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INTRODUCTION



Transatlantic encounters and adaptations in American and German literature and film

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ABSTRACT

Moving beyond models of linear influence or straightforward assimilation, “Transatlantic Encounters and Adaptations in American and German Literature and Film” explores how transatlantic artistic exchanges – accelerated by WWII exiles and modern globalized media – have continually reshaped national identities, film genres, and literary forms. This collection of essays frames adaptation as a multi-layered, historical, and intermedial process. The collected essays investigate diverse historical case studies, including the Hollywood studio era, silent cinema distributions, German-speaking exiles in Los Angeles, and contemporary global co-productions. Through these analyses, the collection demonstrates how cross-cultural “encounters” and media “adaptations” serve as vital, dynamic sites where political anxieties, artistic longings, and ideological definitions are continually negotiated across borders.

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When future historians look back on our era, they will necessarily confront the complex dynamics of globalization – a process that has, somewhat paradoxically, sparked a resurgence of nationalism, identity-based ideologies, and widespread populism across Western democracies. These historians will recognize how the re-emergence of these atavistic ideas, newly weaponized by social media, relies on the denial of a fundamental truth: that hybridity is the primary driving force behind all cultural evolution.

With this collection of essays, we aim to examine a specific manifestation of cultural hybridity – one so foundational that, without it, neither Western film history nor Western culture *tout court* would exist in its current form. It is impossible to view classic Hollywood cinema as a purely native expression of American culture. The defining works of the Western cinematic canon and our collective imagination were born from an exceptional exchange across the Atlantic – a dynamic that dramatically accelerated before, during, and after World War II, as a wave of creative minds fled a European continent devastated by the rise of the Third Reich.

During this dark chapter in twentieth-century history, these expatriates facilitated a profound transfer of aesthetic practices and creative techniques, ultimately generating entirely new forms of cinematic expression. *Mutatis mutandis*, this dynamic has unfolded continuously ever since, its legacy echoing in post-colonial contexts and among displaced filmmakers from the Global South – a phenomenon masterfully mapped by Hamid Naficy at the turn of the millennium in *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking* (2001).

The history of cultural relations between the German-speaking world and the United States has never been a narrative of linear influence or straightforward assimilation. Instead, it operates as a dynamic, contested site of mutual fascination, structural friction, and creative translation. From the early localized imports of German literature to American shores to the cinematic dominance of Hollywood in twentieth-century Europe, this relationship is defined by a continuous loop of adaptation. The title of this collection of essays, *Transatlantic Encounters and Adaptations in American and German Literature and Film*, captures exemplary points of intersection. By pairing “encounters” – which evokes physical movement, exile, and geopolitical shifts – with “adaptations,” encompassing textual, formal, and socio-cultural translations, the essays

in this volume collectively help investigate how German and American cultural histories remain fundamentally intertwined.

To examine the history of German and American cinematic and literary relations is to confront a phenomenon that Lutz Koepnick defines as a “dark mirror.”¹ Rather than viewing Hollywood as an external force that simply colonized or corrupted German national expression, the relationship must be understood as a complex psychological and structural interplay. As Koepnick demonstrates in his work on German popular cinema of the Nazi era, even during the most ideologically fraught periods of the twentieth century, German cultural producers looked to Hollywood to define their own aesthetic boundaries. Under National Socialism, German cinema did not reject Hollywood’s mass-cultural appeal; instead, it sought to mimic and weaponize its emotional mechanics to serve an authoritarian state. As Koepnick points out: “It is the historical irony of Nazi cinema that, in its very attempt to refix German identity and bring Hollywood home to Berlin, it triggered the rise of a German cinema of exile that not only outlasted Hitler’s rule but in which ‘Germany’ reemerged as specter and simulacrum, a performative ‘Germany’ replete with slippages, masquerades and displacements.”²

Hollywood was a constant presence – a standard to beat, an aesthetic to copy, and a terrifyingly effective machine for engineering public desire. This engenders a “double refraction”: German cinema has historically defined itself against an imagined, monolithic “Hollywood,” while simultaneously relying on Hollywood’s formal innovations to construct its own identity. It served as a site where political anxieties, modern consumer desires, and artistic longings were projected back and forth across the Atlantic.

