Verba et Litteræ:
Explorations in Germanic Languages
and German Literature

Essays in Honor of Albert L. Lloyd

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In So war es wirklich: Der deutsche Nachkriegefilm, Manfred Barthel reports on a curious event during the summer of 1979: the re-release of Josef von Baky's 1950 film *Das doppelte Lottchen*, adapted for the screen by Erich Kästner from his 1949 novel of the same name. This seems like an unusual film to be shown in German theaters twenty-nine years after its original premiere. It is quite understandable that this delightful and sentimental film should be popular during its release in 1950 and one year later win the first German film prizes for production, screenplay, and direction. But young and old standing in line to see this relatively low-budget, black-and-white film in 1979, the year of *Superman* and *Schulmädchenreport*? At a time when the socially critical New German Cinema was at its peak? Even Ulrich Gregor, an avid supporter of the Oberhausen generation and the New German Cinema gave *Das doppelte Lottchen* a positive assessment, writing in 1980: "where one expects naive or old-fashioned, if not very petit-bourgeois, outdated rubbish, one experiences instead a refreshing, cheerful film, which even today radiates a special charm." Now that the so-called New German Cinema has become a thing of the past, now that film scholars have learned to take the polemics of the Oberhausen Generation with multiple grains of salt, they are gradually allowing themselves...
to admit that some of Opa’s and Papa’s films were not really that bad. Obviously lacking the social and political orientation of the New German Cinema, Das doppelte Lottchen can, however, be read symptomatically as a film reflecting the traumas and concerns of post-war Germany.

The basic story line is familiar. The opening sequence shows Erich Kästner narrating the beginning of the novel, inviting the viewer to enter the fictitious mountain village of Seebühl on Lake Bühl. Throughout the film, his voice is heard off-screen commenting on the action. The next shot is of an idyllic Alpine lake with mountains in the distance, a scene anticipating the beginning of almost every Heimatfilm made during the 1950s. Kästner tells the viewers that this is not an orphanage, but rather a summer resort for girls. Ten-year old Luise Palfy from Vienna is already at the camp when the bus brings a new group of girls, one of whom looks exactly like Luise. The only physical difference between Luise and the new girl, Lotte Körner from Munich, is that the former has long golden locks and the latter has tightly braided pigtails; however, emotionally, they are quite different: Luise is pampered and spoiled, whereas the timid Lotte is so serious and diligent that her mother sent her to camp with the specific intention that she would learn to be a child again. Initial animosities between the two are soon overcome, and they discover that they are identical twins separated seven years ago. The two girls hatch a plan whereby each one would get to know the other parent and eventually reunite the family. Switching places, Luise goes to her mother in Munich, and Lotte goes to her composer-conductor-father in Vienna. Numerous episodes are presented, which threaten to reveal their true identities, such as Luise’s failed attempt to cook for her mother in Munich, and Lotte, in Vienna, having to eat piles of palatschinken. Luise’s favorite dish, when she would prefer a veal schnitzel or goulash. As in numerous Heimatfilme of the period, such as Grün ist die Heide (1951), young Lotte fills in for the missing mother by taking care of the father’s domestic needs. In her naïveté, she attempts to use her girlish femininity to drive a wedge between her father and his latest flame, Irene Gerlach. Lotte goes so far as to visit Fräulein Gerlach in order to forbid her from marrying her father. Fearing that her daring effort has been unsuccessful, Lotte suffers an emotional and physical collapse. Eventually, the mother and sister come to Vienna; the parents are reunited, and the father is cured of his self-indulgence. Following Lotte’s suggestion, he even exchanges his combination music studio and bachelor pad on the Ringstrasse for the artist’s room next door to the family’s apartment so that he can work closer to his family. And the mother, obviously, gives up her career and moves to Vienna. Yet it is less a rekindled romance between father and mother, which brings them together again, but rather, Lotte’s devotion which leads the self-absorbed father to realize his paternal obligations.

