

Translation of Fliess iv with ER

Original German at : <http://www.heimat3.de/texte.html>

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INGO FLIESS: When did you know that you would tackle “Heimat 3”? Was it already during “Heimat”, was it during or after the “Second Heimat”? and above all: why?

EDGAR REITZ: Immediately after the TV broadcast of the “Second Heimat” I was full of energy. I wanted to carry on, to use the stream of narrative once it was open. I lived very intensely through that year, in which DZH was celebrated all over the world, and wanted to go on working immediately. Many encounters with the public, the enthusiastic critics, thousands of letters in which total strangers confided their life histories to me, all that was so inspiring that in every free minute I had, I was writing down new stories. Soon I had collected enough material for a third Heimat, and I felt called to go on with the work. These creative impulses were stopped short, when I went to talk to WDR, my partner at that time, and found that my plan did not resonate with them. That was in 1994. I had written a first draft, that I wanted to put forward. It consisted of about 100 pages, and in it I sketched out how I would like to continue telling the story of the Simon family. One thing was by then already clear: That I wanted to return to the main setting where “Heimat” had begun, namely in the Hunsrück. The refusal that I received from the editorial department at WDR was so final that I lost hope of ever being able to work with TV again. The broadcasts of DZH in the ARD program had failed to attract the expected ratings. One doesn’t recover from that so soon. Therefore in the following years I began to look around for new jobs. In 1995 I got a call to work as Professor in the Hochschule für Gestaltung in Karlsruhe, and to concern myself with the coming generation. So I moved to Karlsruhe and for several years abandoned my work as a film maker. Karlsruhe offered interesting challenges in entirely new fields: I founded the European Institute of Cinema (the EIKK) and explored with my colleagues there the future possibilities of a digital cinema. The Internet was getting itself talked about quite a lot, and we were all beginning to pin our hopes on this new medium. In Karlsruhe I developed new ideas for “Heimat” as an internet project. Under the title “HEIMAT.NET” strategies were developed for a non-linear narrative form, and with the help of a new kind of production model a distribution system was to emerge, called “The Magic Net”. It would have enabled me and my young colleagues to develop endless story lines, that like the myths of ancient times branched out into sub-stories, and sub-sub-stories. We even got a development grant from the EU for the project, but that had to be postponed as the internet became ever more commercial, and the project overran our financial limits.

INGO FLIESS: You said that it was the place of the drama that was the trigger for “Heimat 3”, rather than the time, that it was not therefore a definite historical period that aroused your desire for a continuation of “Heimat”. In a film-maker, who is so much a chronicler of German history, who perhaps even discovered and invented the chronicle form for film drama, I find that surprising.

EDGAR REITZ: There is a close connection between place and time. As soon as I describe a place, I encounter its history. Every scene, looked at this way, is an historical place. One has only to step into it with the eye of a story-teller. My interest in going to the edge of the Hunsrück, and note this: not right into the middle, was there from the start. But there was still a certain tentativeness, an underlying reserve: What had happened to those once so familiar places? How was the new contemporary history reflected in things and people? The historical event that had changed us all was the Turning/”Wende” of 1989/90. I found it exciting to research this story not only in Berlin or East Germany for a change, but in a place that is located in West Germany yet quite different from the image most people have of West Germany.

INGO FLIESS: That is indeed a principle that in “Heimat” you applied very effectively and successfully, there too is Schabbach, the virtual place, never really in the middle of what is going on in the world.

EDGAR REITZ: And yet it IS the Middle of the World. The question, which people, which protagonists of world history really turn the wheel of history, remains unanswered. The history books maintain it is the politicians, the powerful or the great minds, those people who appear on the front page of the newspaper. I doubt that, I don’t think that they really are the motive power of history. They are indicators of something, they are manifestations of universal conditions. The outcome of elections, for example, even of the American president, is really not a victory of a person, as it is always represented, but the making visible of atmospheres and general moods, perhaps also the working of capital. We would all wish that it were otherwise. We want the individual, for example even the artist, to be able to change the world. That is our longing, but true history is created by other anonymous powers. And therefore the fictional Schabbach is a place where one can see what moves the world at the deepest level. The big things are mostly not at play here, but one can observe the moods that people are subjected to. I am interested in the telling of stories, more than in the big official History. Even a great historical event like the fall of the Berlin Wall is a sub-plot in my film, while the emotions of that day can inspire me to lengthy narratives. Stories speak to our instinctive perception, touch our need for security, our fears, make us behave intuitively. I believe that the art of film can contribute enormously here, sharpening our eye for dangers that threaten us out of the darkness of contemporary events. Film is a school for seeing, and also a school for feeling, for sensing. The narrative method, story-telling, is a highly differentiated instrument for describing the tiniest alterations and shifts in society, that are not logically connected with each other and do not stand in immediate causal relation to each other. That is applied chaos theory: The famous stroke of a butterfly’s wing: It often becomes visible in film images. Or detectable.

INGO FLIESS: Is it another reason for it, that there is always the call for the definitive work of art on a theme? The literary review wants the great novel on the reunification, and the ordinary reader is up to now not happy with the contemporary works on it. How is it that there isn’t such a definitive work? What are those who are attempting it doing wrong?

EDGAR REITZ: What is a definitive work? We know about the call for the ultimate politician, who is to set everything right. In the same way there is the demand for the artist who exposes everything to us all so that now we can say: This subject is dealt with thoroughly and artistically, and now we know how it is. That will probably never happen. Only in retrospect will one or another work of art be elevated to such significance. OK, “Heimat 3” touches on a significant piece of German history, namely the time after the “Wende”. But it would be intolerable if “Heimat 3” were encumbered with the burden of being a definitive work on the “Wende”. The film is neither able nor willing to aspire to that. I am convinced, by the way, that the “Wende” has never really existed as historical turning point of a whole nation’s perspective on life. When I look at the relationships among people and their hopes for attaining happiness in life, the “Wende” does not have such a strong part in it as we always think. Through loving retelling of “Wende” biographies between 1989 and the turn of the century I have discovered that wholly new powers began to influence people, powers which could not have been known at the “Wende”. I am thinking of globalisation, the destruction of what is original and personal in people’s lives.

INGO FLIESS: Is there perhaps also a way, by which film or art can put a stop to the speeding reality of the real world, while depicting or observing it?

EDGAR REITZ: Art is in any case a constituent of our way of learning about the world in which I assign first place to the art of film, since for me it is in our time the artistic medium that allows us to penetrate most deeply into things. In a way, one can say that by the means

of art we are stopping the merry-go-round of time. The experience of operating freely with time that in life still rushes past unstoppably, slowing it down delightfully, or - if we are seeking distance – cramming a whole decade into 12 hours of film – this is truly liberating. And if there were no art of film in the film business, we would be completely directionless. Even people who are treated as Philistines, because they have no understanding of art, become moved by art. If in a group of friends there is just one whose eyes have opened, or one who is moved by film images, then he beams the experience on. Art experience is not the result of a wealth of knowledge. It works even when we think we have our eyes shut, and yet are paying attention. That is why Kubrick's last film has the title "Eyes Wide Shut".

INGO FLIESS: Walter Höllerer once said: Province is a possibility. Would you say that too, or are the provinces today really just provincial, and the music is playing in the big cities?

