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Digitales Journal für Philologie

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TITEL

From Outer Space to the Circus Tent. Science Fiction and the Problems of '68 in Alexander Kluge's *Die Ungläubige*

ERSCHIENEN IN

*Textpraxis. Digitales Journal für Philologie* # 7 (2.2013) / [www.textpraxis.net](http://www.textpraxis.net)

URL

<http://www.uni-muenster.de/textpraxis/kirkland-fulk-science-fiction-and-alexander-kluge>

NBN

<http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:hbz:6-88399571295>

Die NBN dient der langfristigen Auffindbarkeit des Dokuments.

EMPFOHLENE ZITIERWEISE

Kirkland A. Fulk: »From Outer Space to the Circus Tent. Science Fiction and the Problems of '68 in Alexander Kluge's *Die Ungläubige*«. In: *Textpraxis* 7 (2.2013). URL: <http://www.uni-muenster.de/textpraxis/kirkland-fulk-science-fiction-and-alexander-kluge>, NBN: <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:hbz:6-88399571295>

IMPRESSUM

*Textpraxis. Digitales Journal für Philologie*

ISSN 2191-8236

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# From Outer Space to the Circus Tent

## Science Fiction and the Problems of '68 in Alexander Kluge's *Die Ungläubige*

Alexander Kluge's career not only spans the last five decades, it also traverses various terrains. He is a prolific author and filmmaker, a television producer and interviewer, and a social theorist carrying on the tradition of critical theory and the Frankfurt School. One thing that is not typically associated with his name is science fiction.<sup>1</sup> Kluge's journey into the world of science fiction began amid the furor of the student movement in the latter-half of the 1960s and exploded in the following decade. This paper explores Kluge's first science fiction work *Die Ungläubige* from 1967. *Die Ungläubige* centers on »eine nicht voll integrierte Raumpilotin«, Mascha Mendes.<sup>2</sup> The story takes place in the late twenty-first century, a time in which outer space has become a realm of both intergalactic capital and widespread interplanetary uprisings and revolutions. Mascha Mendes is a dreamer, a utopian who longs for a world beyond the capital-dominated interests in outer space but is unable to fulfill this wish. Kluge's initial foray into science fiction thus deals directly with many of the central themes subtending the 1968 protests and the West German student movement: capitalism, imperialist expansion, and revolution. Kluge's work does not provide any hard and fast answers to the students' demands for revolution and an aesthetic in the service of the movement. If anything, *Die Ungläubige* presents a dire situation in which revolution is constantly stunted by the system of capital from which there is no easy escape. At the same time Kluge's interest in science fiction during this tumultuous period tapped into a genre that, while criticized for its affirmative and conservative qualities, is particularly well suited for performing a critique of structures of capitalism. As I argue, for Kluge, science fiction's critical force rests squarely on its contiguity with

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<sup>1</sup> | This is not to say that Kluge's interest in science fiction has either gone unnoticed or received no critical attention. Rainer Lewandowski, for instance, dedicates a brief chapter to Kluge's early sci-fi films *Der große Verhau* and *Willi Tobler und der Untergang der 6. Flotte* in his work *Alexander Kluge* (München 1980) and elaborates on them at length in his monograph *Die Filme von Alexander Kluge* (Hildesheim 1980). Further, many scholars have focused on Kluge's sole sci-fi text *Lernprozesse mit tödlichem Ausgang* (1973). See for example, Rainer Stollmann: »Schwarzer Krieg, endlos. Erfahrung und Selbsterhaltung in Alexander Kluges ›Lernprozessen mit tödlichem Ausgang‹«. In: *Text & Kontext* 12.2 (1984), p. 349–369; Ulrike Bosse: *Alexander Kluge: Formen literarischer Darstellung von Geschichte*. Frankfurt/M. 1989; Leslie Adelson: »Experiment Mars: Contemporary German Literature, Imaginative Ethnoscapes, and the New Futurism«. In: Mark W. Rectanus (ed.): *Über Gegenwartsliteratur: Interpretationen und Interventionen*. Bielefeld 2008, p. 23–51. Despite these contributions to Kluge scholarship, no work has been done on the genesis of Kluge's science fiction nor on the role of science fiction in his oeuvre in general.

<sup>2</sup> | Alexander Kluge: *Die Artisten in der Zirkuskuppel: ratlos, Die Ungläubige, Projekt Z, Sprüche der Leni Peickert*. München 1968, here p. 146. From here on cited parenthetically.

the very system out of which it is born. It is both an investigation of the barriers to revolt and revolution erected by capitalism as well as an exercise in dialectical thought and critique. The following analysis first elaborates on the origin of Kluge's science fiction within its larger socio-historical context before exploring the text itself in greater detail.

## 1. Kluge, Sixty-Eight, and Science Fiction

In order to fully understand *Die Ungläubige* it is necessary to sketch its history. Kluge's first experiment with science fiction is the story of a film that never came to fruition. What began as science fiction gave way to another work, *Projekt Z*, whose central theme, the circus, became the focus of the resulting full-length film, *Die Artisten in der Zirkuskuppel: ratlos* (1967/68). The cause of this seemingly abstruse progression from outer space to the circus tent was the events that transpired on June 2, 1967, the shooting of student protestor Benno Ohnesorg, which marked a violent turn in the student movement on both sides of the barricades. In the wake of the shooting, students at the fledgling Deutsche Film- und Fernsehakademie Berlin (DFFB) formed only a year prior, turned their attention to the events taking place around them. Seeking a direct link between filmmaking and the revolutionary act, the students »turned to allegory and thinly veiled allusion to convey their agit-prop«.<sup>3</sup> For his part, Kluge viewed this »sehr abstrakte[] Linie der Studentenbewegung« as having little more than a facile understanding of what »Kino überhaupt sein sollte«.<sup>4</sup> *Die Artisten*, which Kluge began working on only a month after the death of Ohnesorg, interrogates the role of the artist as well as the status of film within capitalism that resulted in part, as Kluge states, out of his frustration with the students at the DFFB.<sup>5</sup>

*Die Artisten* centers on circus director Leni Peickert and her attempts to »free it from the shackles of inauthentic entertainment«.<sup>6</sup> It explores at once, »die Frage nach alternativen Formen der Kunst- und Medienproduktion« as well as »das Problem einer zunehmenden Verbreitung ökonomischer Reproduktionsformen in der Kulturarbeit«.<sup>7</sup> Peikert's dream is to create a new circus that is, in her own words, worthy of the dead (»einen Zirkus, der einen Toten wert ist«), particularly her father Manfred, who wished to push the limits of the circus by hoisting the elephants into the air.<sup>8</sup> Peickert's efforts, however, are constantly undermined by financial constraints that she can never successfully overcome, whether it be by becoming an entrepreneur concerned with marketing methods and target groups or by inheriting millions.<sup>9</sup> Ultimately, the possibility of alternative artistic, filmic expression is shown to be constantly curbed by the dominant economic interests as

<sup>3</sup> | Richard Langston: »June 23, 1968«. In: Jennifer Kapczynski and Michael Richardson (eds.): *A New History of German Cinema*. New York 2012, p. 417–422, here p. 419, 417.

