

5 Playing with Freedom, Helga 1962

From: "Ivan Mansley" <ivanman dsl.pipex.com>

Date: Fri, 11 Jun 2004 07:03:48 +0100

DIE ZWEITE HEIMAT. PART 5: PLAYING WITH FREEDOM, Helga 1962.

The title of the episode is in itself intriguing, is it not? Does Reitz mean to imply that the students are not real revolutionaries and that they are like little children playing in the sand pit, trying this and trying that and then going home to dinner. Is he suggesting that they are not really serious? Secondly, what kind of freedom is meant? Is it on the personal level? Here we would have young people struggling to find a *modus vivendi* of their own, free from the restrictions and prejudices of their parents or the previous generation. Or is it on the political level? Here there would be a search for new structures and organisation; a search for a new social order, if you like. These questions arise in the mind before we begin. What do we find?

The riots that begin on Corpus Christi, 22nd June 1962, in Munich, as depicted here, are certainly not political to begin with. They involve the arrest of 3 street musicians, but what is quickly revealed, is the hostility of the forces of law and order [the police] to the younger generation, especially students. I take it these scenes are based on actual events. I do not remember here in the UK the same level of police brutality and corruption as we are shown here, although I do remember, for instance, being caught up in a massive anti-Vietnam protest in Grosvenor Square, the site of the American Embassy in London, and being knocked to the ground! I do not remember the year. Anyway, Hermann has his precious guitar smashed on the street cobbles by an irate policeman ["It was my guitar that provoked their hatred"] and receives two pretty violent blows from a police truncheon, as he runs down the stairs and escapes from the police station, where he has gone to protest about his treatment. He makes good use of these wounds later in his escapades.

When Helga arrives back at the Fuchsbau with bleeding hand [was this self-inflicted or am I being too cynical?] Fraulein Cerphal exclaims, "Have they declared open season on students?" and thinking back to the Nazis, "The mob is in uniform again." Hermann has been venting his anger upon the piano, but, after Elisabeth Cerphal attempts to reassure him that he will eventually be a success, he gives us an outline of his political cum creative position, which is not that of a left-wing radical but more a statement of a belief in individual freedom not freedom for others. It would be deemed hopelessly elitist and selfish by many. "I'll never do what pleases the masses, I swear it. The masses are sick and crude like the state. Long live the individual!" He shows no desire for any kind of corporate action. They are more the words of a creative anarchist, perhaps.

The tour de force of this episode is undoubtedly Hermann's seduction in Dülmen, not by two women, as at the age of 16, but by three women this time; Dorli, Marianne and Helga. The scene is brilliantly done. Everything seems so natural as it happens, and yet, in reality, it is out of this world. Hermann sits at the piano playing Beethoven and is gradually stripped to the waist as he plays, whilst the three women caress and soothe his wounds and sexually excite him and themselves. The scene is

tremendously erotic but is never sordid or spoilt by shots of genitalia and tumescence, as in so many modern, exploitative films. The three sirens/enchantresses are sexual and beautiful, especially Marianne, played very sensuously by Irene Kugler. In a masterstroke of daring a little later, after the dinner party for Helga's 23rd birthday, Hermann escapes from the house and joins the bold Marianne in her apartment in scenes of abandoned and beautiful love-making. I remember the great swish of a wonderful piece of peacock blue and red drapery being towed into the bedroom.

I used the word "sirens" to describe Helga, Dorli and Marianne. I did this deliberately, as Reitz sets up all kinds of Homeric echoes for us. I do not know if we can make exact equivalences all round, but Hermann is certainly Odysseus. Hermann himself tells us as he arrives at Helga's house: "I tried hard to stay in control. I was Hermann W. Simon, the brilliant composer, with no roots, no Heimat, like Odysseus, cast up here by chance." At the door we have the Cyclops, the door keeper to Hades, the underworld; the port-hole in the door, through which Granny peers, is her one eye. We will see what a Hell is inside later. He is refused entry. After finding Helga and her friends in the street he is fed [Marianne pops a piece of hot-dog into his mouth] and he is not reluctant to reveal his wounds in order to elicit sympathy. In Dorli's attic food and drink are presented to the wounded hero. All the riches of the world, in the form of cakes and more cakes smothered in cream, are brought before him. It is a scene of excess. The camera focuses from above on writhing limbs and hands and feet and skin. It is noticeable that Helga takes a back seat in much of the action, quotes Nietzsche, I believe, and eventually faints. This brings proceedings to an end and Hermann is left as Dorli's prisoner. He reflects: "For a while I had a feeling anything was possible. Was this the start of something new? Freedom. I was afraid." He is certainly not talking about political freedom. What does he mean? Does he mean freedom from earlier experiences; from Munich; from Clarissa?? What exactly does he mean by the word "this"? Has he realised for the first time how attractive he is to women!!