EDGAR REITZ: That was just the theme of "Heimat 1". In the decades of which I was telling the story there, people still knew: We live in a village, we live in a part of the world that seems to lie "at the back of the moon", the big things of the world don't affect us. And because of this a few of those villagers suffered, pining for far off places. One day they set out, go out into the world, want to get to know it, and only rarely return with their new knowledge. The village stays behind, dreamy and lost. A polarity arises between province and metropolis or between the small land of one's own origin, and the great lands of one's longing, above all America, that has been a theme for a whole yearning generation. The "Second Heimat" is about the life of the young people who had run away from the provinces into the big cities. Here they built themselves small communities based on a cult of genius, circles of friends, in which they mutually overinflated the sense of their own importance and thereby conveyed survival skills to each other. The province is a region one runs away from, the city the place where one experiences absence of barriers. Now, in "Heimat 3" I have to ask myself the question: Does the provincial still exist at all? It certainly does not exist any longer through the lack of information. Absence of barriers too is not felt anywhere any more. Earlier it was only in the metropolis that one really knew what was going on. New movements and directions could be detected only there. The "flat countryside" was conservative, the city was starting out anew. These days people in all corners of the earth learn through the media what is supposed to be reality. Only what appears on television can count as important. The ever-present media substitute for the world and degrade all men to cretins, who lock themselves out of other forms of information. Anyone living in a village in the Hunsrück knows that he must absorb everything that comes to him through the media, so that he can hold his own in his job, relationships or any competitive situation. Banal ignorance is found equally in the cities and villages. It is no longer a question of the place, but of the person. With that we really might have found the end of the provincial. But a Hunsrück village, in my experience, in spite of lying open to view, is something quite unknown. There are always still unique atmospheres, houses, customs, faces, smells, dialects, place names, moods of light, family stories. All these are realities hidden deep in the soul, that do not appear in the media, and that therefore count as valueless. That single concrete experience of the village as the enclosed planet in the cosmos, that is indeed still there, but it no longer counts as real.

INGO FLIESS: Province and "Heimat" are in no way alike, what was once similarity is no longer so. Where then is "Heimat", if today really ubiquity rules?.

EDGAR REITZ: For example, in dialect. One is actually supposed to think that dialects are dying out – but they aren't. And when one looks at the destinations of the mobile country people, or travels to the great holiday resorts, to Spain maybe, there one hears Germans everywhere with their dialects, and they use them quite uninhibitedly. It is no longer as in the days of my youth, when people made an effort to learn Hochdeutsch, as soon as they left the Hunsrück. The Hunsrücker goes out into the world today and speaks his dialect. I think

that responds to the need to insist on belonging together even there, now people are hardly ever with each other anymore. "Heimat" no longer means a place, but a time.

INGO FLIESS: Is oral tradition in the end the most resistant to globalisation?

EDGAR REITZ: Possibly. I admit I don't entirely understand the way the development goes. Naturally people speak to each other, but whether thereby they create independently of the media a community that could be called "Heimat", I do not know. Many dialects are spoken in "Heimat 3". In the first place there is the Saxon dialect: When in 1989/90 the borders opened and the people came out of the East, we heard the true Saxon, not the comic-paper Saxon, that up to then every actor thought he could imitate. I experienced the same self-conscious relation to the dialect with my Hunsrückers in the film. There were members of the Simon family who had risen to wealth. Anton's family branch, for instance – he, as manufacturer and founder of the "Optical Works", is one of the local tycoons. With his money and his lifestyle he could really act the international businessman, and care nothing for his countryfolk, but it is precisely in his family that the dialect is preserved. His sons and daughter speak pure Hunsrücker Low German and challenge the people they speak to with it. An old song: What the poor have given up, the rich take on again. So "Heimat" changes colour again. "Heimat" is not a destiny any longer. There is the possibility of decision, one can choose oneself a "Heimat". But when one thinks one has found one, then come the tasks that it sets us. And in that I see the new identity that can be called "Heimat", that one enters a productive time-relationship to the place where one lives and that in certain phases of life one helps to shape it.

INGO FLIESS: Let's talk a bit more about contemporary history, and also get a bit closer to the real story of "Heimat 3". Where were you when the Wall fell, how did you experience it?

EDGAR REITZ: that is the curious thing about great events: One remembers the banal things, that one would have forgotten, if it were not for the historical background. That's what happened to me too with the fall of the Wall. Normally I would have forgotten what I did that evening. I was in the midst of filming on the "Second Heimat". I conducted a casting interview with an actress. Afterwards when I went out onto the street and began walking home through Schwabing, I heard voices, that in a students' union house were roaring out the "Deutschland" song. They sang the first verse, decried as nationalistic, which up to then no one would have dared. I sensed at that moment a vague fear. One couldn't have guessed that a little while later Neonazis were actually going to appear in East Germany. But I instantly sensed something of it on that night. Naturally I then, like most other people too, immediately rushed to the TV. The fall of the Wall had direct consequences for my current filming work. There is in DZH a sequence in which my characters travel on the stretch of road through the DDR to Berlin. Each of us had experienced this exhausting journey countless times, and we knew those absurd controls and chicanes that had been set up on the road. I had promised myself to depict such a journey through the DDR in the film. I had actually applied for a permit to film to the DDR authorities in the weeks before.. Somehow I had the feeling that against all probability they would let me film on that stretch of road. I had directed my application with quite simple wording to the DDR Interior Ministry, but received no answer. As the planned day for filming drew near, the Wall fell. Shortly afterwards I could proceed with the filming on the autobahn to Berlin without any permit at all. We actually filmed at those crossing points. Officials who a few weeks before had still been running a racket at the border and pillaging West German cars, now worked with us as extras. I could put the same officials in their little huts and let them control the column of vehicles that we lined up for the film.

INGO FLIESS: did you at that time ever have the feeling that you were producing the wrong film? Is the reality then so overpowering that one has the feeling: What am I doing here with my historical film about the sixties, when the present is so exciting?

EDGAR REITZ: That happened to me again and again, but I am no documentary film maker, I am not one of the people who can make a film out of what is happening right now. I need distance to recreate events by narrative means. That is without doubt a tiresome process, because later I have to stage the smallest and most obvious things, I have to have the Trabis drive past as expensive street-scene setting, and have ordinary people run around in the street, because it hasn't happened spontaneously for a long time. But I don't believe it would be possible to portray the actual happening in a film as it really is. It is true that is attempted every day on the television, but I don't believe in those images. I simply know that the mere presence of the TV people and their media behaviour alters everything. Nothing is as it was before, because those who are filming already know what they want to take home. Ultimately that's what they get paid for. But at the distance of several years we know that TV reports mostly carry less documentary power than a good reconstruction, which is not allowed to count as a documentary. These contradictions have also been seen by the famous classic documentarists like Ivens or Flaherty, whose great documentary films were completely staged. Nothing in those immortal films was left to chance. Those authors knew that a good narrative needs time. And reconstruction is not just the restoration of the external circumstances in which something happened, but it is a matter of bringing deeper layers up into sight. We are all in the habit of hiding our feelings from our fellow men. Our whole public manner, and that of politicians and ordinary people too, is more camouflage than openness. We don't want to be seen through by anyone, certainly not by television. Figures in public life put on a poker face and have learnt not to let their true feelings become public in front of so many cameras. But in a film drama it is different, there, by means of the art of narrative and the art of the actor, people are understood from their innermost being outwards. Imagine a taxidriver on duty in Berlin on the night of the 9th to the 10th November 1989, who in the small hours was still driving euphoric Easterners back to the Brandenburg Gate. A taxidriver like that, filmed spontaneously at that moment, would probably have had many reasons for avoiding the camera. He didn't know yet where it would all lead to. But when I reconstruct a scene like that with actors today, then I can talk about the innermost feelings, can lay open what is hidden, and know where things are moving towards. Truth lies in what is hidden, and is almost never visible.