<sup>4</sup> | Alexander Kluge: »Interview mit Ulrich Gregor (1976)«. In: *In Gefahr und größter Not bringt der Mittelweg den Tod: Texte zu Kino, Film, Politik*. Berlin 1999, p. 224–244, here p. 240.

<sup>5</sup> | *Ibid.*, p. 224. See also Rainer Lewandowski: *Die Filme von Alexander Kluge*. Hildesheim 1980, p. 119.

<sup>6</sup> | Langston: »June 23, 1968« (ref. 3), p. 419.

<sup>7</sup> | Dorothea Walzer: »Zirkuskuppel: Ratlos«. In: Christian Schulte (ed.): *Die Frage des Zusammenhangs: Alexander Kluge im Kontext*. Berlin 2012, p. 111–129, here p. 111, 122.

<sup>8</sup> | Quoted in Lewandowski: *Die Filme von Alexander Kluge* (ref. 5), p. 101. Lewandowski further remarks that Leni's efforts to reform the circus are a form of »Trauerarbeit für ihren Vater«. *Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>9</sup> | *Ibid.*, p. 106, 120.

Peickert abandons her dream to reform the circus she loves in order to work in television, a move that seemingly foreshadows Kluge's own move from the big to the small screen.<sup>10</sup> The film's message of the impossibility of »an artistic cinema's propensity to articulate utopia to mass audiences [...] under the eye of economic interests«, is, to be sure, aimed largely at the students' desire to turn film into a form of immediate revolutionary praxis.<sup>11</sup> This should, however, not be misunderstood as an outright rejection of the possibilities of auteur film. Rather, as Kluge argues in his 1964 essay *Die Utopie Film*:

[...] in einer Zeit, in der Film in einer Spannung zwischen seinen wahren Möglichkeiten und seiner beschränkten wirtschaftlichen Praxis steht, hätte eine Kulturpolitik des Films ihre Chance. Diese Chance nehmen die Kultusverwaltungen der Bundesländer nicht wahr.<sup>12</sup>

In a way *Die Artisten* represents this missed chance but also demonstrates the necessity for the public funding of film in order to remove the economic barriers to its production, a point that is echoed in Peickert's decision to work for public television.

In the time between when Kluge began filming *Die Artisten* in July 1967 and its German debut in September of the following year – the film was first screened at the Venice Film Festival a month before – Kluge's relationship with the students only worsened. In June 1968, Kluge along with his close friend and fellow director Edgar Reitz were invited by students at the DFFB to discuss »political action and filmmaking«.<sup>13</sup> Dissatisfied with the directors' »professed allegiance to leftist aesthetic practices«, the students hurled both verbal abuse and rotten eggs at their interlocutors.<sup>14</sup> Kluge's plea for state support of film, essentially proposing to work within and with the support of the very system against which the students were rebelling »amounted to nothing more than a profit-motivated opportunism that sacrificed any and all aesthetic and political principles« to the film students for whom a truly new and alternative film could only develop in a »post-capitalist society«.<sup>15</sup>

Shortly after the rotten-egg incident in Berlin, Kluge secluded himself in his film laboratory in Ulm and began working on science fiction. From 1969 to 1971 Kluge produced two full-length science fiction films, one short film. In 1973 he published *Lernprozesse mit tödlichem Ausgang* which, as Kluge states, was a »Wiedergutmachung« for his previous sci-fi endeavors.<sup>16</sup> Reflecting on these films, Kluge remarks:

Zum Schluß der Filme, da wußten wir, wie wir sie hätten machen sollen. Hätten wir da noch Geld gehabt, so hätten wir mit Sicherheit einen sehr, sehr guten Film gemacht. Wir könnten

**10** | Richard Langston notes that »although frequently thought of as a prophesy of Kluge's own shift from film to television in 1985, Leni's on-screen media shift affected only a genre shift for Kluge«. Langston: »June 23, 1968« (ref. 3), p. 420. That is, whereas Leni Peickert leaves the circus behind to begin anew with television, Kluge's move to television was not a sign of resignation concerning film but rather a transfer of what he developed over the course of two decades to the television format. As Christian Schulte states in reference to Kluge's *Kulturmagazin 10 vor 11*: »Statt, wie in anderen Magazinen üblich, über kulturelle Großereignisse in den immer gleichen, standardisierten Formen zu berichten, setzt Kluge auf Vielfalt und Zusammenhang«, the same characteristics that drive his films. Christian Schulte: »Fernsehen und Eigensinn«. In: Christian Schulte and Winfried Siebers (eds.): *Kluges Fernsehen: Alexander Kluges Kulturmagazine*. Frankfurt/M. 2002, p. 65–81, here p. 65.

**11** | Langston: »June 23, 1968« (ref. 3), p. 419.

**12** | Alexander Kluge: »Die Utopie Film«. In: *In Gefahr und größter Not bringt der Mittelweg den Tod: Texte zu Kino, Film, Politik*. Berlin 1999, p. 42–56, here p. 46.

**13** | Langston: »June 23, 1968« (ref. 3), p. 418.

**14** | *Ibid.*

**15** | *Ibid.*

**16** | Kluge: »Interview mit Ulrich Gregor (1976)« (ref. 4), p. 241.

jetzt auf Grund des know-hows, das wir uns da erarbeitet haben, einen sehr guten Science-Fiction-Standard entwickeln.<sup>17</sup>

Rather than returning to film, Kluge's pursuit of science fiction became a literary endeavor, which sought to make good on the perceived shortcomings of his films.<sup>18</sup> Kluge's turn to science fiction during this time (both in film and in literature), he admits, was in part a reaction to his falling out with the students in the summer of 1968.<sup>19</sup> His move to Ulm was a retreat to and seclusion in the outer space of science fiction and away from the turmoil of the sixties.

While the rotten-egg encounter with the students led to the highly productive and experimental time in Ulm in the 1970s, Kluge's interest in science fiction was very much a product of and intervention in debates of the student movement rather than solely a result of them. Similar to *Die Artisten*, Kluge's science fiction can be viewed as an affront to the aesthetic sensibilities and revolutionary desires of the students. During the sixties, science fiction was hardly considered a genre suitable for expressing the demands of revolution and revolt much less for staging any type of critique. For instance, while Manfred Nagl notes a boom in science fiction in Germany around 1967, his study of the genre published in 1972 is indicative of the suspicion harbored against it. For him, science fiction in general and German science fiction in the sixties in particular is representative of »die Bagatellisierung und Rechtfertigung von Kriegen, die Entlastung von Kriegsschuld und Verantwortung«, the *Perry Rhodan* series that began publication in 1962 being a prime example of this.<sup>20</sup> In his comprehensive analysis of German science fiction, Hans-Edwin Friedrich confirms such damning assessments of the genre in the sixties. Science fiction during this time was viewed, especially by the student movement, as a portrayal of »mit faschistischen Zügen ausgestatteten Superhelden« that carried on the tradition of imperialism, feudalism, and militarism in service of maintaining the status quo.<sup>21</sup> Not only were sci-fi conventions taken for, as Friedrich states, »Reichsparteitagen«, science fiction literature was also derided as indoctrinating its readers into the conformity of a »technisierte Zukunftswelt«, enabling an easy escape from real world issues. It was not until the 1970s that the stigma surrounding science fiction began to fade.<sup>22</sup> As an exploration of a genre condemned for its affirmation and promotion of the status quo, Kluge's venture into science fiction appears quite untimely.

