

Date: Fri, 28 May 2004 11:12:15 +0100
From: "Ivan Mansley" <ivanman dsl.pipex.com>

DIE ZWEITE HEIMAT: A NEW GENERATION

PART 4: ANSGAR'S DEATH, 1961-62

For the very first time since the beginning of this project I felt, whilst I was watching this episode, that I was missing things by being non-German. Certain things had to do with language. For instance, when Evelyne is remembering her day, she recounts with amusement the old lady's pronunciation of "swan" and reflects that there are country people in the city. It is, of course, easy to see Evelyne's empathy with all those whom she meets. She really has a transcendent personality. There is Hermann's concert based on a German riddle designed to provoke Clarissa. There are cultural associations around the Faschingsfest which are probably peculiarly German. All the time I felt as if I was battling through a kind of fog with nuances about German life and character passing me by. Did this mean the content and themes were less than universal? I wonder what other non-German viewers feel.

Ansgar dies in a tragic accident towards the end of the episode, but it has been foreshadowed all the way through. There is no attempt at suspense. We know from the very beginning that Ansgar's wonderful love affair with Evelyne is doomed. Ansgar himself is obsessed with death. One of his earliest childhood poems was about death, as his mother reveals. He bequeathes some of his surviving poetry to Hermann with the words, "You can set them to music when I'm dead." He falls to the ground pretending to be dead when Olga fires the unloaded Winchester rifle at him. In addition, Hermann, in his commentary, declares early on: "I see a friend who was to die young" and gives us the exact duration of his love affair as 7 months and 4 days; a time in which Evelyne and Ansgar were never apart.

Ansgar earns money as a tram conductor and he dies when one of his feet becomes trapped in the closing doors of the tram and he is dragged down the street with his head and body being banged and traumatised on the road with Evelyne running after but being unable to save him. Just before they had been talking of going to the Carnival party and Evelyne had talked of him as a glorious Greek youth garlanded with laurel. Indeed, we have the death of a seriously flawed hero, for Ansgar is riddled with self disgust and injects himself with drugs to cover up his loathing of the world. He is a young man who has run out of time.

I mentioned that Ansgar's foot is trapped in the door and the camera give us a close-up of his boot. Do you remember the scene in the previous episode in the garden, where Ansgar lay on the ground with a glass of wine balanced on his upturned foot. Evelyne drinks from the glass in a happier moment. There are numerous references to feet in this episode. Did you notice? Other than foreshadowing Ansgar's eventual death I do not know what significance they have. When Evelyne declares her love, while they are in bed in the library, she massages or plays with his right foot. After Evelyne's singing lesson the camera focuses on Ansgar's feet as he walks along the stone steps carrying his conductor's satchel. We do not see his upper body. Did you notice that Evelyne had been singing from Wagner's "Rhinegold". One of the lines was something like doom and disaster await. She did not know that this would apply to her. After Hermann's riddle concert Frau Moretti collapses in a chair, as her legs ache after wearing high heels. "Oh my feet!" she exclaims. On the evening of the students' party we see the arrival of Helga and her best friend, Dorli from Dulmen, walking through the heavy but magical snowfall. The camera focuses on Dorli's glamorous court shoes as she steps in an icy puddle. I have just had an idea! Are we meant to think of the weakness of an Achilles' heel. One of Ansgar's weaknesses is his desire to fool around; this is what kills him because he is not paying attention. Feet, shoes, heel, fatal weakness, tragedy! Go

figure, as they say these days!!

For the first hour of the episode I was interested but not terribly involved. I can place exactly where I became engaged by the complexity and depth of the emotions portrayed. It was when Hermann arrives at the Fuchsbau for the party, only to find Clarissa sitting outside waiting for him. She has not gone inside because she does not want to meet Helga, of whom she is bitterly jealous. From this point on the episode grows in strength and power. The love affair between Hermann and Clarissa runs alongside that of Evelyne and Ansgar and could not be more different. It is beset by all kinds of abandonments, withdrawals, jealousies, separation and coming together but it is no less deep. It is very, very troubled, however.