Erich Kästner’s clever but improbable premise for the Das doppelte Lottchen proved to be so appealing that it inspired five remakes for the cinema and three television sequels. Even before filming began, Das doppelte Lottchen received a lot of media attention in Germany. Part of the pre-production publicity campaign was the nation-wide search for twins to play the roles of Lotte and Luise. Not only from Munich, but from all of Germany, mothers came with twin daughters in tow. As Curt Riess reports the events, every mother thought that her twin daughters were the ideal girls for the film because they were the prettiest, nicest, and possessed the most acting talent. Erich Kästner later stated that he had the idea of two identical girls who could look so much alike that they could be mistaken for one another, but each of whom had a different temperament and character, which they exchange in the course of the film. Kästner believed such a pair could not be found because they existed only in his imagination. The choice was eventually narrowed to 120 pairs of twins, and finally Isa and Jutta Günther were chosen for the roles. Kästner discovered during the filming that the two girls actually changed characters as he had conceived it, and he was pleased to see how his imagination and reality intertwined.²

Although made in 1950, Das doppelte Lottchen shows no images of ruined cities, no soldiers returning from captivity, no men on crutches, no occupation troops, and no housing shortage, only a shortage of well-lighted studios for the artist next door. The viewer is presented with what appears to be the positive side of life in the early years of the economic miracle. A closer examination, however, reveals that something is wrong with this view. A film from 1950 without any allusion to the war? No reference to a border between Germany and Austria? No mention of alimony or child-support payments? The film’s historical and geographical indicators actually hint at a period between the Anschluss and the end of the Second World War.

A brief look at Kästner’s career during the Third Reich may answer these questions. The Neuköllner Tageblatt of May 12, 1933, re-

² Curt Riess, Das Gab’s nur einmal: Der deutsche Film nach 1945 (Vienna and Munich: Molden, 1977), 5: 88-90.
ports how, during the book burnings, nine voices called out the reasons why works of specific authors had to be burned. The second voice proclaimed: "Against decadence and moral decay! For discipline and morality in the family and the state. I assign to the flame the works of Heinrich Mann, Ernst Glaeser and Erich Kästner." Six days later, the *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten* reported on the blacklist of authors who were to be removed from public libraries. With the exception of *Emil und die Detektive*, all of Kästner's writings were banned.² Categorized as "undesired and politically unreliable," he was at first only permitted to have his works published outside of Germany. In December 1934, Kästner was briefly taken into custody for allegedly possessing subversive works abroad and had his bank account frozen for one year. The Gestapo arrested him again in 1937 and interrogated him for three hours in order to intimidate him.³ In every country conquered by German troops his books became banned.

The official Nazi attitude toward his works was, at times, ambivalent and the censoring of his works not well orchestrated. While all his literary works, including *Emil und die Detektive*, were forbidden by spring 1936, the film version of *Emil* played in German cinemas until 1937. Because the country needed hard currencies, Kästner was permitted to sell his film rights abroad, in a sense, making him an ambassador of German culture. In 1938 MGM adapted *Drei Männer im Schnee as Paradise for Three*, starring Frank Morgan, Robert Young and Mary Astor. In late 1941, Kästner was permitted to write the screenplay for Ufa's mammoth production of *Münchhausen*, directed by Josef von Baky, and in early 1942 he co-authored the script for the Heinz Rühmann film *Ich vertraue dir meine Frau an*. In a letter to his mother, Kästner writes on November 29, 1941, "[Goebbels] approved the film *Münchhausen*. Whether Goebbels had at that time agreed to permit Kästner to work as screenwriter of the film is doubtful, since he rejected the author's application for membership in the *Reichsschrifttumskammer* on December 29, 1941.⁴ Reports vary as to who interceded on Kästner's behalf, allowing him to work on *Münchhausen*. According to Luiselotte Enderle, it was Eberhard Schmidt, an Ufa production director.⁵ According to other reports, it was Fritz Hippler, director of the infamous *Der ewige Jude*, and at that time, Reichsfilmintendant and head of the film division in the propaganda ministry.⁶

