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Transnational Film History? Um Cinema Teuto-Brasileiro*

Cultural hybridity and national cinema do not get along well. Whereas the first emphasizes the mixing, interaction, and exchange of cultures, the latter tries to avoid any influences that could blur the concept of a national cultural unity. National film historiographies often focus on domestic film productions and exclude the enormous quantity of foreign productions that also characterize a national film industry. However, the exclusive focus on domestic productions is problematic in itself. The international success of many European cinemas, as is the case with the “Newer German Cinema,” is often based on the success of directors and actors with an international background.¹ In this respect German cinema’s international reputation of the last twenty years rests in large parts on its cultural hybridity.

Film studies’ recent interest in questions of transnational cinema can be understood as a reaction to the obvious hybrid character of modern film cultures.² It acknowledges the significant changes in world order that have taken place in the recent past and the new cultural constellations and intercultural encounters that have resulted from it. However, as Peter Burke has shown, cultural hybridity is not a recent phenomenon at all but has been characterizing all cultures for ages.³ In other words, there is no reason to limit the scope of studies of transnational cinemas in recent decades; rather, there should be a widened focus for a historical perspective.⁴ The following anecdote from Colombia in the early 1920s illustrates such a historical perspective and shows the complex character of a cinema culture that can hardly be reduced to an identifiable national subject.

* This chapter is a revised translation of “Deutsche Kultur- und Spielfilme im Brasilien der 1930er Jahre Eine transnationale Perspektive,” in *Film – Kino – Zuschauer: Filmrezeption/Film – Cinema – Spectator: Film Reception*. Ed. Irmbert Schenk, Margrit Tröhler, and Yvonne Zimmermann (Marburg: Schüren, 2010), 399–418.

1 The term “Newer German Cinema” was first used by U.S. film scholar Jennifer Kapczynski, “Newer German Cinema: From Nostalgia to Nowhere,” *The Germanic Review* 82.1 (2007): 3.

2 See the launching of the new cinema journal *Transnational Cinemas* in 2010: <http://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?show=aimsScope&journalCode=RTRC20#VOMdy691vA> 29 July 2014.

3 Peter Burke, *Cultural Hybridity* (Cambridge, England: Polity, 2009).

4 See Randall Halle, *German Film After Germany. Toward a Transnational Aesthetic* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 5.

In May 1923 a certain Pablo Zumpe, secretary of trade at the German embassy in Colombia, informed the Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs about a scandal in the Colombian cinemas. The reason for Zumpe's outrage was the exhibition of D. W. Griffith's propaganda film *Hearts of the World* (USA 1918), which was causing fierce protests among German immigrants living in Colombia. Concerned about maintaining a good mood in German communities and good political and economic relations with Germany, the Colombian government advised all the federal states to prohibit the screening of anti-German films.⁵

Whose history is being told in this anecdote? The incident stands at the intersection of U.S. distribution, national Colombian film, and German-Colombian migration history. No matter from which perspective one investigates this historical event, one can never fully grasp all aspects of it. The anecdote is emblematic for countries whose film cultures are historically framed by a small domestic film industry, domination by foreign productions, and a large percentage of immigrant viewers. The anecdote is the point of departure for the following investigating of a hybrid cinema culture in Brazil, the biggest immigration country on the South American continent.

In "The Limiting Imagination of National Cinema" Andrew Higson critically reconsiders his canonical article "The Concept of National Cinema."⁶ Starting from Benedict Anderson's approach of an imagined community, Higson questions the usefulness of the concept of national cinema, which is, as he argues, a helpful taxonomic labeling device but "always to some degree tautologous, fetishising the national rather than merely describing it."⁷ In many cases the analysis of a national cinema leads to a limitation on films that present the nation as a demarcated geopolitical space with a homogeneous community, closed off to other identities. A concept of national cinema obscures "the degree of cultural diversity, exchange and interpenetration that is so much cinematic activity."⁸

What remains unsaid in approaches to national cinema are the dynamics of modern societies in which political, cultural, and economic developments and identity formation do not stop at a nation's border. Borders are not only bounda-

5 Archivo General de la Nación Colombia, Ministerio de Gobierno, Sección Primera, Rollo 226, Tomos 892–893, Folio 5–13.

6 Andrew Higson, "The Concept of National Cinema," *Screen* 30.4 (1989): 36–46; "The Limiting Imagination of National Cinema," in *Cinema and Nation*. Ed. Mette Hjort and Scott MacKenzie (London: Routledge, 2000), 63–74.

7 Andrew Higson, "The Limiting Imagination of National Cinema," in *Cinema and Nation*. Ed. Mette Hjort and Scott MacKenzie (London: Routledge, 2000), 64.

8 Andrew Higson, "The Limiting Imagination of National Cinema," in *Cinema and Nation*. Ed. Mette Hjort and Scott MacKenzie (London: Routledge, 2000), 64.

ries of the state but, as Higson remarks, also passageways that allow migration and exchange. In other words, speaking and thinking *transnationally* means considering cultural and economic formations, cultural cross-breeding, and interpenetration that are per se hybrid and impure.⁹ In this sense transnational phenomena can be studied in all areas of film: the coproductions or the effect of migrating filmmakers on the production side; censorship, dubbing, subtitling, and marketing issues in the sphere of distribution; and the ways audiences receive films in their specific cultural context.¹⁰ In addition to the reception of films in a new cultural context, one must add the specific exhibition context for foreign films, an aspect that is not mentioned by Higson but is particularly important for the analysis of German films in Brazil.

