

**AK** No, it's our time. We have the license. We give some time to Der Spiegel; it's a co-operation. Their part is broadcasting conventional news. However, Der Spiegel will publish anything uncensored that brings in money, and this is something very good. It has nothing to do with art or moral good, but—what is that animal called that cleans the desert? A hyena. It's very important to have such things, and I think Der Spiegel is the best hyena in Western Germany. Everybody is afraid of Der Spiegel. The extreme right wing makes problems for us all the time, you see, and with Der Spiegel on our side, it's not necessary for us to explain why we need liberty and independence, why we need a presence in the mass media. The right wing claims art already has independence.

**GI** But how did you manage this?

**AK** We have five lawyers who are also filmmakers. If you know the law as well as filmmaking, it's a big advantage, because the other lawyers don't know filmmaking. It wasn't possible to do this only with the power of independent filmmakers, even though independent filmmakers in Germany are the majority. It wouldn't have been enough because the new powers in mass media are consortiums, big concerns, much bigger than the film industry. So we've made this alliance with all book publishers in Germany, and all theaters and opera houses. Opera, theater, music, film, and books, these are the elite media, and together they have such a powerful reputation that they can resist the press influence and the media influence on both sides. And we have Der Spiegel, the most aggressive part of the press. We hope later to have the International Herald Tribune, and we hope to get an American partner, for instance, the Washington Post. And we'd love to have somebody as a partner here in New York.

**GI** I liked the program that told the story of various operas, each about three minutes long. And the analysis that showed that all these operas are based on a European male's desire for an exotic female, and how they always end in the death of the woman, in the fifth act—and then the man has a story to tell.

**AK** All this 19th-century business. The trouble is, these stories still affect us. We have to get rid of them, but you can't get rid of them by cutting them out. You have to first explain them.

**GI** At the end of THE BLIND DIRECTOR you show a ridiculous situation, where the director of a film continues directing even though he's gone blind. You include an interview with the producer who says, "He doesn't need to see it, he's got the film in his fingertips..." It's a satire of production methods, but there's also a feeling that what the producer says is true.

**AK** It is true. I don't make my films with my eyes. I could have a friend who tells me what the picture is like. If I trust this friend, I don't need my eyes. But I need my ears, I need a bit of other things. We have a game in Germany where you ask people if they'd rather lose their eyes or their ears; everyone answers differently. I believe in invisible pictures. If you have two pictures cut correctly, that makes a third picture sometimes. Dreyer does this. In VAMPYR the vampire doesn't appear in a single frame, but all the shots together give you the impression of him. I like these invisible pictures. The world is full of them.

**GI** Parts of VAMPYR were ruined in the laboratory, and Dreyer fell in love with the spoiled footage.

**AK** Yes.

**GI** In THE POWER OF EMOTION, the longest sequence in the film is a story about two couples, both petty criminals—it's hard to describe, but one couple leaves someone

they've killed in the other couple's apartment, but he's not really dead, and the second couple take him to the woods and nurse him back to life by reading to him when he's unconscious—

**AK** They deconstruct the crime.

**GI** What were you thinking about?

**AK** It's a metaphor, again, a sequence of metaphors. The film really ends 20 minutes earlier, but I wanted to make a metaphor with some narration in it. This tells the story of two possibilities which I think exist—a little like Hogarth, "Industry" and "Idleness." The good and the bad. The first couple steal the victim's diamonds and flee to Barcelona. Here they end up in this narrow cell of a hotel room—it's the same as family life, everyone and their emotions locked up in a cell.