This ambivalent relationship extends far beyond the collapse of the Weimar Republic and the rise of fascism. In *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood* (2005), Thomas Elsaesser untangles the complex financial and aesthetic ties that bind European filmmakers to the American film industry. Elsaesser frames the European-Hollywood relationship as a “double-bind” – a structural paradox where European national cinemas rely on Hollywood as an adversarial foil to secure their own state subsidies and cultural legitimacy yet remain completely dependent on the economic and narrative models Hollywood perfected. By implementing a “way of thinking about European cinema which focuses on the many imaginary or mirroring relations a nation’s cinema maintains with itself and its others,”³ Elsaesser challenges the traditional binary of commercial Hollywood versus artistic Europe, a scheme relied upon by European national cinemas “at least since the end of the first world war, and increasingly after the second world war, when their respective mainstream film industries began progressively and irreversibly to decline.”⁴ He argues that European filmmakers have always been engaged in a sophisticated game of “co-opetition” with the American industry. This manifests itself in two ways: first, as a “smart response” that integrates classical Hollywood narrative techniques while preserving a distinctly regional or philosophical tone; and second, as an economic continuum that recognizes that the movement of talent, technology, and capital across the Atlantic is a fluid, continuous cycle rather than a one-way brain drain.

The physical movement of artists fleeing Nazi persecution in the 1930s and 1940s cemented this structural relationship into a lived, historical reality. This period of forced migration changed both Weimar film culture and classical Hollywood cinema. In *In der Ferne das Glück: Geschichten für Hollywood* (2013), Heike Klapdor and Wolfgang Jacobsen compile the historical narratives, letters, and treatments of German-speaking exiles who arrived in Los Angeles with little more than their intellectual baggage – frequently relying on the agent Paul Kohner, who archived numerous unpublished treatments alongside his correspondence with exiled German authors. For these writers, dramaturges, and directors, Hollywood was both a sanctuary and a site of profound creative crisis. The language barrier, the strict studio factory system, and the commodification of storytelling forced these artists to adapt their literary sensibilities merely to survive. This was not a smooth process of assimilation. Rather, it was a stressful negotiation where German Expressionist techniques, psychoanalytic concepts, and literary depth were reshaped into American genres like film noir, the psychological thriller, and the gothic melodrama. The “happiness in the distance” (*Glück in der Ferne*) that many sought was often compromised by the realities of an industry that valued mass-market appeal over avant-garde experimentation.

This landscape of displacement extended deeply into regional and national imaginations. In *Austria Made in Hollywood* (2019), Jacqueline Vansant explores how “Austria” was constructed, romanticized, and reinvented within the American studio system – frequently by Austrian exiles themselves, such as Billy Wilder, Otto Preminger, and Fred Zinnemann. As Vansant writes, in many of Hollywood’s “Austria films,” the

projections on the screen resemble reflections in a “funhouse mirror.”⁵ This imagined Austria helped a displaced culture maintain its visibility on the global stage, while simultaneously locking it into an idealized, Americanized myth. It proved that “transatlantic encounter” involves not merely adapting texts but recasting entire nations as digestible cultural icons.

The cultural traffic did not stop after the fall of the Third Reich or the rebuilding of a divided Germany. In the latter half of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, the dialogue has shifted toward globalization and formal transposition. Christine Haase picks up this thread in *When Heimat Meets Hollywood: German Filmmakers and America, 1985–2005* (2007). Haase examines a later generation of German directors – including Wolfgang Petersen, Roland Emmerich, Tom Tykwer, and Percy Adlon – who engaged with Hollywood, not out of political necessity, but as part of a globalized media landscape. Haase points out that Hollywood functions as the ultimate paradigm of transnational cinema in contrast to state-bound national traditions,⁶ and from this perspective, she elucidates how these filmmakers retained their distinct identities. Instead of assimilating, they translated the traditional German concept of *Heimat* (homeland/belonging) into a global visual language, demonstrating that contemporary German cinema can operate at the very core of Hollywood without being entirely erased by it.