Although production of *Die Ungläubige* was discarded in favor of *Die Artisten*, the two are not so easily separated. As Kluge remarks in the afterword to the collection of

<sup>17</sup> | *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> | Kluge did, however, attempt to reboot his science fiction films after the publication of *Lernprozesse*. In 1977 he reworked some of the material from *Willi Tobler und der Untergang der 6. Flotte* for a film entitled *Zu böser Schlacht schleicht ich heut nacht so bang*, and he continues to produce science fiction vignettes for his online television website dctp.tv. Lewandowski: *Die Filme von Alexander Kluge* (ref. 5), p. 161.

<sup>19</sup> | *Ibid.*, p. 239–241.

<sup>20</sup> | Manfred Nagl: *Science Fiction in Deutschland*. Tübingen 1972, p. 195.

<sup>21</sup> | Hans-Edwin Friedrich: *Science Fiction in der deutschsprachigen Literatur: Ein Referat zur Forschung bis 1993*. Tübingen 1995, here p. 42. Lewandowski echoes this in commentary on Kluge's science fiction: »Der Science-fiction-Film traditioneller Art hat die Tendenz, die bestehenden Normen der Gesellschaft auch in der vermeintlichen Zukunft unverändert gelten zu lassen. Das soziale Gefüge, die moralischen Tugendvorstellungen erscheinen als unveränderbare Größen, der Zuschauer findet sich mit seinem verinnerlichten Verständnis der Gesellschaft auch im dritten Jahrtausend (und später) zurecht.« Lewandowski: *Die Filme von Alexander Kluge* (ref. 5), p. 154.

<sup>22</sup> | Friedrich: *Science Fiction in der deutschsprachigen Literatur* (ref. 21), p. 43.

works in which the script to *Die Artisten* is published alongside *Die Ungläubige*, while the two appear to operate on clearly distinct levels, indeed the opposite is the case:

Dabei wird permanent Substanz von einer Stelle des Projekts aus guten Gründen zu einer anderen getragen, weil die Fragen untergründig miteinander zusammenhängen. Das kommt ohnehin der Tendenz entgegen, daß wir an einen thematischen roten Faden nicht glauben. (p. 146)

The red thread that connects these two works and the world of outer space and science fiction with that of the circus is both the situation in West Germany at the time of the student movement and critical investigations into the functioning of capitalism. The difference between *Die Ungläubige* and *Die Artisten* is one of degree and genre choice rather than theme and problem. For Kluge, the substance of *Die Ungläubige* was concentrated in *Die Artisten*.<sup>23</sup> That is, whereas the latter uses film to reflect on the status and conditions of cinematic production under capitalism, the former casts its net much wider and provides a critique of the structures of capital as a whole.<sup>24</sup>

To be sure, *Die Ungläubige* does not function on the overt and complex allegorical level of *Die Artisten* in dealing with the obstacles to the production of a revolutionary, utopian cinema. At the same time, however, and in a different manner than *Die Artisten*, Kluge's science fiction mines a specific aesthetic. A look forward to Kluge's later full-length sci-fi films *Der Große Verhau* (1969) and *Willi Tobler und der Untergang der 6. Flotte* (1971) can provide some insight into this sci-fi aesthetic. These films, which are characterized by what Miriam Hansen calls »deliberately dilettante trick photography«, reflect the influence of Georges Méliès on Kluge's conception of science fiction.<sup>25</sup> In addition to the amateurish trick photography, Kluge's work is characterized by the frequent use of intertitles, montages of crude drawings and photographs, and spaceships and space stations constructed out of spare parts from television sets (see figures 1 and 2).

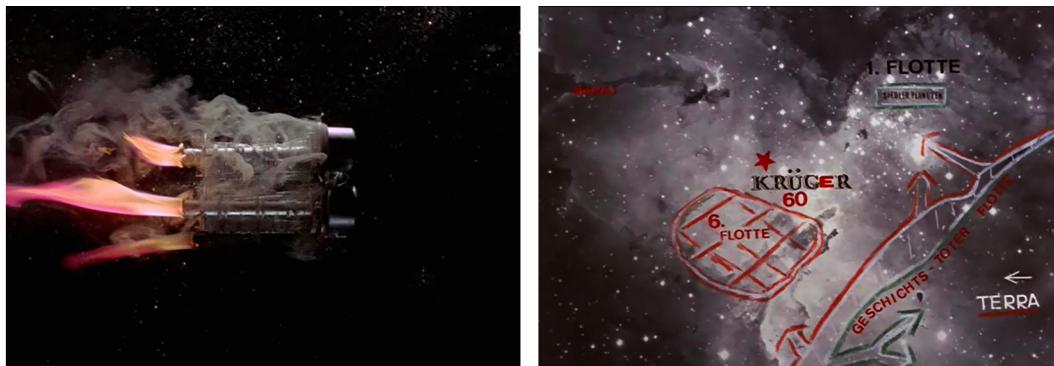


Figure 1: Depictions of spaceships from *Der Große Verhau*

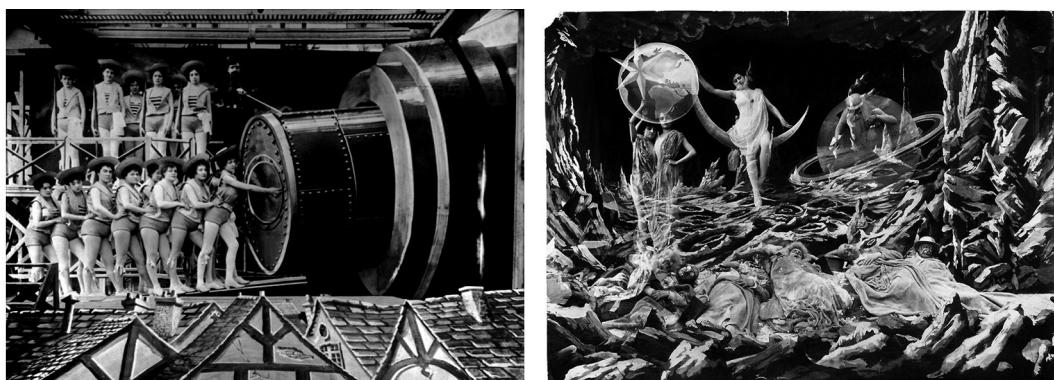
<sup>23</sup> | Cf. p. 146.

<sup>24</sup> | As Lewandowski states in his brief analysis of Kluge's science fiction films: »Zur Ideologie des herkömmlichen Science-fiction-Films gehört auch die Projektion einer gefährlichen unheimlichen Bedrohung von außen, um die eigenen Widersprüche im Inneren zu überdecken. Die kapitalistisch-imperialistische Welt muß sich, so wird suggeriert, gegen Feinde von außen verteidigen; das Recht liegt selbstverständlich auf Seiten der Verteidiger.« In Kluge's science fiction, that is, the inner contradictions of the capitalist-imperialist order are not covered up by a fear of outside intrusion and the necessity of staunch, technologically advanced defense system. Instead they are put on display. Rainer Lewandowski: *Alexander Kluge*. München 1980, p. 85.

