role in the East German *Aufbaufilm, Die ersten Jahre*. And while he reads freedom poems during an American-financed cultural event at the Titania-Palast in Steglitz, she enthusiastically performs Kuba's (i.e., Kurt Barthel's) infamous ode to Father Stalin during a celebration at the construction site on Stalinallee.<sup>9</sup> When Jochen cruelly dismisses her first film as "an abuse of art" and then defiantly declares that "the arts are my only party," their political differences can no longer be ignored. "In the struggle between east and west, my marriage has been destroyed irrevocably," is how Agnes explains their hopeless situation to a paternal friend.

But just as Jochen's stubborn adherence to the myth of bourgeois individualism involves three elements (the relationship between autonomous art and the culture industry, the relationship between capitalism and bourgeois culture, and the relationship between fascism and imperialism), his conversion to the socialist cause takes place in three phases. The closing of the Westend Theater due to financial difficulties and the producer's dubious film project with the Harlan figure at last force Jochen to recognize the capitalist foundation of bourgeois art and to acknowledge the continuities between fascism and imperialism. Scheduled to appear in a Hollywood film about "the dark [criminal] East Berlin around Alexanderplatz," he makes the all-important move from theory to praxis and decides not to take part in such blatant anti-communist propaganda. Then, on his way to the divorce hearing, he sees plainclothes men attack a group of ordinary citizens distributing leaflets against remilitarization. His spontaneous decision to guide some of the protesters to safety eliminates all remaining obstacles to the reconciliation of the couple who, to complete the happy ending in the spirit of anti-Americanism, have a new apartment already waiting for them on Stalinallee.

As my discussion has shown so far, the specter of American mass culture in the Berlin films of the early 1950s brought together a number of ideological concerns: the advance of global capitalism and its steady companions, militarism and imperialism; the leveling effects of modern mass culture on bourgeois high culture and traditional working class culture; and the debates about the future of German national unity and identity in the new geopolitical order. In *Roman einer jungen Ehe*, the gender dynamics of the east-west romance established a framework for articulating these developments and debates through the simplistic binaries of strong versus weak, and of true versus false, that confirmed socialism as the only truly humanizing force. The

divided narratives of mass culture and modernity associated with the Economic Miracle in the west and with the building of socialism in the east relied on particular forms of gendering that combined older German arguments about massification and commercialization with specific postwar anxieties about the crisis of masculinity and the threat of cultural colonization. Reflecting the emerging ideological divisions of the Cold War, the danger of Americanization and the necessity of anti-Americanism were narrated within a love triangle, with capitalist ideology presented as an obstacle not only to the formation of the socialist couple and, by extension, society but also to the preservation of peace and democracy in all of Germany and Europe. To what degree the success of this fantasy of anti-Americanism hinged on the identification of Americanization with feminization becomes even more apparent in my next example, *Frauenschicksale*.

By infusing socialist realist conventions with modernist flourishes, Slatan Dudow used *Frauenschicksale* to reveal the connection between capitalism and bourgeois individualism and, through the equation of erotic desire and consumerist desire, to unmask the individual pursuit of happiness as a founding myth of American capitalism. The director possessed considerable experience in the gendering of ideological conflicts, from his collaboration with Bertolt Brecht on *Kuhle Wampe* (1932, Whither Germany?) to the early DEFA *Aufbaufilm*, *Unser täglich Brot* (1949, Our Daily Bread). All three films focus on young working-class women to show the close connection between the personal and political and to confront the underside of American-style consumerism with the promise of true happiness under socialism. In all cases, the movement of woman's desire from degradation to deliverance serves two equally important goals: to highlight the destructive impact of commodity fetishism on sexual and social relations and, in so doing, to demonstrate the superiority of the socialist ethos of collectivism and productivism.<sup>10</sup>

A widely acknowledged problem in postwar society sets into motion all dramatic complications in the 1952 production, the large number of single, widowed, and divorced women and the (real or imagined) threat they pose to traditional notions of femininity, masculinity, and, perhaps most disconcertingly, normative heterosexuality. Dudow largely ignores the long-term consequences of the *Frauenüberschuß* for the organization of the socialist public sphere.<sup>11</sup> Instead, he utilizes the excess of erotic desire and its substitute, consumerist desire, as a device in mapping the exchangeability of goods and people in capitalist societies. Addressing the female spectator through strategies of identification known from the romance novel, the narrative first reenacts the attractions of the west—in other words, it acknowledges the legitimacy of women's desire for love—but then redirects this desire toward the socialist collective. In typical socialist realist style, the film suggests two ways of resisting the lure of the decadent west: through the ideology of productivism, with

its protestant work ethic a powerful shield against consumerist sloth and sexual debauchery, and through the ideology of collectivism, with its ethos of social responsibility and self-sacrifice an equally effective weapon against the excesses of possessive individualism.