First, I have an apology to make. My memory had totally let me down. Hermann does receive Clarissa's vaguely addressed letter in which she declares she loves him but then she vanishes for 6 weeks and more. She returns home and we have all the business with Dr. Kirchmayer, "the mysterious man in the Mercedes" and the gift of the 18th century cello. This old man loves her and "suffocates" her, as she puts it. She is a deeply troubled soul. When she returns to Munich and meets Hermann, who is also now a very troubled young man, she pretends to be all light and cheerful. Hermann refuses to return her letter and accuses her: "You light fires everywhere and run away." Hermann is obsessed with her. She plays his cello concerto in Neuburg, Evelyne's home town [Why there?], and has won the music competition with it, whilst Hermann, the composer, gets virtually no attention at all. Could this happen today? I would have been bitter and angry also.

After his "Riddle" concert which was aimed at Clarissa, Hermann leaves and hands Clarissa a brown envelope which contains her letter and a piece of black material. I could not make out what this was. He takes it from a case. Is it a black scarf? Anyway it would seem to symbolize the death of their relationship. "I just wanted to return these", he says, as he thrusts the envelope at her. Then we have the scene between them outside the villa. It is beautifully done. Clarissa's confidence is fragile. Hermann reveals that he meant "love" when he talked of "friendship" in the snow at the time of Herr Edel's death. Hesitantly, Clarissa asks, "And now, is it allover?" and she is reduced to tears. "You have no idea", she says, and we can complete for her the words, "the depth of my love". One interpretation of her return home was to practise Hermann's cello concerto for 6 weeks so it would be perfect, as a homage to him. He does not see this, and Clarissa is in distress once more. I loved this scene. She is a vulnerable young woman. She tells Volker, "It's all over between the cello and me." She really means between Hermann and me.

The scenes between Ansgar and his parents, and between Evelyne and Ansgar's mother after his death, are bleak and utterly compelling. They are little masterpieces. As viewers we can see why Ansgar hates his parents so and yet we can sympathise with them a little. His mother pleads and wheedles; she calls him "pet" with every other breath. Ansgar is vehement and outspoken. "You stick like slime with your repulsive prayers". Ansgar's father is rigid and inflexible; he is a man of conviction. But like father, like son. Ansgar makes a mocking sign of the cross and declares, "I'm quitting your stage." In the second scene Evelyne returns to Ansgar's lodgings to return his few possessions and finds his mother there. The camera dwells on the dismal, dingy and spartan room. The grieving mother has upturned the room in search of her son's notebooks, even though in the earlier scene he had told her he had burnt them. She accuses Evelyne of being a thief and then has to discover a syringe. Evelyne tries to protect her by declaring that her son was not a drug addict but it does not really work. They part in acrimony; Evelyne is disgusted by the woman's mercenary feelings and her selfishness. When she cries "I want my Ansgar" Evelyne, that marvellous girl, is compelled to retort, "So do I, you stupid person." That such a beautiful romance should end with this bitterness and misunderstanding is ineffably sad and Reitz's direction and camera work reinforce this feeling of sadness and waste brilliantly.

I do have questions that I could not solve! Why does Fraulein Cerphal confide so intimately in Juan and tell him about Herr Gattinger's membership of the SS? Why does she want the painting carried downstairs to the party? Surely others might recognise the young Herr Gattinger, with whom she had once been in love. What did the cage of mechanical birds signify at the very beginning? Who was the fast asleep member of the audience at Hermann's comic concert? Was it Hartmut with the torch at Clarissa's concert? Who was S. Herman? There was a picture of an old Biblical looking figure of this name in the concert hall.

The breaking of the news of Ansgar's death is very well done. Dorli is in the middle of her stripping routine at the carnival party when Evelyne, almost unnoticed, makes her entry and pronounces the awful words, "Ansgar ist tod"!! She looks like an angel of death. All around her are masked and bizarre figures, now of nightmare. I was reminded of Edgar Allen Poe's short story, "Masque of the Red Death". Her grief is enormous but understated. She has one brief moment of utter anguish over Ansgar's leather jacket. I liked that. There was nothing too histrionic and overdone and over the top. In the final scene we see Hermann and Juan visiting Ansgar's grave in the cemetery. Did you notice the final shot taken from behind the crucifix, as if Christ is observing our two friends from high up, and, in the end, perhaps he is observing us all. I wonder if that was what Reitz was saying.

