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Sex, Drugs, and Neocolonial Leisure: An Intermedial History and Analysis of Dieter Schidor's *Kalt in Kolumbien* (1985)

Juan Camilo Velásquez

Abstract: *This article provides an intermedial history and analysis of Dieter Schidor's 1985 film* Kalt in Kolumbien *to trace a small but fascinating history of interaction between German and Colombian film cultures. Examining archival documents, interviews, and the fictionalised accounts of the film's production in Gary Indiana's* Gone Tomorrow*, the article revisits the "golden age" of the Cartagena International Film Festival, Schidor's trip, and the film's production process. The essay argues that Schidor brings the icy austerity, queer desires, and cruel humour of the German New Wave to the Colombian city to create a film that is comically brutal towards locals and foreigners alike, as it attempts to highlight the inequalities that allowed its director to eat, drink, and do drugs "like a king" in Cartagena. The essay suggests that* Kalt in Kolumbien *is a document of the complicated union between Germany and America as a cultural and intellectual centres and Latin America as a peripheral, romanticised source of inspiration.*

A handsome man with dark features and gleaming eyes steps into the frame. He poses for the camera, which scans his muscular body while he looks at someone off-screen. Maria, an Afro-Colombian housemaid, smiles benevolently back at him with a knowing eye. Faint birdsong echoes in the background of these close-up shots before the film cuts to a title: *Kalt in Kolumbien*, followed by opening credits that feature a barrage of German names with a couple of Spanish ones sprinkled throughout. In its first few seconds, Dieter Schidor's film *Kalt in Kolumbien* (*Cold in Colombia*, 1985) reveals the racial, economic, national, and aesthetic tensions that sustain it. In the film, a German drug lord wreaks havoc in the Colombian city of Cartagena as he strikes deals with shady politicians and mingles with artists, ambassadors, and other members of the leisure class. In real life, Dieter Schidor, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, and other German and American artists wreaked (much smaller) havoc while partying in the city during their trips to the Cartagena Film Festival or Festival Internacional de Cine de Cartagena de Indias (FICCI). The story in *Kalt in Kolumbien* and the history of its production are both steeped in the cold decadence of Germans vacationing in the Caribbean region of Colombia.

In the 1980s, two figures of the New German Cinema were inspired by Cartagena. Rainer Werner Fassbinder travelled to the Cartagena International Film Festival, where, according to Colombian filmmaker Luis Ospina, he was taken by the city's architecture, which inspired his last film, *Querelle* (1982). Shortly after the director passed away, his friend and producer Dieter Schidor travelled to the festival to promote *Querelle*, a visit that, in turn, inspired him to make his first feature *Kalt in Kolumbien*. This essay focuses on Schidor's film to trace a small but fascinating history of interaction between German and Colombian film cultures. Examining archival documents, interviews, and the fictionalised accounts of the film's production in Gary Indiana's

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Gone Tomorrow (2018), the article revisits the "golden age" of the Cartagena International Film Festival, Schidor's trip, and the film's production process. In reviewing this history, questions will be raised about the implications of inviting filmmakers from outside the continent to tell stories about Latin America. Why were these Germans fascinated by Cartagena? What vision of the Colombian Caribbean region did Schidor present in his film? What political and aesthetic challenges arise from German and first-world filmmakers coming to Colombia?

Stored away in an archive, *Kalt in Kolumbien* remained inaccessible to scholars and audiences for decades, except for extratextual documents like reviews, interviews, and Indiana's text. Thus, responding to these singular circumstances, this article approaches these questions through an intermedial methodology that combines film, literature, and archival materials. To understand the discursive field in which *Kalt in Kolumbien* stands today, it is crucial to first embark on a speculative but historically informed examination of these complementary materials. After that, the article engages in a formal and narrative analysis of *Kalt in Kolumbien*, which has not received much scholarly attention due to its elusiveness. I will argue that Schidor brings the icy austerity, queer desires, and cruel humour of the German New Wave to the Colombian city to create a film that is comically brutal towards locals and foreigners alike, as it attempts to highlight the social and racial inequalities that allowed its director to eat, drink, and do drugs with aristocratic indulgence in Cartagena. Reading the film and its production through the lens of Marxist film scholarship and an understanding of the world economy as marked by an empowered Western Core and a dependent non-Western periphery, I suggest that *Kalt in Kolumbien* is a document of the complicated alliance between Germany and America as a cultural and intellectual centres, and Latin America as a peripheral, romanticised source of inspiration.[1]