In his book on the reception of Weimar cinema in South Africa, Michael Eckardt has shown that transnational film history as reception, impact, or effective history (*Wirkungsgeschichte*) can be particularly rich in countries whose production was too small to cover the national market.¹¹ The same goes for film relations between countries that are linked by a common migration history. The number of German immigrants in South America was different from country to country and even from region to region (German immigrants chose the south of Brazil, the northeast of Argentina, or the south of Chile), but the example from Colombia shows that immigrants could be active historical agents with a great influence on the film culture in their new *Heimat*.

Brazil has been one of the most important destinations of German immigrants since the eighteenth century. It has been estimated that in the 1930s the number of immigrants of German origin in Brazil was around a million (approximately 80,000 – 100,000 for imperial Germans).¹² German immigrants settled mainly in the south of Brazil, in states such as Santa Catarina and Rio Grande de Sul, where they were up to 20 percent of the population.¹³ Until the

9 Andrew Higson, "The Limiting Imagination of National Cinema," in *Cinema and Nation*. Ed. Mette Hjort and Scott MacKenzie (London: Routledge, 2000), 67.

10 Andrew Higson, "The Limiting Imagination of National Cinema," in *Cinema and Nation*. Ed. Mette Hjort and Scott MacKenzie (London: Routledge, 2000), 68.

11 Michael Eckardt, *Zwischenspiele der Filmgeschichte. Zur Rezeption des Kinos der Weimarer Republik in Südafrika 1928–1933* (Berlin: Trafo, 2008).

12 Luiz Nazario, "Nazi Film Politics in Brazil, 1933–1942," in *Cinema and the Swastika. The International Expansion of the Third Reich*. Ed. Roel Van de Winkel and David Welch (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 85. The term *Reichsdeutsche* (imperial Germans) refers to German citizenship, *Volksdeutsche* (ethnic Germans) refers to German origin but with a different citizenship.

13 Flaviano Bugatti Isolani, *Das páginas à tela: cinema alemão e imprensa na década de 1930* (Santa Cruz do Sul: EDUNISC, 2006), 38. German names of Brazilian cities such as Blumenau,

1930s German immigrants had a perfect infrastructure in the form of more than a thousand schools, countless associations, and different German-speaking newspapers. In addition, German Brazilians benefited from the good economic and political relations between Brazil and Germany. In April 1938 a decree of the Brazilian government prohibited foreigners from taking part in political activities.¹⁴ German schools were closed or converted into Brazilian schools, and formerly German companies received Brazilian management. With Brazil's entry into World War II in 1942, an assembly ban was passed for German immigrants, and the government prohibited the use of the German language.

South America, particularly countries such as Brazil, Argentina, and Chile, was not only an important destination for German immigrants but also an important export market for the German film industry. Articles and news from South America in early German film journals often reported about the success of German-born cinema owners and the German film trade in Brazil.¹⁵ Studying the minutes of the Universum Film AG (UFA) board of directors also shows that the company was continuously observing the South American market.¹⁶ Since the world economy crisis in 1929, South America had become an important sales market for U.S. film companies, and its biggest European competitor, the German UFA did not change with the outbreak of World War II: South America never was a battlefield in the war, and Brazil entered it at a very late stage.¹⁷

The multifaceted history of German immigration in Brazil has attracted little attention in German film historical research.¹⁸ This is all the more surprising because until today Brazil is inspiring the exoticist desires of some German direc-

Pomerode, Schroeder, or Teutonia remind one of the influence of German immigration. The city of Blumenau, for example, holds the second largest Oktoberfest in the world.

14 Jürgen Müller, *Nationalsozialismus in Lateinamerika. Die Auslandsorganisation der NSDAP in Argentinien, Brasilien, Chile und Mexiko, 1931–1945* (Stuttgart: Hans-Dieter Heinz, 1997), 305.

15 Representative is an ad of the Rombauer Company from Rio de Janeiro, in which the company promotes its cinemas with a high-quality program exclusively of German films. *Lichtbild-Bühne* 11 (1922): 61.

16 Lisa Shaw and Stephanie Dennison, eds., *Brazilian National Cinema* (London: Routledge, 2007); Michael Chanan, "Cinema in Latin America," in *The Oxford History of World Cinema*. Ed. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1996), 427–435.

17 Hollywood productions clearly dominated the Brazilian market, but European film industries managed to gain some market share. Flaviano Bugatti Isolan, *Das páginas à tela: cinema alemão e imprensa na década de 1930* (Santa Cruz do Sul: EDUNISC, 2006), 34.

18 Wolfgang Fuhrmann, "Fortschritt, Modernität und neue Lebenswege. Brasilienbilder im westdeutschen Kino der 1950er Jahre," in *Kulturdialog Brasilien-Deutschland. Design, Film, Literatur, Medien*. Ed. Geane Alzamora, Renira Rampazzo Gambarato, and Simone Malaguti (Berlin: Tranvía, 2008), 61–75.

tors and characterizes the image of Brazil on the German screens.¹⁹ Studies on the history and aesthetics of the German *Kulturfilm* (culture film) in the 1920 and 1930s or on the history of the UFA, the biggest and most prestigious German film company in its time, have shown the significance of the cultural film as a central and distinguished genre of the nonfictional film form and the efficiency of a film enterprise that became Hollywood's most serious competitor on the world market.²⁰ However, film and cinema have not been well discussed in relation to the South American market. Focusing on the distribution and reception of German films in the early 1930s in Brazil means understanding German films not primarily as the extension of German fascistic propaganda abroad but as films that were subjected to the dynamics of an active and sometimes very peculiar Teuto-Brazilian film culture.