<sup>25</sup> | Miriam Hansen: »Reinventing the Nickelodeon: Notes on Kluge and Early Cinema«. In: *October* 46 (1988), p. 178–198, here p. 178.

Figure 2: Stills from *Willi Tobler und der Untergang der 6. Flotte*

It is Méliès' early films, particularly *Le voyage dans la lune* (1902), rather than the grandiose production of the seminal science fiction film of the late 1960s – Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) – to which Kluge's science fiction is indebted (see figure 3).<sup>26</sup>

Figure 3: Méliès's *Le voyage dans la lune*

In this way, Kluge's interest in science fiction harkens back to the age of silent films and the cinema of attractions, a time in which film and cinematic theater experience could have produced an alternative public sphere.<sup>27</sup> Kluge's love of early cinema thus clearly draws on Walter Benjamin's conception of the possibilities of cinematic experience versus that of his close friend, and Kluge's mentor, Theodor Adorno. Whereas the latter viewed the cinema as a mechanism of the culture industry in the service of manipulation and delusion, Benjamin saw in the early cinema a space where »kritische und genießende Unterhaltung [zusammenfallen; K.F.]«.<sup>28</sup> In comparison, Adorno and Horkheimer remark that:

Amusement ist die Verlängerung der Arbeit unterm Spätkapitalismus. [...] Dem Arbeitsvorgang in Fabrik und Büro ist auszuweichen nur in der Angleichung an ihn in der Muße. Daran kränkt unheilbar alles Amusement. Das Vergnügen erstarrt zur Langeweile, weil es, um Vergnügen zu bleiben, nicht wieder Anstrengung kosten soll und daher streng in den ausgefahrenen Assoziationsgeleisen sich bewegt. Der Zuschauer soll keiner eigenen Gedanken bedürfen.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> | See Kluge: »Interview mit Ulrich Gregor (1976)« (ref. 4), p. 241.

<sup>27</sup> | Hansen: »Reinventing the Nickelodeon« (ref. 25), p. 191–193.

<sup>28</sup> | Walter Benjamin: *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit*. Frankfurt/M. 2006, p. 55.

<sup>29</sup> | Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer: *Dialektik der Aufklärung*. Amsterdam 1947, p. 57.

For Benjamin and Kluge, however, the possibility of the alternative public sphere of the cinema is based on the notion »of the reciprocity between the film on the screen and the spectator's stream of associations« in which »a film [either; K.F.] exploits the viewer's needs, perceptions, and wishes, or it encourages their autonomous movement, fine-tuning, and self-reliance«.<sup>30</sup> Rather than a cinema of total immersion and manipulation, Kluge's use of early cinema techniques in his science fiction aims to resuscitate the critical potential of the nickelodeon both objectively (in the film itself) and subjectively (in the experiences of the audience) that was swept away by the technical proficiency of the Hollywood aesthetic.<sup>31</sup>

As Hansen notes, however, Kluge's recourse to early film cannot be reduced to a »nostalgic essentialism or utopian purism«.<sup>32</sup> Rather, she continues, »[w]hatever alternative organization of experience« early film promised »is the result of the very mechanisms – the instability and voracity of the commercial-industrial public spheres – which appropriate and desubstantialize that experience«.<sup>33</sup> That is, early cinema gained its critical force at precisely that moment of tension between its potential and the intrusion of commercial interests. While it is easy see the early cinema aesthetic at work in his later sci-fi films, the crux of Hansen's analysis holds true for this work as well, even though *Die Ungläubige* does not partake in this aesthetic directly. Science fiction, for Kluge, resides at the intersection of possibility and deferred impossibility.<sup>34</sup> It is at this juncture and indeed because of this very tension that science fiction is able to perform a critique of the mechanisms surrounding it, both of cinema and of capitalism.

Kluge remarks only tangentially on his views of science fiction. In *Öffentlichkeit und Erfahrung* (1972), for example, his first theoretical work co-authored with Oskar Negt and itself a product of the sixties, Negt and Kluge note the power of science fiction in a footnote. While science fiction, they claim, appears to stray away from real experiences: »Tatsächlich vermag gerade dieses Genre auf die Erfahrungsweise der im Arbeits- und

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Adorno's position on film and the cinema did not remain unchanged. Miriam Hansen outlines at length how Adorno, later in his career and largely due to Kluge, became more receptive to the possibilities of film beyond the constraints of the culture industry. See Miriam Hansen: »Introduction to Adorno. 'Transparencies on Film' [1966]«. In: *New German Critique* 24/25 (1981–1982), p. 186–198, here p. 193–195.

**30** | Hansen: »Reinventing the Nickelodeon« (ref. 25), p. 185. Kluge's notion of the reciprocity of film and audience is elaborated on in his 1975 essay *Die schärfste Ideologie*: »Dieser Realismus des Motivs lässt sich dadurch unterscheiden, daß er mit sämtlichen kollektiven und individuellen, unmittelbaren und mittelbaren Erfahrungsgehaltenen sich konfrontiert. Das geschieht im Kopf und ist real.« Alexander Kluge: »Die schärfste Ideologie: daß die Realität sich auf ihren realistischen Charakter beruft«. In: *In Gefahr und größter Not bringt der Mittelweg den Tod: Texte zu Kino, Film, Politik*. Berlin 1999, p. 127–134, here p. 129.

**31** | Accordingly, Lewandowski states that one of the key elements that distinguishes Kluge's science fiction is precisely his aversion to the polished technical advancements of bigger productions: »Einmal stehen bei Kluge nicht die Fortschritte der Technik, der Apparatur, im Vordergrund, nicht Kulisse und Fassade in From eines stromlinienförmigen, farblich geschmackvoll gestalteten Raumschiffes, das den Gesetzen der Warenästhetik folgt.« Lewandowski: *Die Filme von Alexander Kluge* (ref. 5), p. 154.

**32** | Hansen: »Reinventing the Nickelodeon« (ref. 25), p. 191.

**33** | *Ibid.*, p. 191–192.

**34** | In his recent work on Kluge's conception of utopian cinema, or the utopia of cinema, Christopher Pavsek summarizes the situation similarly: »In the case of cinema [...] its principle established itself by the strength of its *failure*: for Kluge, the cinema provoked a social, utopian wish that could not be met by the contemporary circumstances that followed in its wake.« Christopher Pavsek: *The Utopia of Film: Cinema and its Futures in Godard, Kluge, and Tahimik*. New York 2013, p. 152.