Helga is in love with him. She had rebuffed him in the Cerphal library when he had tried to take her quite suddenly and violently on the couch, calling him an "animal" but she wished she had not turned him away. She has bought new sexy, black underwear to turn Hermann on, but all her efforts are undone by her repulsive and prowling grandmother. Hermann is unable to perform, although, of course he has Marianne's invitation on his mind as well. However, did you notice a grimace pass over Helga's features [twice, I think] as she prepares to receive Hermann? She reminds me of Renate in her obsession/overwhelming desire for sex with Hermann, but there is something hard and off-putting about her character. She is a virgin, as a question to Marianne reveals, and may be partly afraid, but she is shown as lacking all warmth and spontaneity. The calculation is all too obvious! When I saw this episode for the first time I find I had scribbled these words on the list of episodes: "Hermann betrays Helga with Marianne. He makes the right choice!"

Hermann definitely succumbs to Marianne, the enchantress, the Circe of this episode. Her friends find her beautiful. Dorli says at one point, "If I were a man" and does not finish her sentence but means she would "fancy" Marianne. As Hermann and Marianne walk ahead Dorli and Helga whistle/sing "Here comes the bride" and mock with these words: "A nice couple especially from behind!" Marianne and Hermann make love passionately but also tenderly. Although there is an element of bravado in Marianne's behaviour [she is married with two twin girls] she seems to

love Hermann very deeply. There is a wonderful touch from Reitz when he causes Hermann to find Marianne crying in distress underneath the twisted sheet. It is left unexplained. Is she crying for her lost youth [she is 11 years older than Hermann]? Does she feel guilty about the betrayal of her husband? Or most likely is she riven with anguish because she knows she will have to give up this youth of her desires? She must let him go! The beautiful enchantress and siren has now turned in to tragic heroine! She is perceptive. She can tell Hermann has been hurt in the past. She finds him gentle, unlike her husband[?] and does not want to lose him. "You're a dream", she says, but she is intelligent enough to know that dreams do not last. Your aged correspondent was deeply moved by this!!

I was moved in a different way by some of the characterisation. Did anyone else find Helga's grandmother a total caricature? She is the patroller of the corridors, the keeper of the gate; she drinks heavily from her bottle of Bols, stuffs her face with chicken legs, and makes coarse and vulgar remarks about, for instance, Dorli's family. She interferes in her grand-daughter's life and has a horror of sex but has no compunction in damning those of whom she does not approve. I did not believe in her for a moment! Neither do parents come out of things very well in DZH. Helga's father is prejudiced, right-wing and authoritarian as well as being argumentative and dogmatic.

There is a little hell in that suburban house and it is easy to see why Helga becomes what she does. The stiffness and formality, as they all sit around the dinner table, tells us all we need to know about this bourgeois, suburban family.

Edgar Reitz writes very interestingly about his choice of Henry Arnold to play Hermann in "DreHORT Heimat" [see archive of old posts, page 952/3]. He says that "It would have been fatal if I had made a hero out of Hermann" and that "nothing better could have happened to the film." However, it is this episode that made me feel the inadequacies of Arnold's acting. He seems to lack depth. He portrays deep emotions by raising his eyebrows and rolling his eyes. Reitz seems satisfied that he should appear to be comic. He writes: "Hermann, who with his pipe dream of immortality comes out of the provinces and becomes an artist, manoeuvres himself again and again into life-situations that are downright comic: because again and again he demands too much from himself, both in an artistic respect and also in love. Henry Arnold could play a Hermann that one might laugh over. I offered him the role." To me, he constantly has the look of a small boy with his hand caught in the sweetie jar. Perhaps that was why Marianne was given the line, "Your eyes are so questioning."

I am not sure I want a Hermann to laugh at, nor was Marianne. Nor is Clarissa!! Did you notice the moth fluttering on the window sill of the room in the house in Sylt? Could it represent Hermann trying to find his way? I liked the mentions of England, especially when Hermann reflects as he arrives in Sylt on a day of evil black weather with rain and wind; "I imagined England beyond the horizon." You can say that again!!

