

A New, "Western" Hero?

RECONSTRUCTING GERMAN MASCULINITY IN THE 1950s

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In 1952 one of West Germany's foremost experts on youth and film, Fritz Stückrath, wrote a damning critique of western films in which he connected the consumption of western movies directly to male juvenile delinquency. Stückrath titled his piece "The Attack of the Ogallala on the Youth," thus suggesting that both western films and Native Americans were dangerous. In 1956 he wrote another, much more positive article on the same topic, now arguing that westerns could in fact help boys to distinguish between good and evil. A year later the West German state-run television station broadcast a show with the title "Nothing against Wild West Films," during which an education professor maintained that westerns provided an outlet for the excessive energies of young men and thus fulfilled an important societal function.¹

These three examples stand for changing West German attitudes toward westerns, which transformed from a general rejection of the genre in both dime novels and movies to its increasing acceptance as a tool for shaping proper West German men. In this article, I examine briefly what was at stake in this change of heart. While my aim is not a general critique of westerns, I suggest that some shifts within the genre may have contributed to transforming German views of westerns in the postwar period. More importantly, I argue that the changing West German attitudes toward westerns have to be understood in the context of the legacy of National Socialism and the Cold War division of Germany. While my focus is on West Germany, I draw some comparisons to East German reactions. In doing so, I investigate debates over westerns as a site for the reconstruction of East and West German masculinity. And finally, I explore briefly how changing notions of masculinity relate to understandings of class difference between working-class youth on the one hand and middle-class youth on the other and racial difference, in this case between American Indians and American and German whites.²

Much recent scholarship on gender and German reconstruction has shown that Germans in the late 1940s and 1950s were preoccupied with the specter of overly strong women and weak men. While Germans did not discuss the atrocities that German men had committed as soldiers in the Wehrmacht, particularly on the Eastern front and in parts of Europe occupied by the Nazis, there was a widespread sense that men, who were often physically and psychologically debilitated by the war, had failed as the defenders of and providers for women and children. Thus

male weakness was certainly an important issue. The discussions over westerns, which always focused on the impact of these films on boys, reveal, however, that Germans also worried about overly aggressive men. How to make German boys into men who were neither too weak nor too aggressive became one of the major challenges for East and West German authorities, as they were seeking to separate themselves from National Socialism and to rebuild their societies (and armies) in the face of the Cold War. Debates concerning American influences on German youth, and especially concerning westerns, were one site where Germans undertook the project of resolving the postwar "crisis of masculinity."³

Images of the "Wild West" circulated widely, if not without obstacles, in East and West Germany. In the second half of the 1940s, Germans had easier access to printed versions of the so-called "Wild West" that were produced in West Germany than to American western films. Printed westerns ranged from the novels that the German author Karl May had written in the early part of the century to more recently produced dime novels. The fact that most of these were German-produced did not prevent German commentators from debating and rejecting them as American. American western movies became increasingly available after the currency reform in 1948 and the full opening of the West German market to American distributors.⁴ Much to the concern of many Germans, American westerns, among them many cheaply produced B-movies, became particularly popular and appeared in great numbers in West German movie theaters. Among the releases were numerous older westerns from the 1930s and 1940s, while the latest American blockbusters usually came to West Germany a couple of years after their release in the United States. According to reports by the Catholic Film Commission for Germany, the number of western movies released in West Germany rose from two at the beginning of 1948 to two hundred by May 1953.⁵

East German authorities tried to prevent their population from consuming western movies and fiction, but they could not control access. Authorities did not allow the sale of dime novels, but along the border of the Western sectors of Berlin "exchange" shops catered specifically to an East German pulp fiction audience.⁶ East German authorities also prohibited the import of American westerns (and of American movies generally), but until the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961, millions of East Germans went to West Berlin to watch American and West European films and East German papers even printed reviews of the latest releases in the West.

REJECTING "WESTERN" IMAGES

From the late 1940s, westerns played a role in the increasing Cold War division of Germany. In spite of many differences, East and West German authorities shared a strong cultural anti-Americanism, and East German officials tried to exploit American cultural influences to attack West Germany's transformation into a capitalist liberal democracy and Bonn's growing military and political association with the United States. One important example of this dynamic was the trial of

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Werner Gladow in 1950, in which East German authorities condemned western and gangster stories as part of an American cultural attack on Germany.

In the late 1940s, Gladow's gang, made up of adolescent and adult men, had committed armed robberies all across East and West Berlin; in the course of their crime spree, they had even killed some of their victims. The East Berlin police finally arrested the so-called "Gladow-gang" (Gladowbande). Gladow, who had lived with his mother in the Eastern part of the city, and nine of the gang members were put on trial in East Berlin in March and April of 1950. Although Gladow had been under eighteen when he committed most of his crimes, the court sentenced him to death and he was executed in December 1950.⁷

The East German press and some West Berlin papers combined images of the Wild West and of American gangsters to report Gladow's story.⁸ One East Berlin article referred to Gladow's crimes as "Wild West adventures."⁹ Another article reported that "he races the asphalt of Chicago, as he leads his devoted gang with cowboy hat and revolver to one crime after the other."¹⁰ East German authors stressed that Gladow had modeled his crimes on stories about America told in dime novels. Gladow indeed seemed to be the perfect proof of East German accusations against the American "cultural barbarism" that allegedly led to overaggression among German men.