**GI** The narrator says about the woman, "Now she has exactly what she wants."

**AK** Exactly. That's the majority of human beings, sitting in front of their television sets; they live in just such a cell. A free-lance cell. And the others have the chance either to be punished in a real prison, like in Yesterday Girl, or to reconstruct the time before the crime. I mean this philosophically, if you like. At the end of Yesterday Girl there's a sentence by Dostoevsky: "Everybody is guilty of everything, but if everybody knew that, we would have paradise on earth." This means we must be demolition artists against crime. I can't reconstruct the time before Hitler. But if we together could demolish Hitler in time—and we'd need more ideas than the 20th of July movement—if we could remake 1933 without the fascist result, this would obviously be in our interest. We can't bring Jews in Auschwitz back to life, that's true. But that isn't the only cruelty that was done in the '30s. For a lot of things, we can reconstruct something and absorb the crime.

**GI** You obviously feel it's important to have some kind of place in the television industry.

**AK** You only need one percent of alternative television, of calmness within the television set. If you have it, people will accept that this TV world isn't the only one. One percent is enough to disturb the principle of programming. You have a little hit of non-program. This means seeing something far away, television in the literal sense—a telescope. If you have both telescope and microscope within the television, you only need very little units, very abridged, compressed opera, compressed cinema, compressed novels. It's enough to disturb news, to disturb artificiality.

**GI** What are your impressions of American television? Have you had an opportunity to look at it?

**AK** It's my job! For our first 14 days here, we lived on Long Island and could only get ABC, the landscape channel. One night after another, they had the Dodgers against the Mets, and then one Saturday they had this thin, chilling rain, the game was stopped. They had to keep the program going until 8:30 so people would keep watching ABC. There was no program, so they reported on the specific kind of rain that was falling. It was extremely good. They said, "It's as if 10 thousand icebergs in the North Pole were spitting at New York." It's a good metaphor, very subjective.

**GI** A couple of years ago. New York was expecting this ferocious, destructive hurricane, and the local channels devoted 24 hours to covering the hurricane. But it never happened. They put all these reporters on Long Island and New Jersey, and kept cutting back and forth to people standing in the landscape, saying, "Well, there's nothing much out here. There's rain but no wind," and they'd zoom in on a mud puddle.

**AK** Institutional anarchy is one of the most interesting non-programs that exists. I love it. New York has a double heaven: the real heaven, and the media heaven. I'm astonished that in this cable range you get a lot of Swedish and other foreign films with subtitles (in Germany everything's dubbed), you get pornography (which we don't have on European TV), and all kinds of information. The only problem is, you don't have a grammar. There's no context. You don't know if they're speaking in the perfect, imperfect, present, or past tense; and there's no calmness in it. But it's extremely open. A little bit Babylonian. And it will become more Babylonian in the '90s, I think. I wrote a small novel on this special kind of rain—it was so thin and very cold. It didn't make thick drops, and so all the blankets they put down to protect the astroturf couldn't shelter it; the water got in everywhere. There was a hidden philosophy of water there.

**GI** You have a discursive chapter about snow in your novel about Stalingrad.

**AK** We should have one about love, too. Eskimos have 120 different expressions for snow, because it's life-threatening for them. In Germany we have only one word for love; Greeks have 20.