Ivan Mansley.

Date: Fri, 28 May 2004 23:08:34 +0200
From: Ralf Eigl <ralfeigl t-online.de>

Dear all,

I want to add a thought or two to Ivan's wonderful introduction, thank you so much for this, Ivan!

There are two things that impressed me above all in this episode: Firstly, of course, the wonderful portraying of Ansgar and Evelyne's relationship, which we all feel will end in tragedy. The signs are there all along the way, as Ivan so rightly observed.

What impressed me just as much was how Reitz describes the spiral of stubborn reactions and counter-reactions between Hermann and Clarissa. All the time we have a feeling that ONE sentence by the one or the other would be enough to break the ice and to bring the two of them together in full harmony. But this never happens. On the contrary: it is exactly the wrong sentences they say, the wrong words, the wrong gestures, the wrong reactions. This builds up enormous tension - to a point that definitely made me angry at those two young persons for saying exactly the wrong thing in the wrong place all the time.

We watch Clarissa return to Munich happy and with a joyful glint in her eyes when she sees Hermann. And we wait for a kiss, an embrace, a few kind words. And what happens? Hermann mentions her letter and she asks him to give it back to her! Why such a reaction? She loves him and asks her letter back, which he can only interpret as a withdrawal of her love, as a negation, as a 'no, I do not really want you any more'. And that is where the spiral starts. Hermann is hurt and when we see the two of them together in front of the Fuchsbau, his childish revenge is that he returns her letter and her underwear to her (Ivan, that is the black cloth you took for a scarf - she had taken off her underwear when the two embraced on the stairs to Clarissa's room in Munich and Hermann had taken it with him). How deeply this must hurt her... Somehow this spiral of wrong reaction and even wronger counter-reaction accompanies the two of them through the whole of DZH - one of several re-curring themes that build enormous tension and

make DZH such a masterpiece

I was wondering if everyone else was as astonished as I was at the very last scene of this episode, where the camera moves up higher and higher behind the cross. Ivan suggested this might mean that Christ observes Hermann and Juan, and maybe us all. Yes, I agree, but to me it made an even stronger impression, and 'determine' is rather the verb that comes to mind than only 'observe'. This short scene is quite intensive and strong - maybe a little frightening even?

One of the interesting question Ivan asked was: Why does Fräulein Cerphal trust Juan more than everyone else by telling him about Herr Gattinger's membership in the SS? This surprised me too. The only explanation that I can think of is that - as far as we can see - Juan never joined in the aggressive attitude towards Herr Gattinger that all the others showed all the time. Moreover he is not German, which may make him appear more like a neutral party in this matter. And we should not forget that Juan is the only one that shows genuine interest in Fräulein Cerphal's and her family's past, whereas, at least up to this point, all the others seem to more or less ignore her as a person and see her as no more than the owner of the Fuchsbau and as such a welcome host for the group.

Ralf Eigl

Date: Tue, 1 Jun 2004 09:39:10 +0200
From: "Maarten Landzaat" <gjjs xs4all.nl>

Hi all,

I'm preparing for my holiday to Andalucia for 4 weeks tomorrow so this is a short contribution.

Indeed Ivan, the feet are everywhere. If you know it beforehand, the number of feet-scenes is so high, it is almost funny. But if I don't know it, I wonder if I would have even noticed.

I noticed a parallel between Ansgar's death and the imminent demise of the coal(?)shop where Hermann is living. Deaths in a city, their gaps soon to be filled. Hermann being offered a soon-to-be-vacant room by Frau Cerphal is in the same league I guess.

I also noticed that again, as in the final Heimat-episode, we're not to enjoy the party. Death is always around then.

The final scene is of a big church. Hermann talks about the parallel with life in a village. Evelyne talks about village people in the city. Reitz is saying something about city and village life I guess.

I cannot answer your good questions, Ivan. Just a few guesses:

Maybe the birds have something to do with Schicksal, fate, Life beyond our control, God/Jesus steering our lives? Ansgar said he didn't believe in fate at all.

Maybe bringing the painting from the cellar downstairs is also in this category: the spirits of great artists steering the lives of the Fuchsbau-artists?