Showing Gladow's deviance required that he be associated with "bad" women as well as with ruthless and untamed aggression. Papers focused on Gladow's "inadequate" mother to underline his decline. She was put on trial for misleading authorities about her son's whereabouts. Throughout the trial, East and West German papers portrayed her, rather than his father, who had been absent from the family for extended periods, as hysteric and held her responsible for Gladow's crimes.¹¹ Moreover, by focusing on what Gladow read, East German papers linked him to pornography and unrespectable women, especially prostitutes. The East Berlin *Tägliche Rundschau* gave a sample of his reading that ranged from "The Erotic Question Mark" to "Adventure of a Whore" to "Robbery in Chicago" and "A Colt in Each Hand."¹² West German papers, on the other hand, rarely reported about such reading.¹³

The mixing of images drawn from two genres, the western and the gangster narrative, may seem surprising at first. The two genres represented two poles of negative images of America, the modern urban setting in the gangster film and the rural wilderness in the western, and East German commentators read both as characterized by lawlessness and violence. A subgenre of American westerns of the late 1930s and 1940s that celebrated the careers of famous western outlaws like Jesse James (a subgenre that Richard Slotkin has called the "outlaw" western) probably reinforced such associations. These westerns were just being released in West Germany around 1950. In their intense anti-Americanism, East German commentators failed to recognize that these outlaw westerns often located the source of social injustice in powerful capitalist institutions such as railroads and banks.¹⁴ Instead, East German papers linked American cultural influences to fascism. A headline in an East Berlin paper claimed: "Gladow's Ideals: Wild West and Gestapo." Gladow supposedly had learned how to rob from gangster movies, how

to gag his victim from westerns, and how to torture them from the Gestapo.¹⁵ Collapsing images of the Wild West, of American gangsters, and of the Nazi past was one way for East German authorities to reject American influences.

In summarizing the trial, East German papers leveled ever stronger attacks on American popular culture and American politics. As one East German paper put it, the American imports and the American way of life posed a danger not just to German youth but to all German people (the German *Volks*).¹⁶ Another paper suspected that preparation for war was the real objective of this American attack on the youth.¹⁷ The East German press used images of an "uncivilized" America for a more general indictment of American culture and policies in postwar Germany. Attacking American influences thus became a way for East German authorities to distance East Germany from the National Socialist past as well as from the West German state.

Such East German pronouncements were fueled by the increasing availability and impact of American popular culture in West Germany and by the discomfort and even hostility that members of the West German elite showed toward American cultural influences. Some West Germans were increasingly convinced that westerns played an important role in forming male adolescent identities and led to male overaggression. One review of an American western found in 1950 that the audience of male adolescents were indulging in "a questionable frenzy of murder and manslaughter." The paper urged film distributors to reduce such imports.¹⁸ Many articles in the West German press and numerous film reception experts and educators claimed that westerns and gangster films were a direct cause of juvenile delinquency.¹⁹ In 1952 a sociological study concluded that one-third of twelve- to fourteen-year-olds had the western hero as their ideal, and a year later the Catholic Film Commission found that 75 percent of the westerns released in West Germany were unsuitable for adolescents.²⁰

West German attacks on westerns were often more insidious than East German indictments in that they identified Native Americans directly with the evil effects of westerns. In East and West German newspaper reports, Gladow was usually cast in the role of a white bandit, but in at least one instance a West Berlin paper identified him directly with the faceless Native Americans besieging whites who were so common to westerns in this period.²¹ To describe Gladow's way of torturing his victims, the paper used the word *martern*, which Germans used primarily when they described Native American torture. Thus readers could actually place Gladow in the role of the savage Native American.²² Similarly, Fritz Stückrath published his 1952 critique of westerns under a headline that suggested that Native Americans were dangerous: "The attack of the Ogallala on the youth." With these images, these West Germans in fact racialized the alleged dangers of westerns.

While East German papers did not associate the dangers of westerns with Native Americans, important parallels existed between East and West German attacks on westerns. Stückrath reiterated criticisms of westerns that the East German press had highlighted during the Gladow trial. Westerns made children think that the roughest behavior was also the "manliest and most appropriate." Like the East

German press and authorities, Stückrath complained that by glorifying violence and mixing it with eroticism, westerns prepared humanity for war.²³

Some West Germans viewed adolescent consumption of westerns as a working-class phenomenon. In 1953 the sociologist Karl Bednarik linked the identity of the young male worker—"a new type"—closely to the consumption of American imports.²⁴ Although they probably underestimated the attraction for middle- and upper-class adolescents, other researchers confirmed that westerns and gangster films were particularly popular among male working-class youth.²⁵ Like other East and West German commentators, Bednarik did not distinguish between the effects of the gangster and western genres. He clearly had the "outlaw" westerns in mind when he claimed that after watching western and gangster films, young male workers tried to relive "Wild West," "gangster," and "desperado" feelings for such an extended time and so intensely that these feelings became their basic outlook on life (Grundstimmung). In an attempt to experience adventures in their leisure time that would counter the atmosphere of boredom in their workplace, these young male workers were more likely to engage in criminal activities. However, according to Bednarik, they were not trying to change their work conditions and unlike earlier youth movements—that is, unlike the youth organizations of the Weimar Republic—they did not engage in political activities.

Bednarik's evaluations of these young workers were somewhat contradictory. He was the only commentator I have found who acknowledged that the Nazis had fought such young men. Working-class youth who stood in opposition to the Hitler Youth had indeed used symbols of the "Wild West": in the Rhineland, for example, members of such opposition groups had referred to themselves as "Navajos," thus identifying with Native Americans.²⁶ While Bednarik recognized an anti-authoritarian tradition in the use of "western" symbols by postwar German youth, he nonetheless concluded that "socially, the new type had to be seen rather negatively." He saw these young men as clearly shaped by their consumption of mass culture—traditionally a form of consumption negatively associated with women, femininity, and lack of manliness.²⁷ In the end, Bednarik powerfully confirmed German worries about male working-class youths made overly aggressive and manipulated by American popular culture.