**GI** We don't have too many in English, either.

**AK** No, no, just the one.

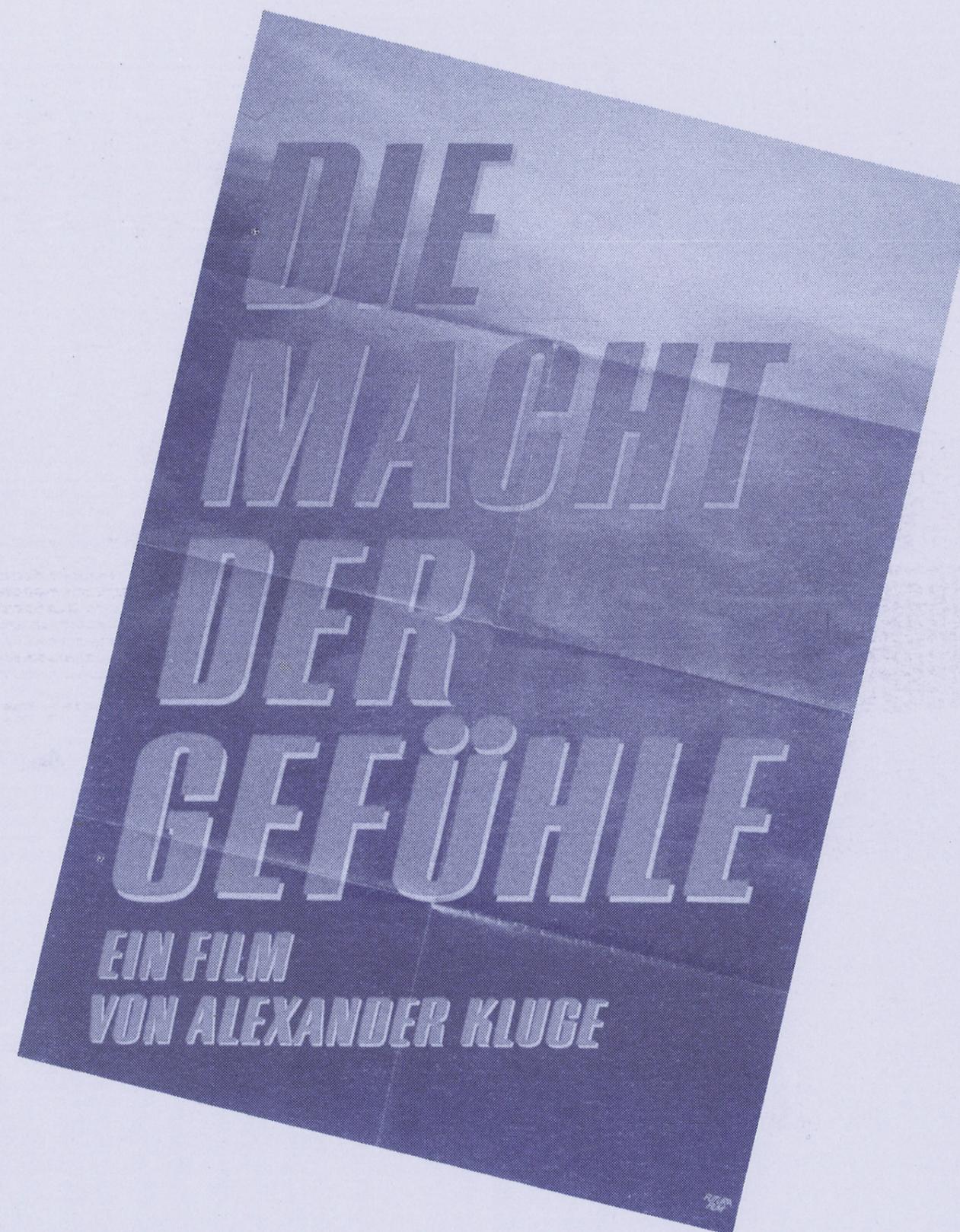
**GI** We have qualifiers: "romantic love," "sexual love." Everything's completely fragmented in love.

**AK** That makes it even more general.

**GI** One more question. You've often said that cinema exists inside our heads, that the repertoire of mental images and feelings that cinema creates corresponds to the mode of consciousness of human beings over the past several thousand years. How is that different than music?

**AK** Music is an elaborated art. It is more than we've carried within us for thousands of years. It's more to do with the four billion years we've existed on earth—with our ancestors, who were very small. Music has to do with sounds within the belly, sounds within the ancient oceans, when the oceans were 37 degrees celsius, like our blood. Some people believe the cosmos is making music, and so on. Music is older and more differentiated. Film is very robust. It's only 90 years old. It corresponds more with anthropology. Music is made in a very aristocratic way, never by majorities. Cinema, from the beginning, was made as a counter-effect to what our senses do all the time. It's an imitation of what our brains do. Music is not an imitation of what our ears do.