The process of adaptation is further unpacked by Christiane Schönfeld and Hermann Rasche, who focus on literary adaptation in *Processes of Transposition: German Literature and Film* (2007). They challenge the outdated, narrow understanding of adaptation as a simple shift from page to screen. Instead, while privileging questions of narrative and text, they treat adaptation as a transposition – a multi-layered process through which texts cross media boundaries, national borders, and linguistic divides.

Finally, Anne-Marie Scholz provides the vital methodological framework needed to bind these case studies together. In *From Fidelity to History: Film Adaptations as Cultural Events in the Twentieth Century* (2015), Scholz argues against the traditional “fidelity critique” (the tedious debate over whether a film is “faithful” to its source book). Instead, Scholz insists that adaptations must be studied as cultural events – historical interventions into specific socio-political contexts. An adaptation is an intervention in a specific historical moment. When an American studio adapts a German literary classic, or vice versa, the resulting film reveals the geopolitical tensions, reception contexts, and even gender dynamics of its era. The text becomes a dynamic site where both cultures negotiate their mutual histories, values, and anxieties.

The collection of essays opens with George Blaustein’s interrogation of a cinematic and cultural icon in “*Übermensch* Emeritus: Arnold Schwarzenegger in and after the Transatlantic Century.” Rather than positing Schwarzenegger as a symbol of simple assimilation, Blaustein analyzes the Central European immigrant as a site of profound irony who masterfully adapted and re-exported American mythologies. Blaustein traces how Schwarzenegger’s cinematic evolution mirrors transatlantic genre transpositions. *Conan the Barbarian* (1982) repurposed the Italian peplum (sword-and-sandal) genre into a Reagan-era counter-countercultural text, utilizing Schwarzenegger’s “Europeanness” to anchor an aggressive American mythology. Similarly, Paul Verhoeven’s *Total Recall* (1990) – funded by international entities and shot in Mexico – thematized postmodern production, placing Schwarzenegger at the vanguard of Hollywood’s globalized market. Blaustein also links this stardom to Schwarzenegger’s 2003 political turn. In line with the theoretical models of Koepnick and Haase, Schwarzenegger’s move from Austria to California directly mirrors the historical migration of neoliberal economic theory from Central Europe to the United States. Today, as an *Übermensch* emeritus, he has successfully adapted once more, refashioning his past hyper-masculine, reactionary cinematic signifiers into an avuncular, therapeutic liberalism.

In “Johann August Sutter in a Transatlantic Key: The Interart of Blaise Cendrars, James Cruze and Luis Trenker,” William Boelhower investigates transatlantic intermediality through the 1936 cinematic adaptations of Blaise Cendrars’s 1925 avant-garde novel *L’Or*. Moving beyond Scholz’s critique of fidelity, Boelhower treats the historical figure of California gold-rush pioneer Johann August Sutter as a porous myth adapted across contrasting national and political landscapes. James Cruze’s Hollywood feature, *Sutter’s Gold* (Universal), framed Sutter as a sympathetic, flute-playing victim paired with a comic sidekick, altering Cendrars’s paratactic source text to suit Depression-era American tastes. Conversely, Luis Trenker’s German production *Der Kaiser von Kalifornien* synthesized the American Western with a nationalistic Alpine *Bergfilm* aesthetic. Shot partly on location in the American Southwest, Trenker’s film leveraged “blood and soil” motifs for German audiences while maintaining enough independent artistic vision to resist Joseph Goebbels’ propaganda mandates regarding its ending. Ultimately, Boelhower demonstrates how a singular historical

narrative became a fluid site for negotiating transatlantic capital, ideology, and genre, echoing Elsaesser's concept of competitive co-optation.