Other West German critiques of westerns did not acknowledge an anti-authoritarian tradition. Like their East German counterparts, they instead linked male overaggression directly to American influences and to National Socialism. Worries about the effects of American culture dated back at least to the 1920s, but the references to National Socialism gave them a new twist and a new function. Stückrath, for one, placed his 1952 critique of westerns in the context of the recent German past. He disagreed with those critics who had made the German fairy tales responsible for the brutalization of the German people. Rather, he argued, these fairy tales paled in comparison to the "uninterrupted attacks of the Ogallala from the Wild West." He thus implied that American westerns, rather than indigenous German culture, could be responsible for Nazi crimes.²⁸

East and West German authorities shared hostility toward American culture, even as they were aligning with opposing political and military systems. In this

context, American movie imports became a contentious issue, and especially so in Berlin. Westerns, along with gangster films, increasingly constituted the main offerings of the so-called border theaters in West Berlin. Aided by tax breaks, these theaters catered with low prices specifically to East German visitors. Beginning in the fall of 1952, several East German citizens complained to West Berlin authorities about the low quality of the movies shown there. In response, West Berlin officials, who took these complaints to be the genuine opinion of the East German population, tried to persuade theater owners to improve the programs, but without success.²⁹ By 1953 the East German press reported that a full quarter of the American movies that West Germany "had to swallow" were westerns; allegedly West Germany was enslaved by American best-sellers.³⁰

It was in the context of this shared hostility toward American popular culture that East German authorities tried to use images of Americanization in their propaganda after the June 1953 uprising in East Germany. On 16 and 17 June thousands of people demonstrated across the GDR, but by the evening of 17 June the Soviet army and East German paramilitary troops had brought an end to the uprising.

Within days the East German press and politicians accused Americanized male adolescents for being responsible for instigating the revolt.³¹ On 21 June 1953, the major Socialist party daily *Neues Deutschland* published a picture of a "member of a group of West Berlin provocateurs" charged with disturbing the public order in Erfurt. The paper described the attributes of this "fascist spawn": "Texas shirt with cowboy [a T-shirt with a cowboy printed on it], Texas tie with a picture of nude women, Texas haircut, a criminal's face—these are the knights of the 'Christian West,' the typical representatives of the American way of life."³² The picture and the text, which reappeared in GDR papers and speeches over the following weeks, again connected images of the American West to fascism and marked the alleged provocateurs as unmanly by stressing their interest in improper fashions.³³

While East Germans put male youths in cowboy T-shirts at the center of the uprising, West German officials largely chose to ignore these allegations. A 1953 report published in the American-financed West German monthly *Der Monat* suggested a reason for this silence—"West Germans, too, would have been disturbed by the looks of the youth depicted in the picture."³⁴ And indeed West Germans continued to be disturbed by East German allegations that equated westerns and West German culture. West Berlin officials tried again to pressure the owners of border theaters to improve their programs. One official drafted a letter in March 1955 explaining the political significance of the theaters: the border theaters were "responsible for providing the people behind the 'iron curtain' with cultural goods of the Christian West." According to the official, this goal could hardly be reached with gangster and western movies. As he stressed, "screenings of such inferior-quality films have made the intended cultural policy into a boomerang against our interests and thus into a serious political issue (ernstes Politikum)."³⁵ That numerous East Germans were getting something they wanted that was unavailable east of the Iron Curtain escaped this official.

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By the second half of the 1950s, however, East German officials began to drop their attacks on westerns. In 1957, for example, a booklet for East German soldiers listed rock 'n' roll and boogie-woogie, but not western, among the dangerous tools of American imperialism.³⁶ (It was not until 1963, however, that East German officials allowed the release of an American western, *The Glorious Seven*.)³⁷ This development can probably be traced to shifting attitudes toward westerns among West German elites.

MAKING WESTERNS RESPECTABLE

In the course of the 1950s, West German fears increasingly disappeared as more and more commentators assessed westerns positively. American westerns that could be interpreted as asserting the power of brave men and the state made the western genre increasingly respectable in Germany. The figure of the sheriff, in particular, personified a vision of manly courage and obedience to the state. In 1949, for example, the John Ford movie *My Darling Clementine* (*Faustrecht der Prärie*, 1946) was released in West Berlin theaters. The West Berlin newspaper *Welt am Sonntag* summarized the plot this way: "The sheriff makes sure that order returns, more with his calm demeanor than with his revolver. He simplifies words and movements so radically that he almost does without them. A few somewhat stupid women, real taciturn men—America around 1900 was disorderly, but not a bad country."³⁸ When the 1939 Erroll Flynn western *Dodge City* (*Herr des Wilden Westens*) was released in West Germany in 1950, some reviewers applauded Flynn's efforts to establish order with his "colt concessioned by the state."³⁹ In contrast to the outlaw western, *Dodge City* and *My Darling Clementine* were representative of a different subgenre, the historical epic that affirmed the just power of the American state. In these "town-tamer" westerns, powerful criminals cause social injustice; the hero defeats them and thus empowers the decent town folks bringing progress to the frontier.⁴⁰ An East German reviewer did not accept the "town-tamer" message, however, and criticized *Dodge City* for not portraying the true social conditions during the colonization of the American West and for promoting the dangerous lesson that "real men" exist only where fights, shootings, and lootings take place.⁴¹ West German authorities, on the other hand, bought the message. In 1954 the West German Protestant film commissioner, Werner Hess, found western films much less dangerous than gangster movies, for in contrast to gangster films, westerns did not urge the viewer to identify with the criminal.⁴² West Germans had begun to moralize westerns successfully and in doing so focused not on the "outlaw" westerns but on the "town tammers" that featured a righteous hero. West German distributors clearly sought to attract audiences by referring to the alleged lawlessness of the American West in purposely inaccurate translations of American "town-tamer" titles. *My Darling Clementine* thus became *Fist Law of the Prairie* and *Dodge City* became *Lord of the Wild West*, but West German reviewers gave positive accounts of the moral plots. These West German assessments of westerns echoed with American Robert Warshow's de-

fense of the genre (published both in the United States and in Germany in 1954), in which he claimed that in contrast to brutal gangster films, westerns did not focus on irresponsible violence but on a hero who refrained from violence until all other means were exhausted in his fight against evil.⁴³