INGO FLIESS: Do contemporary historical events like this run counter to fiction? When I think of the solar eclipse: I know that long before the start of the filming, you had shot the eclipse anyway, so that you could use it in the film. So how do the real events relate to the drama? They don't always coincide, the high points in the life of the story, and the high points in the life of reality.

EDGAR REITZ: When I invent a love scene for my two characters for example, and have them go through a passionate embrace during the fall of the Wall, it might look melodramatic. But it is the expression of innermost feeling. Hermann says: "This is all just for us" and means thereby that he relates the jubilation of the liberated East Berliners only to himself and the happiness in love that he has just felt. In the first ten minutes the film gets a definite impetus through this heightening of feeling. It's the same with the eclipse at the start of the sixth episode. In 1999 when the eclipse in Bavaria really happened, we had already got quite far on with writing the script. We only lacked a good idea with which to explain in the film why the main characters turn up on exactly the same summer's day in Munich. The eclipse then presented itself as a good reason. The cosmic event that was played out only in south Germany would be a reason for my Hunsrückers to travel to Munich. Not only are Hermann and Clarissa in Munich that day, but so also is Gunnar. I have never otherwise taken chance meetings on the street to be a good dramatic device. As an exception during an eclipse the story might nevertheless be believable. So 4 years later I laboriously staged the solar eclipse of 2003 for the film with countless extras on the streets of Munich.

INGO FLIESS: the first “Heimat” too tells of long stretches of technological development, and the meaning it has for daily life. What do you think about the greatest development that we have lived through from the end of the eighties, when “Heimat 3” is set. Although “Heimat” tells of 70 years of contemporary history, and “Heimat 3” of only 10 years, technological change is headlong and massive.

EDGAR REITZ : Now there’s the computer and the cellular phone. It is almost indescribable how much these things have changed people’s daily lives. They have taken over our lives relatively quietly. There are two new generations of computers every year. Cellphones, too. I got my first computer in 1990, and was very nervous about working with it. Today it is the tool I most naturally use. With my first cellphone, that thing with the antenna that you pulled out, I went in 1997 looking for ideas for “Heimat 3” at night through the old town of Mainz, and telephoned Salome. I thought I looked like a lunatic. I asked myself whatever would anyone think, seeing me like that? Only a lunatic talks to himself in the street at night! People who walk down the street and gabble away to themselves were a completely new sight. Today it is so commonplace that no one any longer turns round to look at this absurd phenomenon. In “Heimat 3” these innovations play a big role. Right at the beginning comes the story of Arnoldchen, Clarissa’s son, who is a first generation computer hacker. He is taken to court because he has hacked into the accounts management of a bank. Tillmann, an electrician from the East, settles down by the Rhine as a supplier of computer equipment. His story runs through all the episodes. The mobile becomes a new dramatic device when the characters can telephone and change the plot wherever they just happen to be. Formerly one had to think up often quite complicated twists of the plot in the course of the narrative, so that someone could come into contact with someone else, and if he wanted to telephone, one had at least to get him to a phone. Today by means of the mobile that one can pull out of one’s pocket without fuss, any kind of cross connection between characters can be produced. Technological developments have been rapidly driven ahead in the 20th century. It is unthinkable where we would be if there were no cars. The motor industry is the world’s key industry, and I think that the definitive know-how of mankind today is involved in car manufacturing. “Heimat 1” already sees the beginning of cars, and their development is pursued with great joy. In the “Second Heimat” we have the love story of Hermann and his Citroen. In “Heimat 3” it goes further with Hartmut’s passion for motors. He collects vintage cars and drives a sports car. His identity is completely bound up in the car. The television is just as influential. It has done away with the provincial, and opened up new horizons for people. What doesn’t appear in a television programme loses its claim to reality.

INGO FLIESS: One machine you haven’t yet mentioned is the aeroplane. In “Heimat 1” the Simon who went away has a crucial experience triggered by a flight in a plane. In “Heimat 3” there is a very important character, above all in part 5, who is himself a pilot and looks down on the “pedestrians”.

EDGAR REITZ: “Ernst the Flyer”, as he was then called, is now over 60 years old, and still flies round the area in his Cessna. In the fifth part of “Heimat 3” he also loses his life in the plane. His whole idea of the world is bound up with this plane, and with the possibility of being able to rise up into the air and leave the place of his troubles behind. When he feels misunderstood by his family or his village, then there’s nothing for it but straight into the Cessna and away. But planes symbolise yet another dream that has always fascinated men: Birdlike flight, rising up into the air. Sometimes it seems as though it manifests a memory of prehistoric experience, a long forgotten heritage that men have in common with pterodactyls. The mythology of all peoples tells of flying beings, usually bad ones, but also good flying beings, from angels to dragons, and therein lies a longing or even an ancient memory. I think that the pioneer aviators bore such dreams around with them. I have already once devoted a film to them, “The Tailor of Ulm”. For Ernst the plane is the possibility of getting out of every tight corner, and not only spatial but also psychological or spiritual corners. And then there is the story of Matko, the young boy who dreams of becoming a pilot, and who dies in

the end, but he flies once more before he dies, without a plane but simply with outstretched arms down from a high rock. There flying becomes a dream of redemption. Planes for me go far beyond banal technology. It is not without reason that Ernst crashes in Germany's most mythical place, on the saga-entwined Lorelei rocks.

INGO FLIESS: With "Heimat" you were working alone to begin with, then together with a co-author, Peter Steinbach. DZH you wrote alone. For "Heimat 3" you once more found a co-author, Thomas Brussig. How did collaborating come about, and how did it turn out?

EDGAR REITZ: I was a couple of years looking for a suitable co-author for "Heimat 3", because I foresaw that it would touch on experiences that went beyond my personal horizon, especially where it concerned life for people in the East. For the story teller there is no better touchstone than that of one's own experience, there is no book and no source of information in the world that can supply the details that one needs for film making. There had been tentative approaches to various authors. When I held a guest-professorship in Berlin at the Film-school in Babelsberg and conducted courses in dramaturgy and filmscript writing, Thomas Brussig was one of my students. I heard from his fellow students that he had already published a successful book. I read "Heroes Like Us" with great pleasure on a train journey. It was fortunate that people from the Film University the year before in Potsdam had organised a performance of DZH. Thomas Brussig was one of the organizers and thus he knew and loved DZH. When I spoke to him about a collaboration on "Heimat 3" he was immediately interested, although at that point it was still completely unsure whether the film would ever get made.

INGO FLIESS: At that point, had definite basic decisions, of what the story was about, been made? Was the time frame fixed, in which "Heimat 3" takes place? Were there already elements of the story?