Hot in Cartagena: The History of *Kalt in Kolumbien's* Production

The story of Dieter Schidor's *Kalt in Kolumbien* began with a visit to Cartagena, Colombia, during the mid-1980s. Even though Cartagena is a small city relative to the Colombian capital of Bogotá, it was (and still is) a crucial location for the country's film culture and industry thanks to its popular festival, the Cartagena International Film Festival, which is famous for bringing film legends to the country, including Rita Hayworth, Jack Nicholson, Joan Didion, Bernardo Bertolucci, and Fassbinder throughout its history. The festival was founded in 1959 by Cartagena-born businessman Victor Nieto, who hailed from a family of professional cinephiles: his father programmed a movie theatre in Bogotá and his grandfather worked for the Acevedo Brothers, known for pioneering the distribution of newsreels in the country (Stein 80). Nieto went into the family business, and by the 1950s, he was managing a chain of twelve theatres and had even built his own, the Miramar (Stein 80). In 1957, he began developing a film festival in Cartagena to foster a local film culture that would in turn transform the city in the image of internationally renowned vacation destinations like Mar del Plata in Argentina and Punta del Este in Uruguay ("Lánguido espectáculo"). The idea appealed to local businesspeople and government officials who wanted to expand the city's tourist appeal beyond its colonial walls and historic city centre (which was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1980) (Nogueira 49). So, in 1960, the Cartagena International Film Festival held its first edition, becoming the first dedicated film festival in Latin America.

It was not long before the FICCI became the most important film event in Colombia. Nieto, who directed the festival for forty-eight years, was the main architect of its artistic DNA. During its early years, the FICCI focused on national and regional programming, but as the years passed, Nieto sought to attract more international visitors and productions, and by the 1970s, the festival had built a reputation for its internationally oriented curatorial vision. In 1976, Gary Horlick reviewed the festival for *Variety*, naming it "the biggest and most durable of such ingatherings in Latin America" (76). However, Horlick's review also suggests that for many international guests, the FICCI was seen more as a vacation than a film festival because Cartagena was not of top importance as a market since the continent's independent exhibitors already had agents in New York: "A certain renown does attach to the festival parties (in the backfront Hotel Caribe and the Naval Club)", he wrote, "a role to which Cartagena, a charming 16th-century Spanish colonial port, lends itself gracefully" (76). Despite its impressive artistic reputation, the Cartagena International Film Festival has always been seen through a touristic lens.

Acclaimed Colombian filmmaker Luis Ospina, who was still an emerging director, attended the festival during the 1970s, where he met figures like Katy Jurado, Paul Morrisey, and Fassbinder, who visited Cartagena in 1978 with stars of *Faustrecht der Freiheit* (*Fox and His Friends*, 1975), Harry Baer and Peter Chatel (Ospina 29). As Ospina relates, Fassbinder spent most of the week secluded in his room working on scripts; he expressed himself in monosyllabic terms, never took off his leather jacket, and never stopped smoking (29). Yet despite his reclusion and idiosyncratic reserved demeanour, Ospina also writes that Fassbinder and his friends "tried the 'local delicacies' and gave everyone around them coke non-stop, which they would carry in an enormous, plastic bag from the Almacenes Tía supermarket" (29).[2] Fassbinder's trip to Cartagena was punctuated by extremes: he was either working and ignoring his surroundings or partying and taking Dionysian advantage of the fruits, both sexual and narcotic, that the city had to offer. Ospina even claims that Fassbinder was inspired by the old city's colonial buildings and walls when designing the uncannily similar, albeit more phallic, sets for *Querelle*.

But not everyone was happy with the FICCI's international bent. Colombian director Lisandro Duque criticised what he described as "a parade of stars", claiming that "the festival always had imprinted on itself a stamp of international entertainment with 'vedettes' who bring their small dogs and exhibit their thongs in Bocagrande. Something like an underdeveloped caricature of Cannes" ("Lánguido espectáculo"). Duque's comments point to the fact that the FICCI was run by the local bourgeoisie for the global bourgeoisie. For Nieto, the festival was not merely about artistic expression (although one should never deny the festival's contributions on that front), it was also a tool to foment tourism in Cartagena. The history of the festival has always been attached to a peculiar class of patrons with strong currencies who can spend generously in developing countries like Colombia. Duque's comments highlight a Colombian culture of imitation and exaltation of all things American and European, a sort of internalised cultural imperialism in which Colombian artistic endeavours do not develop their own point of view because they are trying to catch up with Cannes.

Dieter Schidor first visited the Cartagena film festival amid this identity crisis and negotiation between national and international curatorial priorities. In 1981, the national government's cinematic development company, FOCINE (Compañía de Fomento Cinematográfico), took over the festival's artistic control. As *Semana* magazine notes, FOCINE