Sozialisationsprozess zurückgedrängten Phantasie zu reagieren«.<sup>35</sup> In their analysis, science fiction operates on the fault lines of reality and fantasy. As they explain:

Alle eskapistischen Produktionsformen der Phantasie haben deshalb die Neigung, in einer gewissen Entfernung von der Realität umzukehren und sich gerade realen Bezügen zuzuwenden. Sie richten sich nur dann auf einer vom Produktionsprozess endgültig abgegrenzten Ebene ein, wenn eine Verwertungsindustrie sie dort organisiert und festhält.<sup>36</sup>

Science fiction, then, resides at a certain necessary distance from and proximity to the condition of its production at which point it turns to face up to the very thing it professes to escape, the reality of capitalism itself. Capitalism is both the reality out of which the science fictional world of *Die Ungläubige* is born as well as that which gives it its critical capacity.

For Kluge, outer space in general and science fiction in particular are dominated by the institutions of capital or what he calls the »Verwertungsindustrie«. In the preface to the republished edition of *Öffentlichkeit und Erfahrung* from 2001, Kluge opens the text with a picture of outer space depicting a large satellite, numerous planets and stars, and a spaceship. The caption reads: »Weit draußen. Die größte Öffentlichkeit, die es gibt, ist der Kosmos, Outer Space: Weltöffentlichkeit. Überschließendes Rüstungskapital, das auf Erden den Fortschritt hemmt, kann dorthin exportiert werden« (see figure 4).<sup>37</sup>

Outer space is thus a realm of excess(ive) capital, the space into which it indefinitely and incessantly expands outside of its terrestrial boundaries. At the same time, the outer space of capital and its earthly reality are the same things that organize and ground the fantasy of science fiction, keeping it from spinning out of control and losing any bearing on reality. Thus, while Lewandowski, in line with Friedrich and Nagl, asserts that Kluge's science fiction differs from its affirmative counterparts that rely on a confirmation of the status quo (morally, technologically, and economically), it is by virtue of the inherent conformism associated with the genre that Kluge's science fiction is able to perform a critique. In this way *Die Ungläubige*, as a work of science fiction, both differs from and engages in dialogue with *Die Artisten*. »Die Schwierigkeiten der Kunstproduktion im Kapitalismus«, Lewandowski remarks about *Die Artisten*, »liegen aber nicht nur in der finanziellen Abhängigkeit des Künstlers, das wäre zu einfach gesehen, sondern auch in Momenten der Kunst selbst«.<sup>38</sup> That is, the latent contradictions and difficulties of artistic production under capitalism do not merely manifest themselves as financial impediments but materialize in the artwork itself. This is the case with *Die Ungläubige* as well. As a work of science fiction, it is haunted both by the failed possibilities of its early origins and by the later



Figure 4: Opening picture  
from *Öffentlichkeit und Erfahrung*

<sup>35</sup> | Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge: »Öffentlichkeit und Erfahrung: Zur Organisationsanalyse von bürgerlicher und proletarischer Öffentlichkeit«. In: *Der unterschätzte Mensch. Gemeinsame Philosophie in zwei Bänden*. Vol. 1. Frankfurt/M. 2001, p. 333–674, here p. 466, footnote 11.

<sup>36</sup> | *Ibid.*, p. 381.

<sup>37</sup> | *Ibid.*, p. 329.

<sup>38</sup> | Lewandowski: *Die Filme von Alexander Kluge* (ref. 5), p. 120.

developments of science fiction as a complacent and conformist genre. In contrast to *Die Artisten*, however, *Die Ungläubige* uses science fiction as a product and object of capitalism, through which its structures are rendered visible. Kluge's science fiction is a staging ground for an immanent critique of capitalism that sets its sights beyond the obstacles to artistic production by mining a genre that itself is a site of contradiction and contestation, of possibility and failure.<sup>39</sup>

## 2. The Outer and Inner Spaces of *Die Ungläubige*

The critical force of science fiction, which rests on a dialectical understanding and appreciation of its formal and theoretical mechanisms that perform an immanent critique of the structures of capital, is reflected as well in the story of *Die Ungläubige*. *Die Ungläubige* opens with a snapshot of outer space in the twenty-first century. The numerous stars, from Alpha Centauri and Sirius to Epsilon Eridani, are listed in detail, reduced to coordinates for intergalactic trade routes.<sup>40</sup> Further populating the outer space of Kluge's science fiction are roving space frigates that guard these routes and other planets from attack. Due to the amount of capital invested in their construction, they are piloted by »hohe[n] Beamte[n]« tasked with reporting possible losses and additional expenditures (p. 64). The planets in *Die Ungläubige* are also little more than extraterrestrial spaces of capital. The planet Tauta Eridani is the base of the intergalactic justice system which is fully under the control of the unnamed »große[n] Gesellschaften« (p. 65). Outer space in Kluge's work is not a realm populated by alien races, robots, and the like. It closely mirrors the spaces of capital on Earth. Interstellar free trade, imperial warships, and entire legalistic planets form the backdrop of this world and constitute the excess capital that now roams outer space.

Kluge's outer space is also a realm of revolution. Initially the revolution is restricted to the planet Nänie, which is located in the system 61 Cygni, and part of the intergalactic trade route listed at the outset. The planet is currently in the throes of a »Bauernunruhe« (p. 68). The farmers' uprising centers on two competing groups, the Beccouds and the Thronisten. The Beccouds fear that the Thronisten, who have occupied the planet, will be unable to quash the revolt. Failure to do so would lead to further social upheaval, and the Thronisten would likely aim to take control of the planet and acquiesce to the farmers' demands. As the leader of the Beccouds Strehls-Jubel states:

Wenn wir diesen Kampf verlieren [...], so überlassen wir das Feld den unfähigen, allerdings massenhaften Thronisten oder Legalisten. Sie werden die Aufstände nicht unterdrücken, Änderungen werden getroffen, Umwälzungen. Das ist für uns nicht vollziehbar. (p. 68)

In short, the Beccouds want to prevent any possibility of a prolonged and potentially successful revolution. Were the matter to remain in the hands of the Thronisten, the uprising would succeed in bringing about a series of reforms on the planet. The prospects for a successful revolt, however, reside in the underlying paradoxical logic of the system of capital. »Einige Theoretiker«, the narrator states, »gaben damals Aufständen noch eine

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**39** | As Darko Suvin notes, one of the main factors in the development of science fiction and its temporal and spatial abstractions was »the strong tendency toward temporal extrapolation inherent in life based on a capitalist economy, with its salaries, profits, and progressive ideals always expected in a future clock-time.« Darko Suvin: *The Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre*. New Haven/CT 1979, p. 73.

**40** | Cf. p. 63.

Chance, wenn ›die Verelendung absolut unerträglich und massenhaft wäre«. The situation on Nanie having reached such an unbearable state, the farmers' uprising could be successful, at least theoretically. The caveat to this reads as follows:

Praktisch finden aber Siege von Aufständischen nur dann statt, wenn alle Beteiligten eines Systems dem zustimmen oder es wenigstens dulden. Allein der Wille Strehls und seiner Beccouds [...] genügte, um den Aufstand zu einem negativen Ergebnis zu führen, auch dann, wenn die Thronisten ihn duldeten oder sogar begünstigten. Hätten die aufständischen Bauern auf Nanie das gewußt, hätten sie trotzdem angegriffen. Die Theoretiker sagen: ja, eben *weil* ihre Situation absolut unerträglich war. In diesem Sinne war das Geschehen also notwendig bzw. unabweisbar. (p. 69)

The revolt on the planet Nanie was doomed from the beginning. The reason behind this does not lie in any type of military superiority or strategic decisions but rather in a type of logic endemic to the functioning of capitalism, whereby capitalism produces its own dissent and is simultaneously able to absorb it into its system. The failed revolt on Nanie is deemed necessary insofar as the farmers refuse to operate within this framework and attempt to step out of it altogether. To be sure, the intolerable conditions on Nanie inevitably initiate a revolt, but the will and rationality of capital (albeit represented by the small minority of Strehl-Jubel's Beccouds) is enough to suppress it. A large scale uprising is, in this case, impossible unless it accepts the dictates under which it is created.