EDGAR REITZ: I had already written a scenario in which base-lines were set out that are still valid today: that a house is built by the Rhine, and that people who come from East Germany as cheap building workers collaborate, and that in this way it allows a mixture of life stories from the East with Hunsrücker characters in the West. Hermann Simon, meeting Clarissa again, and the encounter with Hermann's family clan in the Hunsrück, those were already firm basic ideas. Many others were already sketched out: Ernst's death while flying, Anton's death and his cremation, the Günderröde House as pivot of the plot. I was still pursuing the idea of concentrating the whole narrative into a single year, namely the year before the Millennium. There were still seven parts planned, that were all to play out in a single year. But it became clear very quickly in conversations with Thomas Brussig that the stories in their chronicle-like form could not work like that. Certain turns of the plot could not have been told, for example when Lulu gets pregnant. In a narrative time frame of just one year the film could not have covered the birth of the child. Not to mention a company going under, the passing away of a generation, or the expansion of a business enterprise in the East.

INGO FLIESS: In view of Thomas Brussig's own literary work, I would not initially have considered you two as an ideal team, because your interests are ostensibly so different. And yet the collaboration has been so incredibly successful.

EDGAR REITZ: I think a crucial foundation was the mutual respect that we have maintained. Thomas Brussig is an author who has enough self esteem to say: I am putting my work at the service of a film maker and the goal is to make this film happen. An author who had no status of his own in the literary world could not afford to do that and no more. Thomas Brussig had published two books and he knew in his heart that his direction in life is as a writer of literature, and that collaborating with a director on a script is not his main life's work. He knew that, over and above that, I am a film author of the purest water. As co-author one is always going to come up against the film-maker's subjective way of seeing. Thomas

tried, in what seems to me a very pleasant and devoted way, to integrate himself with my vision of things. The task which was foremost for me, namely to bring in the experience of an author who grew up in the East - he solved that unbelievably well. A figure like Gunnar, who is a highlight in the whole work, might never have been brought to life without the contribution of Thomas Brussig. Gunnar's life history contains turns that are not at all typical for me. The story of his becoming a Wall-pecking millionaire springs from the most original Brussig imagination. All along it's been a joy for me to transpose this story of Thomas' into film, although it did not stem from the world of my ideas. And so I could devote myself perfectly happily to work with the actor Uwe Steimle, who actually comes from Saxony and contributed many details to the character, especially in his speech.

INGO FLIESS: Whereas the deadly seriousness, with which Gunnar sells pieces of the Wall and thereby becomes a millionaire, has certainly something much in common with your characters in "Heimat" or the "Second Heimat": an obsession or stubbornness that in the end leads to success too.

EDGAR REITZ: I confess I love over the top characters. In "Heimat" there's Lucy, in the "Second Heimat" there's Renate. Interesting, that this time it's a man, but he is just as over the top as those women. There are people of this kind in the Hunsrück too. I keep coming across individuals who just get it wrong by a hairsbreadth and yet pour huge passion into everything. Like the team captain of Schabbach FC, to whom the manager says: You talk in exactly the way you shoot your free kicks, always just a little off. This "Just missed it" is a Hunsrück characteristic too. I'd already all along had an affinity to the Saxons. It is there in "Heimat 1", in 1938, at the time when the so-called Hunsrück High Road is being built. At that time there were some ten thousand workers from Saxony and Thuringia in the Hunsrück. They were road workers and engineers. They played a big role in my childhood and were integrated into the family. And their idiomatic speech, Saxonish, is still so deeply planted in me that I get quite a warm feeling when I hear it. Their kindness sometimes goes to the edge of self-abasement. Being friendly is for Saxons rather like being over zealous. It is well known that the Berliners and the Saxons don't get along. Thomas Brussig is a Berliner. To depict a Saxon so well must have gone against the grain for him.

INGO FLIESS: the "Second Heimat" ended with Hermann going back to Schabbach, after he had met up with Clarissa one more time in Amsterdam. What has happened to Hermann and Clarissa since then, until the third "Heimat" when they meet again in Berlin in an hotel, on the day the Wall comes down?

EDGAR REITZ: We have established according to the filmscript that since then 17 years have passed. We are told how both of them have immersed themselves fully in their careers. He has perhaps gone through a break in his career, because he has not achieved anything very noteworthy as the composer he originally wanted to be, but has become instead well known in the music world as a conductor of both classical and contemporary music. And Clarissa who was originally a cellist has given up her instrument. We were already told about that at the end of the "Second Heimat". We are also told about her career as a modern singer with an exceptionally varied repertoire: old music, classical music, the body of romantic lieder, cabaret songs, musicals, opera and avant-garde experimental work. Clarissa is a singer of universal talent. We are told as well that the marriages contracted in the sixties have broken down. People may wonder what has happened to all the friends who played a role in the "Second Heimat". There might well have been something to tell there, but it would have demolished the framework of this six-part film, which had difficulty fitting into the broadcast schedule anyway.

INGO FLIESS: If at the centre of "Heimat" there stands a family, and at the centre of the "Second Heimat" a group of friends that has become a kind of surrogate family, what is the focus of the characters in "Heimat 3"?

EDGAR REITZ: Over time it becomes clear in the third “Heimat” that the family has a stronger bonding power than we had all supposed. I think it is a recognition that set in all over the world following the sixties. There was a time when we said that work was the binding force. But as soon as one went a bit further into it, one immediately realised that it is a question of economic success and money. And if we ask ourselves today which are the relationships where money does not play a role, there are few outside the family. Hermann and Clarissa are a couple from the sixties, and they see their relationship as a free partnership. They also never get married. But in the end they are nonetheless a married couple. Watching “Heimat 3” one feels a certain uneasiness about this kind of resolution. That it’s precisely the oldest of all answers that should now, after years of resistance, be the right one again, disappoints us a little too.

INGO FLIESS: I feel it as a great satisfaction that the wrong that is done to the children of the sixties in the “Second Heimat” is put right again in “Heimat 3”. Suddenly common sense is brought to bear, which says: there is nothing more important than that. It sounds conservative, one could almost say reactionary, after 1968, but perhaps it is nonetheless more true than we want to admit.

EDGAR REITZ: Above all it communicates so well! When I tell a story about a family, I know that I will be understood all over the world. Everywhere, whether in Africa, or Japan or among the Eskimos. As soon as I say: This is that man’s daughter, and therefore it matters to him what happens to her, then every person understands me. Everyone knows what family ties are. Here we encounter a natural law of human relationships.

INGO FLIESS: Hermann and Clarissa are not really the lead characters in the story. They are perhaps something like a starting point for the narrative, but the fascinating thing about “Heimat 3” is that both casts from the previous films “Heimat” and the “Second Heimat” intermingle in a certain way. Now does each episode have its own leading character, or how did you solve it?

EDGAR REITZ: It was not the intention to give each episode its own leading character, nevertheless, it has turned out like that. For example, there is Galina, whom one could say is the secret lead character of the third episode. She is a young Russian, who has arrived in the Hunsrück as the wife of a Russian-German, and has a fateful encounter with Hartmut Simon. Through the shared experience of a fatal car crash she is all at once closely bound to him, and yet they lose each other again. Parallel to the Hartmut-Galina story, other characters and their fortunes are depicted resulting in a kind of polyphony [‘Drehort Heimat’ (p.240)]. I would like to leave it up to the viewer himself to choose his favourite from a rich offering of stories.

INGO FLIESS: Now there are, besides well known characters from the first “Heimat”, like the Simon family, Ernst and Anton, and from the “Second Heimat”, above all Clarissa, a whole series of very exciting newcomers. When I picture them to myself, I have noticed that they always appear only as couples or in triangular relationships. Hartmut and Mara and Galina whom you’ve just mentioned, for example. Hartmut’s destiny is very typical of a generation change in the politics of an industrial family. Perhaps we could talk a little more about that, how the characters act as connecting links between the old cast and the new cast.