wanted to focus on showcasing Latin American and Colombian cinema, which were often overshadowed by the fanfare and spectacle of international stars and celebrities ("Lánguido espectáculo"). FOCINE's vision for the FICCI was national: to create a festival that would support and showcase local productions, especially as it wanted to fund more film production in the country. However, this would only last a couple of years. Following complaints from the FICCI's employees and the local community, FOCINE returned to its original role of providing funding, promotional support, and assistance to the festival, while Nieto and his son, Victor Nieto Jr., retook the reins of its artistic vision. Historical records show conflicting accounts of the first edition of the festival after Nieto's return. According to *Semana*, there were no Colombian features in the festival because the three filmmakers selected were notified at the last minute ("Lánguido espectáculo"), but Christopher Dann from *Hollywood Reporter* wrote that Colombian film *El escarabajo* (*The Bicycle Racer*, 1983), directed by Lisandro Duque, was met with enthusiastic public response and that Nieto was optimistic about Colombian cinema thanks to the proliferation of independent producers and the financial aid of FOCINE (Dann). One year later, *Variety* covered the 1984 version of the festival, writing: "Ending some years of feuding, the organizers of the Cartagena Intl. Film Festival and the Colombia Film Board have reached an accord that will expand the 24th annual festival, set for Friday 15–June 22, to include more American independent films among its new offerings" ("Pictures"). For some, the 1980s were the "golden age" of the FICCI with its international guests and global prominence, but for some Colombian directors, that did not matter because they never had access to the gold.

In 1982, Schidor visited the festival to promote Fassbinder's *Querelle*, which he had produced. Of Schidor's visit, Luis Ospina writes: "[He] fell in love with the city and its joyous boys, who took him to Pie de la Popa to introduce him to the infernal secrets of 'basuco' and 'Busicaro'" (29).[3] Schidor's introduction to Cartagena was debaucherous, indulgent, and inspiring. Festival organiser Victor Nieto Jr. provided him with the best Colombian hospitality that money could buy, showing him corners of the country that many locals could only dream of accessing. He met international icons, local elites, and national creatives like Ospina and Colombian artist Karen Lamassonne, both of whom were part of the Colombian film movement of the "Cali Group". In an interview, Lamassonne said she met Schidor at a dinner at Sam Green's mansion, a wealthy American who sold antiques. "All this is cited in *Kalt in Kolumbien*; his house was used as the mansion in the film", she says. "Dieter and I had dinner there one night; Sam invited us, with Luis, to a sit-down dinner for eight with Garcia Marquez also. That's when we decided to make a film in Cartagena, which ended up being *Kalt in Kolumbien*" (MacFarlane). Inspired by the city's beauty and its community of creatives, Schidor returned two years later to turn these conversations into a film.

As a coproduction between the German company Planet-Film and the Colombian Miramar Films (owned by the Nieto family), the film brought together an eclectic band of collaborators from Germany, Colombia, and the United States. As mentioned in the introduction, the opening credits look overwhelmingly German, with names like Rainer Klausmann as cinematographer, Petra Mantoudis as editor, Christian Moldt as sound supervisor, and Jane Seitz as assistant director, but there were also important Latin American crew members like camera assistant Jorge Vignati, who worked on *Fitzcarraldo* (Werner Herzog, 1982), line producer Ricardo Cifuentes, and art director Karen Lamassonne. The latter was also part of the cast, which included artist Marcel Odenbach, Ulrike Schirm, Gerald Uhlig, Richard Ulacia, Victor Nieto Jr., Burkhard Driest, and

writer Gary Indiana. In fact, Indiana based his novel *Gone Tomorrow* on the production of the film, and while it is a fictionalised account of the events, it is helpful in tracing the contours of the erratic, problematic, and drug-fuelled filming of *Kalt in Kolumbien*.

Gone Tomorrow: Fictions and Speculations on a Film Production

Gary Indiana's *Gone Tomorrow* tells the story of a "fictional" film production in Cartagena, while in the background, a serial killer murders tourists in the area, and HIV begins to spread across the world. The book follows Indiana's fictionalised version of himself, an unnamed narrator who carries a heavy weight of existentialism and self-consciousness, which he counterbalances with a vitality and penchant for pleasure that allows him to clearly see the flows of desire around him. The narrator travels to Colombia, or what he calls "the asshole of the world" (Indiana, *Gone* 39), to act in a film directed by his best friend Paul Grovesnor, a German filmmaker and actor he met while orbiting the social scene of mythic German film director, "Rudolph Bauer". Evidently, Grosvenor is Indiana's version of Dieter Schidor, and Bauer is his rendering of Fassbinder—two close friends and collaborators whose relationship was muddled by egos, power, and subordination.[4]

For Paul Grosvenor, the film is an opportunity to break free of his friend's overpowering shadow and develop his own directorial voice. Indiana describes Grosvenor as "an intense-looking man of thirty-five with a steeply angled nose, disdainful lips, and an expression of incipient hilarity", and he betrays an attraction towards his "grins, the caustic asides, the casual, vast erudition" (*Gone* 42). Indiana's rendering of Paul speaks to the latter's magnetism, which allowed him to recruit collaborators on a flimsy script, but it also exemplifies how *Gone Tomorrow* and *Kalt in Kolumbien* depict social dynamics between characters as cruel, sadomasochistic, and austere. He continues: "Paul was flanked by his technical crew, nondescript young people sucking cigarettes, hands poking and flailing to illustrate their jumpy thoughts. Their voices were loud, contentious, workaholic. Paul had removed his spattered glasses and was oblivious to my arrival" (*Gone* 41). No one was certain where they stood with Paul, but the iciness only made him hotter.