Now to the ending! Back at Fuchsbau Clarissa is suddenly framed in the window. Her hands and wrists are bandaged, caused perhaps by over practising her cello and Hermann's piece? She asks Hermann about his music and he replies: "Mistakes" and "Detours". He is talking about his personal life, not music, as I think she realises. He knows his true love is there next to him. I found it strangely refreshing to see her again, such is the power of Salome Kammer's performance. The whole of this episode has in its own way been a long and interesting detour!! But Hermann has not

found freedom on
any level, has he?

Ivan Mansley.

Sent: Saturday, June 12, 2004 6:32 PM -0500
From: "Susan Biedron" <susan jsbiedron.com>

Ivan,
I have not yet re-watched Part 5, but Granny is imbedded in my memory.

>>At the door we
have the Cyclops, the door keeper to Hades, the underworld; the port-hole in
the door, through which Granny peers, is her one eye. We will see what a
Hell is inside later. He is refused entry. <<

I never thought about her as the Cyclops - what a brilliant analogy. Granny
is indeed a horrible old woman.

>>I was moved in a different way by some of the characterization. Did anyone
else find Helga's grandmother a total caricature? She is the patroller of
the corridors, the keeper of the gate; she drinks heavily from her bottle of
Bols, stuffs her face with chicken legs, and makes coarse and vulgar remarks
about, for instance, Dorli's family. She interferes in her grand-daughter's
life and has a horror of sex but has no compunction in damning those of whom
she does not approve. I did not believe in her for a moment! <<

I did not think of her as a caricature because she reminded me immediately
of my Aunt Ruth, deceased since about 1990. I think many families have one
of these. In addition she reminded me of old women in the neighborhood who
were always spying on people on the street - especially children and young
people - and just waiting for them to commit some transgression. I don't
think she is a character at all - there were (are?) really people like her.
I would guess Reitz based Granny as someone who scolded him when he was
young.

Anyone else have a character like Helga's Granny in their past life?

Susan

From: "Ivan Mansley" <ivanman dsl.pipex.com>
Sent: Saturday, June 12, 2004 11:08 PM +0100

Susan, I know that grannies like Granny Aufschrey exist in real life. In
fact, one of my grandmothers was somewhat like her! My point is that she is
depicted in DZH Part 5 in such broad strokes, without nuances or subtleties,
that she is not a rounded character and can be seen as a caricature, as a

stereotype, rather than a real person. Whatever the judgement she certainly leaves an impression!!

Ivan.

**From: "Susan Biedron" <susan jsbiedron.com>
Sent: Sunday, June 13, 2004 8:13 PM -0500**

Ivan,
I was so taken by her nastiness, I did not notice she was not a well-rounded character. But I will keep that in mind when I watch Part 5 again.
Susan

**From: "Susan Biedron" <susan jsbiedron.com>
Sent: Friday, June 18, 2004 9:14 PM -0500**

At the beginning of Part 5, Helga comments how hot it had been for days in Munich. Yet when we see the Corpus Christi procession, almost every person is wearing a coat or jacket. This has bothered me every time I have watched this scene. Did Reitz film a real procession on a cool day or was this staged for DZH?

>The riots that begin on Corpus Christi, 22nd June 1962, in Munich, as
>depicted here, are certainly not political to begin with.

>When Helga arrives back at the Fuchsbau with bleeding hand [was this
>self-inflicted or am I being too cynical?]

If the film showed how Helga injured her hand, I did not notice it.

Helga is in love with him. . . . However, did you notice a grimace pass over Helga's features [twice, I think] as she prepares to receive Hermann?

Yes, she grimaces twice and I did not notice this in previous viewings until Ivan mentioned it. After her aggressive pursuit of Hermann, I found this a little strange.

>There is a wonderful touch from Reitz when he causes Hermann to find Marianne
>crying in distress underneath the twisted sheet. It is left unexplained. Is she
>crying for her lost youth [she is 11 years older than Hermann]? Does she
>feel guilty about the betrayal of her husband? Or most likely is she riven
>with anguish because she knows she will have to give up this youth of her
>desires? She must let him go! The beautiful enchantress and siren has now
>been hurt in the past. She finds him gentle, unlike her husband[?] and does
>not want to lose him. "You're a dream", she says, but she is intelligent
>enough to know that dreams do not last. Your aged correspondent was deeply
>moved by this!!

I thought perhaps Marianne was crying because she felt Hermann was imagining his first love, (Klarchen) while they were making love. The fact that Hermann tells Marianne about Klarchen, also 11 years older, does show that Hermann is very comfortable with her.