The Cultural Film Service

The Brazilian film audience was not unfamiliar with the *Kulturfilm* genre: In January 1927, Hanns Walter Kornblum's feature-length nonfiction film *Wunder der Schöpfung/Our Heavenly Bodies* (D 1925) was shown in Brazilian cinemas.²¹ A special distribution of the documentary film in the form of instructional and educational films in the German-speaking regions seems to have begun only in the late 1920s. A possible but still provisional starting point could have been Edgar Beyfuss's visit to Brazil in August 1925. At the time Beyfuss was a script editor in the UFA documentary department and presumably on a promotion tour for German cultural film in Brazil. One of his stops during his trip was Olinda in São Paulo, the biggest German school in the city. His lecture explained to the German-Brazilian audience the significance of the film medium, and the screening

19 *Brasilianischer Volkstanz* (Elge, D 1910), *Die Tante aus Brasilien* (Karlchen-Film GmbH Berlin, D 1921), *Das Frauenhaus von Rio/Plüsch und Plümowski* (Hans Steinhoff, D 1927), *Donogoo Tonka* (Reinhold Schünzel, D 1935–1936), *Kautschuk* (Eduard von Borsody, D 1938), *Stern von Rio* (Karl Anton, D 1939–1940), *Stern von Rio* (Kurt Neumann, BRD 1955–1956), *Mannequins für Rio* (Kurt Neumann, BRD 1954), *Stefanie in Rio* (Kurt Bernhardt, D 1960), *Mord in Rio* (Horst Hächler, D 1963), *Streets of Rio* (Alexander Pickl, D/BRA 2005–2006), *Schroeder liegt in Brasilien* (Zé do Rock, D/BRA 2008).

20 On the history of the German *Kulturfilm* see all three volumes of *Geschichte des dokumentarischen Films in Deutschland*: Uli Jung and Martin Loiperdinger, eds., *Kaiserreich. 1895–1918* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2005); Klaus Kreimeier, Antje Ehmman, and Jeanpaul Goergen, eds., *Weimarer Republik. 1918–1933* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2005); and Peter Zimmermann and Kay Hoffman, eds., *Drittes Reich. 1933–1945* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2005).

21 *Deutsche Rio Zeitung*, 27 January 1927.

of film gave the viewers the opportunity to look behind the scenes of the German cultural film production.²² During the years that followed, the German schools – particularly the Olinda school – strengthened their film activities. The new interest in film was not influenced just by the political changes in Germany but by a private film network in Brazil as well.

Very soon after Hitler's takeover, the German Ministry of Propaganda started its international collaboration with the foreign organizations of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP), the so-called *Auslandsorganisationen* (AOs). A Brazilian foreign organization already existed in Rio de Janeiro since 1931 and had about 40,000 members.²³ In the years that followed the German government expanded its support and planned the export of German films.

Parallel to the NSDAP's efforts but independent from it, two German-Brazilian film initiatives began supplying German immigrant regions with film shows. Before Hitler's takeover, the Association of German Teachers in São Paulo (Deutscher Lehrerverein São Paulo) purchased a film projector in 1930 to increase the number of film screenings in the metropolitan area. In 1932 in São Leopoldo, in the state of Rio Grande de Sul, a Dr. Kosche founded the German Brazilian Cultural Film Service (Deutschbrasilianische Kulturfilmdienst [DKD]), which from 1934 on was administered by the National Association of German Brazilian Teachers (Landesverband Deutsch-Brasilianischer Lehrer.²⁴ The Film Service received support from the overseas branch of the German Reich Railway (Deutsche Reichsbahn) in Brazil and from companies such as Zeiss, Agfa, and Siemens.²⁵

The Film Service rapidly expanded in the country, soon opening its first branch in São Paulo, and very quickly connected with other regional, district, and city branches and finally reached up to Bahia in the northeast of Brazil. The film programs that were shown were exclusively silent films in 16-mm or the very rare 24-mm format.²⁶ Films could be rented at cost. The idea of the

22 "Diario G. A. Hoch 1924–1926" (São Paulo: Arquivo do Instituto Martius-Staden [henceforth AIMST]).

23 Luiz Nazario, "Nazi Film Politics in Brazil, 1933–1942," in *Cinema and the Swastika. The International Expansion of the Third Reich*. Ed. Roel Van de Winkel and David Welch (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 87.

24 *Allgemeine Lehrerzeitung für Rio Grande do Sul* 5 (May 1934): 13. The idea of distributing cultural films in South America probably did not start in Brazil but in Chile. "Correspondência Deutscher Lehrerverein São Paulo 1930, 'Verein Deutscher Lehrer in Chile, 1. Rundschreiben, Ende März 1930'" (São Paulo: AIMST).

25 Olga Rodrigues de Moraes von Simson, "Imagem e memória," in *O Fotográfico*, 2nd ed. Ed. Etienne Samain (São Paulo: Editora Hucitec, 2005), 21–34.

26 *Bericht Deutsche Schule São Paulo 1933* (1934), 75.

Film Service was to reach the entire German-speaking population in Brazil and to show them “lifelike pictures of German scenery, historic places and sites of German labor” and “to bring the great national festivities to life.”²⁷ As a “living link with the *Stammesheimat*” the films were intended to maintain German folklore and strengthen the German schooling system in Brazil.²⁸ In turn, films that were produced by the Film Service were intended to show the audience in Germany “Germanhood in Brazil.”²⁹ Film screenings by the Deutscher Lehrerverein or the Film Service were extremely popular and successful. The number of requests and correspondences between 1931 and 1938 show that German associations and clubs not only asked for film shows but also supplied the organizations with information and requests for further acquisition of films.³⁰ In the first year of its activity the Film Service organized 121 screenings, 85 of them in the metropolitan area of São Paulo and 36 in the interior of the state of São Paulo.³¹ The district office in Santa Catarina reported about 3,000 viewers per screening.