Gone Tomorrow portrays the production of *Kalt in Kolumbien*—or, of the fictional film directed by Grosvenor—as a makeshift affair wherein the director made creative decisions based on whims, social favouritisms, and a complicated enmity with star, producer, and film financier Alex Gavros, who also was allegedly sabotaging Paul by conspiring with the cameraman and line producer. In retaliation, Paul changes the script throughout the shoot, giving fewer scenes to Alex and instead adding love scenes between Irma (a fictional stand-in for Ulrike Schirm) and Michael (probably a combination of Burkhard Driest and Richard Ulacia). These details are obviously fictionalised, especially considering that Alex does not fit neatly with any of the real actors in *Kalt in Kolumbien*, and thus must be taken with a grain of salt. But still, *Gone Tomorrow* speaks to something more ineffable and important, the *feeling* surrounding the production of the film: "[T]he whole business ended in an onrush of foolishness […] more inanity, more petty rivalries, more circumspection […] as things will, on a film" (163). After snorting a line of cocaine, Paul even goes as far as saying that "the plot is expendable" (50). The production was messy, sexually inappropriate, artistically compromised by shady funding, and imbued with a sense of decadence afforded by their leisurely lifestyle in Cartagena.

Indiana not only pokes fun at the relationships between bourgeois German and American artists, he also paints a rather damning picture of their relationship with the Colombians they meet in Cartagena. The author instrumentalises the country and its citizens for literary purposes, painting a tumultuous picture of the land to set the stage for the book's torrid emotional atmosphere. The socioeconomic and political conditions of 1980s Colombia become a metaphor for the lawlessness of human relations. While riding a car through the city, Grosvenor's jealous boyfriend, Ray, tells the narrator that he has trouble tolerating "the people down here" in Colombia: "I mean, look at this bottleneck here. They're like monkeys. I mean they carry on like pigs" (68). The narrator does not respond and instead contemplates a more generous outlook. Indiana writes: "The vista in front of the windshield, an avenue constricted by traffic and variegated humanity, looked completely normal. The only difference from a street in Munich or Sydney, as far as I could tell, was that the people were darker and had more life" (*Gone* 68). The writer paints an unflattering picture of Cartagena and then compares it to cities in the Global North to universalise the particularity of Cartagena's beauty and problems. The ugliness he finds in Cartagena is not unique to the city; it is alive in Germany and Australia because it is part of the human condition.

Indiana's depiction of Colombia relies on trite stereotypes of drugs, sex tourism, and cheap servants, and his first-world characters are too blasé to care about the country's politics. However, Colombia is only collateral damage in an attack that Indiana is launching at Americans and Germans who take advantage of the corruption and destitution to live the labour-less life of lords and kings. The novel depicts a neocolonial engagement of first-world visitors, expats, and foreign drug lords, as when a minor character brings up the days of Spanish colonialism. "We are looking straight at what the Spanish thought it was El Dorado […] I do believe they were correct, too. It *was* El Dorado. Trouble is, Alex, it ain't El Dorado anymore" (Indiana, *Gone* 94). Europeans imagined South America as a mysterious and magical distant region of the world with bounties ready for the taking, an extractivist view animated by myths like El Dorado—literally meaning "The Gilded One"—which spoke of a fictional city in the Andean highlands teeming with so much gold that Indigenous leaders were said to cover themselves in gold dust. As Juan Gustavo Cobo Borda asserts in *Fábulas y leyendas de El Dorado*, this myth was a collaborative creation by both the Spanish and Indigenous Peoples, designed to enchant and misguide European explorers. By the time of *Gone Tomorrow*, Spanish colonialism was long gone, and Colombia was no longer El Dorado. It had become "the asshole of the world", beholden to relations of debt, extraction, currency inequality, labour exploitation, and military intervention from American and European powers that can only be described as neocolonial or imperialist.

The ethics of *Gone Tomorrow* are complicated. Much like his characters, Indiana was not interested in reparative politics; his text does not attempt to show Colombia in a positive light, and he does not try to undo decades of stereotypes created by American and European writers. But his cruel honesty about his narrator's position leads to an incisive and jocular critique of capitalist neocolonialism in the twentieth century. *Kalt in Kolumbien* strikes a very similar tone. Schidor also shows his characters as pseudo-aristocrat bohemians with ethically reprehensible attitudes towards the Colombians who work for them. Speaking with the hindsight of many decades, Indiana criticised the film. In a letter to Ana María Millán from 2015, he wrote: "It's intriguing that you're doing a project around that film, which if I think about it today, seems almost a colonialist artifact, of oblivious Europeans snuffling up epic quantities of white powder and patronising the 'natives'

[…] I think it was a very strange period in the lives of most of the people involved in it, too" (43). Indiana and Schidor err on the side of flippancy, but by highlighting the moral ambiguity of their semifictional characters, they also vividly articulate the economic dynamics of tourism instead of trying to disavow their own position with a veneer of progressive politics.