The romantic longings of three single women establish the libidinal structure in which the American way of life finds programmatic expression in the personal motto of a small-time womanizer known as Conny: "You only live once." Personifying the lure of capitalism, Conny is repeatedly proven wrong by the women's choices of a second life under socialism. During her brief affair with this man about town, Barbara, an otherwise mature law student, becomes distracted, irritable, and withdrawn. She even neglects the political responsibilities formerly so evident in her work for the communist resistance during the Third Reich. Yet after a traffic accident—and sufficient time spent in the hospital reading up on dialectical materialism—she recognizes her mistakes and, newly committed to the socialist state, is rewarded with a judgeship and marriage to a colleague. Anni, a naive young seamstress who lives and works in the western sector, falls for Conny's superficial charms only to end up alone, pregnant, and unemployed. Responding to the many wanted ads by the new state-owned companies, she eventually moves to East Berlin. There the young mother not only enjoys free childcare but also has the opportunity to design attractive but inexpensive dresses, a small concession to women's consumerist needs despite the general push toward industrialization.

Renate, the last woman to be seduced by Conny, lives in a small East Berlin apartment with her widowed mother and younger brother. Selfish, unfeeling, but also extremely needy in her interactions with others, she requires the most reeducation; this is already apparent in her rude indifference toward her female coworkers in a radio factory. Desperate to keep the man interested, she develops an obsession with an expensive baby-blue dress, a rather obvious device (via the Blue Flower of Romanticism) for the projection of human longing into the commodity form. Caught stealing money from her mother, she accidentally kills her brother. Even during the ensuing trial, Renate insists on her inalienable right to be happy, a direct reference to the quintessentially American pursuit of happiness. Far from condemning her "feverish lust for life," the defense attorney reminds the socialist collective of its responsibility to all members, including those traumatized during the war and early postwar years. Working in a scrap metal factory as part of the conditions of her prison terms, Renate eventually learns to appreciate the rewards of hard physical labor. After her release, she is welcomed back into society with the promise of a romantic relationship to a fellow worker and the gift of a new blue dress manufactured, incidentally, by her predecessor Anni. In the film's propagandistic closing sequence, all three women happily join the cel-



ebtrations during the World Youth Festival with a renewed commitment to "world peace and friendship among all nations."

If the three women stand for all those "dazzled by the false glitter of a doomed social system," what are we to make of the man at the center of such libidinal investments? Conny's parasitic existence and manipulative demeanor bring together a number of anticapitalist clichés. His black market connections implicate him in the inequities of the so-called free market economy and its exploitative system of supply and demand. His affected American phrases—"darling," "wonderful," and "bye-bye"—attest to the infiltration of postwar Germany by American tastes and attitudes. All of these allusions culminate in the close attention to elegant clothes and affected mannerisms that suggest strong effeminate, if not homosexual tendencies. Apart from the silk robes and scarves that function as a code for homosexuality, it is above all his complete lack of sex appeal to the women themselves that confirms this character's largely symbolic function.

Conny's identification primarily with bourgeois lifestyles and secondarily with American-style consumer culture culminates in a West Berlin nightclub scene distinguished from the rest of the film by its extensive rapid editing and visual symbolism. Confirming the earlier diagnosis of decadence, the spectacle of nouveau riche patrons dancing rock 'n' roll recalls imagery of social decline from the roaring twenties (via George Grosz and Otto Dix). Even more disconcertingly, the wall drawings of cigar-smoking apes closely resemble the racist iconography from Nazi propaganda campaigns against "Negro" jazz. By being associated with all social classes (i.e., the aristocracy, bourgeoisie, and petty bourgeoisie) except the one that brings about his downfall (i.e., the proletariat), Conny serves an important double role in the gendered scenarios of the Cold War. For by acting out what was often denounced as the feminizing effects of Americanization on the German male, the figure links older traditions of anti-Americanism to the new political rhetoric of anticapitalism and anti-imperialism. Significantly, the ubiquitous serial seducer is expelled from the socialist narrative by a young woman in a FDJ uniform, a highly significant scene that takes place under an advertisement for *Neues Deutschland* at the Friedrichstraße station. The political conclusions to be drawn from this last romantic encounter between east and west are spelled out clearly in the Hanns Eisler song performed during the film's triumphant finale, "Happiness is worth fighting for," which means, by building a unified front against Americanization in all of its social and cultural manifestations.