TERRASSEN



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DIE MACHT DER GEFÜHLE · 1983 · 115 min · Color/B&W · Mono

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**Gary Indiana** In many of your films you show found footage from very early movies, archive photographs and drawings with the frame cropped in various ways, a Brechtian effect: the films are like free-ranging meditations rather than linear narratives. The viewer notices the cutting. What do you see as the advantages of these techniques?

**Alexander Kluge** I show the cutting because I don't believe pictures have to do with one another, whether they're contrasting or similar. They don't carry the information, the information is carried by the cut, the splice. Therefore, the cut should be visible. This is an ideal of early Eisenstein; it's an ideal in literature. In music also, you always reveal your effects. The early forms of cinema are better: before 1907, and before the soundtrack. The problem isn't with it, between the molecules. You can do the same thing with reality, and with wishes, and necessities. There isn't much space in our constituted, institutional public sphere to express documentary knowledge. But in reality, half of reality isn't consistent, and you can change it, you can observe it, and it doesn't lie.

**GI** Epic narrative is porous. In other words, you can cut into it at any point?

**AK** Yes. Nowadays, we live in something like the Babylonian Empire. One text doesn't understand the other. People can understand each other but the texts they speak are, to some extent, autonomous. If I speak to you, and a policeman hears this text, it's no longer the text you and I speak together. Texts have their own life, and images too. As I have to deal with the situation of the '80s, not of 1907 if we have this Babylonian confusion that one language doesn't understand the other, it's also necessary to bring more context into narration. For example, it isn't useful to tell the story of a complete industry. Like the German chemical industry—there's been a huge 12 hour film made on this subject, but in it you see the family life and the love stories of the bosses and their daughters and so on. All of that isn't the reality of the German chemical industry in the '30s. It was a very cruel reality for some people. To be more realistic, you need more context.

**GI** In your short stories and films, you mix fiction with nonfiction. You show the public history and real people along with made-up characters. Your technique emphasizes the idea that history is as much a fictional construction as a novel; the model of reality in newspapers and television is a fiction. And there is very little space where other versions of reality can appear.

**AK** This has to do with something good and something bad. Human beings are not interested in reality. They can't be; it's the human essence. They have wishes. These wishes are strictly opposed to any ugly form of reality. They prefer to lie than to become divorced from their wishes. These are wishes from childhood, very early wishes, and to some extent unknown ones. Not psychologically unknown or unconscious, but wishes that progressively encounter social barriers. I am not capable of dominating myself completely; this is a subjective social problem. Because I have to accept this, I have to accept that it's necessary for human beings to be ideological, to make falsifications while observing. Therefore, human beings have no documentary interest initially. On the other hand, as they have been hurt, they want to know the reason why they've been hurt and to take revenge against reality. They acquire an interest in reality that way. It sounds more complicated than it is. We both know all about it: as a human being, I'm concerned, from childhood on, that everything continues and everything is satisfying. I will never die; my parents won't die; if I wish my parents away, they'll go away; if I wish them here, they'll be here. It's like in the opera *Solaris*. The astronaut has a woman with him, but he can send her into the cosmos whenever he likes, and she comes back when

he wants to have her. Human beings forget everything and can give up everything except this principle of misunderstanding reality, the subjective. And that's something good and something bad; I can't have the good of it without accepting the bad of it. If this is real, then the media industry is realistic in telling fiction, and the construction of reality founded on this basis can only lie. This is one of the reasons why history isn't realistic: it's not documentary, it's not genuine, and it's not necessary.

**GI** One of the reasons?

**AK** Another reason is this. If you study reality, you notice there are a lot of exits—as you said, pores. This table, as every physicist knows, is not consistent. If you're tiny enough, you can go straight through it, between the molecules. You can do the same thing with reality, and with wishes, and necessities. There isn't much space in our constituted, institutional public sphere to express documentary knowledge. But in reality, half of reality isn't consistent, and you can change it, you can observe it, and it doesn't lie.