>I was moved in a different way by some of the characterisation. Did anyone
>else find Helga's grandmother a total caricature?

I looked at "Granny" again - she is definitely pretty much one sided, but is briefly pleasant when Hermann first arrives at the birthday dinner. Apparently she has a drinking problem. I suppose that her character (no pun intended) is just one of the pieces of Helga's dysfunctional family. It's a great touch that Granny is sitting on top of the toilet while keeping watch on Helga.

Even though Helga turns out to be a terrorist and generally nasty person, in this episode, I like her, she has my sympathy.

Back to Helga's birthday dinner: Apparently a wave of homesickness hits Hermann when he is passed the dish of potato dumplings. He becomes suddenly sad and I suspect is thinking about his mother's home cooking. However, I was mystified when he sits down at their piano, cannot think of something to play and then asks for sheet music. In contrast to all the other times he just sits down at any piano and produces concert level music. In Helga's house he plays a very plodding piece with Helga. Is this to show that a family like Helga's suppresses art?

Is it too much of a coincidence that there is even a piano in the empty apartment above the bakery?

I thought it interesting at the end when Herman returns to Fuchsbau - after visiting 2 smaller towns, he is happy to be back in the big city. He ran away from Munich, but he returned. Now it is his Heimat.

Susan

**From: "Raymond Scholz" <rscholz zonix.de>
Sent: Sunday, June 20, 2004 10:55 PM +0200**

"Ivan Mansley" <ivanman dsl.pipex.com> wrote:

> The title of the episode is in itself intriguing, is it not? Does Reitz mean
> to imply that the students are not real revolutionaries and that they are
> like little children playing in the sand pit, trying this and trying that
> and then going home to dinner. Is he suggesting that they are not really
> serious? Secondly, what kind of freedom is meant? Is it on the personal
> level? Here we would have young people struggling to find a modus vivendi of
> their own, free from the restrictions and prejudices of their parents or the
> previous generation. Or is it on the political level? Here there would be a

> search for new structures and organisation; a search for a new social order,
> if you like. These questions arise in the mind before we begin. What do we
> find?

I think the term "Spiel mit der Freiheit" has a determinate meaning in the German language implying that one carelessly plays with the freedom she/he has already established. Of course Reitz may have juggled with that interpretation taking the perception of "Spiel" literally. The students are in the process of questioning authorities and revolting against them (state, parents, ...) and are testing how far they can go.

> The riots that begin on Corpus Christi, 22nd June 1962, in Munich, as
> depicted here, are certainly not political to begin with. They involve the
> arrest of 3 street musicians, but what is quickly revealed, is the hostility
> of the forces of law and order [the police] to the younger generation,
> especially students. I take it these scenes are based on actual events.

Right, Reitz embeds the so called "Schwabinger Krawalle" into the DZH story. I'm not a historian but I see the Schwabinger Krawalle as the first uproar publicly noticed against national authorities after WWII. Stefan Aust's "Baader Meinhof Komplex" on the Rote Armee Fraktion mentions that Andreas Baader, who was born in Munich, took part in the riots. A link to Helga's future here?

BTW, did anyone notice the mockup of the Schwabinger street scene with all the police cars and the fire brigade like seen in model railways? Pretty strange, I've never seen something like that before in a movie. Well, not quite true. "München - Geheimnisse einer Stadt" by Michael Althen and Domik Graf has a similar scene with a model of the Münchener Rathausplatz. Anyone fond of Munich should watch this film. A little masterpiece in my eyes. The film as an accompanying commentary, fast, dense and probably difficult to follow for non native speakers of the German language. Erm, back to DZH...

> The tour de force of this episode is undoubtedly Hermann's seduction in
> Dulmen, not by two women, as at the age of 16, but by three women this time;
> Dorli, Marianne and Helga. The scene is brilliantly done. Everything seems
> so natural as it happens, and yet, in reality, it is out of this
> world.

I totally agree with you. Not much to say here. Beautiful.

> I used the word "sirens" to describe Helga, Dorli and Marianne. I did this
> deliberately, as Reitz sets up all kinds of Homeric echoes for us. I do not
> know if we can make exact equivalences all round, but Hermann is certainly
> Odysseus.

Great, I have to watch the arrival of Hermann in Dülmen again, keeping this in mind.

> He reflects: "For a while I had a feeling anything was possible. Was

> this the start of something new? Freedom. I was afraid." He is
> certainly not talking about political freedom. What does he mean?
> Does he mean freedom from earlier experiences; from Munich; from
> Clarissa?? What exactly does he mean by the word "this"?