Additionally, these texts about the "asshole of the world" speak to a fundamental challenge facing transnational collaborations between the Global North and the Global South. As Larissa Pelúcio suggests, in these anatomised metaphors of world geography, the rectum is "linked to situations of extreme geographic and/or socio-political marginality," while implying that there is also a head that thinks located "'up there', somewhere northwards" (36). Given global economic inequalities, European and American artists most often spearhead transnational projects financially and creatively, while artists and cultural workers in countries like Colombia work to fulfil their vision. Indeed, Schidor relied on the work of local creatives like Karen Lamassonne and Victor Nieto Jr., who, eager to sell Cartagena as a cinematic location for future foreign productions, secured Colombian architect Rogelio Salmona's "Casa de Huéspedes Ilustres" for filming. This uneven separation of labour is the norm for most Latin Americans since, as Dolores Tierney suggests, transnational filmmaking has been a feature of Latin American film production since its inception "and an increasing necessity since the late 1980s and early 1990s" (97). Mette Hjort's taxonomy of transnational cinema has shown that these collaborations are not economically or politically neutral, some, like *Kalt in Kolumbien*, are cases of "opportunistic" or "cosmopolitan" transnationalism because they are financially motivated and/or produced by well-travelled multicultural cosmopolitans (Stam 137). *Kalt in Kolumbien* sparkles with Colombian beauty—natural, artistic, and architectural, but despite the inspiration provided by the country and its citizens, the film is a product of economically unequal German–Colombian relations.

Kalt in Kolumbien fell into oblivion after its screenings at the Berlinale and the Toronto Festival of Festivals, where *Variety* published a scathing review, saying: "It's hard to see the film as anything other than an exploitation of existing myths about the Third World and an excuse for filming in Cartagena a film about chilling alienation" ("*Kalt*" 22). In the decades that followed, *Kalt in Kolumbien* was remembered for the tragic events that occurred after its production. In 1986, Michael McLernon, Schidor's partner and actor in the film, died from HIV/AIDS, and after a failed suicide attempt, Schidor himself also died of AIDS complications in 1987. Around that time, film producer and the FICCI director Victor Nieto Jr. passed away from AIDS-related illnesses, and in 1988, assistant director Jane Seitz committed suicide. The film was forgotten in the archives for decades until Ana María Millán's reconstruction of it in her video art piece *Frío en Colombia* (2015), for which she used a video copy that belonged to Michel Odenbach, renewed interest in the film. In the fall of 2022, *Kalt in Kolumbien* screened at Anthology Film Archives in New York City as part of a retrospective of Karen Lamassonne's career, the first time in decades that a wider audience had a chance to see the film. So, after forty years, we can finally comment on *Kalt in Kolumbien*'s form, narrative, and cinematic techniques.

Cold in Cartagena: A Formal Analysis of *Kalt in Kolumbien*

Set in 1980s Cartagena, *Kalt in Kolumbien* follows a group of criminals, layabouts, and nomads as they navigate sexual tensions and revenge schemes. Following the opening scene

described at the start of this essay, the film cuts to sycophantic Mike (Victor Nieto Jr.) playing the piano, with more zeal than skill, for Philip Grosvenor (Dieter Schidor), a wealthy foreigner with obscure ties to the drug trade and a beautiful colonial villa in Cartagena's city centre. The awkward, staccato rhythm of Mike's musical hesitations echoes in the background while Grosvenor delivers a vague aphorism: "We need a society of deaf and dumb people." Just as lazy as his thoughts is Grosvenor's wife (Karen Lamassonne), who glamorously lounges in bed. At this point, Schidor introduces the grainy image of a television set showing news footage of Colombian soldiers barging into someone's home and killing them. After this intertextual interlude, we see Norbert, Jojo, and Ulrike at the airport.

Kalt in Kolumbien is loosely structured around the arrival of Norbert Haim (Burkhardt Driest) and Jojo (Gary Indiana), two white men who have come to Cartagena to take photos and write a story about the Colombian drug trade for the German publication *Der Spiegel*. But Norbert has other intentions: he is fresh out of prison and plans to murder an old business partner who betrayed him, Hans Malitzky (Gerald Uhlig). Malitzky is now a wealthy and influential drug lord who lives in a massive property in Cartagena; his violent reputation and icy demeanour precede him, scaring everyone he approaches. On the same flight as Norbert and Jojo is Hans's girlfriend Ulrike (Ulrike Schirm), a tall, stylish Teutonic woman who saunters across the airport runway with her short blonde hair and masculine air. Ulrike notes the arrival of Hans at the airport, but instead of running to warn her boyfriend, she takes a car into town where she gets ready leisurely, ruminating about the events that led her to Cartagena.