The image of strong, yet restrained, masculinity that commentators found in these westerns was probably particularly appealing as West Germans were rearming in the mid-1950s and were struggling to portray the new army as nonaggressive, antitotalitarian, and staffed by male "citizens in uniform."⁴⁴ It is perhaps no coincidence that West German reviewers of the "town tammers" explicitly referred to their judicious use of weapons. And in 1953, West German commentators read both *High Noon* and *Shane*, two westerns that found critical acclaim around the world, as representations of such a restrained hero. One West German paper twice repeated a quote from *Shane* that likely had special resonance in the context of West German debates over rearmament: "A weapon is as good or bad as the man who uses it."⁴⁵

The defenses of the genre in West German newspapers applauded the images of strong masculinity and obedient femininity in many westerns. One 1953 article claimed that as a genre western films were of much higher quality than comedies, love stories, or German *Heimfilme* (films that idealized the German "homelands"). In the western, the "man, with the colt in his belt, was still valued. And the women know that they have to obey and they do it with pleasure." This article contrasted the clear division of good and bad and the clear division of gender roles in the westerns with the challenges that modern men had to face in an urbanized, bureaucratized society. "Instead of jumping on his horse, he [the modern man] had to climb into the streetcar" after the movies. Westerns helped him to rebel secretly and then to reintegrate into modern life. In this vision, which represented a clear departure from East and West German attacks, westerns—and this probably included both "outlaw" and "town-tamer" westerns—were a healthy antidote to the lack of control men experienced in modern life. Consuming western films, German men no longer needed to physically join any front(ier)s—be they in the West or in the East. Instead, they could take care of their healthy desires in the realm of the movie theater and the psyche.⁴⁶ Such a vision validated escape and the satisfaction of longings as one of the functions of mass culture and thus made forms of consumption that were formerly negatively associated with femininity compatible with masculinity. This validation of consumption was part of what one might call an emerging Cold War liberal West German identity that sought to distinguish itself from both West German conservatism and East German Communism.⁴⁷

The possibility that westerns fulfilled an important psychological function by providing a space in which men could experience and release their aggressions became a central theme in West German discussions on westerns in the mid-1950s. Some researchers made the consumption of westerns into an important part of adolescent development. In doing so, these West Germans aligned themselves with a view increasingly accepted in the West and promoted, for example, by UNESCO. International researchers at a conference funded by UNESCO in 1954 had concluded that most western films were valuable because they contained a clear moral

message with positive psychotherapeutic effects on adolescents.⁴⁸ Film expert Stückrath, who had been so critical of westerns in 1952, assessed them differently by 1956. Now he urged that one needed to look at westerns from the "psychological point of view." The main audience for western films was, according to Stückrath, boys of the age 12 to 13. For them the (white) "Wild West hero embodied the guy who remains in control in the face of adversity." And, Stückrath claimed, "the boy sees on the screen his ideal ego, the aim of his longing." Rejecting the notion that such boys wanted brutality and lawlessness, he nonetheless warned against those westerns that "separated the use of weapons from the danger for those fighting." The disciplined (innerlich geordnete) boy would be able to withstand, but for others such "suggestions to become rowdies" represented a strong temptation. Here Stückrath identified an important role for teachers, who could direct the undiscriminating consumers of westerns and could help boys to distinguish between good and evil.⁴⁹

Other voices went further. Thus the West Berlin newspaper *Der Tag* reported in December 1956 about two psychological studies exploring the effects of movies on young people. Both had concluded that a clear connection between movies and delinquency could not be proven. The article quoted one study that found that adventure films were indeed important for adolescent development: adult men who were conspicuous in their belligerent behavior and "mannerisms of Native American chiefs" (Häuptlingsallüren) had never aired these feelings as boys; western movies, in contrast, helped boys to live out their aggressions before puberty.⁵⁰ Such a logic associated adolescent overaggression directly with a racial other, Native Americans, and at the same time made it part of a normal adolescent life stage. The practice of comparing nonwhites to children had, of course, a long history in European and American racism.⁵¹ Now, however, Native Americans were associated with adolescence, and this life stage was seen as positive. The fact that it remained racialized might point to two things: persisting ambivalence toward unruly adolescent behavior and the need to reassert German "whiteness."

Such reinterpretations of both westerns and adolescent rebelliousness took on particular significance in the context of youth riots that were shaking West German cities and some East German ones in the mid-1950s. Many West German commentators perceived these adolescent rebels, so-called *Halbstarke*, as a political threat, but psychological and sociological studies provided an alternative interpretation. Rebelliousness was part of a normal and nonpolitical adolescent life stage that could indeed be properly channeled with the aid of westerns. At a conference on youth and film in September 1956, West German social scientists asserted westerns were dangerous only for youths from dysfunctional families.⁵² A couple of months later sociologist Hans Kluth, in the journal *deutsche Jugend*, denied that all juvenile delinquents and each and every visitor of a "Wild West" film (or for that matter a jazz event) were potentially frightening and dangerous *Halbstarke*. Instead he described adolescent rebelliousness as an act that was not politically motivated and did not call for strong state action. He described *Halbstarke* as a transhistorical, psychological phenomenon that arose from the clash between drives for attention and action as well as from spiritual and social instabil-

ity during adolescent development. Kluth asserted that in West Germany in the mid-1950s adolescents in big cities were deprived of possibilities to fulfill their need for adventure. Their actions had to be seen just as "action for action's sake." Kluth criticized adults for not being able to make this behavior tolerable by both controlling and limiting it. At the same time, he explicitly contrasted *Halbstarke* of the 1950s with the dangerously politicized youths of the Weimar Republic and National Socialism, whose instability, he said, had been solicited for political purposes, including for the persecution of Jews and for war.⁵³