Freedom through his power? Power to entrance women, artistic power?
Free love?

Cheers, Ray

From: "Raymond Scholz" <rscholz zonix.de>
Sent: Sunday, June 20, 2004 11:01 PM +0200

"Susan Biedron" <susan jsbiedron.com> wrote:

> I thought perhaps Marianne was crying because she felt Hermann was imagining
> his first love, (Klarchen) while they were making love. The fact that Hermann
> tells Marianne about Klarchen, also 11 years older, does show that Hermann
> is very comfortable with her.

My thoughts about that scene were quite similar with a little
about-turn. Marianne and Hermann are sharing the same fate, a similar
relationship in the past. Marianne is Klärchen for Hermann and
Hermann reminds Marianne of a past relationship with interchanged
roles.

Cheers, Ray

From: "Ivan Mansley" <ivanman dsl.pipex.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 22, 2004 11:48 AM +0100

Susan wrote earlier: "At the beginning of Part 5, Helga comments how hot it
had been for days in Munich. Yet when we see the Corpus Christi procession,
almost every person is wearing a coat or jacket. This has bothered me every
time I have watched this scene. Did Reitz film a real procession on a cool
day or was this staged for DZH?"

I haven't been back to re-check but could it be that Reitz is suggesting
that the religious devotees are conservative by nature and that they are all
"buttoned up". I deliberately use a clothing idiom to suggest perhaps rather
inhibited, repressed characteristics. It is also interesting that the
student revolutionaries still wear collar and ties at this time which is
authentic! [Hermann, Stefan etc.]

Susan also wrote concerning the character of Helga: "Even though Helga turns
out to be a terrorist and generally nasty person, in this episode, I like
her, she has my sympathy." Well, I will have to disagree here. I found there
to be something strangely repellent, hard and selfish about her personality.

She demands sex with Hermann and everything else gets pushed to one side. There is a ruthlessness here, from which Hermann escapes! I am cheating slightly by referring to future events, but Susan has mentioned her future role as a terrorist, and I would just observe that Reitz must make that journey credible. If Helga had had more warmth and genuine humanity then she might not have followed that route. I mentioned Helga grimacing and Susan noted: "Yes, she grimaces twice and I did not notice this in previous viewings until Ivan mentioned it. After her aggressive pursuit of Hermann, I found this a little strange." Could it be that Helga being virginal and so desperate to lose her virginity is also afraid of making herself so vulnerable and subservient to a male and is also apprehensive about any pain involved?

I found myself in full agreement with the insightful comments of Raymond and Susan on the nature of Marianne's tears. I had overlooked the overpowering presence of Klarchen in memory and Marianne's great sensitivity in feeling that presence.

Ivan Mansley.

**From: "Bart van den Dobbelsteen" <bart vandendobbelsteen.net>
Sent: Tuesday, June 22, 2004 12:27 PM +0200**

Ivan writes:

"I had overlooked the overpowering presence of Klarchen in memory and Marianne's great sensitivity in feeling that presence".

And don't forget the hint Reitz gives us on Hermann's reminiscence: again the looking into the large mirror in Mariannes bedroom. I haven't reviewed the episode yet, but I remember this very clearly.

We have discussed the significance of the mirror scenes before. I have always thought they were indications of Hermann's reminiscence of Klärchen and of his vow: 'nie mehr die Liebe' - the mirror scenes always come up when with other women, budding love, whichever. So also here. And he only smashes the mirror in the last episode, before he goes home 'to learn to wait'.

Bart

**From: "Ivan Mansley" <ivanman dsl.pipex.com>
Sent: Thursday, June 24, 2004 11:39 PM +0100**

Well we must bid good bye to Part 5 now. There were no late entrants, under the wire as it were. 3 other people than myself sent in contributions and we had a grand total of 9 posts. Are there any more DZH enthusiasts out there who could put us all on the right track?!

Ivan Mansley.

From: "Ralf Eigl" <ralfeigl t-online.de>
Sent: Friday, June 25, 2004 1:27 PM +0200

I have read your interesting comments on episode 5 and - although very late - would like to add a few thoughts on Helga, who this episode is dedicated to.