**GI** I didn't realize you thought it was half.

**AK** Well, you don't know exactly, so you say half-and-half like a good merchant does. The philosopher Leibniz had a theory of the so-called "separatrix," the "between" two things which are contradictions. There's always a line. On one side this is blue, and this is red. In reality, red has embassies in the blue, and blue has embassies in the red. And Leibniz says 50 percent of this line, this structure "between," is order, and 50 percent is anarchy. This is a law. It's true, you can ask any computer.

**GI** Is this the same as the line of chaos, where the computer makes a line, and as soon as the structure goes below the line—

**AK** Exactly. It's 50-50 because what is undecidable always means 50-50.

**GI** In *THE BLIND DIRECTOR*, you show a family gathered around a new kind of hearth: not the television set, but a computer. The mother's nursing the baby; the father's manipulating the keyboard. We soon see that this computer, rather like an infant, needs looking after around the clock. This scene suggests two things. One, that in this construction of the family, inside the private space, there's always a site of fascination on which dreams and wishes are projected.

**AK** You could work with it; you could earn money with it...

**GI** And the other suggestion is that the technical organization of this space takes more and more time and attention from the individual.

**AK** That's right. We see the family in front of this computer, which is their working place at home. In the future, in Europe, it will be a very typical kind of working place. Classical industry will dissolve a little bit, and we'll have home industry like we had in the 18th century and early 19th century. The computer is like a hearth. You had something like that in all houses for years. Now the computer is something like that. Someone is sitting around it and earning money with it. In former times in Europe—you don't know it in America because capitalism was already established when America was founded—capitalism was founded by people who brought machines into the houses of the peasants. There, the wool would be woven. Now, the family at home starts with capitalism. Therefore there's this incredible input of emotion which can be carried by capitalism. Marx never knew that, you see. And that's why it's so difficult to find alternatives for this kind of capitalism, because it has this subjective input. The new world of the next century will be very indirect;

it will totally occupy the mind. No one will have time to reflect, to have experiences.

**GI** Mass media and cinema also take away the time people need to reflect.

**AK** Some kill time, but some produce it. A book can do it very easily, it can transport time from the 12th century to the 19th or 20th: it's something very utopian and very interesting. Music also conserves time to some extent; polyphonic music expresses time. Let's say there are two parties: those who kill time, and those who produce time, and I belong to the second party. You can stop any drama in the world through slow-motion, by adding reflection to the historical process. If you did this before 1914, you could stop World War I. And then you wouldn't have World War II and so on. You know Mr. Giese? He's an extremely good modern composer and conductor. He was the director of the Frankfurt Opera. For his last performance there he conducted *GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG*. How do you call that here?

**GI** *GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG*.

**AK** Valhalla has to burn at the end. They spent all one afternoon trying to get the stage to burn. It was fascinating. We photographed everything, and made a book-film on fire-making effects. Three months later, this exact stage for this opera burned down completely. We brought fire experts together and asked them all about opera burnings. They could explain fire, that in reality, it's nothing but oxygen, a certain amount of temperature, and some material. The temperature is only a name for moving material, the velocity of material, hot or cold. If it's cold, it doesn't move much, and if it's hot, the electrons move very fast. If you slow it down, no fire can burn. If you take away the oxygen, no fire can burn.

**GI** It's not just an artistic idea, it's reality. You can repeat everything in history in a slow-motion alternative. This is what Walter Benjamin means, to repeat everything that's happened, without producing the same result. The time-producing aspect of film is hidden in pre-Hollywood American films before 1907: in illustrated songs, vaudeville, tableaux cinema—which is extremely interesting, a cinema that only treats subjects the audience already knows like Uncle Tom, Caesar's death, and so on. It's rather epic, concentrating on one motion, one moment of a complete story. Robinson Crusoe on the day he met Friday, his first slave. Not the whole story, but just this moment. Everyone could add the rest of the story. It's very modern.