Massimiliano De Villa's "*The Light Ahead – Fishke der krumer: A Voice from the American-Yiddish Screen*" further examines transatlantic reconfiguration by analyzing Edgar G. Ulmer's 1939 American-Yiddish film *The Light Ahead*, an adaptation of Mendele Moykher-Sforim's foundational 1869 novel *Fishke der krumer*. De Villa explores how Ulmer transforms the source text's episodic, picaresque dispersion into a concentrated cinematic parable centered on the love story between two vulnerable outcasts: the physically impaired Fishke and the blind orphan Hodel. A pivotal point of analysis is the film's treatment of the "cholera wedding" – a superstitious ritual where the community forces marginalized individuals to marry in a cemetery to ward off disease. De Villa argues that Ulmer, rather than treating this as mere ethnographic curiosity, instead exposes the underlying social violence of the community's scapegoating of its weakest members, while simultaneously reclaiming their forced union as a site of authentic, ethical reciprocity. Through a distinct visual strategy – utilizing "Hasidic gothic" lighting and intimate close-ups – the film counters theatrical amplification to grant dignity to exposed bodies that the social hierarchy systematically denies. Released on the eve of World War II for immigrant audiences in New York, the film forcefully rejects diasporic nostalgia, illustrating Klapdor's framework of exile trauma by portraying the traditional shtetl as a site of stagnation and internal exclusion while positioning the city as an uncertain horizon of secular transformation.

In "From Berlin to Hollywood: Transatlantic and transmedial journey of Vicki Baum's *Menschen im Hotel* (1929)," Beatrice Feder examines the transatlantic and transmedial trajectory of Vicki Baum's 1929 bestselling novel *Menschen im Hotel* and its renowned 1932 Hollywood film adaptation, *Grand Hotel*, directed by Edmund Goulding. Feder positions the Grand Hotel setting as a modern, shared transit space – a literal and symbolic "revolving door" that mirrors both Baum's personal biography as an émigré and the broader circulation of identities, cultures, and capital within the transatlantic system. The novel itself is framed as a *Verbindungstext* ("connection text"), linking European literary traditions and the urban *Zeitgeist* of Weimar Germany with American popular culture. Central to Feder's analysis are the ways in which the Hollywood film actively domesticated and "whitened" the text to suit the moral values and national anxieties of 1930s America. While Baum's original text incorporated vibrant markers of Americanism and African American culture that were highly popular in the Weimar Republic – such as jazz music, boxing, and a culturally hybrid Black bartender – the MGM film systematically erased or suppressed these elements. The adaptation replaced them with an idealized, nostalgic "old Europe" score (dominated by Strauss waltzes) and reinforced national stereotypes by giving the morally corrupt character Preysing a thick, caricatured German accent. Bringing Scholz's emphasis on reception contexts to bear, Feder argues that this commercial adaptation strategy flattened the original novel's ironic, multi-layered critique, ultimately contributing to a long-standing critical dismissal of Baum's oeuvre as mere kitsch entertainment – a judgment only recently corrected by transnational literary scholarship, which shows that the so-called fidelity principle, though largely dismissed by film critics in the last decades, can still have a heuristic effect in the analysis of contexts.

In "Run Tom Run: Tom Tykwer between Germany and the United States," Matteo Galli conceptualizes the contemporary transatlantic cinematic landscape by analyzing the idiosyncratic career of German filmmaker Tom Tykwer (born 1965). To contextualize Tykwer's trajectory, Galli historicizes the shifts in European-Hollywood relations – from the legendary pre-1941 wave of exiled Weimar masters (such as Fritz Lang, Ernst Lubitsch, and F.W. Murnau) who profoundly reshaped classic American genres, to the resistant "love-hate" stance of the New German Cinema in the 1960s and 70s, and finally to the seamless, market-driven emulation practiced by 1990s blockbuster émigrés like Roland Emmerich and Wolfgang Petersen. Galli divides Tykwer's thirty-year career into distinct phases to demonstrate how the filmmaker resists these established historical paradigms. Rising to prominence by co-founding the production company X-Filme Creative Pool to revitalize German auteur cinema, Tykwer achieved massive global success with *Run Lola Run* (1998). Yet, rather than permanently emigrating to Los Angeles, Tykwer chose a hybrid path as a "tightrope walker" between Europe and America. His career oscillates between personal German-language projects like *Three* (2010) and *The Light* (2025), massive English-language literary adaptations produced by Bernd Eichinger (*Perfume: The Story of a Murderer*) or Lana and Lilly Wachowskis (*Cloud Atlas*), and high-profile transatlantic television showrunning (*Babylon Berlin*). Extending Christine Haase's conceptualization of contemporary *Heimat* meeting global markets, Galli argues that Tykwer represents a modern, globalized trend where