Bye,
I'll join you after June 26!

Maarten

Date: Tue, 1 Jun 2004 12:13:00 +0200
From: ReindeR Rustema <reinder@rustema.nl>

At 9:39 +0200 1/06/04, Maarten Landzaat wrote:
> I'll join you after June 26!

Actually, this summer we all take a break according to the schedule.

http://reinder.rustema.nl/heimat/viewing_schedule.html

On the 25th we watch part 6 (Kennedy's Children), on the 9th of July we watch part 7 (Christmas Wolves). Then we take a summer break and return the 3rd of September with part 8 (The Wedding).

But I expect people to use the holidays to catch up with the viewing and the discussion...

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ReindeR

Date: Tue, 01 Jun 2004 23:52:19 +0200
From: Bart van den Dobbelsteen <bart.vandendobbelsteen.net>

Ivan Mansley wrote:

> After his "Riddle" concert which was aimed at Clarissa, Hermann leaves and
> hands Clarissa a brown envelope which contains her letter and a piece of
> black material. I could not make out what this was. He takes it from a case.
> Is it a black scarf? Anyway it would seem to symbolize the death of their
> relationship. "I just wanted to return these", he says, as he thrusts the
> envelope at her."

They are her underpants, which Hermann, excitedly takes off her (and she lets him) in the scene in part 3, in the stairwell in Clarissa's apartment building, when Herman wants to post his hastily written letter, and Clarissa returns home, but before things get 'out of hand' the old man comes down to go to work and chases Hermann out of the building. Interestingly, in that scene and here they are black; when earlier in part 3 we see Clarissa lose her balance from the bicycle where she is fooling around with Juan, we get to see she is wearing white pants ... One of the very few continuity-mistakes in DZH.

Bart

Date: Fri, 4 Jun 2004 12:29:11 -0500
From: "Susan Biedron" <susan.jsbiedron.com>

A few comments on Part 4 and my question about the music:

Ivan wrote:

> The scenes between Ansgar and his parents, and between Evelyne and
> Ansgar's mother after his death, are bleak and utterly compelling.

Did you notice that when Ansgar's father is shown praying in his son's room, part of the

window frame behind him appears like a cross?

Ivan here are my interpretations to some of your questions -

- > I do have questions that I could not solve! Why does Fraulein Cerphal
- > confide so intimately in Juan and tell him about Herr Gattinger's membership
- > of the SS?

Juan is very charming and does act much more like an older person than the other students. He states that he feels older - perhaps because he grew up in South America, he seems to be from an earlier era. I would guess that he reminds Fraulein Cerphal of the young men of her youth.

- > Why does she want the painting carried downstairs to the party?

I believe she wants to show the students that her house used to be the gathering place for famous artists and writers. She wants to fit in and have their respect.

- > What did the cage of mechanical birds signify at the very beginning?

I have a bizarre idea on this. There is a very old song, I believe from the 1890's - "She's Only a Bird in a Gilded Cage". Could this be a reference to Elisabeth Cerphal? Whether this song is known in Europe, I have no idea.

She's only a bird in a gilded cage,
A beautiful sight to see.
You would think she was happy
And free from care.
She's not, though she seems to be.
It's sad when you think of her wasted life,
For Youth cannot mate with Age.
And her beauty was sold
For an old man's gold.
She's a bird in a gilded cage

I have some music related questions: Is Clarissa really playing the cello? It looks so real. If not, did Reitz hire a cello player and dub in the sound? Where did Reitz get all the musicians - did he hire actual music students for the film?

Susan

Date: Sat, 05 Jun 2004 00:19:50 +0200
From: Bart van den Dobbelsesteen <bart@vandendobbelsesteen.net>

Susan Biedron wrote:

- > I have some music related questions: Is Clarissa really playing the cello?
- > It looks so real. If not, did Reitz hire a cello player and dub in the
- > sound? Where did Reitz get all the musicians - did he hire actual music
- > students for the film?
- >
- > Susan

She plays for real. Reitz has indeed looked (for a long time!) to find actors who actually had a musicians background, or musicians who could act. E.g. Salome Kammer

(Clarissa) was a fully qualified celloplayer when she took up acting (www.salomekammer.de), and she performs as a singer now (very much how she develops during DZH, singing Pierrot Lunaire and all kinds of contemporary music etc.), Armin Fuchs (Volker) was a pianoteacher I think, Henry Arnold really studied piano and orchestra direction (www.henryarnold.de), I know Daniel Smith (Juan) studied percussion at the Royal Conservatory of Music in The Hague when my wife was a student there, Gisela Müller (Evelyne) is a singer, etc.