Thus, the rhetoric of anti-Americanism in the early Berlin films took two forms, exposing autonomous art as a function of bourgeois ideology and, by extension, of US imperialist aggression (in *Roman einer jungen Ehe*) and exposing the pursuit of happiness as a function of bourgeois individualism and, in its latest manifestation, of American consumer culture (in *Frauen-*

*schicksale*). These narrative solutions made Maetzig's humanist antifascism and Dudow's socialist realism part of a larger Cold War topography of demarcation, exclusion, and containment. On the one hand, both directors gave their female protagonists unprecedented narrative agency. Because of their association with the collective, these socialist heroines did not have to be punished with the kind of masculinization or hyperfeminization found in most West German women's films from the same period. On the other hand, the women's personal and political choices were shown to derive from their female nature, which manifested itself either instinctively, as in the virginal heroine of *Roman einer jungen Ehe*, or after a period of trials and tribulations, as in the reformed female sinners of *Frauenschicksale* and the naive young girl of *Eine Berliner Romanze*. Only through the simultaneous articulation and transformation of female desire, these films seemed to suggest, could East German identity be simultaneously conceived of as German (i.e., national) and non-German (i.e., international) and the problem of gender and sexuality be absorbed within the larger project of nation building.

During the second half of the decade, the connection between bourgeois individualism, the ethos of socialism, and the filmic imagination became increasingly politicized as these early conversion stories gave way to more aggressive cautionary tales that left no doubt about the political measures necessary to stop the continuing traffic in consumerist fantasies between East and West Berlin. In the process, strong female characters gradually disappeared from the grand narratives of building socialism, only to be reconfigured in the parallel projects of masculinization and militarization that, in the real metropolis, culminated in the building of the Berlin Wall. In the remaining pages, I want to sketch this line of argumentation by looking at the critically acclaimed Berlin films written by Wolfgang Kohlhaase and directed by Gerhard Klein, *Alarm im Zirkus* (1954, *Alarm in the Circus*), *Eine Berliner Romanze* (1956, *A Berlin Romance*), and *Berlin Ecke Schönhauser* (1958, *Berlin at the Corner of Schönhauser*).<sup>12</sup> Their neorealist style has been hailed as innovative, if not subversive, in much of the critical scholarship. However, in terms of their political commitments, these films cannot be separated from the anti-American arguments of the early 1950s, with the tone becoming increasingly antagonistic in light of the continuing dissemination of mass culture and consumer culture into East Berlin. Moreover, their male-dominated narratives introduce a decidedly dogmatic tone by conflating the crisis of (East German) masculinity, the provocation of female sexuality, and the influence of American mass culture, as well as by blaming the problems in postwar families on the weakening of authoritarian structures in public and private life.

Focusing on children, adolescents, and, in the case of *Eine Berliner Romanze*, young adults, Klein and Kohlhaase's Berlin trilogy takes advantage