European directors no longer need to fully assimilate into Hollywood, but can instead navigate a fluid, decentralized network of international co-productions while maintaining deep roots in their home industry.

In “Distributed Authorship: Erich Maria Remarque’s Novel *Zeit zu leben und Zeit zu sterben* and Douglas Sirk’s Film Adaptation *A Time to Love and a Time to Die*,” Lars Nowak explores the transatlantic and intermedial adaptation of Erich Maria Remarque’s 1954 novel into Douglas Sirk’s 1958 Hollywood film. Nowak positions the project at the intersection of complex intercultural and biographical currents, noting that both Remarque and Sirk were prominent German émigrés who fled Nazi persecution for the United States before ultimately settling in Switzerland after the war. The primary focus of Nowak’s analysis is the concept of “distributed authorship” within Hollywood’s late studio era, which challenges individualistic notions of the *auteur*. The film serves as a collaborative battleground and synthesis between its director and its original author. Sirk infused the project with his signature style by hybridizing the masculine war film with the conventions of the feminine melodrama. He altered the narrative to focus primarily on a tragic, time-bound romance while using cinematic artifice – such as ironically premature spring blossoms brought into being by the heat of incendiary bombs – to underscore the omnipresence of wartime destruction. Furthermore, Sirk defied contemporary West German cinema’s “clean *Wehrmacht*” myth by explicitly depicting German soldiers participating in the execution of civilians.

In a rare historical occurrence, Remarque engaged with the adaptation through three distinct authorial roles: novelist, initial screenwriter, and actor. Although his original text had already been politically compromised and censored in its first West German print edition to align with Cold War rearmament policies, Remarque sought to protect his anti-fascist, pacifist vision in Hollywood. While his screenplay draft was ultimately heavily revised by studio writers, Remarque successfully protected critical dialogue related to personal accountability and faith by embodying the moral mouthpiece of the narrative, Professor Pohlmann, on screen. Through this dual lens, Nowak demonstrates that the finished film represents neither a pure directorial vision nor a simple literary translation, but rather a unique system of shared authorship negotiated across transatlantic commercial and political realities.

In “‘Franz, I’ll meet you There in the Mountains’ – The Transatlantic Hagiography of Franz Jägerstätter in Terrence Malick’s *A Hidden Life* (2019),” Christian Quendler examines Terrence Malick’s 2019 film within the broader context of transatlantic mountain cinema history and its ideological engagements with the Third Reich. The film depicts the real-life martyrdom of Franz Jägerstätter, an Austrian farmer and conscientious objector who was executed for refusing to fight for Nazi Germany. Quendler positions the film less as a conventional historical biopic and more as a modern, ecological hagiography that responds to contemporary socio-political anxieties. To illuminate Malick’s unique thematic and visual framework, Quendler contrasts *A Hidden Life* with Eduard von Borsody’s post-war Austrian film *Die Frau am Weg* (1948). Borsody’s film adapts a resistance play but transposes it into a traditional alpine *Heimat* film melodrama. In doing so, it treats the alpine landscape as a protective barrier and an emblem of national seclusion. This aesthetic effectively trivializes Austrian complicity in National Socialism by transforming it into an escapist, allegorical love triangle, so that the film conforms to the post-war narratives explored by Vansant that framed Austria strictly as Hitler’s first victim. In sharp contrast, Malick departs from traditional *Heimat* tropes to build an environmentalist perspective based on faith and resistance. Although the real Jägerstätter lived in the flatter terrain of Upper Austria, Malick deliberately relocates the setting to the dramatic Alpine landscape of South Tyrol. Using hand-held cameras, wide-angle lenses, and natural lighting, the film continuously recenters its characters within their environment – framing the natural landscape as a spiritual cathedral and a medium for quiet resistance. Furthermore, Quendler highlights the fact that Jägerstätter’s historical legacy is itself a transatlantic construct. Suppressed initially by Austrian Catholic authorities after the war to avoid offending veterans, Jägerstätter’s story was popularized in the 1960s by American sociologist Gordon Zahn.⁷ This biography turned Jägerstätter into a major icon for the U.S. Catholic pacifist movement during the Vietnam War, sparking a transatlantic dialogue that eventually culminated in his beatification by the Vatican in 2007. By utilizing George Eliot’s concept of the “hidden life”⁸ and subverting early German mountain film aesthetics – which historically fused mountain worship with fascism – Malick portrays freedom not as a grand escape, but as an intimate, enduring engagement with moral responsibility.