Bart

Date: Sat, 5 Jun 2004 08:28:02 +0200
From: Th.Hoenemann t-online.de (Thomas Hönemann)

Besides: Salome Kammer is Edgar Reitz's wife! And Henry Arnold is directing e. g. the Schwäbisch Hall Festspiele (see www.henryarnold.de). Armin Fuchs is a well known concert pianist.

Indeed: All of the actors are really playing their instruments or singing themselves. No fake, no double at all. This is really a great great quality.

Have a nice weekend,
Thomas

Date: Sat, 5 Jun 2004 22:58:50 +0100
From: "Ivan Mansley" <ivanman@dsl.pipex.com>

Susan wrote:

- > I have some music related questions: Is Clarissa really playing the cello?
- > It looks so real. If not, did Reitz hire a cello player and dub in the sound?
- > Where did Reitz get all the musicians - did he hire actual music students for the film?

Other very knowledgeable people have replied. I knew I had once read a very interesting account by Reitz himself about the problems of casting the film. I went to the archives of old postings on Reinder's website on Friday night. I got so interested and side-tracked that I did not find the following until this morning. It is a translation of an extract from "Drehort Heimat" translated, I think, by Alexander Blom. I take the liberty of copying and pasting here:-

One cannot play musicians.

You decided not to work with playback in any scene and to take up live all the scenes with music in them. That had far-reaching consequences for the casting: You needed actors that are musicians at the same time.

Brecht said: you cannot play the way in which work goes forward. An actor that only acts as if he can play piano or violin will never find the correct expression. The concentration and the effort that are involved in making music cannot be replaced with mimic and playback. Pay attention some time to the play of expressions on the face of a pianist who has to play a difficult passage on the piano. An actor always goes along with the music: wherever the music builds up to, there he falls apart. When the music resounds, he tears his eyes open, and when it becomes intimate, he shuts them. The musician's facial traits on the other hand derail where control is difficult. When the celliste has a change of position that requires her hearing for the intonation to be clean, that produces a mimish over-expression. An actor who has an education in music in addition ceases in

this moment to be an actor and is a musician. The instrument demands his full concentration. At the same time stage performances were required that went to the very edge of what was possible. Salome Kammer had to play a truly difficult passage on the cello --- as Clarissa. Or, on Hermann's wedding-day, Volker speaks with her and at the same time plays Ravel's 'Gaspard de la Nuit,' no easy piece itself. To carry a dialogue on top of a musical performance, that demands an intensity that lies far beyond all possibilities of control. The demands made on a role like that of Clarissa or Hermann is so great that amateur actors --- in this case, that means: musicians that are not educated actors as well --- could not fill it. On the other hand, the actor in the role of Hermann had to be able to play Beethoven's 'Sturmsonate' with a certain virtuosity. So well, that even in the seduction scene in the Dülmen attic he doesn't break tempo ... In the Beethoven sonata there are slowing moments, the arpeggios in the Adagio, where one lets the tones echo away --- very well suited to taking the shirt off the pianist while he is playing ... That works almost as if it was composed for it. And before that Chopin, that sure, salonesque elegance, music created for seduction, or for making a shining impression. It is probably still relatively easy to find an actor who can also play the piano. It must be quite a bit more difficult, on the other hand, to find an actress with real cello skills. Salome Kammer was the first casting for which I made up my mind. We searched systematically and asked at all the acting schools, theaters and agencies. To that date there was in the whole West German Republic only a single actress who had studied cello; she had just been engaged at the state theater in Heidelberg. The search for a casting for 'Hermann' was an adventure.

Susan also wrote:

> Did you notice that when Ansgar's father is shown praying in his son's room,
> part of the window frame behind him appears like a cross?