Goebbels wanted to spare no costs on *Münchhausen*, which was being planned to celebrate Ufa's 25th anniversary, and because he wanted the best possible authors to work on the screenplay, he was willing to overlook their political standing.⁷ A requirement for writing the script was membership in the *Reichsschrifttumskammer*, and Goebbels granted Kästner a special approval, provided the author use a pseudonym. When the filming was completed in December 1942, however, Hitler reportedly went into a rage when he discovered that Kästner had written the script. In January 1943, Goebbels again had him banned from working in the film industry and prohibited him from publishing at home and abroad.⁸ *Münchhausen* had its premiere on March 5, 1943, but the original film credits list neither Kästner's name nor his pseudonym.⁹ (Kästner's *nom de plume* Berthold Bürger evokes not only Gottfried August Bürger, who had written many of the Münchhausen stories, but also Bertold Brecht, whose works were banned and who was living in exile.)

Most scholars agree that Kästner had already written the film treatment for *Das doppelte Lottchen* in 1942, when he suggested making the film to von Baky, but since the author was blacklisted again, the project was abandoned. The exact completion date of the screenplay is unknown, since the theme of twin sisters preoccupied him for several

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5 Wulf, 65.
8 Götz and Sarkowicz, 228.
9 Erich Kästner. *Leben und Werk*, 12; Götz and Sarkowicz, 227.
10 Riess, 3: 171; Felix Moeller, *Der Filmminister: Goebbels und der Film in Dritten Reich* (Berlin: Henschel, 1998), 128; Eric Rentschler, *The Ministry of Illusion: Nazi Cinema and Its Afterlife* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1996), 376-77; Götz and Sarkowicz, 227-28. Hippler later claimed that one of the reasons why he was relieved of his position and sent to the front was because he had allowed Kästner to work on *Münchhausen*. The real cause for Hippler's dismissal was apparently incompetence. Moeller, 128.
11 Riess, 3:171-72.
12 Götz and Sarkowicz, 234-35.
13 Rentschler, 377.
years. In 1937 he offered Shirley Temple in a double role. It is plausible that a reworked version of the story, entitled Das große Geheimnis, was the completed script for Das doppelte Lottchen. If the screenplay was already finished before 1945, and Kästner, without making any major revisions, used it for the film in 1950, this would explain the film's lack of specific references to post-war life. Others think that after the war, he reworked the story of Das doppelte Lottchen into a novel, which was published in 1949 and became the basis for the filmscript.

In the late 1940s and early 50s, however, the story gained new meaning, tapped into the collective consciousness of the time, and became more than a film about the effects of divorce on children. Fritz Göttler argues that "the children's films of these years most strongly express the trauma of the period."

Between the Second World War and 1956, when the last German POWs returned from Russian captivity, numerous disrupted families longed to be reunited. Unlike other films, which explicitly depict the crisis of masculinity during the post-war period, here the absent or morally and physically broken male is treated obliquely. The husband-father is a self-absorbed, self-indulgent composer and conductor who splits the twins because the crying of two infants disrupted his creative energies. Das doppelte Lottchen not only reflects personal longing for intact families, but it is also in tune with official government policy during the period of post-war reconstruction and national regeneration. During the late 1940s, little over one half of the West German population lived in intact families. As Heide Fehrenbach has pointed out in her exhaustive study of Die Sünderin and its reception, not only Adenauer's CDU and the Catholic Church, but also the SPD and the FDP linked the success of reconstruction to the renewal of the family structure. The family became the basic building block of the new democratic political order. In the words of Fehrenbach, Das doppelte Lottchen "leads us on a fantastic journey from an untouched, scenic Heimat to the reconstructed security of Heim."