The possibility of a successful revolt residing in the self-same system against which it is aimed is mirrored on an interplanetary level, albeit negatively. In *Die Ungläubige* this is evident in the dual usage of the word system, both in the sense of a socioeconomic structure as well as in the sense of solar system. Nanie is one of thirty-six fictional planets in the system 61 Cygni, a real system of binary stars first discovered in 1792. As explained in *Die Ungläubige*:

Das System 61 Cygni besteht aus einem Stern des Typs K5 sowie einem weiteren Stern des Typs K7, die in einer Entfernung von 90 astronomischen Einheiten umeinander kreisen. [...] Zwischen den großen Sternen bildet sich (wie in einer Sanduhr) in Zeitabständen eine Materiebrücke. (p. 68)

During the farmers' uprising, this system effectively becomes the source of the revolt's downfall. Though the Thronisten are initially able to deal a substantial blow to the Beccouds, Strehls-Jubel turns his attention to the system within which the battle is transpiring:

Nach einem Gottesdienst von einstündiger Dauer ließ Strehls seine Restflotte in das Sonneninnere vorstoßen. Nahe der inneren, chemisch komplizierten Plasmazone, in der die Schiffe ohnehin zerstört wurden, sprengte er alles, was er noch hatte. Das brachte den Energiehaushalt dieser Sonne in einen chaotischen Zustand. Die Materiebrücke zu K7 bildete sich einseitig, von beiden Sternen erhob sich ein Plasmanebelring. Sechs Stunden später hatte der K5-Stern das Aussehen eines Gasballes in Größe des Durchmessers der äußersten Planetenbahn. Einige Thronistenschiffe versuchten noch zu entkommen. Das war in diesem System aber nicht mehr möglich. (p. 69)

Strehls-Jubel and the Beccouds are, in the end, able to use the system against itself. They create an explosion from the inside that generates an all-encompassing gas ball, from which their enemies can not escape. This strategy was, to be sure, available to the Thronisten as well who successfully destroyed some of the planets around the star K5 where the Beccouds intended to regroup, but they dared not go any further.<sup>41</sup> It is at this juncture that Strehls-Jubel enacts his strategy to make the system that the Thronisten were

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<sup>41</sup> | Cf. p. 68.

defending ultimately the cause of their defeat and to thereby seal the fate of the revolt. The objects of capitalist expansion both hinder and/or facilitate revolution.

The fictional world of *Die Ungläubige* is grounded by many similar scientific asides, similar to the description of 61 Cygni, that explain elements of astrophysics, including planetary and stellar movements. In this way, the material of Kluge's science fiction is based in both the world of capital and science. Often the latter informs the decisions of the former such that the moons of Saturn and Neptune, for example, become sites of possible exploration, habitation, and exploitation.<sup>42</sup> As with the system of capitalism that houses its excesses in outer space, the objects here (planets, stars, moons, etc.) become the sites of capital. It is not just that one system (capitalism) expands into another (solar). The two are mimetically related such that the functioning of the one system becomes indistinguishable from the other.

This systematic mimicry is due to a process of cognitive estrangement enacted both by the science fiction text itself as well as the objects that it explores. First coined by Darko Suvin in his seminal study on the genre, the term »cognitive estrangement« denotes a dialectic of the known and the unknown, the familiar and the strange.<sup>43</sup> Following Suvin, Seo-Young Chu amends this definition slightly asserting that science fiction is a »representational technology« that »generate[s] mimetic accounts of cognitively estranging referents« or that »render[s] cognitively estranging referents available for representation«.<sup>44</sup> In *Die Ungläubige* the objects in outer space represent capitalism at work, even as they are grounded in scientific validity and then again estranged in a fictional world where they can, for instance, be manipulated and inhabited. In the case of the revolt on Nanie, the objects in the solar system 61 Cygni demonstrate the ways in which an entire system (capitalism) can either produce and quell resistance, or how the system can be turned against itself, thus generating critique from within. The formal and theoretical underpinnings of science fiction self-reflexively impose themselves on its content. The outer space of *Die Ungläubige* takes on the qualities of capitalism on an objective level.<sup>45</sup> Thus, even when divorced from formal considerations – a standpoint one must take into account with an unproduced film like *Die Ungläubige* – the moment of critique, as Chu asserts in his analysis of the genre, occurs at the site of »the object or phenomenon that the SF [science fiction; K.F.] text seeks accurately to represent«.<sup>46</sup> The objects of

**42** | Cf. p. 78.

**43** | Suvin: *The Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* (ref. 39), p. 6. This is in following with Carl Freedman's analysis of Suvin's term from his work *Critical Theory and Science Fiction*. As he states: »Science fiction is determined by the *dialectic* between estrangement and cognition. The first term refers to the creation of an alternative fictional world that, by refusing to take out mundane environment for granted, implicitly or explicitly performs an estranging critical interrogation of the latter. But the *critical* character of the interrogation is guaranteed by the operation of cognition, which enables the science fictional text to account rationally for its imagined world and for the connections as well as the disconnections of the latter to our own empirical world.« Carl Freedman: *Critical Theory and Science Fiction*. Middletown/CT 2000, p. 16.

**44** | Seo-Young Chu: *Do Metaphors Dream of Literal Sleep? A Science-Fictional Theory of Representation*. Cambridge/MA 2010, p. 73.

**45** | Mark Bould argues, for example, that »SF [Science fiction; K.F.] world-building is typically distinguished from other fictional world-building, whether fantastic or not, by the manner in which it offers, however unintentionally, a *snapshot of the structures of capital*« [italics added; K.F.]. Mark Bould: »Introduction: Rough Guide to a Lonely Planet, From Nemo to Neo«. In: Mark Bould and China Méville (eds.): *Red Planets: Marxism and Science Fiction*. Middletown/CT 2009, p. 1–28, here p. 4

**46** | Chu: *Do Metaphors Dream of Literal Sleep?* (ref. 44), p. 5. While Chu to some extent discounts the »formal apparatus« of science fiction, he nevertheless concedes that science fiction »involves

extraterrestrial capital in outer space, including science fiction itself as a product of capitalism, are the very things that make critique possible.