In “Welcome to Görlitz/Görlwood: Wes Anderson’s *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014) and Stefan Zweig’s Legacy,” Stefania Sbarra analyzes Wes Anderson’s film through its multi-layered semiotic setting and its profound creative relationship with the literary legacy of Austrian author Stefan Zweig (1881–1942). Rather than

analyzing the film as a conventional adaptation of a single text, Sbarra positions it as a sophisticated re-interpretation and assemblage of Zweig's memoirs, fiction, and broader narratological devices. Anderson staged the interiors of his fictional hotel inside the *Warenhaus Görlitz* (originally the *Zum Strauss* department store, built 1912–1913), located in a small eastern German town nicknamed “Görliwood” for its popularity with major film productions. Sbarra traces the history of the German department store (*Warenhaus*) as an architectural metonym for modern Weimar culture and a tragic site of Jewish-German industrial symbiosis that was later violently dismantled by Nazi “Aryanisation” policies. By setting the film here, Anderson uses a physical monument of European splendor and deception as his canvas. The film's protagonist, the elegant concierge M. Gustave, acts as a tribute to Zweig himself – serving as an Orphic bard of a Central European humanism ultimately erased by fascist violence. Structurally, Anderson adopts Zweig's hallmark narrative frame technique – specifically mirroring the opening pages of Zweig's 1939 novel *Ungeduld des Herzens* (*Beware of Pity*), where a famous writer encounters a stranger, Hofmiller, who shares a story with him. Furthermore, while Zweig evinces a delicate, sentimental compassion in his writing, M. Gustave becomes an “anti-Hofmiller,” embodying an active, creative compassion that leads to a form of extreme self-sacrifice for his stateless lobby boy, Zero. Ultimately, Sbarra throws light on a pervasive melancholic irony underlying the project. While M. Gustave wins on an aesthetic and moral level by maintaining the illusion of a civilized world with marvelous grace, historical reality breaks through the artifice. From a contemporary perspective, the real-world *Warenhaus Görlitz* faces a darker reality: its current real estate owner has publicly banned a refugee benefit concert from the premises using nationalist rhetoric that mirrors the rise of the far-right Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) party in the region. Thus, the real location stands in stark, troubling contrast to the values of solidarity, migration sanctuary, and beautiful style immortalized by Anderson's cinema.