Ulrike is somewhat of a narrator, or at least the only character whose internal monologue is presented as extradiegetic sound in the film. She talks of Hans's role in organising massacres and building concentration camps, saying, "He rediscovered forgotten methods of torture and gave new glamour to old agonies." With the old and new superimposed, Ulrike describes feeling as if "[she's] already lived through everything that's going to happen", and perhaps she has. In Schidor's fictional world, the methods of the Holocaust never went away, they only transformed and moved to the Third World. History visits Ulrike, or perhaps it never left her side, leading her to interrogate her postwar German identity in relation to the Global South. Stuck in an endless, repetitive loop, she predicts Stephen Grosvenor's exact greeting when she goes out on the terrace—and she foresees the fact that she will sleep with her boyfriend's nemesis, Norbert.

Following in the spirit of Fassbinder's German New Wave films, Ulrike Schirm's performance is ascetic, as most of the German cast, who seem to mockingly evoke stereotypes of German restraint. The film's emotional tone is ambiguous; facts are implied rather than stated, and characters communicate through silences, not words. The slow pacing and idiosyncratic editing further impress this taciturnity, as Schidor often cuts away from scenes before the viewer can comprehend the narrative or the emotional stakes of an interaction between two characters—and the complete absence of nondiegetic music does not help. Unrelated b-roll images of the city appear out of nowhere, interrupting the flow of conversations and constructing a sense of ambient idleness. After getting ready, Ulrike reluctantly meets Hans at his hacienda for lunch, and when she tells him about Norbert, he confesses that he indeed betrayed him, and she responds by calling him a pig. But Ulrike's ire is not long-lasting; her cold and blasé gestures obfuscate the fact that she loves and hates Hans with a fiery passion.

Chromatically, the film is filled with washed-out tones of brown and tepid greys that convey a feeling of stuporous humidity, while Lamassonne's art direction imbues the cavernous interiors with flowing red curtains, antique furniture, and ornate decorations. But even in the moments when the film's art direction veers into extravagant territory, Rainer Klausmann's cinematography tones down the affective register of the film. His camera remains distant and inexpressive, moving only when necessary and instead letting the characters and spaces speak for themselves. As *Variety*'s reviewer quipped: "Part of the Fassbinder legacy, *Kalt in Kolumbien* features the conceptual intrigue of cocaine, Colombia, and sundry literary citations, but the camera never moves and the visual images remain so flat and distanced that [it] gets stranded between minimal chic and self-parody" ("*Kalt*" 22). This visual iciness is most evident in a striking montage scene that depicts the sadomasochistic rituals and fetishes of Ulrike and Hans's relationship. Close-up shots of knives set against a white backdrop are followed by close-ups of Ulrike's legs and neck; weapon and body parts follow each other in a quick succession of images that climaxes with shots of blades caressing her skin—all the while, ominous music plays in the background. Sexual intercourse appears as programmatic, fragmented, and stoic—Ulrike is playing with fire, the coldest fire that has ever burnt her skin.

Figure 1: Philip Grosvenor's wife (Karen Lamassonne) and Ulrike (Ulrike Schirm) talk on the former's bed. *Kalt in Kolumbien* (Dieter Schidor). Planet-Film and Miramar Films Productions, 1985. Screenshot.

Halfway through the film, the characters congregate at Grosvenor's villa for a party. A frantic Grosvenor exalts the glamorous history of his home, naming celebrities who have visited, as he introduces Norbert and Jojo to his biographer Michel (Michel Odenbach), Mike, and his wife. In one of the longest sequences in the film, the camera goes around the villa, spying on the party guests as they split off into smaller groups with shifting power dynamics. Jojo reads some of his work to Grosvenor's wife, Ulrike tells her that she is planning on breaking up with Hans, and Grosvenor tries to sell Colombia as a destination to Norbert (or perhaps to himself), flippantly

saying things like: "Servants are so cheap here", or "Nothing works in this house though child labour is useful." Schidor's character spews his cruel and racist sentiments while the other characters continue to take drinks and drugs from him, and the comments turn grimmer when they convene at the dinner table. He turns to Norbert and says: "Your picture of South America is wrong. To function well, suppression must be arbitrary and, apart from breathing everything, should be a crime. Torture is a natural part of interrogation…" Grosvenor is an opportunist and potentially a sadist, but he is not so different from every other character in the film who complicitly follows along and laughs at his jokes. Schidor portrays the darkest side of humanity to suggest how commonplace and apathetic evil can be.