No, I didn't notice this. I must go back and have a look at this again. Ansgar's father was portrayed as a Jehovah's Witness, wasn't he? Ansgar makes a mocking sign of the cross as he rejects his parents and all that they stand for. We have the final image in the cemetery, as Juan and Hermann leave, which I commented on and Ralf took up.

I should have welcomed Ralf when he posted on Part 3. I found your last post very illuminating and thought-provoking, Ralf. [Susan already knows I find her analyses valuable and stimulating.] Ralf wrote:

> I was wondering if everyone else was as astonished as I was at the very
> last scene of this episode, where the camera moves up higher and higher
> behind the cross. Ivan suggested this might mean that Christ observes
> Hermann and Juan, and maybe us all. Yes, I agree, but to me it made an
> even stronger impression, and 'determine' is rather the verb that comes to
> mind than only 'observe'. This short scene is quite intensive and strong -
> maybe a little frightening even?>

I wonder if you would care to expand on this, especially your use of the word "determine". I do not fully understand. Do you mean "control" by that? Did you mean that Hermann and Juan's actions are controlled by a higher being? Does this fit in with Edgar Reitz's philosophy? As they walk out of the cemetery I noticed that their figures become smaller and smaller. Are we puny, unimportant beings wrapped up in our own self-importance as set against a higher deity? Is Reitz suggesting this? I genuinely don't know!! Also I wondered if this might link in with the shot of the mechanical birds in their cage at the beginning. Like the birds, perhaps, we humans go through our robotic motions trapped forever in our cages which we do not even perceive. Certain things pertaining to Ansgar's death seem to suggest this. Susan wrote:

> I have a bizarre idea on this. There is a very old song, I believe from the
> 1890's - "She's Only a Bird in a Gilded Cage". Could this be a reference

> to Elisabeth Cerphal?

I found this very interesting and it certainly seems to fit many aspects of Elisabeth Cerphal's position and character. I would have thought, however, if this were the case the image would have been in colour so we could have seen the gilded cage!!

I thoroughly agree with both Ralf and Susan about Frau Cerphal's trust in Juan. Susan, for instance, wrote:

> I believe she wants to show the students that her house used to be the
> gathering place for famous artists and writers. She wants to fit in and have
> their respect.

> Juan is very charming and does act much more like an older person than the
> other students. He states that he feels older - perhaps because he grew up
> in South America, he seems to be from an earlier era. I would guess that he
> reminds Fraulein Cerphal of the young men of her youth.

Ralf wrote:

> One of the interesting question Ivan asked was: Why does Fräulein Cerphal
> trust Juan more than everyone else by telling him about Herr Gattinger's
> membership in the SS? This surprised me too. The only explanation that I
> can think of is that - as far as we can see - Juan never joined in the aggressive
> attitude towards Herr Gattinger that all the others showed all the time.
> Moreover he is not German, which may make him appear more like a
> neutral party in this matter. And we should not forget that Juan is the only one
> that shows genuine interest in Fräulein Cerphal's and her family's past,
> whereas, at least up to this point, all the others seem to more or less ignore
> her as a person and see her as no more than the owner of the Fuchsbau and
> as such a welcome host for the group.

However, it was very risky, wasn't it? Juan could easily have talked to some of the others even if he is half in love with Mrs. Cerphal. Her past is dubious as Reitz makes clear. There is the ousting of Uncle Goldbaum [anti-Jewish Nazi sentiments?] and questions of the ownership of the villa could be revealed. If the picture is taken downstairs, as it is, then others eg. Ansgar could recognise the young Herr Gattinger, just as Juan did. That could be very awkward!!

As regards Clarissa's underwear I can only say "Mea culpa!" I saw them coming down but I did not realise Hermann had taken the garment, as a trophy perhaps, or simply to hide them from the prying eyes of the elderly apartment dweller who escorts him from the premises. I noticed nothing in his hand. What it is to be young!!

Ivan Mansley.

Date: Sat, 5 Jun 2004 17:45:09 -0500
From: "Susan Biedron" <susan jsbiedron.com>

Bart and Thomas,

Thank you for the information about Salome Kammer and Henry Arnold. They have very interesting websites - both are multi-talented actors with many credentials. The people in this list are so knowledgeable, it seems all one has to do is ask!