EDGAR REITZ: From “Heimat 1” I took across three characters, the three brothers Anton, Ernst and Hermann. Herman continues as protagonist throughout all sequences of the Heimat Trilogy. In “The Second Heimat” Clarissa is brought in, and now both of them are the protagonists. They set the action going. Anton and Ernst become important focal points for the narrative, because again a small cosmos builds up around each of them. Anton who is already presented in “Heimat 1” as founder and inventor and has built up a whole industrial enterprise, has five children who are adults by now. These once again are deeply rooted in

the local region, and have entered marriages with other industrialist families, as is the custom in those circles. However there are those who have broken away, one daughter is a teacher and has married a teacher, and is therefore always a bit sneered at, because they have not become rich. Ernst is the exact opposite of Anton and his clan: He is the eternally unattached, someone who has no family, who in his aeroplane flies out into the world, but yet in his own way remains tied to the Hunsrück. In the family, Ernst is the seeker after meaning. He asks if there is still any ground at all for planning or thinking beyond one's own lifetime. As an art collector, he plans to found a museum, in which his life's work can be preserved. Clarissa is simply incorporated into the Simon clan. The resulting family image is confused and stirred up by the "Ossis". What connects these people with each other is the experience of the first hour: the day after the fall of the Wall. And only through their having spent this time with one another, that first year, does something lasting remain of their friendships. They have built a house together. In a moment that will never come again, in the year that the Wall fell. All rules were suspended. Freedom was still freedom. When in the sixth episode New Year is celebrated, when everyone comes together once more, and Gunnar is missing because he is in jail, then that really hurts. We miss him, as parents might miss one of their children.

INGO FLIESS: One of the most moving moments in the first episode, when exactly that auspiciousness of the hour is so clear, in private, in a relationship that arises purely from the fact that people can see each other and are together at a stirring moment on the Zugspitze.

EDGAR REITZ: A feeling like that could not be staged for all the money in the world. All the characters have come slithering out of the same egg, and no one knows the name of the egg. It's not the family. It is the "mantle of history" that enfolds them all.

INGO FLIESS: Can one as a director contrive something like that: we go to a location, in this case the Zugspitze, and hope that the common experience of being in this place binds us together in a way that makes possible the emotions that are needed for the scene?

EDGAR REITZ: I've never thought about that. It was always clear to me that this happiness would appear on a high mountain. Of course one can say in retrospect a high mountain is a symbol for a peak of experience, but it's more than that. This mountain stands on the border of Germany, from it you can see quite close other mountains that are no longer German. Just on this spot Jana repeats Momper's famous words: "We Germans are today the happiest people in the world". One can't say words like that everywhere and at all times. On a high mountain it can ring true. That is of course a director's contrivance, if you like. Again, it is also part of this stratagem that on the highest peak in Germany Gunnar's marriage is betrayed. Reinhold and Petra kiss at the station on the mountain-top. I can't explain this any better, but a kiss at the station in the valley would never have had the same consequences.

INGO FLIESS: What is the origin of a character like Hartmut? Is he really born in the first "Heimat"?

EDGAR REITZ: Yes. His mother is Martha, whose name by the way is reminiscent of Mara, Hartmut's wife. Martha is the character in "Heimat" who goes through the famous proxy wedding. You will remember that she comes to the Hunsrück pregnant, and before long gives birth to Anton's son. Hartmut is Anton's oldest. Imagine it: Anton, then very young, 21 or 22, a soldier in Russia, assistant camera-man with the Propaganda company, is taken prisoner and, tormented by his homesickness, manages to flee from the prison camp and to walk the unbelievable distance of over 4000 Km from Siberia to Schabbach. On the way he has the idea of founding an optical manufacturing business. Then he arrives, and finds Martha who has a two-year old child. Little Hartmut. Naturally the boy is far closer to his mother than to his father. Anton will find it hard in the following years to win Martha's heart back again. He tries to do it in the traditional way, by getting her pregnant another three or

four times. This is the origin of the big family that plays such an important role in “Heimat 3”. It is all history, the past years continue to influence everything. But the son who was conceived before the marriage with Martha, will always play a special role in Anton’s life. Here the film depicts an ambivalent father-son relationship. For on the one hand there is Anton, of none of his children so proud as he is of Hartmut, and at the same time he grudges none of his children their place in the sun so much as he grudges his firstborn. The father also sets the hurdle for approval very high. Hartmut must always be better than all the others, just to be able to make the grade. When Anton dies, Hartmut is the hardest hit. At that moment he loses his adversary, to whom he has clung so tightly. As heir to the factory, he is not capable of upholding the family business. He becomes a plaything of the banks and the multi-nationals. It is the same story too for the proud middle class of craftsmen, that had once coined the image and identity of a whole region.

INGO FLIESS: In a way, Hartmut is the character most typical of “Heimat 3”. His story might also have potential for quite an ordinary TV series. It becomes special, because the roots of this story go so far back, and are shaped in such an individual way. It has universal validity because it tells so much about industrial history, and the difficult transitions to the next generation that even the captains of industry cannot manage to control. The story is of lasting worth, and has some fundamental significance, and yet touches us so deeply.

EDGAR REITZ: A defining point for me is Hartmut’s speech to the employees after his father’s death. He appeals to his father’s pride in craftsmanship, but he decides that one has to bend to the laws of the market. Things are no longer decided in Schabbach, he says, and does not realise that without an identity as a master entrepreneur he will be sacrificed to market forces. That tells us a lot about making films too. We have had to keep asking ourselves, what film making truly is. Is it craft, art or industry? In which dimension are we thinking? And does the market really determine the quality of what we produce? And what do we properly derive our pride from, when we have completed a work? Can we really find identification with our work through success in the market? Is there Heimat in success? Big question mark, no answer.

INGO FLIESS: It is lovely to see how in “Heimat 3” a new generation is already forming, and how it interprets its destiny in a stubbornly different way. You had already mentioned Arnold. But there is also Hermann’s daughter Lulu, who draws quite different conclusions from the botched relationships of her parents

EDGAR REITZ: Lulu is one of my favourite characters. She wins our sympathy through something that is very difficult to describe. It is true that she fosters a permanent spirit of opposition to her father, but it gives way very easily and she spends a large part of her life in her father’s house. After her partner a young pediatrician, loses his life in a car crash, she brings her child into the world alone, and, undeterred, completes her studies as an architectural student. As a young architect she takes over the construction management of Ernst’s museum building. But then this project is put on hold by Ernst’s sudden death while flying. After that Lulu pushes ahead unperturbed with the museum project until it is completely wrecked by violent underground flooding. Ernst’s art collection is destroyed. Lulu loses her job, love and family ties. Lulu is the character with whom “Heimat 3” ends. She could have moved to France with her child and, at the side of a successful architect, might well have taken part in projects which would attract attention all over the world. But she doesn’t manage to say yes. Something within her asks if there might still be something beyond wealth and security, that is worthwhile possessing. In the morning of New Year’s Day of the year 2000, she goes for a little wander with friends on the bank of the Main in Frankfurt. A friend asks her how her love life is. But Lulu appears not to know what love is. Her child is highly gifted musically, and at least hope could come from him, but Lulu is completely helpless. “Heimat 3” ends with Lulu. She is just 27 years old [‘Drehort Heimat.’

version says she's 32]. I would have dearly loved to know a good answer to Lulu's questions to the world, and allowed her a smile too.