Kluge's work, however, does not concern itself solely with the objects of capital or science fiction. *Die Ungläubige* also investigates the subjective, personal effects of capitalism that are connected with life in the cosmos. Outer space, as this work makes clear, is not a place accommodating to human beings: »Nimmt der Mensch sich selbst als Maßstab, gibt es im Sonnensystem nur zu heiße oder zu kalte Ziele« (p. 77). The varying extremes in outer space pose biological problems for humans, issues that are again scientifically explained by the percentage of sunlight the nearest planets receive for instance. They create psychological issues as well.<sup>47</sup> The astronomical distances in outer space make space travel itself a frighteningly lonely endeavor: »Nach 420 Tagen Raumfahrt in relativ engen Kapseln folgten 12 Wochen Wartezeit in Isolierbunkern. Diese öde Wartezeit ist nicht auszuhalten« (p. 79). This is the unforgiving world in which the protagonist of the story, the space pilot Mascha Mendes, finds herself. Mendes is first introduced during the revolt on Nänie as a well-trained sharp shooter. As she targets and kills two armed farmers the commentary reads: »Was ich eigentlich tun und werden wollte. Ich möchte so gern etwas lernen. Wie ich abgerichtet wurde. Ich möchte so gern vergessen« (p. 70). Mendes is not only dissatisfied with her current position as a soldier fighting against the farmer revolts, but she attributes this moreover to a problem with learning and upbringing, in short the internalization of the dictates of the outer space of capital. Her desired rebellion is thus simultaneously a revolt against her role in economic and military imperialism as well as the system that stunts her subjective desires and wishes.<sup>48</sup>

Mendes's role as the story's eponymous »Ungläubige« positions her as the rebellious spirit enveloped in a system of intergalactic capitalist domination. Although she rises to the rank commander of a group of special troops, she is nevertheless viewed as unreliable by those in the upper echelons:

Mascha Mendes gilt als unzuverlässig. [...] Trotzdem kann auf ihre Mitarbeit nicht verzichtet werden. Die Zahl der Astronauten, die unter den extremen Bedingungen der kalten Planeten, der äußeren Planeten, insbesondere Saturn, arbeitsfähig bleiben, ist begrenzt. Die Nachschulung braucht Zeit. Später einmal wird man auf sie verzichten können. (p. 77)

At the moment she is an irreplaceable, functioning, and »arbeitsfähig[er]« part of the system. The hope remains that the biological and psychological demands of outer space that

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greater similitude than dissimilitude between referent and representational text«. *Ibid.*

**47** | Cf. p. 77.

**48** | The emphasis on learning in Kluge's work carries through from his first literary text *Lebensläufe* (1962), – which includes the story *Anita G.*, the subject of his first full-length film *Abschied von Gestern* (1966) – to his science-fiction story *Lernprozesse mit tödlichem Ausgang* (1973). For Anita in *Abschied von Gestern* the situation is quite similar to Mendes's. Anita states, »I really want to learn, but it's impossible to learn not to learn«. As Richard Langston notes about this paradoxical formulation: »Anita's problem is ultimately a Kantian one. Entirely independent and sovereign in her thinking, she announces that the human capacity for learning can never be acquired from another person. Yet, the imposed acquisition of this capacity is precisely Anita's conundrum.« In contrast to Habermas's analysis of the film, which poses Anita's problem as solely a systemic one, Langston writes: »Negt and Kluge would certainly add that the dilemma is not merely institutional in nature. Anita must be held accountable *not*, as Habermas might suggest, for failing to call into question the validity claims of legal norms, but rather for failing to think consistently by and for herself and others.« As with Anita, then, Mendes's desire to learn and her failure to do so must be understood as originating both from the system as well as the individual. Richard Langston: »Toward an Ethics of Fantasy: The Kantian Dialogues of Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge«. In: *The Germanic Review* 85 (2010), p. 271–293, here p. 281–283.

challenge one's ability to work under these conditions can be corrected through a process of re-schooling. In this way, the objective characteristics of outer space together with the barriers they erect to successful human integration (planets and stars, but also temperatures, distances, and sunlight) become subjective concerns for the successful functioning of interstellar capital.<sup>49</sup> Eventually a new type of astronaut can be created whose internal processes (biological and psychological) correspond to the demands of outer space, in essence making them into an object of the system capable of surviving and working in these extreme conditions. Knowledge and learning are thus of central importance to Kluge's science fictional world in two ways. For one, they are the very foundation of this system itself and, second, they are potential forms of rebellion. It is against this type of subjective reprogramming that Mendes' desires are again emphasized: »Mascha Mendes möchte lachen, so lachen, daß sich ein See um ihre Füße bildet, jemanden lieben, eine große Bibliothek besitzen. Etwas lernen« (p. 80–82). Mendes longs not only to delve into books, but also into sensuousness and subjectivity, laughing and loving; in short, she refuses to become an object of the system, reified in the service of systematic and systemic expansion.

This type of subjective control is echoed as well in the sexual politics of outer space. As with the other extraterrestrial spaces of capital (the planets and stars that have become sites of conquest and exploitation), Mendes is also seen as little more than a passive sexual object. In one scene, a fellow soldier enters her room and begins to caress her before pulling out his genitals.<sup>50</sup> When she explains that she's seen such things before and they are of no interest to her, the man proclaims that he is, however, particularly endowed. Mendes then »macht eine einladende Geste und tritt ihn [sic] dann gegen das Schienbein, boxt ihm in die Hoden« (p. 72). In another instance, Mendes invites a comrade to her room though quickly tires of his company »da er aus moralischen Gründen nur die Rückenlage der Frau akzeptierte« (p. 91). While she could get used to this if the corresponding »Kompensation« was to be had, she laments that it is never quite fulfilling (p. 91). Thus, as with her longing for a new sensuous learning process, her desired sexual liberation and satisfaction is always already restricted and controlled by the male-dominated outer space of capital. The system that intrudes on and stymies revolts on interplanetary bodies similarly thwarts possible sexual and subjective rebellions.

The outer space of Kluge's science fiction is a realm of both affirmation and contestation. On the one hand, capitalism continues its imperialistic expansion into the far reaches of space, an expansion into both objective and subjective sites. On the other hand, each of these is also a site of revolt. For Mendes, alternatives to the present system are to be found in new, subjectively oriented learning processes and sexual expression. At the same time *Die Ungläubige* demonstrates the ways in which these alternative possibilities are also the product of the system against which they attempt to rebel. At the end of the story the following question is posed as to why people are not simply made »nach Lochstreifencode«, that is, with the existing technology it is not only possible but potentially advantageous to create pre-programmed, identical individuals conducive to the needs of capitalism. The question elicits the following answer: »Wir sind da zurückhaltend, immer nur ein Mensch einer bestimmten Art ist für die Gesellschaft sinnvoll. Zwei würden einander aufheben. Das zerstört die Dialektik« (p. 92). Quite aware of the benefits it

**49** | This echoes Marx's evaluation in *The Grundrisse* where he states: »Thus the appropriation of labor by capital confronts the worker in a coarsely sensuous form.« Karl Marx: »The Grundrisse«. In: Robert C. Tucker (ed.): *The Marx-Engels Reader*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York 1978, p. 283.