Yet films that were shown in the German schools or German-speaking regions were not exclusively about or produced in Germany. Likewise, the audience was not exclusively German or of German origin. A screening at the Olinda School in São Paulo in May 1934, for example, started with the animation film *Wupp lernt das Gruseln* (Wupp learns to be scared; Hermann Diehl, D 1932), followed by *Mit dem Condorflugzeug von Natal bis Santos* (With the Condor Airplane from Natal to Santos) and *Der schöne Rhein. II. Teil* (The Beautiful Rhine, Part II). The animation films were hardly suitable to strengthen Germanhood in Brazil, but their function was first of all to present an entertaining film show for a broad audience.

In analogy to Thais Blank’s thesis that films about German immigrants in Brazil that were shown in the German *Wochenschau* (weekly review) in Germany

27 *Bericht Deutsche Schule São Paulo 1933* (1934), 74.

28 *Bericht Deutsche Schule São Paulo 1936*, 88.

29 *Bericht Deutsche Schule São Paulo 1936*, 88. An exact list of films that were produced by the DKD could not be found. Titles that are mentioned in the correspondences are *Rio Grandenser Giftschlangen*, *Die grosse Parade in Porto Alegre vor Flores da Cunha am 24.10.1933*, *Das grosse Gauturnfest in Ijuhy*, *Quer durch Santa Catharina oder Bertioga [Reise nach den Iguassufällen]*, *[Die Eroberung des Urwaldes (Deutsche Siedlung in Südbrasilien)]*, and *[Brasil Grandiosa]*. Titles in brackets refer to films that probably were donated by German Brazilians to the DKD.

30 “Correspondência Landesverband Deutsch-Brasilianischer Lehrer 1933, ‘22 April 1933’” (São Paulo: AIMST).

31 GIV f 7: “Instituto Hans Staden 1925–1941. Hans Staden-Verein São Paulo, Rundschreiben 4/35, o.A.” (São Paulo: AIMST).

strengthened the bond of a fascist imagined community,³² one could argue that cultural films from Germany exhibited in Brazil had a similar function: The films gave the German-speaking community in Brazil a feeling of belonging, still being part of a German, fascist community. For example, a subtitle such as “From Koblenz to Rotterdam” in *The Beautiful Rhine* could demonstrate that German landscapes reach beyond the national borders. Likewise, viewers could interpret the flight in a Condor airplane along the Brazilian coast as a masterpiece of German technology that aeronautically measured or surveyed the new *Heimat*.³³

However, considering the heterogeneity of the film audience and the specific program structure of the film shows, it is very difficult to argue for a clear reception of the films.³⁴ It seems more plausible to speak in terms of Stuart Hall’s encoding/decoding model: German films in Brazil offered the chance for a negotiated or even oppositional reading.³⁵ A more nuanced discussion of the reception of German films reveals that the relationship between the NSDAP’s AOs and the German-Brazilian population was not without tension. The majority of the German population was still speaking German and was practicing German art and tradition, but it showed little interest in fascist ideology.³⁶ Only a small part supported Hitler and considered it their right to speak and stand up against “Teuto-Brazilians” who did not follow the Nazi ideology.³⁷

32 Thais Blank, “O Papel dos Cinejornais Alemaes sobre o brasil na ‘Comuindade Imaginada’ Nazista,” paper presented at the XXXI Congresso Brasileiro de Ciências da Comunicação, Natal, RN 2–6 September 2008, <http://www.intercom.org.br/papers/nacionais/2008/resumos/R3-1708-1.pdf>, 29 July 2014.

33 The Condor originated from the association between the Colombian Sociedad Colombo Alemana de Transporte Aéreo (SCADTA) and the German Aero Lloyd in 1924.

34 The films that Blank discusses are *Ilha de Marajó* (The Marajó Island) and *Colonos Alemães no Brasil* (German Colonies in Brazil). The latter seems to be identical to *Auf Grosser Fahrt. Ein Film von Kriegsmarine und Auslandsdeutschen* (Hans-Hein von Adlerstein, D 1936), http://www.filmarchives-online.eu/viewDetailForm?FilmworkID=dca453179b5df647038de54ffb3240ff&content_tab=deu, 29 July 2014.

35 Stuart Hall, “Encoding, Decoding,” in *The Cultural Studies Reader*, 2nd ed. Ed. Simon During (London: Routledge, 1999), 507–517.

36 Luiz Nazario, “Nazi Film Politics in Brazil, 1933–1942,” in *Cinema and the Swastika. The International Expansion of the Third Reich*. Ed. Roel Van de Winkel and David Welch (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 86.

37 Luiz Nazario, “Nazi Film Politics in Brazil, 1933–1942,” in *Cinema and the Swastika. The International Expansion of the Third Reich*. Ed. Roel Van de Winkel and David Welch (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 86; René Geertz, *O fascismo no sul do Brasil* (Porto Alegre: Editora Mercado Aberto Ltd., 1987), 82.

Some groups considered the activities of the AOs insensitive and dangerous for the reputation of Brazilians of German origin in Brazil.³⁸ In November 1931 the minutes of the board of directors of the associations of German clubs reported on the board's growing concern about the NSDAP's influence on the German community.³⁹ Furthermore, studying reports and correspondences about film shows in the cities and on the countryside discloses that the audience was anything but purely German or of German origin. Germans made up only the smallest part of the Olinda students. The school had mainly Teuto-Brazilian students, and one quarter were Brazilians or students of other nationalities.⁴⁰ Without the attendance of the Portuguese-speaking, that is the Brazilian population, film screenings in the countryside often became an incalculable risk.