INGO FLIESS: How do you do your casting? Do you have cameras running? Do you employ a casting agency?

EDGRA REITZ: I have, so to speak, built up my own casting agency with Petra Kiener, who for many years has been my colleague and advisor again and again. Frau Kiener has accomplished a monumental task for "Heimat 3". She made herself familiar with agencies, theatres, drama schools and colleges, and everywhere she presented the profile of the roles to be cast. For months she had videos and photos sent to her, and made appointments with actors in order to get to know them. At that time we had tall racks full of videos of actors and of course many times more full of photographic material with us in Agnesstrasse. Petra made a preliminary selection from them, I looked at those once more and made a selection of three or four applicants for each role with her. These candidates we invited to a personal meeting. At these meetings I always had my little video camera with me, and let it run during the conversations that I conducted with the candidates. By watching the videos I could check my impressions later on. But for the most part, after the personal conversations, I already knew who inspired me to work with them. There were some roles that were very hard to cast, where we kept having to make new approaches.

INGO FLIESS: Which roles were particularly hard to cast?

EDGAR REITZ: Tobi for instance. Outwardly, for a start, with long red hair down his back, a late East German Hippy. I was also always concerned that the dialect that was spoken should be authentic, that the actor too should come from the region of the dialect I wanted, and have a natural relationship with his speech. That alone is an onerous condition, because an actor is trained away from his native way of speaking and for most roles has to suppress the tones of his dialect. Given the many Saxons who were to be cast, that was particularly difficult. Gunnar, for example, who was even supposed to perform an imitation of Honecker! Right from the beginning we were doubtful that we would ever be able to cast him authentically. With Uwe Steimle we probably found the only German actor who could give life and poetry to that bizarre figure. In the autumn of 2001 I set up numerous trial auditions. A small team was set up, including costume designers with wardrobes. Mauch was the camera-man. We dressed the performers to suit their roles, and had the make-up artists develop a profile of the roles. I wanted to see how the performers lent themselves to be changed as authentically as possible into the most idiosyncratic characters. We filmed on video under professional filming conditions. For trial takes I quickly and spontaneously wrote special scenes, because I didn't want scenes from the film script to get stale too soon. In the course of many days I staged dozens of little films with the applicants for the parts, now and then even enacted with varying casting. In this way several lovely, entirely new scenes were developed that would later be transferred into the film script. After a week of reflection, during which we had the trial films projected again for the producer Robert Busch and our advisers, I was able to let the actors know the final decisions. With this, as director, one very largely seals one's fate. I must point out that I was particularly fortunate, in that on the basis of the contractual relationships with the co-producers, no one could interfere with my casting decisions. There is almost no more important precondition for free and artistically responsible work.

Later there followed even more numerous casting activities in the Hunsrück. Besides the 93 "speaking roles" that we cast with professional actors, there were still a good 150 further roles, for which I could find characters from the region. What had been of benefit to us already with "Heimat 1", is the Hunsrückers' tradition of supporting an amateur dramatic group in nearly every village. Three more colleagues in the Hunsrück, led by Helma Hammen, hunted through the theatre groups for us, seeking suitable performers. In the

preparatory months we set up several casting sessions in the Hunsrück. However all the casting problems were far from being solved. Still lacking were the Russian-Germans, the Americans, children and young people, among whom in particular was the performer of 14-year old Matko, who had a big leading role to play in the fifth episode. For this role alone various trial takes were set up throughout a whole year, until in Patrick Mayer we had finally found the right young Hunsrücker. In a production that goes on for nearly two years, this so called layman gets more days of filming than many a pro does in his whole life. So in that time he gets practically trained, and in the end he is a pro and knows the mechanism of producing a film inside out. Our Matko got to understand all the processes of performance and film technique in the end.

INGO FLIESS: When was it confirmed that Clarissa, Hermann, Anton and Ernst would again be played by the same actors, as had played them before in the “Second Heimat” and “Heimat 1” respectively?

EDGAR REITZ: That question was already decided at the time of writing the filmscript. The demands on the performer of Clarissa are actually impossible for any actress other than Salome Kammer to fulfil. She plays a singer and has a series of scenes in which she herself sings live. Many actresses are in a position to sing a nice little song – but here it’s a matter of portraying an international singing career. If one wants to show Clarissa’s scenes in opera houses, concert halls or even in cabaret, that will only be believable if the performer herself sings. I know no actress who could have mastered that both dramatically and musically. There is for example an opera that according to the filmscript is produced in Paris. This was Purcell’s “Dido and Aeneas”, early baroque music with a great soprano part. Another task that Salome had to master was the recital of Schumann lieder with piano accompaniment. That too rates among singers as a specialty of its own, and is never in the command of an artist who can interpret modern music or pop songs. In all the scenes the filmscript makes very high demands. But even that is not enough. In the film, Salome interprets experimental music by Berio and Rihm, sings songs from musicals, and a cabaret ‘chanson’. I didn’t know of any other singer who could bring all that under one hat, and who on top of that is a good actress. Now, Salome had already personified Clarissa as a cello virtuoso in the “Second Heimat”. Consequently it was because of that that Henry Arnold becomes her partner again. But the actor didn’t look as though the required seventeen years had passed between the two film cycles. With the help of the make-up artists he had to be turned into the 50-year old Hermann. Paul Schmidt who already had brought about the miraculous change in Marita Breuer for the role of Maria and who is truly an artist in this special kind of make-up work, was employed. It was not only for Henry and Salome, but also for the actors who had earlier played the roles of Anton and Ernst. They too had not aged nearly as much in the years since “Heimat 1” as their stories now demanded. Michael Kausch and Matthias Kniesbeck had grown twenty years older since “Heimat 1”, but that was still not long enough. According to the filmscript, 40 years should have passed! I could talk all day about what Paul Schmidt, the costume designers and the actors undertook, to embody traces of the stories of their lives and roles in these performers. All that happened long before the start of filming, and it was all part of the casting decision. Only when the four actors from “Heimat” and the “Second Heimat” had been tested and hired, was I sure that I really could make “Heimat 3” happen.

INGO FLIESS: What did it feel like at last, having the performers from “Heimat 1” and “Heimat 2” together on the location?

EDGAR REITZ: Funnily enough, it was as though no time at all had gone by, as though it had had to happen. The actors immediately got on well, and got back into their roles very quickly. I think it is quite unlike any other experience in the profession, when an actor can play the same person again 20 years on. You know what the character you play was like as a child, how he grew up, how his mother treated him, you have all this knowledge inside you. You are playing a whole life story.

INGO FLIESS: In spite of being so close to the present time, “Heimat 3” is still a historical film. Is it harder to stage a film that is set in the last decade than one set in the last century?