The rise of psychological modes of explaining character development was by no means something confined to West Germany. In the 1950s psychological explanations gained ever greater importance in Western Europe and the United States: they refocused the search for the roots of rebelliousness from social conditions to the individual and his or her family background. So pervasive was the influence of psychology that it did not just reshape social science research but also westerns themselves. Westerns such as *Shane* and *High Noon* located their heroes' actions in their personal psychology, rather than in the injustice of the society surrounding them. The use of recognizable psychological concepts in westerns further contributed to making them respectable in the eyes of critics and the general public in West Germany, Western Europe, and the United States.⁵⁴

West German newspapers also reported about positive assessments of westerns in France and Sweden. By the mid-1950s, the French film critic André Bazin and Jean-Louis Rieueyrout had published a spirited defense of the western genre, and other French intellectuals agreed, for example, in commentary in *Les Temps Modernes*, published by Jean-Paul Sartre. Some German critics followed their analysis, applauding both the older westerns that presented unambiguous male heroes and more recent psychological ones such as *Shane* where, as one German commentator put it in 1956, a new type of cowboy at times hesitated, suffered, and was afraid.⁵⁵ Positive German reviews had not read *Shane* as someone who was afraid when the movie was first released in 1953, but the intellectualizing that the psychological westerns in particular made possible further contributed to the respectability of the western in West Germany and in other Western nations.

In 1957, West Germany's state-run television station broadcast a show with the title "Nothing against Wild-West Films." Gone were the worries about westerns and working-class men. Instead, a professor from a teachers' college argued that western movies gave young people a sense of moral certainty. These films provided release for excessive energy and could satisfy the lust for fighting and adventure. By witnessing fights so closely, young people, presumably from all classes, could overcome the evil in themselves. The professor was explicitly concerned about the behavior of young men and the construction of a proper, assertive masculinity. "During a time in which the father is missing for the most part, the western hero provides an example of a vital masculinity; he reestablishes the disturbed order while risking his life."⁵⁶ This logic tied the significance of the western directly to the West German situation. In the years after 1945, many households were indeed headed by women but, as in the United States, there was also a widespread concern about the failing powers of fathers in modern industrial con-

sumer societies. The education professor affirmed the significance of the armed, restrained, and brave male citizen and argued that young men could achieve such manliness through "western" consumption.⁵⁷

Conservatives, however, continued to attack such psychological explanations of the positive power of western movies. A report about this television show in a Catholic paper strongly criticized the professor. The author did not doubt that a lust for fighting and adventure existed but questioned whether release and satisfaction were an educational aim. Instead he advocated a return to the concept of renunciation. Further, the author offered the criticism that evil is overcome in westerns by destroying the enemy and claimed that such a situation might be, with some restrictions, true for American conditions but was alien for "our"—that is, for German—conditions. At the same time, the author highly recommended the integrationist western *Broken Arrow* (*Der gebrochene Pfeil*, 1950) with its sympathetic portrayal of Native Americans. (The integrationism of *Broken Arrow* was in fact based on a different form of racism: the movie showed "good" Native Americans to be just like whites and literally and figuratively banished all ethnic Native Americans. Good Native Americans were played by whites, bad ones by Native Americans.)⁵⁸ While the West German author supported integrationism strongly, he at the same time rewrote the recent racist German past that had been characterized by destroying alleged enemies. Rather he placed violence (and genocide) firmly in the American context.⁵⁹ Such criticisms of westerns persisted in West Germany but were increasingly outnumbered by more positive assessments of the whole genre.

The appropriation of the western in West Germany was one step in a complicated process of redefining Germanness after World War II. Like their East German counterparts, West German authorities were on the defensive against all American cultural influences at first and indeed displaced the threat of fascism onto America. Increasingly, however, West German officials made the consumption of American imports part of a Cold War liberal West German identity. This required a moralizing, psychologizing, and depoliticizing of American imports. Although westerns did not shed their status as low and dangerous culture easily, it is not by chance that they were the first of the controversial products, which included American music as well as American movies, to lose their threatening quality in the minds of most West German commentators and educators. The vision of manhood portrayed in many westerns—the fighter who takes up arms, protects women, and also serves the state—was part of the reconstruction of a new post-fascist, Cold War West German masculinity: the good white men in the westerns, like the new West German soldier, were aggressive, but not too aggressive. But something more happened. Overaggression became a clear part of a male adolescent life-stage across classes. And terms like release, escape, and satisfaction—drawn from psychology and now code words for consumption—became, even if this was still regretted, part of a new image of West German masculinity. What we see here then is the development of a vision that made masculinity explicitly compatible with consumption. It would become significant in the construction of West Germany's self-image as a haven of consumer culture—an image that powerfully

contrasted a liberal West Germany with a Communist East Germany defined by consumer deprivation and oppression.