In June 1931 a screening in Cosmópolis in the interior state of São Paulo had to be relocated to the local cinema because the electricity was out at the first exhibition venue. Only because of the Brazilian audience who came to see the film show did the evening not become a financial disaster for the organizers. A report about the evening remarked:

Though the stories of the films were easy to comprehend, it is interesting that especially the Brazilians lamented that the texts were just edited in German and not in Portuguese. Without any doubt we could be even more successful, if we considered this request in future.⁴¹

Similarly "Brazilian" was a screening in Congonhas do Campo in Minas Gerais in 1938, where only 10 – 15 out of 200 viewers were of German origin.⁴² That some organizers were even including the Brazilian population in their planning of a film program is apparent from a peculiar combination of German and Brazilian film titles for a screening in March 1935 in São Caetano in Minas Gerais. German titles such as *Von Ammergau zum Staffelsee* (From Ammergau to Lake Staffel),

38 Jürgen Müller, *Nationalsozialismus in Lateinamerika. Die Auslandsorganisation der NSDAP in Argentinien, Brasilien, Chile und Mexiko, 1931–1945* (Stuttgart: Hans-Dieter Heinz, 1997), 43 and 296.

39 "Correspondência Deutscher Lehrerverein, São Paulo 1931, 'Bericht aus der Vorstandssitzung des Verbandes Deutscher Vereine, 9 November 1931'" (São Paulo: AIMST).

40 Of 426 students in 1923, 259 were German-Brazilian, 79 German, and 88 Brazilian or other nationality. At the 60th anniversary in 1938 the school had 947 students, of whom 126 were German, 520 German-Brazilian, 249 Brazilian, and 52 other nationalities (Joachim Tiemann, "Deutsche Schulen in Brasilien im Rahmen des brasilianischen Bildungssystems," <http://www.topicos.net/fileadmin/pdf/Tiemann.pdf> (2008), 29 July 2014, 4).

41 GIV f. Nr. 25/Schubert-Chor, "Bericht des Deutschen Lehrervereins-São Paulo über die Filmvorführungen am 22 May 1931" (São Paulo: AIMST).

42 "Correspondência Landesverband Deutsch-Brasilianischer Lehrer, '22 April 1938'" (São Paulo: AIMST).

Die Ostsee, 5. und 6. Teil (The Baltic Sea, Part 5 and 6), and *Sport im Schnee* (Snow Sports) were shown together with the films *Os 3 Cavalheiros* (The Three Gentlemen) and *Koko e o Cacique* (Koko and the Chief).⁴³ Significant in this programming structure is not just the side-by-side presentation of German and Brazilian titles but the division of *Kulturfilm* and animation films: The German titles refer to the genre of the *Kulturfilm*, the Brazilian titles to animation films. The programming structure of this film show can be regarded as an alternative to the complaint of the Brazilian audience in Cosmópolis. Although it is not known in what language the film evening was presented or introduced, or whether intertitles of the first three German films were translated into Portuguese, the animation films did not require any explanatory text or introduction. They simply were what they wanted to be: amusing entertainment for a broad audience, regardless of the audience's origin, German or Brazilian.

While the content of a program was one chance for public entertainment, the screening in itself was an entertaining event. The problem of missing or unstable electricity at some venues made film screenings in the interior of Brazil masterpieces in improvisation. In contrast to film shows in the cities, film screenings in interior Brazil often were the first screenings ever for the local public of remote, small villages.⁴⁴ One report about such a first screening retells cinema's founding myth, in which the moving images of an arriving train made viewers run out of the cinema or hide under their seats. However, in the German-Brazilian version it was not the arrival of a train but the arrival of a military truck that scared the audience.⁴⁵ The anecdote refers to the ideological content of the film that speculates on the viewers' fascist-patriotic or reverent admiration, but it also refers to the projection of a film as an attraction in itself, which was experienced by viewers "insecure between fear and admiration."⁴⁶ Film screenings were a viewing experience of the fantastic and a novelty in themselves. Films about the Day of Potsdam, the day the German Reichstag started its work after the Nazis came into power, the First of May, or a sports meet in Stuttgart offered a range of possible reception contexts: from political propaganda, to visual attraction, or the aesthetic pleasure of watching a nonfictional event, something Tom Gun-

⁴³ GIV f. Nr. 25/Schubert-Chor, "13 March 1935" (São Paulo: AIMST).

⁴⁴ *Bericht Deutsche Schule 1933* (1934), 76.

⁴⁵ *Bericht Deutsche Schule 1933* (1934), 76. There is no proof for the legendary panic at the first film screening by the Lumière brothers in Paris. According to Martin Loiperdinger, the "panic" rather refers to the new experience of reality, in this case a fantastic experience of reality. Martin Loiperdinger, "Lumières *Ankunft des Zuges*. Gründungsmythos eines neuen Mediums" *Kintop* 5 (1996): 49.

⁴⁶ *Bericht Deutsche Schule 1933* (1934), 76.

ning calls the “view aesthetic.” Foreign films introduced exotic elements in the indigenous culture and thereby contributed to the diversity of a nation’s film repertoire.⁴⁷ But regarding the sparse entertainment that existed in remote regions in Brazil, it was not just the films that made a contribution to the local culture but the exhibition of the films in form of a never-before-seen event as well.