EDGAR REITZ: I would say it is much the same. It is always a matter of the details. Of course a car of today looks quite similar to a car of 1990, it hasn't altered so much, compared with a vintage car from the 1920s which looked rather like a carriage. But what's the use, if you can't simply take today's almost correct car. You have to be precise, because if you find a car that is 15 or 20 years old, you can be sure that it will have new wheel-rims, or that it will at some time have been in an accident and been fitted with the wrong bumper or the wrong trim. Something is always wrong, even if it's only the windscreen (windshield) wipers. So you need advisers for historical vehicles, and it makes no difference now if the cars are ten or fifty years old. Also the provision of costumes for “Heimat 3” was a difficult subject, because for people from the East old clothes meant much more than something to wear. Clothes either expressed the trauma of only being able to buy DDR products, or they were the fulfilment of dreams from the West. I am not able, without further help, to see at first glance whether these or those jeans come from the West or from Hungary, but people from the East had an unerring eye for it. I take things like that very seriously in my films. For the actors too, who came from the East, there were eventful encounters: when they saw that the label on the clothing still said “VEB gents outerwear Schkoppau” or they saw that the props were of real DDR manufacture. I even go so far as to procure authentic underwear, even though the viewer remains unaware of it, because it is not seen. But I know that the feeling on the body is different. And the performers move differently when their underpants are historically correct. My costume designer, Rosemarie Hettmann, comes from the East. She knows from personal experience about the development of fashion in the West and about the clothing supplied in the East. She has collected a really fantastic store of costumes and props. In the Hunsrück we had a building that was filled from top to bottom with Rosemarie's costumes. An historical film means that everything in it has to be researched. If you found a setting anywhere, a street, a street corner, a pub, a train compartment – it doesn't matter where you come from, you have to look back and ask from what period things originated, what colour they originally were, etc. In a historical film that is set in ancient Rome for example, everything is entirely fictional. An error can hardly slip in, because nothing is really researchable and everything that belongs only to our time immediately stands out. With an historical film about our own lifetime we have to consider that we are awaking personal memories in our audience. That could call up strong emotions, and also powerful resistance if something does not correspond to the truth.

INGO FLIESS: You worked for many years with one production designer for “Heimat” and “Second Heimat” and again for one episode of “Heimat 3”, but then Franz Bauer was not able to work anymore.

EDGAR REITZ: Franz again did many crucial things for our film. Above all, the adaptation for filming and the production of the Günderrode House. He bore the whole burden of the first months and the preparatory year. So it was a great loss for me when he had to retire for health reasons. With Irmhild Gumm we then obtained a young production designer who was born in the Hunsrück and could carry forward and develop Franz' work in an ideal way.

INGO FLIESS: “Heimat” is set in Schabbach and almost nowhere else. “The second Heimat” is set in Munich and almost nowhere else. Has “Heimat 3” a place of its own too?

EDGAR REITZ: The scene of “Heimat 3” is the Hunsrück and its edge. Geographically the Hunsrück ends at the Rhine, at the point where the Rhine gorge begins. Geologists speak of a “fracture line” (‘Abbruchkante’). that was cut by the river through the slate hills. That is a very precisely defined regional boundary. And exactly on this boundary stands the house that Hermann and Clarissa acquire and where they base the centre of their new life, with their

backs to the Hunsrück, so to speak. And yet it is only a short walk to Schabbach. What Hermann originally thought of as a significant demarcation, looking towards the Rhine Valley and its culture, fades away more and more over time, and changes into a gradual return to the Hunsrück. So one can say that “Heimat 3” too is set in the Hunsrück again. The view to the Rhine is a view onto the world. The Rhine symbolises for me the current of History, that has always flowed past the Hunsrück, has only ever just scratched it a little, but not fully defined it. As Zuckmayer wrote in “The Devil’s General”: The Rhine as the “great mill of the peoples, the winepress of Europe”, in which for centuries cultures have intermingled. The river that flows from Switzerland over the Netherlands to the North Sea connects the peoples – with all the darker sides of the modern world: noise, traffic, destruction of nature. In absolutely no way did I want “Heimat 3” to delude us with the idyll that here ‘Heimkehr’ happens in an undisturbed land of dreams, that would have been a lie for me. That is why the last episode is called “Goodbye to Schabbach”.

INGO FLIESS: many of the apparent idylls depicted prove to be deceptive, including Hermann and Clarissa’s being happily alone together. Even the house itself at a later point in the film starts to become threatening.

EDGAR REITZ: In each “Heimat cycle” a house plays a role. In “Heimat 1” it is the house with the smithy, the house of the Simon family, that again and again is the site of meetings, reunions, and farewells. The kitchen with the wooden pillar against which people can sit and rest from the Odyssey of their lives. Here is the Middle of the World. In the “Second Heimat” it is the Fuchsbau [Foxhole], a place for shared beginnings, dreams and despairs, and in “Heimat 3” it is the Günderrode House, as a place of creative unrest, regeneration, of an attempt at lasting love. I have often felt that a house can be another form of “heimat”. The act of building a house is an archaic deed. And I think that everyone who builds a house knows that he is doing something that carves deeply into his life story, and has a wealth of consequences. It is also something very special in the memory of children: A house in which one is born or has passed one’s early childhood binds one often more intensely than the region or wider social environment. A house is an inner space in which we find shelter. Basically, in this retreat we become cave-dwellers again. The social instincts function as they did once in the original caves: Outside are the enemies, inside the friends. A house allows the continuation of archaic relationships. A basic separation of inner and outer, private and public, is anchored in our behaviour as well. We have an interest in both: we need the private sphere, which is a source of every kind of regeneration, and we need the public sphere, that represents the realm of the outer world from which we obtain nourishment (spiritual nourishment too). Leaving the caves, meeting other cave dwellers “outside” and planning something together, that is the original form of politics. In the inside of the house or cave came into being at one time the original form of the family. That’s always where the boundary arose between kin relationships and relationships of choice. When a house and a common roof were on hand, kin and relations of choice could be accommodated in the same way and share a life of their own. Of course these questions present themselves again quite differently in the age of “dwelling machines” and “industrial-residential conurbations”. But a film called “Heimat” can give no answer to that.

INGO FLIESS: During the filming of “Second Heimat” you had already once had to overcome a change of camera man, when Gernot Roll did not want to work any more, and two other camera people continued to work instead of him, one of whom was your son Christian Reitz. How now did the change from Thomas Mauch to Christian Reich come about in “Heimat 3”, and what difference did it make?

EDGAR REITZ: Thomas Mauch had already begun working with a camera over 40 years ago. I’ve known him since we made our first film together. I was then a cameraman myself and he was my assistant. Obviously working together on the basis of so many years of shared understanding was a joy. After nearly a year of filming and 4 completed films, it then seemed

important to me to allow a young man's experience to contribute to the film for once. Christian Reitz could offer many technical innovations that he had developed himself, by which the heavy 35mm camera can be made into an extremely mobile instrument. So he brought a breath of fresh air into the course of the production, and a lot of inspiration for the director's work. For example it affected one of the most tiresome problems that a film maker has to solve, filming dialogue scenes in a car. Every film script contains scenes like that. They are some of the most ordinary, and yet the means for obtaining an image in a car are still rather poor because the heavy cinema-film camera won't fit into a car at all. Most dialogues in cars are filmed on a low loader (US: flat-bed truck), on which both the vehicle the actors are in and also the camera and lighting equipment are driven through the area. Car and camera stand on the same mobile base, the actors just pretend to be driving, and therefore the feeling of travelling in the filmed image is never natural. Christian has now developed an apparatus that lets the camera swing on the arm of a crane over the vehicle with the actors, and allows us at the same time both to film through the windows into the vehicle and also to swing over the bonnet of the car and to film through the windscreen from every imaginable perspective at full speed, without being connected to the vehicle. Thereby we get an unbelievably real sense of travelling, because the actors are driving the vehicle themselves, and unevennesses in the road are detectable, without everything undergoing horrible vibrations. With Christian I have achieved sensational camera movements, that up to now I had never thought possible. Another example: Christian had the ten metre arm of a crane mounted on the bucket of a digger, and swung like that over precipices, deep pools of water or through thickly overgrown ground. Suddenly we had complete freedom of movement. Travel and camera movements in three dimensions became possible, which can follow the performance of the actors with incredible accuracy. It no longer felt as though the camera was moved by apparatus. All the possibilities of a hand-held camera were available, without any of the famous "Dogme wobble" to spoil the fun. And finally, Christian is master of the whole know-how of computer technique and digital reworking.