of the earlier tradition of east-west romances but depicts the resulting ideological conflicts with greater attention to the differences between the parent generation—that is, the founders of the GDR—and the children growing up during the 1950s.<sup>13</sup> *Eine Berliner Romanze* comes closest to the standard romantic pattern that places a young East Berlin woman, Uschi, between two young men from West Berlin. Whereas the more superficial of the two tries to participate in the Economic Miracle, the other, more thoughtful fellow recognizes the increase in poverty, unemployment, and housing shortages as part of a larger pattern of exploitation in capitalist societies. By moving in with the girl's solid working-class family, he consciously decides in favor of the socialist ethos of "work, struggle, and love." Whereas *Roman einer jungen Ehe* and *Frauenschicksale* treat female emancipation as a prerequisite for the building of socialism, the gendered representation of the Americanized youth culture in *Berliner Romanze* leaves little room for a strong female presence. The pretty HO salesgirl and aspiring model enables the filmmakers to present their critique of Americanization as part of a broader reflection on capitalism and modernity. In Uschi's misguided words, "In the west, everything is more modern"—that is, more fashionable, exciting, interesting, and desirable. But a leftist (and rightist) critiques of capitalism, modernity also means atomization, dislocation, and alienation; above all, it means the victory of the culture industry and the cult of the commodity. Rejecting this American model of democratization through mass cultural practices, the film's happy ending again relies on the young woman, now reduced to a mere object of male desire, to show the attractiveness of a third socialist alternative: the acceptance of modernization in the program of productivism and the rejection of individualism in the ethos of collectivism.

In typical neorealist fashion, Klein and Kohlhaase evoke the Americanization of East Berlin youth through their relationship to modern mass culture. In the case of *Berlin Ecke Schönhauser*, this means fashion choices like leather jackets, status objects like portable radios, favorite movies like "Devil n Blond," and English nicknames like Lord, Jimmy, and Charlie. Emulating their screen idols Marlon Brando and James Dean, these disaffected young men cultivate the aggressive masculinity of the working class, but in the commodified terms established by Hollywood. Their Americanization leads them to reject traditional family values for the fellowship of all-male groups; but their oppositional stances also functions as a vehicle for sexist attitudes and misogynist tendencies. Like the West German *Halbstarke* in the films by Georg Tressler, the East German *Rowdys* respond to the feared feminization of German men by retreating into homosocial structures and homoerotic situations. In both cases, the male-male attraction revolves around a shared obsession with consumer objects as convenient means of individual self-expression and, by extension, resistance to prevailing norms

of sociability.<sup>14</sup> As in the West German *Die Halbstarcken* (1956, The Hooligans), this defiant identification with American objects and practices takes place on the level of symbolic behavior. In the words of Dieter from *Berlin Ecke Schönhauser*, "When I stand on the street corner, I am a hooligan. When I dance boogie-woogie, I am American. When I wear my shirt tucked in, I am politically suspect."

The German rebel films make clear to what degree the attraction of American mass culture for these young men lies in its provocative effect on parent and authority figures. Yet what in the original context is directed against the social conformity of suburban middle-class America becomes, in the very different setting of Cold War Germany, a gesture with broader political implications—because it challenges the official ideology of economic prosperity in the west and of socialist nation building in the east. The obligatory denunciation of American mass culture (by priests or teachers in the west and by party members or policemen in the east) takes place in the name of a more authentic German culture, which of course means working-class culture in the east and middle-class culture in the west. In the process, the transformation of women into objects of male sexual desire and the subordination of the female perspective to the conflicts between rebellious sons and authoritarian father figures become important stabilizing elements in the intensifying conflict between two political systems. Cognizant of the inherent dangers in such an arrangement, *Berlin Ecke Schönhauser* thus closes with a call for greater vigilance: "Our enemies are everywhere where we are not."

In assessing the contribution of DEFA cinema (and, more generally, GDR culture) to the bifurcated narratives of postwar Americanization, we would have to take into account two additional factors that, because of limitations of space, can only be mentioned briefly here. After all, Americanization as a cultural model is thematized both through the form of specific representations (e.g., of American consumer products) and through the search for alternatives to the classical narrative models of Hollywood and the old UFA studio. First, a more thorough discussion of the critique of American mass culture and consumer culture would have to consider the aesthetic and ideological trajectory from the humanism of the early socialist melodramas (e.g., in the work of Maetzig) and the codification of a socialist realist style (e.g., in the work of Dudow) to the new visual sensibilities introduced through references to Italian neorealism (e.g., in the films of Klein and Kohlhaase). The more hidden patterns of anti-Americanism would also have to be connected to the official attacks on modernism—typically denounced as formalism—and the conflicting positions on the relevance of national traditions (e.g., expressionism) and international movements (e.g., existentialism) for the development of socialist art and entertainment.<sup>15</sup> Second, the highly gendered narratives of Americanization should ideally be analyzed as part of