I had not seen DZH for at least 5 years and had a picture of Helga as the very chaotic, depressive, even aggressive person she is in the last few episodes (if I remember correctly, that is...). When re-viewing the first episodes, therefore, I was very much surprised to see such a young, cheerful person - still a child, actually. It struck me like "Ah, what a nice old photograph of Helga, just look at how very young she is on there..." - I reacted as if she were a real-life person. Reitz knows very well to bring his characters very close to us, doesn't he! In her we see a character development described very beautifully. Episode 5 brings about the change. And it seems to be a forceful change. Unwillingly she is drawn into the tumults with the police in Munich (like all the students), unwillingly she is drawn into the triad with Dorle and Marianne although she wants Hermann for her own.

Look at Helga sitting on the floor and dipping her finger into the whipped cream and then looking up to Hermann - eyes wide open, like a child, admiringly, lovingly, then when Hermann is kissing Dorle and Marianne and asks Helga to join, she empties her glass at a draught to find the courage to join the others. What innocence there is still in her. All of a sudden she faints. 'What is wrong?' Those are Dorle's words and they echo ours as we watch, surprised, worried. Again and again we see Helga struggling to win Hermann for herself

A few other observations:

Did you notice that - when we see the family on Sylt watch the events in Munich on the black and white TV, we suddenly see red flames of fire appear in the middle of the TV - Munich is on fire! It is the flames from the open fireplace reflected right onto the screen. Wonderful idea!

And: was I mistaken or is it true that amid all the upheaval and revolution, we see Hermann for the first time at all remembering his home in Schabbach when he eats dumplings at Helga's place in Dülmen?

Ralf

From: "Susan Biedron" <susan jsbiedron.com>
Sent: Friday, June 25, 2004 4:57 PM -0500

Ralf,

your comments on Helga,

>When re-viewing the first episodes, therefore, I was very much surprised
>to see such a young, cheerful person - still a child, actually. It
>struck me like "Ah, what a nice old photograph of Helga, just look at
>how very young she is on there..." - I reacted as if she were a
>real-life person. Reitz knows very well to bring his characters very
>close to us, doesn't he!

Yes, I forget all the time that Reitz's characters are not real people!

>In her we see a character development described
>very beautifully. Episode 5 brings about the change.

I think that is why I had sympathy for Helga at the beginning of Episode 5 - until this point, she is seen as a somewhat sweet young student trying to write poetry, etc, who is suddenly caught up the student revolution. Even as she rides home on the train to visit her family and childhood friends, everything about her appears to be "normal." But after Episode 5, Helga becomes a nasty, unsympathetic person, as Ivan indicates in his introduction to Part 6. We can see some of the roots of her problem in her family.

>Did you notice that - when we see the family on Sylt watch the events in
>Munich on the black and white TV, we suddenly see red flames of fire
>appear in the middle of the TV - Munich is on fire! It is the flames
>from the open fireplace reflected right onto the screen. Wonderful idea!

I'm glad you pointed this out - I admit I did not notice this!

>And: was I mistaken or is it true that amid all the upheaval and
>revolution, we see Hermann for the first time at all remembering his
>home in Schabbach when he eats dumplings at Helga's place in Dülmen?

But I did notice Hermann's "Heimweh" during the family dinner. It was a long time since Hermann had sat down with a family for dinner and not surprisingly he suddenly thought of home and his mother's cooking.

I would also like to comment on what Ivan wrote:

>I mentioned Helga grimacing and Susan
>noted:" Yes, she grimaces twice and I did not notice this in previous
>viewings until Ivan mentioned it. After her aggressive pursuit of Hermann, I
>found this a little strange." Could it be that Helga being virginal and so
>desperate to lose her virginity is also afraid of making herself so
>vulnerable and subservient to a male and is also apprehensive about any pain
>involved?

Good point!

Also, about the Corpus Christi procession Ivan wrote:

>Susan wrote earlier: "At the beginning of Part 5, Helga comments how hot it
>had been for days in Munich. Yet when we see the Corpus Christi procession,
>almost every person is wearing a coat or jacket. This has bothered me every
>time I have watched this scene. Did Reitz film a real procession on a cool
>day or was this staged for DZH?"

>I haven't been back to re-check but could it be that Reitz is suggesting
>that the religious devotees are conservative by nature and that they are all
>"buttoned up".

Perhaps Helga is also "buttoned up" and uptight due to her upbringing and family heredity (why not be modern and blame it on the family) - after this she explodes as a revolutionary.

Susan

**From: "Ivan Mansley" <ivanman dsl.pipex.com>
Sent: Friday, June 25, 2004 10:21 PM +0100**

Ralf wrote: "Did you notice that - when we see the family on Sylt watch the events in Munich on the black and white TV, we suddenly see red flames of fire appear in the middle of the TV - Munich is on fire! It is the flames from the open fireplace reflected right onto the screen. Wonderful idea!"