NOTES

1. Fritz Stäckrath, "Der Überfall der Ogalalla auf die Jugend," *Westermanns Pädagogische Beiträge* 4 (1952): 220–22; idem, "Gut und Böse im 'Wildwester,'" *Welt am Sonntag*, 5 February 1956; "Grundsätzliches zu Wild-West-Filmen," *Die christliche Familie*, 14 July 1957. A slightly shorter version of this article appeared in the Discussion Forum, "The 'Remasculinization' of Germany in the 1950s," *Signs*, 24 (Fall 1998): 147–62. For their helpful criticism, I thank Robert Moeller, John Findlay, the members of the History Research Group at the University of Washington, and the anonymous reviewers for *Signs*.
2. Investigation of American influences on postwar Germany are numerous. See especially Volker R. Berghahn, *The Americanization of West German Industry, 1945–1973* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Dan Diner, *America in the Eyes of the Germans: An Essay on Anti-Americanism*, trans. Allison Brown (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 1996); Michael Ermarth, ed., *America and the Shaping of German Society, 1945–1955* (Providence, R.I.: Berg, 1993); Heinz-Hermann Krüger, ed., "Die Ehistolle, die hatte ich mir unauffällig wachsen lassen": *Lebensgeschichte und jugendliche Alltagskultur in den fünfziger Jahren* (Opladen: Leske und Budrich, 1985); Konrad Jarausch and Hannes Siegrist, eds., *Amerikanisierung und Sowjetisierung in Deutschland* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 1997); Alf Lüdtke, Inge Marfalek, and Adelheid von Saldern, eds., *Amerikanisierung: Traum und Alptraum im Deutschland des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1996); Kaspar Maase, *Bravo Amerika: Erkundungen zur Jugendkultur der Bundesrepublik in den fünfziger Jahren* (Hamburg: Junfermann-Verlag, 1992); Reiner Pommerin, ed., *The American Impact on Postwar Germany* (Providence, R.I.: Berghahn Books, 1995); Uta G. Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Michael Rauhut, *Beat in der Grauzone: DDR-Rock 1964 bis 1972—Politik und Alltag* (Berlin: Basisdruck, 1993).
3. Heide Fehrenbach, *Cinema in Democratizing Germany: Reconstructing National Identity after Hitler* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 95. On gender and German reconstruction, see also, for example, Erica Carter, *How German Is She? Postwar West German Reconstruction and the Consuming Woman* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997); Ute Gerhard, "Die staatlich institutionalisierte 'Lösung' der Frauenfrage: Zur Geschichte der Geschlechterverhältnisse in der DDR," in Hartmut Kaelble, Jürgen Kocka, and Hartmut Zwahr, eds., *Sozialgeschichte der DDR* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1994), 388–89; Alina Grossmann, *Reforming Sex: The German Movement for Birth Control and Abortion Reform, 1920–1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Elizabeth Heineman, "The Hour of the Woman: Memories of Germany's 'Crisis Years' and West German National Identity," in this volume; Ina Merkel, "... und Du, Frau an der Werkbank: Die DDR in den 50er Jahren" (Berlin: Elefant, 1990); Maria Höhn, "Frau im Haus und Girl im Spiegel: Discourse on Women in the Interregnum Period of 1945–1949 and the Question of German Identity," *Central European History* 26 (1993): 57–90; Robert G. Moeller, *Protecting Motherhood: Women and the Family in the Politics of Postwar West Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels*. On masculinity in postwar Germany, see also Heide Fehrenbach, "Rehabilitating the Fatherland: Race and German Remasculinization," and Robert G. Moeller, "Fathers, Sons, and Foreign Relations," in the Discussion Forum, "The 'Remasculinization' of Germany in the 1950s," *Signs*, 24 (Fall 1998): 107–28; Thomas Kühne, "... aus diesem Krieg werden nicht nur harte Männer heimkehren," *Kriegskameradschaft und Männlichkeit im 20. Jahrhundert*, and Kaspar

- Maase, "Enblichle Brust und schwingende Hüfte: Momentaufnahmen von der Jugend der fünfziger Jahre," both in Thomas Kühne, ed., *Männergeschichte—Geschlechtergeschichte: Männlichkeit im Wandel der Moderne* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 1996): 174–92, 193–217. On the problem of masculinity after war experiences, see especially Susan Jeffords, *The Remasculinization of America* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1989); Margaret Randolph Higonnet et al., eds., *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); Elisabeth Domansky, "Militarization and Reproduction in World War I Germany," in Geoff Eley, ed., *Society, Culture, and the State in Germany, 1870–1930* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 427–63.
4. See Thomas Guback, "Shaping the Film Business in Postwar Germany: The Role of the U.S. Film Industry and the U.S. State," in Paul Kerr, ed., *The Hollywood Film Industry* (New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986), 245–75, especially 255–66; Febrnbach, *Cinema in Democratizing Germany*, chapter 2.
5. "Wild-West-Jubiläum," *Film-Dienst*, 9 November 1951; "Der 200. Wildwest-Film in Deutschland," *Film-Dienst*, 10 April 1953.
6. On pulp fiction see Petra Jäschke, "Produktionsentwicklungen und gesellschaftliche Einschätzungen," in Klaus Doderer, ed., *Zwischen Trümmern und Wohlstand: Literatur der Jugend 1945–1960* (Weinheim: Beltz, 1988), 209–520; Inge Marbolek, "Internationalität und kulturelle Klischees am Beispiel der John-Kling-Heldromane der 1920er und 1930er Jahre," in *Amerikanisierung*, 144–60.
7. On Gladow, see Siegfried Heimann, "Das Überleben organisieren: Berliner Jugend und Jugendbanden in der vierziger Jahren," in Berliner Geschichtswerkstatt, ed., *Vom Lagerfeuer zur Musikbox: Jugendkulturen 1900–1960* (Berlin: Elefant, 1985), 105–36. Gladow's story has been fictionalized in a novel by Erich Loest, *Die Westmark fällt weiter*, and a film by Thomas Brasch. See also the screenplay and documents in Thomas Brasch, *Engel aus Eisen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1981).
8. "Der vollendete Gangster," *Kurier*, 28 March 1950; "Höhepunkte im Gladowprozess," *Berliner Zeitung*, 28 March 1950; "Der Nervöse Revolverheld," *Kurier*, 29 March 1950.
9. See "Höhepunkte im Gladowprozess," *Berliner Zeitung*, 28 March 1950.
10. Kiebitz, "Ein Psychiater und sein Kommissar," *Berliner Zeitung*, 1 April 1950. See also "Ich riss die Pistolen heraus," *Telegraf*, 31 March 1950.
11. See, for example, "Berlin ist nicht Chicago," *Neues Deutschland*, 9 April 1950; "Entgleiste Jugend," *Abend*, 11 April 1950.
12. "Die Beweismahme ist zu Ende," *Tägliche Rundschau*, 4 April 1950. See also "Villa mit Panzerjalousien," *Tägliche Rundschau*, 1 April 1950; Alice Stettiner, "Amerikanische Kulturbarbarei bedroht unsere Jugend," *Neues Deutschland*, 4 April 1950.
13. See Carl Corvus, "Werner Gladow und die Verbrecher-Romantik," *Tagesspiegel*, 2 April 1950.
14. Richard Slotkin, *Gunslinger Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Atheneum, 1992), 293–303, 379. The literature on American westerns also includes, among many other works: John H. Lenihan, *Showdown: Confronting Modern America in the Western Film* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980); Jane Tompkins, *West of Everything: The Inner Life of Westerns* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).
15. Rudolf Hirsch, "Gladows Vorbilder: Wildwest und Gestapo," *Tägliche Rundschau*, 31 March 1950.
16. "Lehren aus dem Gladow-Prozess," *Tägliche Rundschau*, 6 April 1950.
17. Alice Stettiner, "Amerikanische Kulturbarbarei bedroht unsere Jugend," *Neues Deutschland*, 4 April 1950.
18. "Wildwest und kriminelle Langeweile," *Neue Zeitung*, 3 May 1950.