larger cultural configurations that include the relationship of genre cinema to the classical heritage in literature and the other arts; the contribution of socialist cinema to working-class culture and popular culture; and the enlistment of modern mass media in a multi-layered attack on American capitalism and imperialism that, among other things, serves to hide vestiges of German nationalism and cultural elitism. A critical assessment of this gendered topography of Cold War cinema would not be complete without at least some reference to the significant shifts in the self-understanding of the GDR from the antifascist socialism of the early reconstruction years to the continuing strategic adjustments within the entire Eastern Bloc captured in the rhetoric of freezes and thaws. Any detailed analysis of the gendering of anti-Americanism would ultimately have to extend to comparative perspectives not only between East and West German cinema but also among other East and West European cinemas similarly affected by postwar Americanization. Obviously such an enormous task cannot be accomplished on a few pages. Thus it might be more useful to conclude this discussion of Cold War cinema by calling for a reexamination of the very discourse of Americanization and anti-Americanism.

The current reassessment in German studies of postwar Americanization is structured around the West German master narrative from reconstruction to reunification. According to this hegemonic account, "America" during this period functioned as Germany's Other, and the prevailing stereotypes and clichés are to be read not as images of America but as images of self. Within such a system of projections and incorporations, America always signified difference, not just ordinary foreignness. Implicated in the difficult process of self-definition and self-representation, "America" provided a narrative of change and transformation, with Germany posited defensively at the receiving end of industrialization, mechanization, standardization, and rationalization—in short, of modernization. At the core of these reaction formations, most scholars conclude, was a deep-seated ambivalence toward modernity that found expression in various scenarios of Americanization and self-Americanization.<sup>16</sup>

My discussion of the DEFA Berlin films has shown that this western model cannot fully account for the complicated triangulation of politics, culture, and identity during the Cold War. After all, from the East German perspective of the 1950s, America did remain the radical Other that could not be integrated in any dreams of daily life under socialism, especially as regards its very different forms of identity formation and fantasy production. Kaspar Maase's notion of Americanization as cultural democratization may have moved the scholarly debates beyond the all-too-familiar conservative complaints about homogenization and commercialization of German culture during the Adenauer era.<sup>17</sup> However, the coupling of capitalism and democ-

ocracy that has sustained the utopian, or fantastic, aspects of "America" for so long has, since the Third Reich and throughout the Cold War, also given rise to very different models of selective inclusion and exclusion in which repressive political systems have repeatedly enlisted American cultural and social phenomena in their very different projects of nation building. In light of recent political developments, the relationship between Americanization and anti-Americanism and, more specifically, between political and cultural anti-Americanism can no longer be explained through any simple binaries or affinities but must finally take into account the triangulated ideological configurations and the highly gendered fantasies of attraction and rejection that first developed during the Cold War.

## Notes

1. Assuming the sentimental perspective of American tourists, many West German films continued in the tradition of *Heidelberger Romanze* (1951, A Heidelberg Romance) and *Königliche Hoheit* (1953, His Royal Highness), an adaptation of the eponymous Thomas Mann novella. Among the productions that included references to the American occupation, very few underscored the benefits to be gained from the kind of cultural exchanges depicted in the fraternization comedy *Hallo Fräulein!* (1949). More serious treatments could be found in *Taxi* (1952), where the appearance of the Afro-German child forces a middle-class family to confront their racist attitudes, and *Die goldene Pest* (1956, The Golden Plague), where the corrupt dealings of the village folk expose the deep moral crisis of postwar society. In the Hollywood films about the Allied occupation, the gendered division of labor between German *Geist* and American *Tat* that had characterized the American love affair with European culture until this point became taken over by hostility and suspicion. Noirish occupation dramas like Jacques Tourneur's *Berlin Express* (1948), Billy Wilder's *A Foreign Affair* (1948), and *The Big Lift* (1950), about the Berlin Blockade, set the tone for the entire decade by warning about the dangers of German-American sexual encounters. But in the end, the feminization of the defeated enemy always allowed the United States to assert its political, economic, and, most important for my discussion, cultural hegemony. For a general overview of Hollywood and the Cold War, see Nora Sayre, *Running Time: Films of the Cold War* (New York, 1982) and Ronnie D. Lipschutz, *Cold War Fantasies: Film, Fiction, and Foreign Policy* (Lanham, 2001).
2. For an introduction to postwar cinema in the Federal Republic, see Claudius Seidl, *Der deutsche Film der fünfziger Jahre* (Munich, 1987), Ursula Bessen, *Trümmer und Träume: Nachkriegszeit und fünfziger Jahre auf Zelluloid: Deutsche Spielfilme als Zeugnisse ihrer Zeit: Eine Dokumentation* (Bochum, 1989), and Micaela Jary, *Traumfabriken made in Germany: Die Geschichte des deutschen Nachkriegsfilms 1945-1960* (Berlin, 1993). On the relevance of postwar cinema for a reconceptualization of German film, see the excellent essay by Tassilo Schneider, "Reading Against the Grain: German Cinema and Film His-