I did not know Salome was Reitz's wife! I guess Reitz really lived the part of Hermann :)

With Reitz requiring the actors to be musicians, it is amazing that DZH was produced.

Susan

Date: Sun, 6 Jun 2004 13:34:05 +0200
From: Ralf Eigl <ralfeigl t-online.de>

Ivan asked what I meant when I said that the cemetery scene tells us that there is a power that 'determines' everything. His question was:

> I wonder if you would care to expand on this, especially your use of the word
> "determine". I do not fully understand. Do you mean "control" by that?

Yes, control is the word I should have used. When I wrote those thoughts down, it seemed to me that with the scene on the cemetery, Reitz wanted to tell us that there is something out there that controls everything that we do. But the more I think about this, the more I believe that I was wrong. Maybe the real message is not so much that there is a higher being out there that controls everything we do but simply that in the end we all share the same fate that no-one can escape: death. Whatever we do, it all ends on a cemetery (just like the episode does). Just like the birds at the beginning of the episode, we are in a cage, and that cage is life and the fact that it does not last forever. To a certain, but limited extent we are able to move around. But there's that cage which we will never be able to leave (a REAL bird could, at least once someone leaves the door open, but not so a mechanical one). So there we have them again, those re-curring themes: The very first scene opens a circle that is closed with the very last scene - we have an intro and we have an extro - wonderfully done!

Ivan also wrote

> As they (Hermann and Juan) walk out of the cemetery I noticed that their figures
> become smaller and smaller. Are we puny, unimportant beings wrapped up in
> our own self-importance as set against a higher deity? Is Reitz suggesting this?

For the reasons mentioned above, my answer is No. Would Reitz want to bring the fear of God into our hearts? No, I believe he wants to make us aware that we all share the same inescapable fate, that we all have to die - and maybe in the end the message is not as dark as it seems at first, but rather one that tells us to live our lives more consciously, to enjoy and to make the best out of it. But I admit I am probably over-interpreting here...

By the way, the song "She's Only a Bird in a Gilded Cage", is that a German song? - We have a saying here in Germany 'Wie ein Vogel in einem goldenen Käfig', I didn't know there was a song too.

Ivan - you say it is risky that Fräulein Cerphal trusts Juan. Well, when we see Juan and her sitting there, talking to each other calmly, there is such an air of confidence, trust - almost some kind of intimacy about the scene that it seems almost natural that she does not tell him any lies.....

Or: isn't it possible that Fräulein Cerphal tells him just as sort of a revenge as all the others behave so badly towards Herr Gattinger?

Ralf

Date: Thu, 10 Jun 2004 20:44:31 +0100
From: "Ivan Mansley" <ivanman dsl.pipex.com>

This time we had 10 posts directly concerned with Part 4 from 6 different contributors. Maarten, I hope you enjoy your holidays and look forward to future posts from you when you get back. I always find your posts most enlightening as I'm sure do others.

I would like to raise a couple of points in Part 4, all found in the cemetery scene at the end. As the leaves fall in suitable melancholy mood, Hermann remarks, as he looks at the small wooden cross marking Ansgar's grave, "We have our first death in Munich." This is not really true, is it? We have Herr Edel's death [he lies frozen in the snow] at the end of Part 2, which affects the young people deeply. I noted also that Juan talks of suicide and claims that he would like to die like Hemingway. "End when I choose."

I remember asking before [in the discussion about the final part of Heimat and its depiction of an after-life] if anyone knew anything about Edgar Reitz's actual religious beliefs, if any. I don't think anyone replied. Thinking about the camera shot from behind and above the figure of the crucified Christ as Juan and Hermann leave the cemetery, I started to think of Ansgar as a kind of crucified Christ. I thought of the vehement way Christ ejected the money lenders from the temple and Ansgar's outspoken vehemence. It does not really fit as Ansgar hardly dies for any beliefs, does he? Except maybe for love? I also thought of how Christ died to redeem the sins of mankind in orthodox belief and to think where that might lead.

Anyway, on to Part 5 tomorrow!

Ivan Mansley.