The narrative's structural idleness mimics a tourist's experience on a foreign vacation; it operates on a temporality where everything melts into sameness, and one forgets what day of the week it is. Many characters in the film share the sense of circularity that Ulrike describes in the early scene: Grosvernor's wife spends most of her time onscreen in languid poses, luxuriating and resting in bed, while Norbert falls into a lethargic torpor upon arrival and refuses to either work on the *Der Spiegel* story or kill Hans. Writes Michel Faguet: "Ultimately no drama of any kind actually occurs: the absence of a discernible plot unfolds across a series of charged encounters populated by terse conversations, piercing gazes, and gay overtones—the last of these incarnated by Ricardo, the only significant Colombian character and object of everyone's desire, especially [Ulrike]" (14). Schidor joins in this mimetic desire, often filming a shirtless Ricardo by the pool or walking around the villa in tight clothes; he does not speak much, he is merely a projection of Schidor's fantasies. The film's plot does not march on so much as melt away under the sun, as the intrigues of revenge and sexual betrayals brew unhurriedly under the surface. In the end, very little changes; Norbert leaves without writing the article or killing Hans, and the last shot of the film circles back to its beginning as a naked, sexualised Ricardo stands by a door while Ulrike gets on her knees to perform fellatio.

Thus, the material conditions of *Kalt in Kolumbien*'s production bleed into its narrative form. *Kalt in Kolumbien* soaks up the neocolonial dynamics of Schidor's experience in Cartagena, most evidently in its representation of labour and leisure as being distributed unequally along class, racial, and national lines. Ulrike and Philip Grosvenor talk about bodyguard Ricardo as if he were a fungible commodity, as when she asks: "What's your opinion on giving me Ricardo?", while Hans has a serf-like relationship with his Afro-Colombian maid Maria, who looms in the background of several scenes. Usually quiet and characterised by a deferential stance, Maria's servitude is an afterthought to the German characters (and a few white Colombian ones) who behave like modern aristocrats, yet without her, their lifestyle would collapse. Schidor inserts close-up shots of Maria's face throughout the film, rupturing the relaxed enjoyment of the characters and the spectator to remind us that the luxurious ease of these characters' gestures is only possible thanks to the work of Colombian servants. By foregrounding the neocolonial undercurrents of 1980s Colombian capitalist society, Schidor points to the fact that his characters—and his real self and friends—were complicit with systems of domination that oppressed many Colombians. However, *Kalt in Kolumbien* merely points and chuckles. The film brings up the hypocrisies of its characters (and its creators), making the viewer reconsider their own position vis-à-vis the Global South, but without delving into the possibility of engaging in more ethical behaviour. Nor does it intend to. *Kalt in Kolumbien* is not that film; it is not a political or activist text, but its observations on German–Colombian interactions provide an important

perspective on international (sex) tourism, the economics of leisure, and the union of two economically disparate national film cultures.

Ultimately, *Kalt in Kolumbien* is not just a German film, it is a transnational collaboration, albeit an unequal one. The artistic vision of its German director might be the strongest, but it is not the only one. Most notably, there is Cali-born art director Karen Lamassonne, who gave the film its undoubtedly Colombian visual identity: from outdoor scenes in the city's picturesque colonial centre and impoverished neighbourhoods to the interior scenes that depict the country's architectural history through colonial villas, modernist beach estates, and rundown hotel buildings. In fact, Gary Indiana's account in *Gone Tomorrow* makes it seem like Lamassonne's role in the film went beyond art direction: "[Maria's] naively patronising manner wasn't the most winning quality she could have brought to the production", he writes, "but her energy and evident willingness to do menial jobs would definitely endear her to the undoubtedly torpid cast and crew" (48). Indiana's descriptions of Lamassonne's fictional character, Maria, reveal how much work the Colombian art director contributed to the film. As the interpreter, she and Victor Nieto Jr. were the bridge between German and Colombian crew members, making possible the transnational triangulation between Colombia, Germany, and the US at the heart of the film. Thus, *Kalt in Kolumbien* embodies a tension between Schidor's position as a German tourist and the insider point of view of the Colombian cast and crew. It is a document of the complicated union between the global cultural centre and Colombia as a peripheral source of inspiration.

Conclusion

Kalt in Kolumbien is an instructive and generative case study for critics, researchers, and lovers of transnational cinema. In recent decades, film and media scholars have raised concerns about these collaborative projects, emphasising how first-world perspectives on countries from the Global South often exploit their labour and obfuscate their reality through stereotypes and reductive images. As Robert Stam points out, leftist film scholars have criticised how transnational productions operate in tandem with the "race to the bottom" logic of capitalist globalisation, searching for "cheap labour, embodied in differential pay scales for Westerns and non-Westerners, even in putatively anticolonial films" (178). This article has followed in the footsteps of this tradition because, as Stam suggests, political economy must be understood in relation to the "long 1492" as a foundational event of contemporary Globalisation (179). Without the colonial plundering of the Americas, facilitated by stereotypical myths like El Dorado, there might be no capitalism, no globalisation, no unequal economic relations between Germany and Colombia, and therefore, no *Kalt in Kolumbien*.