I watch each episode twice, once right through without stopping and once pausing all the time in order to make notes. The first time I saw Episode 5 I thought something had gone wrong with the recording with all the red flares on the screen!! You are exactly right. The link with the fire in front of which Tommy's parents are lying is quite clear. A very neat and clever touch! However, if you consult your tape again at the point where Tommy's parents clothed only in towels are listening to Hermann's playing and just before the news reader on TV says "Guten Abend" at the beginning of the News the camera suddenly shows a scenic shot of the surrounding countryside. I thought I could see the coastline and what looked like a lighthouse with flashing red beams pulsing from it. I couldn't make much sense of this. I started thinking, "Is Hermann being symbolically warned of danger perhaps from being involved with the actress wife who definitely flirts with him?" Are these red flares also from the fire, do you think? They are not being reflected in a TV screen though, are they? I saw this on my second viewing and just now when I re-checked. Have a look! Or is it my imagination?

Susan wrote about Helga:" Perhaps Helga is also "buttoned up" and uptight due to her upbringing and family heredity (why not be modern and blame it on the family) - after this she explodes as a revolutionary."

I am inclined to a psychological interpretation of Helga's character as well. Her father is a very authoritarian character [at the drop of a hat he is reminding his daughter of whose house it is and giving his views on

students and life in general] and her mother seems weak. She hardly speaks, as I remember. Helga seems to have inherited that streak of dogmatism and desire to control. Revolutionaries, whether of the Right or Left wing persuasions, often wish to dictate and impose their views on the unwilling. How's that for a bit of dangerous amateur psychology!

Ralf also remarked:" And: was I mistaken or is it true that amid all the upheaval and revolution, we see Hermann for the first time at all remembering his home in Schabbach when he eats dumplings at Helga's place in Dülmen?"

I seem to remember this also. Moreover, in Part 6, at the little dinner party arranged at Schnusschen's borrowed flat, she and Hermann talk at some length about Hunsruck food and potato dumplings. They use colloquial terms and Juan has to ask for a translation ["taters" = Kartoffeln]. In my introduction I mentioned how often Reitz's camera dwells on the preparation of food. Here we see several close-ups of Juan's empanadas as they are taken from the oven and have a little wine sprinkled on them.

Ivan Mansley.

From: "Maarten Landzaat" <gijs xs4all.nl>
Sent: Sunday, July 04, 2004 12:04 AM +0200

Sorry if this is late, but I was on a 4 week holiday to Andalucia (which was great BTW!).

Ivan, thanks for your encouraging words!

I watched part 5 yesterday. I did not know the title then, because my tape just starts after it, and I did not read the viewing schedule. I was sure it had to be something to do with fleeing/escaping, which I felt was the central theme to this episode.

I saw the fleeing in:

- Hermann leaving Munchen
- Helga leaving Munchen
- The rich family with the piano learning son, fleeing Munchen to a beautiful place on Sylt, walking around naked
- Helga fleeing her parent's world
- Hermann's thoughts about his leaving the Hunsruck
- The rain, which makes you run for shelter
- Hermann fleeing from Helga's parents' house to Marianne
- Marianne's flight from her marriage
- In the end, Helga flees from everything: her family, her friends, Munchen, her believe in her love for Hermann.
- Clarissa's implied suicide attempt (that's how I interpreted her bandaged wrists): a flight from live

On every "flight", the film deals with the question whether it was good to flee or not. The general feeling seems to be "no, it's not good". I believe

in the end Hermann says something like "it's just detours".

The "sirens" scene in Dulmen is indeed brilliant. Regarding the combination food/love, I remembered Maria feeding Otto eggs.

Was there some significance in the location of Sylt, is it not about as far from Munich as can be (in Germany, that is)?

The Munich riots couldn't be escaped; they were on TV everywhere, all the time.

Ivan wrote:

> The title of the episode is in itself intriguing, is it not?

It is! I think that since freedom is so new, one has to play around with it before it can be handled wisely. Playing is having fun and sometimes making painful mistakes. In the episode it is shown both on the personal level (Hermann/Helga&friends) and on the society level (the riots).

> Secondly, what kind of freedom is meant? Is it on the personal level?

>

> Or is it on the political level?

Wouldn't you agree that both levels are intended? Both levels are addressed in the episode.