19. See the introduction and answers by court officials in Haans-Wilhelm Lavies, *Film und Jugendkriminalität: Eine Betrachtung zu einer Umfrage an deutschen Jugendgerichten* (Wiesbaden: Schriftenreihe des Deutschen Instituts für Filmkunde, 1954).
20. E. Werner, "Untersuchungen über die Idealbildung," *Bildung und Erziehung* 5, no. 7 (1952): 485–98; "Der 200. Wildwest-Film in Deutschland," *Film-Dienst*, 10 April 1953, 6.
21. On the problem of race and American imperialism in U.S. westerns, see Tom Engelhardt, "Ambush at Kamikaze Pass," in *American Media and Mass Culture: Left Perspectives*, ed. Donald Lazere (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 480–98.
22. See "Gladows Wildwest-Methoden," *Telegraf am Morgen*, 30 March 1950.
23. See Stückrath, "Der Überfall der Ogalalla," Hans Bunk, "Im Zeichen des Zorro," *Lebendige Erziehung* 4, no. 14 (1955): 319–21.
24. Karl Bednarik, *Der junge Arbeiter von heute—ein neuer Typ* (Stuttgart: Gustav Klipper, 1953).
25. Bunk, "Im Zeichen des Zorro"; Klaus-Dieter Hartmann, "Buch und Filminteressen und finanzielle Lage Jugendlicher mit Volksschulbildung," *Pädagogische Rundschau* 11 (October 1956): 22–29.
26. See Detlev Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition, and Racism in Everyday Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 158.
27. See Leora Auslaender, "The Gendering of Consumer Practices in Nineteenth-Century France," in Victoria De Grazia, ed., with Ellen Furlough, *The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 79–112; Eve Rosenhaft, "Lesezeit, Kinosticht, Radiostimmung: Zur (geschlechter-) politischen Relevanz neuer Massenmedien in den 1920er Jahren," in *Amerikanisierung*, 119–43.
28. Stückrath, "Der Überfall der Ogalalla."
29. Carlbergh and Völckers, "Bericht für den Herrn Regierenden Bürgermeister," 31 December 1954, Landesarchiv Berlin (hereafter LAB), Rep. 2 Acc. 1636 Nr. 2163; "Protokoll über die Besprechung in der Frage der Neuregelung der Sondervorstellungen für Ostbesucher (Grenztheater)," 18 February 1955, LAB Rep. 2 Acc. 1636 Nr. 2163.
30. "Westfilm in amerikanischer Versklavung," *Der Morgen*, 30 May 1953.
31. "Augenzeugen berichten," *Junge Welt*, 19 June 1953.
32. "So sieht die faschistische Brut der Adenauer, Ollenhauer, Kaiser und Reuter aus!" *Neues Deutschland*, 21 June 1953.
33. Speech by Otto Grotewohl, 26 June 1953, quoted in Glaebner, "Murmachungen," 192. See also "Alle Kraft für die geduldige Aufklärung der Jugend," *Junge Welt*, 24 June 1953; Wolfgang Neuhäus, "Das hatte mit dem Arbeiter nichts gemein," *Junge Welt*, 25 June 1953; "Ich sah tapfere Berliner," *Junge Welt*, 25 June 1953. The picture is disturbingly similar to depictions of "inferior humans" in Nazi propaganda.
34. "Der Aufstand im Juni: Ein dokumentarischer Bericht (II)," *Monat* 6 (October 1953): 45–66.
35. Carlbergh to movie theaters, 31 March 1955, LAB Rep. 2 Acc. 1636 Nr. 2163. See also Carlbergh to Wiener Lichtspiele, 7 April 1955, LAB Rep. 2 Acc. 1636 Nr. 2163.
36. See, for example, Hannsgard Prötsch, *So müssen unsere Soldaten sein: Eine Betrachtung über das politisch-moralische Antlitz der Nationalen Volksarmee der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* (Berlin: Verlag des Ministeriums für Nationale Verteidigung, 1957).
37. "Kein Mangel an Romantik," *Neue Zeit*, 24 July 1963.
38. "Unordnung," *Welt am Sonntag*, November 6, 1949. See also "Faustrecht der Prärie," *Neue Zeitung*, 6 November 1949.
39. "'Herr des Wilden Westens' in zwölf Theatern," *Telegraf*, 9 April 1950. The movie also received negative reviews. See "Die Leinwand wird wild," *Nachtrepp*, 12 April 1950.