**AK** The tableaux film existed for half a year, let's say, when commercial film producers thought they could rationalize it, make it better for the audience by filling out the story, and then it died. The next type, the nickelodeon, also died. Then came the normal commercial cinema. But hidden in primitive diversity of pre-commercial cinema (but it was also paid for, of course), there are possibilities that could be repeated with the means of the '80s, and with much more time. This would be the next step of New German Cinema, the idea of myself and my friends. To repeat everything with more patience, better means, more time. It could be the same with music. Modern music must not be divided from the audience. Cinema, in alliance with the best parts of classical music, the best parts of literature, could invent new forms.

**GI** Your films show people destroyed or half-destroyed by the social system: Anita returns to prison at the end of *YESTERDAY GIRL*; Leni abandons her dream of the "reform circus" to take a job in *TV in ARTISTS UNDER THE BIG TOP*.

**AK** Which I've ended up doing.

**GI** Ferdinand in *STRONGMAN FERDINAND* remains true to his dream, but his dream is a psychotic control fantasy, and it destroys him anyway. You seem more optimistic than your films. Do you see them changing?

**AK** I'm afraid not. I should say, "No, thank God," and, "I'm afraid not." As post-Einsteinians, we believe in relativity, and our situation will always be half-and-half. If something is oppressed in me or you or the audience, the same amount exists that can't be oppressed. If you observe the relativity between subjective standpoint and objectivity, you will always find this half-and-half, as long as societies aren't liberated, and I don't see any possibility of that for the moment. All contexts are blocked.

**GI** A critique of the division of labor and the social construction of sexuality can be read through all your work. Do you think the reinvention of sexuality is an a priori condition for what you'd consider significant social change?

**AK** I'm not sure you could say "reinvention," because sexuality you can't invent. But all basic problems are hidden there. What is a Nazi in love? What is a fascist in love? What is a social democrat in love? What does it mean to be radical in sexual relations? This is more interesting than politics. I believe these questions have emigrated into personal relations. You can't speak of family politics, of sexual politics clearly—it's difficult to combine sexual life with the real movements which are a little bit monadic within everybody. I'm convinced, though, that if you could build an alliance or a coalition between the different feelings you have, then you would have a political change outside. But you couldn't produce it by political means.

**GI** You spoke somewhere of the kind of public sphere we've created with mass media as being like a fence, and that there's always some space under the fence we can slip through to bring our own ideas in, however obliquely and indirectly—they're like the spores of the future, somehow.

**AK** Yes. Stanley Kubrick does it with a high budget, and most people do it with a low budget.

**GI** I'm thinking of Enzensberger, where he says that the consciousness industry needs our originality to continue, because otherwise it would become redundant. But it's always using us rather than the other way around.

**AK** Yes, and Enzensberger, who says that the information of television is zero, the function zero, the result zero, and the movement zero—he made a good program for us on 10 to 11. He showed attacks—not boxing matches but people who can't stand each other, shouting at each other, and people who don't dare shout at each other—a real Roman circus, with lots of spiritual bloodshed. And where there's not enough bloodshed, there are two commentators telling the audience, "Just look at them, they're cowards!" It's more television than television dares to be. So Enzensberger's not a believer in his own theory, in this case.

**GI** What's your impression of New York?

**AK** I think New York is the second half of Europe. This is Europe like we had in the '20s. Extreme tolerance on the one hand, and on the other, Babylon. But it's a coexistence of contrasts, which we don't have anymore in Europe.

**GI** You're making a real intervention in the mass media in Germany with the 10 to 11 program. It comes on every night over the satellite network, and you do all kinds of things, the programs are made by the best filmmakers and writers in the country—and you share the network time with Der Spiegel?