The specific “view aesthetic” in actualities and travelogues that Tom Gunning defines as films in which the “subject filmed either pre-existed the act of filming or would have taken place even if the camera had not been there” adds a particularly important reception context.⁴⁸ In the specific context of views of German sites in films that the audience was watching with “tearful eyes” and with a “melancholic memory of the old Heimat,” the films turned viewers into virtual time travelers, watching images not from the present but from a bygone time, as if looking at a photo album.⁴⁹ Against the background of the specific time experience while watching films from Germany, the film screening at the Olinda school in May 1934 offers an interesting alternative: The view from a plane flying into Brazilian territory, crossing 3,000 kilometers along the Brazilian coast, from the northeast (Natal) to São Paulo (Santos) in *Mit dem Condorflugzeug von Natal bis Santos* and 400 kilometers from Koblenz to Rotterdam in *Der schöne Rhein. II. Teil* certainly corroborates the *Volk ohne Raum* (people without space) ideology. Considering the critical stance of many German-Brazilians toward NSDAP ideology, however, the German-Brazilian viewers also could come to the conclusion that Brazil and Germany stood for different periods in life: huge Brazil as the aspiration for a new and better life and small Germany for the outdated memory.

For Brazilian viewers the programing of the two films could have had a different effect: They could enjoy the film for its demonstration of Brazil’s enormous size compared with the small European country. The shot from an airplane associated Brazil with modernity and technology, whereas the view of the Rhine, probably taken from a ship, referred to a traditional, old transportation system. Studying the program structures of the film demonstrates that the shows were not standardized but varied according to the specific local needs and inquiring

47 Andrew Higson, “The Limiting Imagination of National Cinema,” in *Cinema and Nation*. Ed. Mette Hjort and Scott MacKenzie (London: Routledge, 2000), 69.

48 Tom Gunning, “Before Documentary: Early Nonfiction Films and the ‘View’ Aesthetic,” in *Uncharted Territory: Essays on Early Nonfiction Film*. Ed. Daan Hertogs and Nico de Klerk (Amsterdam: Stichting Nederlands Filmmuseum, 1997), 14.

49 Tom Gunning, “Before Documentary: Early Nonfiction Films and the ‘View’ Aesthetic,” in *Uncharted Territory: Essays on Early Nonfiction Film*. Ed. Daan Hertogs and Nico de Klerk (Amsterdam: Stichting Nederlands Filmmuseum, 1997), 14.

institutions. It is too limited to understand film shows exclusively as extensions of National Socialist film propaganda. Brazilian viewers could consider the shows as interesting contributions to local cultural life, but German-Brazilian viewers could react differently: Cultural films strengthened the bond of an imagined community but not necessarily that of a German or German fascist community. Thinking of a heterogeneous audience, it could also strengthen the bond of an imagined Brazilian community that was composed of Brazilians and Teuto-Brazilians.

Feature films in Brazil

Reviews of German feature films that were released in Brazil show that German productions were first of all considered as a welcoming change and challenge to the dominant Hollywood cinema. Only later did the films become associated with fascist propaganda.⁵⁰ In contrast to the privately organized network for the distribution of cultural films discussed earlier, feature films were distributed on the commercial market. Films were distributed by different companies, but for the Brazilian audience every film was an U-F-A film, *um-filme-alemão*.⁵¹ German feature films were popular because of their high technical standard. Reviews praised the *mise-en-scène* of light, music, and camera work. *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, D 1925–1926), *Faust* (Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau, D 1925–1926), *Varieté* (Ewald A. Dupont, D 1925), and *Walzertraum/The Waltz Dream* (Ludwig Berger, D 1925) were applauded as “wonder[s] of modern cinematography” and “brilliant work[s] of art.”⁵² Reviews were full of superlatives. Hans Steinhoff’s *Der alte und der junge König/The Making of a King* (D 1934–1935) was the “most terrific film ever, that Germany has produced,” and some months later it was *Mazurka* (Willi Forst, D 1935), that was the best film ever made in Germany.⁵³

Some cinema owners used the UFA’s quality label in a particular way: In April 1935 the UFA office in Berlin received a letter from a certain Eugenio de

50 See Luiz Nazario, “Nazi Film Politics in Brazil, 1933–1942,” in *Cinema and the Swastika. The International Expansion of the Third Reich*. Ed. Roel Van de Winkel and David Welch (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 88–90.

51 Bundesarchiv Berlin (BArch) R 109/5379, fol. 536. Report of the Brazilian UFA representative Ugo Sorrentino.

52 Flaviano Bugatti Isolan, *Das páginas à tela: cinema alemão e imprensa na década de 1930* (Santa Cruz do Sul: EDUNISC, 2006), 89.

53 Flaviano Bugatti Isolan, *Das páginas à tela: cinema alemão e imprensa na década de 1930* (Santa Cruz do Sul: EDUNISC, 2006), 90.

Felix, who introduced himself as “German in mind and Austrian in emotion,” who was living in Brazil. De Felix was outraged about recent film programs in Brazil and drew the UFA’s attention to a scandalous situation in the Brazilian cinemas.⁵⁴ De Felix reported about cinemas in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro that showed German films of the category “Only for men” from 2 p.m. until midnight every day:

About the films that are shown, they all are silent films and intercut at all possible and impossible moments with pure pornographic scenes, to give the audience the impression that the films were full-blown productions. What is particularly interesting: Almost all films are old UFA films with well-known artists such as Willi Fritsch, Lilian Harvey, Werner Kraus, Werner Fuetterer, Gustav Fröhlich, Ivan Petrovitch, etc.⁵⁵

De Felix had investigated the production of the films and reported that the cinema owner bought the films from the Brazilian distributor Urania and intercut them with pornographic scenes. It is not known how the UFA reacted to the incident or how it answered De Felix, but the anecdote indicates a particular mode of cultural appropriation.