In “Fluid identity: In-media adaptations of early-twentieth century German films for transatlantic distribution,” Tristan Thietz investigates the fluid nature of early silent cinema, directly challenging the assumption that classic films exist as monolithic, authoritatively fixed pieces of art. Focusing on the transatlantic distribution of German Weimar cinema to US and British markets, Thietz frames these early works as highly adaptable commodities subjected to routine, market-driven post-production modifications. Because silent-era film stock was highly susceptible to physical wear and tear, German studios like UFA routinely shot scenes using multiple cameras or takes to compile at least three distinct negatives, with the third negative systematically designated for overseas export. Because each take varied slightly in performance, framing, or positioning, multiple canonical versions existed simultaneously right from the production phase. Examining Fritz Lang's two-part epic *Die Nibelungen* (*The Nibelungs*; 1924), Thietz illustrates how a film's narrative fabric fundamentally changed when it crossed national borders. While the German premiere was exceptionally long, the British distributor trimmed the runtime significantly to suit local audience psychology and added expository prologues to compensate for the public's lack of pre-textual knowledge regarding the Siegfried myth. The American adaptation took a different approach by stripping away references to mythological destiny and courtly life – such as cutting Kriemhild's prophetic dream – to reframe the epic as an adventurous fairy tale centered on dragons, dwarves, and magic. Thietz describes the resulting products as “textual ruins” – landscapes of fragmented visual pieces stitched together into entirely new genre forms, offering a concrete visualization of Schönfeld and Rasche's broader paradigms of media transposition. This text degradation was inherent to the analog medium, as physical prints continued to suffer alterations as they moved down the projection chain. Ultimately, Thietz argues that the proliferation of divergent versions does not dilute a film's history but expands it. Rather than searching for an elusive, singular, authentic version, modern film scholarship should treat these historical variations as a rich bouquet of meanings that reveal how early distributors creatively projected and curated unique cultural identities for their target audiences.

The interview with director Roman Hüben about his documentary *Douglas Sirk – Hope as in Despair* provides a fitting anchor for these essays, masterfully synthesizing the film's core themes of transatlantic migration, archival memory, and the complex moral landscapes of wartime cinema. By tracing the trajectory of Douglas Sirk – a deeply intellectual figure of Weimar theater who transitioned into the Hollywood studio system – the text grounds this collection's theoretical focus in cultural translation in a vivid historical case study. Sirk's work represents a fluid bridge between European high culture and the practical demands of American commercial melodrama by demonstrating how subversive artistic visions can navigate and

critique capitalist and geopolitical structures. Furthermore, the dialogue brings a profound emotional and ethical weight to his investigation of filmmaking under fascism. Hübner reveals the tragic, hidden history of Sirk's son, Klaus, who was legally separated from his father by a Nazi ex-wife and turned into a Hitler Youth child star while Sirk filmed nearby at UFA, before the director fled Germany with his Jewish wife. This painful compromise of paternity, culminating in Klaus's death on the Eastern Front, illustrates the deeply personal traumas woven into transatlantic film history. The interview also emphasizes the vital role of the archive in modern film scholarship. Hübner's meticulous work deciphering uncatalogued diaries at the Cinémathèque Suisse, combined with his decision to have Fassbinder muse Hanna Schygulla voice these historical texts, creates an active, multifaceted intergenerational dialogue. By rejecting speculative, fictionalized history in favor of an ethical, documentarian stance, the interview closes this collection of essays with a poignant reflection on how cinema preserves fragments of human resilience across borders and historical catastrophes.

Notes

1. Koepnick, *The Dark Mirror*, 1–4.
2. Ibid., 3.
3. Elsaesser, *European Cinema*, 10.
4. Ibid., 16.
5. Vansant, *Austria Made in Hollywood*, 1.
6. Haase, *When Heimat Meets Hollywood*, 1–2.
7. Zahn, *In Solitary Witness: The Life and Death of Franz Jägerstätter*.
8. Eliot, *Middlemarch: A Study of Provincial Life*.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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Ashley Riggs is an associate professor of English Language, Translation and Linguistics at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. Her main areas of research are news translation and literary translation, which she combines with the exploration of the interplay between text and image. In 2020, she published *Stylistic Deceptions in Online News: Journalistic Style and the Translation of Culture* and more recently, she co-edited *Constructive News Across Languages and Cultures* with Lucile Davier (2025). Ashley has also published in international journals such as *Language and Communication*, *Perspectives*, *inTRAlinea*, and *Language and Intercultural Communication*.

Stefania Sbarra is an associate professor of German literature at Ca' Foscari University in Venice. Her research focuses on the Classical-Romantic period (Goethe, Herder, Kleist and Schiller), late Realism (Theodor Fontane and Wilhelm Raabe), the reception of Friedrich Nietzsche among early twentieth-century authors, and the relationship between literature and film.

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