In an interview regarding his film Heimat, Edgar Reitz commented on how films about families always arouse the interests of viewers: "I am amazed at how effective the family is as a narrative element. As soon as the family is the connecting element, there is great attentiveness on the part of the viewer, even in a world like ours in which the family as an institution is endangered." Das doppelte Lottchen not only stood at the beginning of a wave of family films, but also set the standard for a series of films about children either being reunited with their parents or finding a home within a newly constituted family: in Töxi (1952), the black GI father returns years later to take his German-born daughter to America; in Rosen-Resli (1954), an orphaned Christine Kaufmann brings two people together who adopt her, and in Laß die Sonne wieder scheinen (1955), Cornelia Froboess, then known as "die kleine Cornelia," unites the man who had illegally adopted her with her biological mother who had lost her ten years ago in the chaos of the war. Aware of this tendency, this longing for intact families, Carl Froelich renamed his unsuccessful Drei Mädchenspinne into Mutti muß heiraten—one wonders whether the verb muß at that time had an ambiguous meaning. Ilse Kubaschewski, head of Gloria-Verleih, renamed R.A. Stemmlé's unsuccessful 1954 Austrian film Das Licht der Liebe: for release in Germany, it bore the title Wenn du noch eine Mutter hast. As Barthel has pointed out, mama and papa became dualing titles: as a pendant to Mutti muß heiraten came Vater braucht eine Frau (1952); in response to Grete Weiser's Meine Kinder und ich...
(1955) came Heinz Rühmann in *Wenn der Vater mit dem Sohne* (1955), and the 1957 film *Vater, unser bestes Stück* was answered one year later with *Ist Mama nicht fabelhaft?* By 1956, however, the genre had pretty much run its course in Germany. Partly due to the influence of American pop culture, in particular, the rebellious James Dean, Marlon Brando’s *Wild One*, as well as rock’n’roll music, the ideal German families became dysfunctional; the angelic young children had gotten older and turned into the *Halbstarken*.

Within a year of its German publication in 1949, an English translation of the novel *Das doppelte Lottchen* appeared, but in the journey across the Atlantic, the names were reversed. In the United States, the novel was given the title *Lisa and Lottie*, and in England, it was *Lottie and Lisa*. (Perhaps Lisa’s name came first because Lottie is a less common American name.) Between 1949 and 1965, the novel *Das doppelte Lottchen* was translated into twenty-two languages.

It did not take long for foreign film adaptations of to be made. The first of these was *Hibari no komori-uta* (literally translated as “The Lullaby of the Lark”), a Japanese musical production from 1952, directed by Koji Shima, and starring a child singing star in the double role. The British version, *Twice Upon a Time* (1954), followed, directed by Emeric Pressburger, with whom Kastner had co-authored several scripts in the early 1930s before Pressburger was forced to emigrate. This adaptation received mostly negative reviews, and like the Japanese version, was not shown in Germany.

In 1961 came Walt Disney’s *The Parent Trap* (1961) with Hayley Mills and Hayley Mills, which was released in Germany as *Die Vermählung ihrer Eltern geben bekannt...* Although Disney provided family entertainment for the baby boomers’ childhood years, his first *Parent Trap* was really one of many low-budget, commercially successful, live-action films from the early 1960s which supported the production of the more expensive and commercially less successful animated films. 

During the 1980s, Disney made three TV sequels with an adult Hayley Mills playing twin mothers: in 1986 *The Parent Trap II*, which was released in Germany only as a video with the title *Nikki und Mary—die 5-Minuten Ehe*, and in 1989 came both *The Parent Trap III* and *The Parent Trap Hawaiian Honeymoon*, also known as *The Parent Trap IV*. In 1998, the Disney studios remade *The Parent Trap* for cinematic release. In the early 1990s, there was an animated Japanese television series based on *Das doppelte Lottchen*, and, in 1993, Joseph Vilsmaier updated *Das doppelte Lottchen* in Germany under the title *Charlie und Louise*.

In the two adaptations of the film for American theater audiences, numerous changes were made, whereby the striking differences between the original German and the two Disney versions reflect both the cultural differences between the two countries as well as the social changes which have taken place in the United States between 1961 and 1998. Lotte’s psychosomatic collapse in the original German film stresses the effect of her father’s planned remarriage on her. The 1950 film often runs the risk of becoming overly sentimental, something which is mitigated in the novel through Kastner’s humor and irony. Instead of sentimentalism, the first *Parent Trap* resorts to slapstick humor, including a cake fight. It minimizes the problem of divorce—in fact, the word “divorce” is never used; instead, the parents are “separated.” Another major difference is that the twins in the German version are innocent, ten-year old girls who celebrate their eleventh birthday toward the end of the film, while in the two Disney versions they are more animated, exuberant, precocious pre-teens; to be precise, the Hayley Mills’ characters Sharon and Susan are already thirteen years old.