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40. See Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, 291, 397.
41. "Herr des Wilden Westens" amerikanisch, "Neues Deutschland," 11 April 1950.
42. "Ist der Wildwestfilm keine Gefahr?" *Junge Stimme* (November 1954): 1–2.
43. See "Der Wildwestfilm ist besser als sein Ruf," *Darmstädter Echo*, 1 May 1954; Hans Dietrich Weiss, "Zur Dramaturgie des Wildwestfilms," *Filmforum* 4, no. 9 (1954). A translation of Warsaw's piece was published in West Germany; Robert Warshaw, "Helden aus dem Goldenen Westen," *Der Monat* 6 (March 1954): 639–47.
44. On rearmament see Moeller, "Fathers, Sons"; Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels*, chapter 2; David Clay Large, *Germans to the Front: West German Rearmament in the Adenauer Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), and Michael Geyer's chapter in this volume.
45. For positive reviews of *Shane* (*Mein großer Freund Shane*), see "Neu auf der Leinwand," *Telegraf*, 24 October 1953; "Mein großer Freund Shane," *Telegraf*, 2 November 1953; *Neue Zeitung*, 25 October 1953; *Spanischer Volksblatt*, 25 October 1953. For positive reviews of *High Noon* (*Zwölf Uhr Mittags*), see "Aulenseiter gehen ihren Weg," *Abend*, 15 January 1953; Günter Ebert, "Kammerspiel und Angstschweiß," *Das neue Wort*, 11 April 1953.
46. "Pferde, Pioniere und Pistolen," *Stuttgarter Nachrichten*, 11 September 1953.
47. A consensus is emerging among scholars of West Germany that the years after 1956 saw important social and political transformations. See Anselm Doering-Manteuffel, "Deutsche Zeitgeschichte nach 1945: Entwicklung und Problemlagen der historischen Forschung zur Nachkriegszeit," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 41 (January 1993): 1–29; Paul Erker, "Zeitgeschichte als Sozialgeschichte," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 19 (1993): 202–38. The question whether West Germany indeed developed into a liberal system has been the subject of much concern. See Konrad H. Jarausch and Larry Eugene Jones, "German Liberalism Reconsidered," in Jarausch and Jones, eds., *In Search of a Liberal Germany: Studies in the History of German Liberalism from 1789 to the Present* (New York: Berg, 1990), 1–23, esp. 20. Jarausch and Jones have asserted that liberalism has shaped West Germany's political landscape. See also Theo Schiller, "Parteienentwicklung: Die Einbebauung des politischen Milieus," in Dieter Bänisch, ed., *Die fünfziger Jahre: Beiträge zu Politik und Kultur* (Tübingen: Narr, 1985), 37–51; Erica Carter, "Alice in the Consumer Wonderland: West German Case Studies in Gender and Consumer Culture," in Angela McRobbie and Mica Nava, eds., *Gender and Generation* (London: Macmillan, 1984), 185–214. On Cold War liberalism in the United States, see Robert J. Corber, *In the Name of National Security: Hitchcock, Homophobia, and the Political Construction of Gender in Postwar America* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1993).
48. "Der Wildwestfilm ist besser als sein Ruf," *Darmstädter Echo*, 1 May 1954.
49. Franz Stückrath, "Gut und Böse im 'Wildwest,'" *Welt am Sonntag*, 5 February 1956. This article was based on a book by Stückrath and Georg Schottmeyer, *Psychologie des Filmlebens in Kindheit und Jugend* (Hamburg: Schropp, 1955).
50. "Keine Angst vor Abenteuer?" *Der Tag*, 9 December 1956. On the effect of westerns, the article used a direct quote from Margarete Krause-Ablauf, "Entwicklungspsychologische Gesichtspunkte und praktische Erfahrungen als Grundlage für die Beurteilung von Filmen für Kinder und Jugendliche," in Wissenschaftliches Institut für Jugendfilmfragen München, ed., *Film-Jugendpsychologisch betrachtet* (Munich: Ehrenwirth, n.d.), 48–59, esp. 55. See also "Auf die richtige Auswahl kommt es an," *Wiesbadener Kurier*, 3 November 1956; "Der Film ist nicht an allem schuld," *Schwäbische Landeszeitung*, 15 November 1956.
51. On this history of racism, see, for example, Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Conquest* (New York: Routledge, 1995).
52. See, for example, Viggo Graf Blücher, *Freizeit in der industriellen Gesellschaft: Dargestellt an der jüngeren Generation* (Stuttgart: Ferdinand Enke, 1956), 11–13, 118–24; Blücher, "Jugend auf dem Weg zur Selbstbestimmung," *deutsche Jugend* 4, no. 6 (June 1956);

- 260–65; Helmut Schelsky, *Die skeptische Generation: Eine Soziologie der deutschen Jugend* (Cologne: Eugen Diederichs, 1957); "Der 'Western'—ein Film für die Jugend?" *Deutsche Lehrerzeitung* 3, no. 41 (1956). On the youth riots, see Maase, *Bravo Amerika*; Poiger, "Rebels with a Cause?"
53. Heinz Kluth, "Die 'Halbstarken'—Legende oder Wirklichkeit?" *deutsche Jugend* 4 (November 1956): 495.
54. Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, 379–81; Lee Clark Mitchell, *Westerns: Making the Man in Fiction and Film* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), chapter 7.
55. Rudolf Weiler, "Der Cowboy fürchtet sich," *Kölnner Stadt-Anzeiger*, 27 November 1956; Jean-Louis Rieupeyrou and André Bazin, *Le Western: ou, Le cinéma Américain par excellence* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1953); German translation, *Der Western: Geschichten aus dem wilden Westen—die Wildwestfilme* (Bremen: Schünemann, 1963).
56. Reported in "Grundsätzliches zu Wild-West-Filmen," *Die christliche Familie*, 14 July 1957.
57. These concerns about the failing powers of fathers were voiced by both American and West German social scientists. See especially Alexander Mitscherlich, *Auf dem Weg zur verlorenen Gesellschaft* (Munich: Piper, 1963); English translation: *Society without the Father: A Contribution to Social Psychology* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1969).
58. See Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, 375–77.
59. See "Grundsätzliches zu Wild-West-Filmen," *Die christliche Familie*, 14 July 1957. On the German tradition of identifying with the Native Americans and seeing killings of Native Americans as worse than the genocide of the Jews perpetrated by Germans (thereby self-exonerating the Germans), see Andrei Markovits and Philip S. Gorski, *The German Left: Red, Green, and Beyond* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 313, n.7.