- toriography," in *Perspectives on German Cinema*, Terry Ginsberg and Kirsten Moana Thompson, eds. (New York, 1996), 29-47.
3. On the early years of DEFA, see Heinz Baumert and Hermann Herlinghaus, eds., *20 Jahre DEFA-Spielfilm von "Die Mörder sind unter uns" bis "Solange Leben in mir ist"* (Berlin, 1969). For general overviews, see Ralf Schenk, *Das weite Leben der Filmstadt Babelsberg: DEFA 1946-92* (Berlin, 1994), and Seán Allan and John Sanford, eds., *DEFA: East German Cinema, 1946-1992* (New York, 1999). On the representation of daily life in DEFA films, see Joshua Feinstein, *The Triumph of the Ordinary: Depictions of Daily Life in the East German Cinema* (Chapel Hill, 2002). On the present difficulties (and future possibilities) of placing DEFA cinema within German and East European cinema, see Barton Byg, "Introduction: Reassessing DEFA Today," 1-23, and Katie Trumpener, "DEFA: Moving Germany into Eastern Europe," 85-10, both in *Moving Images of East Germany: Past and Future of DEFA Film*, Barton Byg and Bethany Moore, eds. (Washington, D.C., 2002).
  4. On gender as a central category in the study of postwar culture, see Erica Carter, *How German Is She? Postwar West German Reconstruction and the Consuming Woman* (Ann Arbor, 1997), especially "Film, Melodrama, and the Consuming Woman," 171-201; and Uta G. Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany* (Berkeley, 2000), especially "The Wild Ones: The 1956 Youth Riots and German Masculinity," 71-105.
  5. On this later point, see Heide Fehrenbach, *Cinema in Democratizing Germany: Reconstructing National Identity after Hitler* (Chapel Hill, 1995), 234-53.
  6. Wera and Claus Küchenmeister, review of *Eine Berliner Romanze*, rpt. in *Spielfilme der DDR im Urteil der Kritik*, Lissi Zilinski, et al., eds. (Berlin, 1970), 127. Citation modified, with "the protagonists" substituted for "Hans and Uschi."
  7. For competing definitions of socialist culture during the 1950s, see Thomas Heimann, *DEFA, Künstler und SED-Kulturpolitik: Verständnis von Kulturpolitik und Filmproduktion in der SBZ/DDR 1945 bis 1959* (Berlin, 1994) and Dagmar Schittly, *Zwischen Regie und Regime: Die Filmpolitik der SED im Spiegel der DEFA-Produktionen* (Berlin, 2002). For a general overview, also see Manfred Jäger, *Kultur und Politik in der DDR 1945-1990* (Cologne, 1995).
  8. Kurt Maetzig, "Unsere Absicht" (1950), rpt. in *Kurt Maetzig—Filmarbeit: Gespräche, Reden, Schriften*, ed. Günter Agde (Berlin, 1987), 218.
  9. The Titania-Palast episode refers to the June 1950 founding of the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF), a CIA front organization. On the propagandistic role of Radio Free Europe (RFE) and Radio in the American Sector (RIAS) during the Cold War, see Walter L. Hixon, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945-1961* (New York, 1998), 29-55.
  10. For an introduction to Dudow, see Hermann Herlinghaus, *Slatan Dudow* (Berlin, 1965). On the representation of working women in the DEFA film, see Uta Becher, "Packen wir es an"—Die Darstellung der Arbeitswelt als Feld der Selbstverwirklichung von Frauen," in *Der geteilte Himmel: Arbeit, Alltag und Geschichte im ost- und westdeutschen Film*, Peter Zimmermann and Gebhard Moldenhauer, eds. (Constance, 2000), 381-97.
  11. Nonetheless, the press attacked the 1949 production for failing to show typical figures in typical situations, a key requirement of socialist realist cinema. On the problem of the *Frauenüberschuß*, see Elizabeth D. Heineman, *What Difference Does a Husband Make? Women and Marital Status in Nazi and Postwar Germany* (Berkeley, 1999).