> Hermann definitely succumbs to Marianne,

....

> There is a wonderful touch from Reitz when he causes Hermann to find
> Marianne crying

....

> not want to lose him. "You're a dream", she says, but she is intelligent
> enough to know that dreams do not last. Your aged
> correspondent was deeply moved by this!!

So was I!

I remember Hermann replied something like "yet I'm very real too".

Maybe this refers to the title again, since "freedom = turning dreams into reality"??

> The whole of this episode has in

> its own way

> been a long and interesting detour!! But Hermann has not

> found freedom on

> any level, has he?

He didn't find much luck, that's for sure. But I think he did experience his freedom to travel, to flee, to seduce women, to make love to women he doesn't love, to stand up for his rights at the police station, etc. But he found that freedom alone doesn't bring you a lot.

Susan writes:

>Is it too much of a coincidence that there is even a piano in the empty
> apartment above the bakery?

Funny, I had the same thought. The master baker playing the piano, yeah right. Anyway, the attic scene more than compensates for this!

Maarten

From: "Ralf Eigl" <ralfeigl t-online.de>
Sent: Sunday, July 04, 2004 11:47 AM +0200

Susan and Maarten agreed:

>>Is it too much of a coincidence that there is even a piano in the empty
>>apartment above the bakery

I wasn't disturbed by this in the least. What about Helga meeting the young filmmakers while travelling to Dülmen?

A piano on a master baker's attic does not seem that weird to me. I have been playing music for 30 plus years, have bought quite a few used instruments, too. Let me tell you: Attics are THE places for unused pianos. And, Maarten, the master baker does NOT play the piano, that's exactly why it is standing on the attic. But do not misunderstand me, I know every individual perceives such things differently and why not!

Sometimes I think that you encounter coincidences in real life that are so incredible and bizarre that no scriptwriter on this earth would dare use them in their stories....

Which brings me to what I was actually going to say: I believe that almost ANY coincidence used in a film script is O.K. as long as it is presented convincingly. To me this one is.

Ralf

From: <theresia_martijn onetelnet.nl>
Sent: Monday, July 05, 2004 2:57 PM +0200

Maarten wrote:

Was there some significance in the location of Sylt, is it not about as

far from Munich as can be (in Germany, that is)?

Edgar Reitz went to Sylt himself before he started writing the script for Heimat I. I think he got in a depression after his latest project didn't become a success. So he fled to Sylt and withdrew himself. After Sylt he went to the Hunsrück and stayed there for quite a while, there he started with writing Heimat I.

As so many things this Sylt-scene could be autobiographical.

Theresia

**From: "ReindeR Rustema" <reinder.rustema.nl>
Sent: Monday, July 05, 2004 9:48 PM +0200**

At 15:57 +0200 5/07/04, <theresia_martijn.onetelnet.nl> wrote:
>Edgar Reitz went to Sylt himself before he started writing the script for
>Heimat I. I think he got in a depression after his latest project didn't
>become a success.

He wrote Die Heimat in reaction to the Hollywood television-film Holocaust (1979), which he thought was not a good way to deal with the war for the Germans.

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0077025>

A film I still haven't seen. Meryl Streep is in it. Did any of you see it? 475 minutes long. The description sounds boring:

>"Holocaust" follows each member of the Jewish Family Weiss
>throughout Hitler's reign in Germany. One by one, the family members
>suffer the horrible fate of extermination under Anti-Semitic Nazi
>Law until only one son remains at the end of World War II. A
>sub-plot follows the story of Eric Dorf, a young German lawyer with
>a good heart who is changed into a mass murderer by membership in
>the SS.

--

ReindeR

**From: "Susan Biedron" <susan.jsbiedron.com>
Sent: Saturday, July 10, 2004 5:49 PM -0500**

ReindeR,

I believe that I saw this a long time ago on television. I had totally forgotten about it until your email. (Which in itself says something - because I do remember another American mini-series from this time frame very

well, "Roots" by Alex Haley which was about slaves in the south and their African heritage.) - I did not realize Meryl Streep was in this movie, but she probably was not famous at the time. If I remember correctly - and I could be wrong because it was a long time ago - schools recommended that older children should watch this program.

When I first watched Heimat in 1994, I read in the brochure that came with the video tapes, that Reitz wrote Heimat in reaction to this Hollywood movie. At the time I completely understood his feelings, as being from a German-American family I was really tired of all Germans portrayed as evil.

I recall very little about "Holocaust" but I surely do not want to view it again to analyze it!

Susan