In his analysis of the reception of German cinema in the Brazilian press in the south of Brazil, historian Flaviano Bugatti Isolan argues that the popularity of German films was also due to Weimar Republic’s liberal image in Brazil. It stood in sharp contrast to Hollywood cinema, which had to follow the Hays Code after 1930.⁵⁶ German films often transgressed this code and were dealing with issues such as prostitution, abortion, and sexual taboos appreciated by the Brazilian audience. The liberal image changed with the Nazi regime’s coming into power, but, surprisingly, reviews started to mention and applaud the educational character of the films, which were now standing for a new Germany that continued to produce films of high artistic quality.⁵⁷ The “UFA Pornos” stand in sharp contrast to the paradigmatic shift in the morality discourse of German cinema. However, it is possible that the cinema owners who were showing the porn movies were speculating not just about quick success among the men in Rio de

⁵⁴ BArch R 109 I/5379, fol. 398–399.

⁵⁵ BArch R 109 I/5379, fol. 398–399. de Felix mentions the following UFA productions: *Almas Perdidas/Die Carmen von St. Pauli* (Erich Waschneck, D 1928), *Inferno das Virgen/Die Hoelle der Jungfrauen* (Robert Dinesen, D 1927), *Embriaguez da Mociedade/Jugendrausch* (Georg Asagaroff, D 1926–1927), and *Caste Suzana/Die keusche Susanne* (Richard Eichberg, D 1926).

⁵⁶ Flaviano Bugatti Isolan, *Das páginas à tela: cinema alemão e imprensa na década de 1930* (Santa Cruz do Sul: EDUNISC, 2006), 91.

⁵⁷ Flaviano Bugatti Isolan, *Das páginas à tela: cinema alemão e imprensa na década de 1930* (Santa Cruz do Sul: EDUNISC, 2006), 93–95.

Janeiro and São Paulo but also about UFA's reputation for producing films of high quality and German cinema's image of producing films that were once famous for their transgressive moments that represented Weimar cinema in Brazil. Maybe viewers noticed the compilation technique of the films, but maybe they could not figure out the agents behind it. From this perspective the "UFA Pornos" may be understood either as another liberal product of the German film industry or as a smart appropriation and parody or spoof of the new decent German cinema.

In contrast to Brazilian reviews that praised the new UFA productions for their high production values, the UFA headquarters in Berlin was not too euphoric about the performance of their films at the Brazilian box office. The UFA was concerned about new marketing strategies for the South American market. According to the minutes of the UFA's board of directors, the Brazilian market was especially hard to assess.

For example, the UFA was quite sure that *Das Hofkonzert/The Court Concert* (Detlef Sierck, D 1936) would be as successful in Brazil as in other Monopol areas, but that proved not to be the case; it was unsuccessful.⁵⁸ Films such as *Schlussakkord/The Final Chord* (Detlef Sierck, D 1936) and *Der Bettelstudent/The Beggar Student* (Georg Jacoby, 1936) were just moderately successful.⁵⁹ One solution to this dilemma was to raise UFA's visibility in the South American market, for example, through their own UFA cinemas.⁶⁰ This way, the UFA could face the growing competition from Hollywood in Brazil and accommodate the demand of the German-speaking population for German-language films. In 1933 the *Deutscher Morgen*, mouthpiece of the NSDAP in São Paulo, complained about the exhibition of French-language versions of German films in the city.⁶¹ In the same year the local branch of the NSDAP addressed the UFA and asked for the exhibition of German-language films.⁶²

The UFA explained that German-language films would make money only in the very first days after their release, when Germans and German-Brazilians were attending the cinemas. In contrast to the German-language film, the French version of Ludwig Berger's *Walzerkrieg/The Battle of the Waltzes* (D 1933) did well at the box office.⁶³ Therefore, cinema owners had no other choice but to program

⁵⁸ BArch R 109 I/1032b, p. 295.

⁵⁹ BArch R 109 I/1032b, p. 295.

⁶⁰ In March 1935 the board also discussed the opening of additional UFA cinemas in cities such as London or New York. BArch R 109 I/1030a.

⁶¹ *Deutscher Morgen* 41 (13 October 1933): 7.

⁶² GIV f. Nr. 25/Schubert-Chor, "12 June 1934" (São Paulo: AIMS).

⁶³ GIV f. Nr. 25/Schubert-Chor, "12 June 1934" (São Paulo: AIMS).

German-language films together with Hollywood productions. Under the condition that the German-speaking population would make sure that UFA films made enough profit, the UFA promised the NSDAP São Paulo to show exclusively German-language films from then on.⁶⁴

But much more troubling to the UFA than complaints by the German-speaking population was Hollywood's market control in Brazil (about 85.9 percent at the end of World War II).⁶⁵ In the mid-1930s the UFA decided to expand its efforts on the Brazilian market by running their own premiere theater.⁶⁶ Responsible for leasing the new cinema was the UFA's Brazilian distributor, Sorrentino, who also got permission to use the official name "UFA Palácio."⁶⁷

On 13 November 1936 the UFA celebrated the inauguration of its first South American Palácio, a name that was taken from the German name *Kino-Palast*. The UFA Palácio had about 3,119 seats and was located at the prestigious Avenida São Joao in the heart of the city of São Paulo.⁶⁸ The Palácio was a masterpiece of modern cinema architecture and equipped with the latest film projection technology. The architect of the new cinema was Rino Levi, one of the most famous architects of Brazilian modernity.⁶⁹ For the very first time in Brazilian cinema architecture, Levi developed a new acoustic and illumination system.⁷⁰ Brazilian and German representatives celebrated the inauguration of the UFA cinema, and Berthold von Theobald, deputy member of the board of directors and head of UFA's foreign department, flew to Brazil on a Zeppelin that circled above the new UFA Palácio on opening day. The German-language press praised

64 GIV f. Nr. 25/Schubert-Chor, "12 June 1934" (São Paulo: AIMS).

65 Kristin Thompson, *Exporting Entertainment. America in the World Film Market 1907–1934* (London: BFI Publishing, 1985), 134.