Whereas the initial antagonism between the two girls in the German film reaches its violent highpoint when Luise kicks Lotte under the table, the Disney versions rejoice in showing the competitiveness of the girls and the nasty pranks they play on one another and on the father’s fiancée, pranks which get nastier in the latest film. If in 1961, the sight of a lizard scares the fiancée, in 1998, the episode is intensified by having the lizard crawl into her mouth. She also becomes greedier and more vicious; in the final version, the girls refer to her as Cruela de Ville, one of several intertextual references to other Disney films. The dichotomy of poor, working mother and rich father is missing. In the two adaptations of the film for American theater audiences, the geographical distances between the parents increased: Munich and Vienna first become Boston and Monterey, and then London and Napa Valley. A photo of Ricky Nelson on the walls of the cabin is replaced by one of Leonardo di Caprio. A listing and discus-

22 Barthel, 280-81.
23 The girls’ names Luise and Lotte were apparently derived from the name of his companion Luiselotte Enderle.
tion of all the differences are too numerous to be considered in this paper, so it will focus on three aspects: the working mother, the father's profession, and the opera Händel und Gretel.

In von Baky's version, the mother (Antje Weisgerber) has a low-paying career as an editor of the "Münchner Illustrierten." Her job is a necessity, in order for her to provide a modest life for herself and her daughter. In this sense, the film reflects the historical and financial situation of many women. Although the mother may be seen as an emancipated career woman, she does not earn very much as is evident from the furnishings of her apartment and Luise's question, whether they can actually afford to take an overnight trip into the mountains. The mother's job takes its toll: she takes work home with her at the end of the day, and instead of playing after school, her young latch-key daughter Lotte/Luise must clean, shop for groceries, and cook dinner every day after school—responsibilities which make her grow up too fast. In this sense, the film presents Kästner's interest in social environment and its effect on childhood development. At the end of the film, the mother gives up her job in order to return to her husband in Vienna, letting him assume the role of provider for the family. Her action is in tune with the policies of socially conservative politicians who wanted women back in the kitchen so that men could regain their places in the workforce, where they earned more than women. In the first Parent Trap, the mother, as played by Maureen O'Hara, is an Irish Boston Brahmin, a class synonymous with wealth, power, and elegance when the film was made—at that time another Bostonian of Irish descent, John F. Kennedy, was president of the United States. She is a society matron who does not need to work and devotes herself to charity functions, perpetuating the ideal of all 1950s' television shows that mothers should not be employed outside the home. With her Irish temper, Maureen O'Hara appears to give a slight reprise of her role in The Quiet Man, and there is the implication that this temper was a major cause of the divorce. In the 1998 remake, the mother (Natasha Richardson) also comes from a wealthy family, resides in an elegant London townhouse with her father and butler, and although she does not need the money, she runs her own business, designing glamorous wedding gowns.

In Das doppelte Lottchen, the father (Peter Mosbacher) is a composer and conductor at the Vienna Opera House. Through Lotte, he becomes inspired to write a children's opera. In the early 1970s, Der Stern presented the results of a survey regarding women's views on men in various professions. Under a picture of Herbert von Karajan, the printed text stated that the majority of women considered a symphony conductor to be the ideal mate. Apparently, for American audiences, opera is too high brow, and a conductor-composer just doesn't cut it as a romantic ideal. In the 1961 version, the father (Brian Keith) is a rich rancher, and the film taps into the mystique of the western genre, which was still popular in 1961. When he goes horseback riding with Sharon and when the family goes on the camping trip, one hears cowboy-film music in the background. In the 1998 adaptation, the father (Dennis Quaid) is a wealthy winegrower. Judging from articles in Food and Wine as well as other gourmet magazines, now that California wines have received worldwide recognition in the last decade, vintners are no longer perceived as farmers, but have been elevated to a glamorous social class. Considering the self-promoting tactics of the Disney Studios and product tie-ins, it's surprising that a special Parker Knoll Vineyards Select Parent Trap 1998 Vintage was not marketed in conjunction with the film's release. Imagine Parent Trap wine in a special plastic collector's cup available with a Big Meal at McDonalds—not in America. Not even in France, where the allegedly wholesome, family-oriented company initially resisted serving wine at Euro-Disney.