Like the legend of El Dorado, *Kalt in Kolumbien* is a depiction of Colombia informed by the fantasies of idle visitors, the avaricious desires of local elites trying to bring in foreign tourism, and the labour of non-white and working-class Colombians. In the film, Cartagena ceases to be a physical location, home to hundreds of thousands of people, and it becomes a mythical impression—the stage for Schidor's gothic psychodrama. Despite making explicit references to real-life events like the assassination of Justice Minister Rodrigo Lara Bonilla and implicit comparisons to public figures like Pablo Escobar, *Kalt in Kolumbien* is ultimately set in a fictional *Kolumbien*, not in Colombia. The film runs on stereotypes of Colombia as a land of Magical

Realism and Tropical Gothic, or through mass media tropes of savage lawlessness.[5] However, the film does not believe its own images to be entirely true; *Kalt in Kolumbien* deploys stereotypes as stereotypes. With an unfinished texture and an experimental edge, the verisimilitude of the film's images collapses under the weight of self-reflexive gestures that foreground the film as film. Schidor participates in a representational tradition that depicts Latin America as a terra incognita with natural and human resources for white Europeans and Americans to extract, but unlike the myth of El Dorado, *Kalt in Kolumbien* foregrounds its existence as a neocolonial myth rather than trying to pass as a reflection of reality.

For Schidor, Cartagena was a land of exploration and vacation where time stopped on its tracks, where everyone wanted to wine him, dine him, and maybe even fuck him (for the right amount of money). When his blue eyes fix on the Colombian region of the Caribbean, they cannot help but romanticise its tumultuous beauty and decadent plenitude, but they also pierce through the tropical façade to find a human darkness that is too similar to the one in Germany. *Kalt in Kolumbien* approaches its setting and characters in a satirical manner, replicating the patronising attitudes of the German artistic bourgeoisie while laughing at their hypocrisy. His depiction of Colombia as a backwards and lawless country is also a reflection of postwar German identity crises, stuck in a never-ending loop of historical cruelty and guilt. Indeed, as the flashback at the end of the film reminds us, Norbert travels to Colombia to perpetuate a vengeful cycle of violence that originated in the snowy Global North. Despite socio-economic differences, this German-Colombian collaboration was possible because both countries lived in the shadow of violence, and the crew of both countries shared in creating a satirical critique of humanity.

Kalt in Kolumbien faded into obscurity shortly after its release, but thanks to the efforts of Michel Odenbach, Ana María Millán, Michel Faguet, and the programming team at Anthology Film Archives, it has been possible to revive the film and the fascinating questions it raises about transnational film collaboration, the uneven dynamics of centre and periphery, and the difficulties of faithfully representing a foreign location, especially those at an economic disadvantage. By summoning interviews, press materials, and fictionalised accounts, one can try to understand the context in which the film was produced and the history that led to its peculiar arrangement of labour and leisure, but only by examining the text, does it become apparent that the context bled into the content and form of *Kalt in Kolumbien*.

It is important to hold filmmakers from the Global North working in the Global South accountable to ethics of respectful representation, and while contemporaneous reviews of the film are right to criticise its exploitation of Colombian stereotypes, it would also be futile to ask *Kalt in Kolumbien* to be a film it is not trying to be. Through humorous nihilism and hedonism, Schidor simultaneously avows and disavows his own neocolonial guilt, and the foregrounding of this tension, while far from revolutionary, is the film's most important contribution. *Kalt in Kolumbien* does not resolve the legacy of colonialism nor the ills of neocolonialism, but it harnesses the power of transnational cinema to reveal and mock the myths and the economic conditions that animate the subjugation of Cartagena, Colombia, and Latin America.

Notes

[1] The notion of core and periphery that I will adopt is indebted to work by scholars from the Annales School, World-systems theory, and dependency theory such as Hans Singer and Raúl Prebisch.

[2] All translations from Spanish are mine.

[3] Basuco is a highly addictive psychoactive drug that is a byproduct of cocaine production, made out of the residual paste left at the bottom of a barrel after the pure drug has been produced.

[4] Indiana himself was friends with Fassbinder, and like most of the director's friends, he loved and despised him. "What can you say about a fat, ugly sadomasochist who terrorized everyone around him, drove his lovers to suicide, drank two daily bottles of Rémy, popped innumerable pills while stuffing himself like a pig, then croaked from an overdose at 37?", Indiana wrote in a eulogy for *Artforum* ("All").

[5] Juana Suárez argues that the tropical gothic is another genre and set of conventions used to represent Colombia. She writes: "[I]t is not a matter of complying literally with longstanding characteristics of gothic style, but of appropriating them and giving them back together with elements associated with the Tropics—an essentialist and colonial construct for Latin America, and more specifically for the Caribbean" (24). Although Suárez is writing about Luis Ospina's and Carlos Mayolo's films, which take place in the landlocked Valley of the Cauca River, she believes these movies belong with Caribbean films because sugar, as a harvest of the empire, is at their core.

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