66 Already in 1926 the cinema Colyseo Paulista in São Paulo advertised with the UFA logo. It is not known whether this was authorized by the UFA. "Colyseo Paulista (São Paulo-SP)," <http://salasdecinemadesp2.blogspot.com/search/label/Colyseo%20Paulista>, 29 July 2014.

In June 1928 the UFA board decided to renovate the Lyrico Theater in Rio de Janeiro. With this the UFA intended to secure its market position in Latin America. However, the project probably never was realized. BArch-R 109 I/1028b, Vorstand, Nr. 334, 12 June 1928.

67 BArch R 109 I/1031a.

68 "UFA-Palácio (São Paulo-SP)," <http://salasdecinemadesp2.blogspot.com/2008/06/ufa-palace-so-paulo-sp.html>, 29 July 2014.

69 Paula Freire Santoro, "A relação das salas de cinema com o urbanismo moderno na construção de uma centralidade metropolitana: A cinelandia paulistana," <http://www.anpur.org.br/revista/rbeur/index.php/anais/article/view/3465/3395>, 29 July 2014.

70 Paula Freire Santoro, "A relação das salas de cinema com o urbanismo moderno na construção de uma centralidade metropolitana: A cinelandia paulistana," <http://www.anpur.org.br/revista/rbeur/index.php/anais/article/view/3465/3395>, 29 July 2014.

the new cinema as a monument of German-Brazilian friendship and cultural exchange that stood for mutual understanding between nations.⁷¹

The UFA Palácio quickly became one of the best exhibition venues in the city. From then on, the UFA was no longer exclusively associated with artistic films but with a unique film theater that was clearly also Brazilian in its architectural design. The reaction of the neighboring cinemas did not take long. A study of the first three months of the UFA Palácio in the *Deutsche Zeitung* shows that the new cinema interfered with competition for the German-speaking and Portuguese-speaking audiences in São Paulo. Ads of new German films always appeared with the German original title und the Brazilian Portuguese distribution title.

A first competitor appeared at the end of November 1936. The Pedro II had shown German films before and did not seem to make way for the new Palácio. The last week before Christmas, the Broadway was the third cinema to show a German film: *Ave Maria* (Johannes Riemann, D 1936), starring Italian tenor Benjamin Gigli. The day before Christmas it was the UFA Palácio with *Liebeslied* (Fritz P. Buch, Herbert B. Fredersdorf, D 1935), the Pedro II with *Kleine Mutti/Little Mother* (Henry Koster, AU 1935), the Broadway with *Ave Maria*, and, finally, the Rosario with *Der Postillon von Lonjumeau/The Postman from Lonjumeau* (Carl Lamač, A/CH 1935).

A more detailed study of the UFA Palácios remains to be done, but the success of the cinema encouraged the UFA to invest even more in Brazil. In April 1938, von Theobald visited Rio de Janeiro to promote the establishment of a UFA chain in Brazil, the UFA Palácios do Brasil Limitada.⁷² There is no doubt that with this new chain the UFA was interested in more than just the German-speaking population. The location of the São Paulo UFA Palácio in the center of the city shows that the UFA aimed to address all citizens.

Conclusion

One major counterargument in the discourse of national cinema is the danger of cultural imperialism through foreign films and culture.⁷³ However, the example

⁷¹ *Deutsche Zeitung* 4 November 1936.

⁷² BArch R 109 I/2909, no foliation.

⁷³ Ian Jarvie, "National Cinema. A Theoretical Assessment," in *Cinema and Nation*. Ed. Mette Hjort and Scott MacKenzie (London, Routledge, 2005), 78; Higson, Andrew. "The Limiting Imagination of National Cinema," in *Cinema and Nation*. Ed. Mette Hjort and Scott MacKenzie (London: Routledge, 2000), 69.

of the distribution of German cultural films and feature films in Brazil shows that Brazilian film and cinema culture never was in danger, neither in the cities nor in the rural regions. On the contrary, foreign German films contributed to the diversity of the national film repertoire. The anecdote of the intercut, hybrid “UFA Pornos” is an example of a very particular kind of cultural appropriation. The cinema owner’s strategy to produce “new” UFA films can be regarded as an expression of Brazilian ambivalence toward foreign productions, as described by Randall Johnson and Robert Stam. Through parody of foreign films, “Brazilian filmmakers could make fun of foreign films and laugh at their own inability to emulate their glossy production values but also capitalize and indirectly capitalize on their success.”⁷⁴ One can dispute how far the intercut UFA porn movies were intended as a parody of a morally decent Nazi cinema, but they certainly guaranteed a rich source of income for cinema owners and demonstrate how something exotic or foreign was integrated in a new “familiar” reception context.

This brief overview of the distribution and exhibition of German films in Brazil shows that the analysis of national film history from a transnational perspective does not just open new ways of approaching film history, but it stresses once more that film was an international, circulating medium to the core from its beginning. In February 2011 the U.S. film journal *Variety* reported that German-Brazilian coproductions were on the rise, “with filmmakers on both sides of the Atlantic eager to tell stories that explore intercultural themes while tapping domestic sources of soft money.” *KulturConfusão* seems to me more promising than ever.⁷⁵

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⁷⁴ Randal Johnson and Robert Stam, ed., *Brazilian Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 23.

⁷⁵ Ed Meza. “Germany, Brazil Back ‘Bach,’ ‘Beach,’” *Variety*, 15 February 2011, <http://www.variety.com/article/VR1118032299>, 11 July 2013.

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