In his hyperbolic polemic against the films of the 1950s, Göttler refers to Das doppelte Lottchen as "a black story of depression and loneliness, as hopeless as nightmares." Although this description does not apply to the entire film, it does characterize the dark dream sequence, which is taken directly from the novel. At a performance of Humperdinck's opera Händel und Gretel that her father conducts, Lotte meets his ladyfriend, Fräulein Gerlach. Lotte begins to identify with Gretel who was sent into the forest and abandoned by her parents. That night she has a nightmare in which she sees Fräulein Gerlach as the witch of the opera, and her father saws the bed in half, separating the twins. Later Lotte calls her a witch, like on the stage, only prettier. This scene best exemplifies the depression, loneliness and hopelessness of the little heroine. American audiences are undoubtedly familiar with the fairy tale, but very few children here know the opera. During the 1950s and 1960s many parents were not yet consciously aware of the psychologically beneficial "uses of enchantment," that is, the benefits of reading fairy tales the way they were written, as advocated by Bruno Bettelheim. Only in the 1970s did more accurate English translations replace the sanitized versions of Grimm's fairy tales. Lotte's identifica-

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25 Göttler, 190.
tion with Gretel, however, appears to support Bettelheim’s critics, since the fairy-tale opera does not symbolically resolve unconscious anxieties but rather intensifies conscious ones. As frightening as this nightmare may be for Lotte, it was apparently omitted in the Disney versions not because of its horror, but because the rewriting of the father’s role would have made this scene incongruous with the rest of the storyline.

These three films finally lead into the quagmire of adaptation theories, a problematic area since every adaptation is both a transference from one medium into another, involving what Bluestone calls “inevitable mutations,” and an interpretation of an interpretation. Over the years critics have been divided as to whether the integrity of the original source must be preserved, or whether the work must necessarily be freely adapted to create a new and different work of art. Using this dichotomy, Das doppelte Lottchen would be considered a faithful adaptation of Kästner’s novel, if one assumes that the novel was written first. A treatment was ready in 1942, but whether the actual script was already finished by then is not known. Von Baky had a reputation for remaining loyal to scripts, and as stated previously, had already collaborated with Kästner on the extravagant Münchhausen. If the final script was completed after the novel, one would then speak of fidelity to the source with regard to Das doppelte Lottchen because it closely follows the novel, Kästner wrote the screenplay and spoke the voiceover commentary (as he also did, for example, in 1954 for Das fliegende Klassenzimmer). The recurring commentary throughout the film initially draws the viewer into the story and later comments humorously on the plot, incorporating the author’s reflections from the book into the film. It does not function as a conscious form of alienation as in the films of Alexander Kluge and approaches what Siegfried Kracauer calls an “obtrusive presence … raising the issue of uncinematic adaptations.”

26 For example, Maria Tatar, Off With Their Heads: Fairy Tales and the Culture of Childhood (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992), 78.

26 For example, Maria Tatar, Off With Their Heads: Fairy Tales and the Culture of Childhood (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992), 78.
make's director Nancy Meyers and the producer Charles Shyer. (Meyers and Shyer had previously collaborated on Baby Boom starring Diane Keaton and on the remake of The Father of the Bride starring Steve Martin and Diane Keaton.)

The success of the three films is obviously due to the narrative's continual appeal to audiences of all ages, fulfilling childhood fantasies about finding a lost sibling and adult longings for harmonious families. For all three films, the German term Familienfilm is appropriate in both senses of the word: a film for the entire family and a film about a family. An unknown irony is that the classic German children's films of the 1950s such as Das doppelte Lottchen were originally intended for adults to teach them about the problems children face. In Lotte’s and Luise’s journey from Munich and Vienna to Boston, Monterey, London and Napa Valley, however, Kästner's pedagogical intentions, his gentle humor, his delightfully charming use of language, as well as the social and economic trauma experienced by German audiences in 1950 were thrown overboard—but that's entertainment, Hollywood style.

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35 Tornow, 86.