  12. On this point, see Annette Kaminsky, *Wohlstand, Schönheit, Glück: Kleine Konsumgeschichte der DDR* (Munich, 2001). For a comparative West German perspective, see Jennifer A. Loehlin, *From Rugs to Riches: Housework, Consumption, and Modernity in Germany* (New York, 1999).
  13. The protagonists from East Berlin belong to the generational cohort of 1949 described by Dorothee Wierling as being socialized into an identity markedly different from that of West Germans, given the prevalence of working mothers, the emphasis on collective settings, and the ubiquitous politicization of private life. See "Mission to Happiness: The Cohort of 1949 and the Making of East and West Germans," in *The Miracle Years*, 110-25. On youth culture in the Berlin films, see Horst Claus, "Rebels with a Cause: The Development of the *Berlin-Filme* by Gerhard Klein and Wolfgang Kohlhaase," in *DEFA: East German Cinema*, 93-116. On the films' gender politics, also see Julie Gregson, "East or West—A Straight Choice? Representations of Masculinity and Constructions of National Identity in Wolfgang Kohlhaase and Gerhard Klein's 'Berlin-Ecke Schönhauser,'" in *Millennial Essays on Film and Other German Studies*, Daniela Berghahn and Alan Bance, eds. (Oxford, 2002), 63-78.
  14. In a longer contribution, it might also be worthwhile to examine further the connection established by the DEFA rubble films—for example *Die Mörder sind unter uns* (1946, *The Murderers Are among Us*), *Irgendwo in Berlin* (1946, *Somewhere in Berlin*), and *Razzia* (1947, *Raid*)—between the crisis of German identity and the crisis of masculinity, as articulated through the figures of the missing or ineffectual father and of the (sexually or racially ambiguous) stranger preying on fatherless boys. On gendering in the rubble film, see Erica Carter, "Sweeping Up the Past: Gender and History in the Post-war German 'Rubble Film,'" in *Heroines without Heroes: Reconstructing Female and National Identities in European Cinema, 1945-1951*, ed. Ulrike Sieglöhr (London, 2000), 91-110.
  15. A brief discussion of East German anti-Americanism during the 1950s can be found in Ina Merkel, "Eine andere Welt. Vorstellungen von Nordamerika in der DDR der fünfziger Jahre," in *Amerikanisierung: Traum und Alptraum*, 245-54. On the bifurcated nature of postwar Americanization, also see Michael Geyer, "America in Germany: Power and the Pursuit of Americanization," in *The German-American Encounter: Conflict and Cooperation between Two Cultures, 1800-2000*, Frank Trommler and Elliot Shore, eds. (New York and Oxford, 2001), 121-44.
  16. On West German patterns of argumentation, including the defensive strategies of self-Americanization, also see Ermarth, "Amerikanisierung' und deutsche Kulturkritik 1945-1965," in Jarusch and Siegrist, *Amerikanisierung*, 312-34.
  17. Kaspar Maase, "Establishing Cultural Democracy: Youth, 'Americanization,' and the Irresistible Rise of Popular Culture," in *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany, 1949-68*, ed. Hanna Schiessler (Princeton, 2001), 428-50. On "Americanization" as a critical category in debates on the Adenauer era, see "Amerikanisierung von unten. Demonstrative Vulgarität und kulturelle Hegemonie in der Bundesrepublik der 50er Jahre," in Lüdtkke et al., *Amerikanisierung*, 291-313 and "'Amerikanisierung der Gesellschaft': Nationalisierende Deutung von Globalisierungsprozessen?" in Jarusch and Siegrist, *Amerikanisierung und Sowjetisierung*, 219-41. On the Americanization of cinema, also see his "'Halbstarke' and Hegemony: Meanings of American Mass Culture in the Federal Republic of Germany during the 1950s," in *Cultural Transmissions and Receptions: American Mass Culture in Europe*, R. W. Rydell et al., eds. (Amsterdam, 1993), 152-70.