**50** | Cf. p. 71.

produces, the system of interstellar capital is not interested in collapsing its own dialect. Rebellious tendencies such as those demonstrated by Mendes are useful insofar as they can be easily manipulated. This is exemplified in the case of sexual subversion: »Aus Effektivitätsgründen müssen wir von manchen Tabus absehen. Aber nur unter Ausschluß der Öffentlichkeit. Lösung der Sexualprobleme der Sternenfahrt« (p. 91). In this instance, sexual taboos are allowed and even tolerated so long as they do not occur in public. The obstacles to successful and productive space travel thus demand a liberalization of its subjective constraints. Here too the dialectic of capitalism's systems of control is put on display: The solution to its objective problems reside in a duplicitous subjective freedom that actually preserves that against which it supposedly revolts.<sup>51</sup> Thus, the sexual freedom that Mendes desires is also the potential source of her lack of freedom and continued participation in the advancement of intergalactic capital.

The impediments cast by the outer spaces of capital and that intrude on the inner space of the protagonist appear to offer no easy alternatives. Decades after the uprising on Nanie, outer space is transformed into a battle ground in which the so-called revolutionary planets lash out against the continual »Vordringen[] zu den äußeren Planeten« (p. 80). Mendes is again enlisted in this endeavor that lasts two years, at which point all-out revolution gives way to reform: »Es wird versprochen, daß in Zukunft alles ganz anders wird. Im Bereich des Möglichen liegt eine Auswanderung in das System Betaigoize« (p. 85). The possibility of a mass exodus to the Betelgeuse system arouses a utopian desire to begin a new society in a distant galaxy. In a scene designated in the text as imaginary, a planet is discovered that becomes home to the newly allied revolutionary classes as well as the remnants of capitalism »[e]ben weil in dieser Aufbauphase alle auf einander angewiesen sind« (p. 85). In this imaginary scenario, Mendes implores the representative of the former revolutionaries to break ties with their new allies knowing full well that it is only a matter of time before the latter institute their system on this world as well. When the text flashes back to the real (announced accordingly as »wieder real«) the union between the two adversaries has already come to pass.<sup>52</sup> In *Die Ungläubige* the imaginary, utopian alternatives to capitalism are themselves governed by reality. On the one hand, this demonstrates the extent to which such flights from reality are the products of the system from which they seek to escape. On the other hand, this dialectic is a testament to Negt and Kluge's assertion that such fantasies, even though regulated, produced, and organized by capitalism, elicit a moment of critique that exposes the limits inherent to both. Here the utopian possibility of a world beyond the system of capital confronts its own indebtedness to the system, but at the same time this curtailed desire is the very thing that makes a critique of capital possible. In a world in which capitalism is able to appropriate any resistance to its hegemony, the only recourse comes through a mode of immanent critique that refuses to reconcile the contradictions that it displays.

As with *Die Artisten*, *Die Ungläubige* is characterized by a deferment rather than a foreclosure of revolutionary and utopian possibilities. While a happy end is nowhere to be had (no positing of a utopian world beyond the constraints of capitalism) the act of critique endemic to science fiction is championed as a critical tool for probing utopian alternatives. For Kluge, the locus of utopia is to be found in the »unverbildete[n]

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<sup>51</sup> | Herbert Marcuse best explains this process: »The relaxation of taboos alleviates the sense of guilt and binds the ‚free‘ individuals to the institutionalized fathers.« Herbert Marcuse: *An Essay on Liberation*. Boston 1969, p. 9.

<sup>52</sup> | Cf. p. 86.

Phantasie«.<sup>53</sup> Tapping into this dimension is itself no utopian endeavor but rather »eine Sache der Arbeit«.<sup>54</sup> Science fiction is, then, a way of doing this type of work based on investigating and uncovering the obstacles to the development of fantasy, in particular, and utopia, in general. This early piece of science fiction is somewhat of an anomaly during the student movement as well as within Kluge's early works, yet it is indicative of what would later become pressing aesthetic and theoretical concerns for Kluge – most notably his enduring critique of the structures of capitalism and the development of an aesthetic suited to both capturing and subverting their effects.<sup>55</sup> Although his later sci-fi works are viewed largely as a response to the events of sixty-eight, *Die Ungläubige* attests to the impact of the latter on the former. This work poses a serious and in many ways heretical problem to the demands of the students – namely, the barrier to revolution seems to be the inability to face up to the notion of failure as a necessary precondition of utopia. In the final lines of *Die Ungläubige* the issue is summarized thusly: »Mascha Mendes: Ir-gend etwas war mit ihrer Bildung schiefgegangen. Sie glaubte an überhaupt nichts. Man konnte sie nicht veranlassen, irgend einen Wunsch fallen zu lassen« (p. 92). Here, we are faced with the intertwining of utopia and failure at work throughout Kluge's films and texts. As Christopher Pavsek adroitly notes: »The central paradox of Kluge's conception of utopia lies in this generative notion of failure [...]: only in failure, only in the thwarted realization of a social project, be it of the cinema or of emancipation more broadly can the hint of a future utopia be found.«<sup>56</sup>

The work that science fiction does is thus twofold: it organizes already existing fantasies, wishes, and desires and in doing so highlights the point where they face up to the very thing that produced them along with their inherent and necessary failures. The critical power of science fiction lies in this self-reflexive and dialectical movement that is aware of its own preconditions and nevertheless interrogates them in order to see where they lead. This early work of science fiction was merely the beginning of Kluge's preoccupation with the genre. While many of its elements would later be recycled in his full-length films, it is imperative to understand the genesis of Kluge's science fiction and the events that influenced and momentarily derailed it. Far from shying away from the concerns of the day, Kluge's science fiction tackles them head on through a genre that became a crucial piece in his enduring critique of capitalism and the conditions of possibility of utopia.

**53** | Kluge: »Im Sternbild des Zwitters«. In: *In Gefahr und größter Not bringt der Mittelweg den Tod: Texte zu Kino, Film, Politik*. Berlin 1999, p. 141.

**54** | *Ibid.*

**55** | Many of these ideas still in germination at this point are key components of his theoretical work from *Öffentlichkeit und Erfahrung* (1972), to his writings on realism in *Gelegenheitsarbeit einer Sklavin. Zur realistischen Methode* (1975). The former deals principally with the barriers posed by capital to the development of an alternative public sphere and the latter outlines Kluge's theory of filmic realism developed largely in response to the effects of the bourgeois public sphere. As he states in *Die schärfste Ideologie*: »Das Motiv für Realismus ist nie Bestätigung der Wirklichkeit, sondern Protest.« To this extent his realism, often displaying complex and confusing narrative and technical strategies, works against the false simplicity imposed by the bourgeois public sphere: »Gegenständlichkeit der Situation setzt radikale Komplexität der Erzählweise voraus. Alle Ausdrucksformen der bürgerlichen Öffentlichkeit [...] zerschneiden aber gerade die Komplexität der Wahrnehmung, die eigentlich Grundform der Sinne ist.« Kluge: »Die schärfste Ideologie« (ref. 30), p. 128, 133. Kluge's early science fiction shows a close affinity both in form and function with these later, more mature writings and films.

**56** | Pavsek: *The Utopia of Film* (ref. 34), p. 152.

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