INGO FLIESS: when do you really feel happiest as a film maker? On location, at the cutting table, or while writing the script?

EDGAR REITZ: The times when I am filming are particularly fascinating. In a way they are the high points of my existence, and in them I feel at the top of my form. It may be because while filming you are all the time being challenged in a very distinct way. During the filming you have for example to keep going back to the drawing board. I like to rewrite a few scenes and dialogues when I know the actors better and see how they speak and behave. And then there is always a place for solitary reflection during the filming period. I withdraw every day, usually for the two hours before going to sleep, to look over the next day's tasks and prepare myself for the day's filming. I make sketches and drawings, write out the sequence once more and interrogate the script. But the day of filming is something else again. Being around with other people plays an essential role for me. When I arrive on location, I encounter a storm of questions from my colleagues. The actors have questions about roles, costumes, locations, partners. The props people, the camera team, all come with their questions. And in answering these questions you attain new ideas and solutions that you have never arrived at before. The fascinating thing is, that you can often even put these ideas into practice on the same day. A film team is a huge apparatus that is able to move mountains. I am again and again amazed by how much you can keep simultaneously in your head, and how naturally everything comes together and also how few words you need to make it happen. In films on the "Making Of..." I have seen directors just speaking in disjointed phrases, because all the people they have to deal with are so tuned into the work process. Signals are enough to guide them. The times when I am filming are incredibly busy, in a quite extraordinary state. In the past it weighed on me that each day of filming cost so much money. Now filming days put me in a happy state. That is why it is always so sad when the filming comes to an end. The last day of filming is the end of many dreams. To tackle the cutting, you have first to take leave of those dreams. You see the rushes, you see the material, and remember

each of those euphoric days. But just for that reason it is important to sever the cord to the filming and the memories, before cutting starts. That is very hard to do, if the filming has gone well. Now I am able to suppress all the happiness of the filming, during the cutting. I had to learn to do that, as otherwise your memories get mixed up with the film material. It doesn't do for a scene of the film to get so rooted in your heart that you can't any longer judge whether it has the artistic power to carry through to coherence with the work.

INGO FLIESS: Is that the reason too why you cut in the comparatively old fashioned analogue way? Because then cutting becomes in a way harder? Because you have longer to think about it?

EDGAR REITZ: No. It's also wrong to say that the 35mm-film cutting table is out of date. Why do I shoot a film in cinema format? why don't I let myself be seduced by electronic (digital) cameras? When I think of all the trouble that it costs to stage a good film, then it's fortunate to be able to shoot it on cinema-film. Had I shot the first "Heimat" on video, the film would no longer exist today. With a 35mm negative from that time I can produce a DVD that still surpasses all standards. One cannot invest one's money better than in a 35mm film. The whole equipment is still worth its weight in gold after 20 years. Unfortunately electronic engineering trashes its products every five years. Cutting film on the Steenbeck cutting table only looks complicated for the first few minutes. On that there is none of the snicksnack of mindless splicing and hick-hack cutting, and I am forced to tell my stories clearly and openly. When I have a digital copy made of my negative, I get something inherently unstable in my hand. You can do anything you like with the data. But not with film. The data for digital images run through machines with an inbuilt aesthetic. I see for example in electronic colour correction endless possibilities that will nevertheless only be used to make everything "beautiful". The digital world is immaculately beautiful – and just for that reason of lesser expressive power. Digital film is a wholly manipulable and disposable legacy. Susanne Hartmann, who is such a master of the cutter's craft that she will not let herself be seduced by inbuilt effects, is as quick on the cutting table as a routine operator at the AVID. The argument that only digitally can you cut different versions of your film and keep them or assess them against each other, is false. When we conceptualise different versions, we keep them image by image in our heads and assess them in the mind. Only when I recapitulate my cut with my eyes closed can I judge whether it is good. After working on the cutting I know by heart every cut, every scene or sequence, and could prepare a complete cutting protocol of all six films with my eyes closed. So too I wrote the book of the film, "Heimat, Chronik einer Zeitenwende" for Knaus-Verlag. All the same there is something I must add: I am no opponent of the computer and the new technology. In my life I have been far from conservative in respect of technical innovation, and was already working with computers when many of my young colleagues were still frightened of them. In contrast to imaging technology, the digital age has effectively revolutionised the possibilities of working with the technology of sound. We produced the film with 6-channel sound (5.1 Dolby Surround-Sound). That is why for "Heimat 3" I only used digital sound technology. Here there have been further developments that are still awaited in the world of images. I am nonetheless sure that one day we will turn away from the photographic methods of filming on celluloid, if only for the sake of the constraints that threaten us due to the costly methods of production.

INGO FLIESS: How did you deal this time with colour and black-and-white film? "Heimat" uses colour very intuitively, colour accentuates magical moments. The "Second Heimat" was more systematic, in that it showed the night coloured and the day black-and-white. What did you do in "Heimat 3"?

EDGAR REITZ: In "Heimat 3" too there are black-and-white sections. They have however not simply been used impulsively or spontaneously as in "Heimat 1". By now I have weighty technical reasons for my proceeding methodically. Unfortunately it is not possible to insert genuine black-and-white scenes into a colour film without problems when producing cinema

copies. Only by copying black-and-white negative onto black-and-white positive can one achieve the fascinating aesthetic effect of the classical black-and-white image. As soon as one copies the negative onto colour print material the process of light definition is no longer controllable. The so-called "Colour-distortion effect" occurs. The shadows become blue-green, and the highlights turn pink. These images look horrible, and bear no relation any more to the original beauty of a black-and-white image. With electronic imaging one can really quite easily and well make black and white pictures out of colour shots but the effect of an original black-and-white shot cannot be reconstituted electronically. The true aesthetic effect comes from the silver compound that forms the black tones in the coat of photosensitive emulsion. In electronic processing colour images are desaturated. The result looks different and, with all the tricks that are used, be it increasing the contrast or amplifying the signal, can never be brought closer to the aesthetic effect of a black-and-white image. What I reject is black-and-white as mere absence of colour. With "Heimat" and "Second Heimat" we prepared the copies for the Festivals by hand and spliced the black-and-white parts into the colour copies. The process was much too expensive for mass production for export. So I had to put up with my beautiful black-and-white scenes being downgraded to cheap monochrome images. I didn't want to go through that yet again with "Heimat 3". Therefore I restricted myself to a few related blocks of black-and-white. They only appear when the scenes take off into the sphere of universal validity or contemporary history. These are for example scenes dealing with the fall of the Wall, historical flashbacks or people in borderline situations, moments detached from the plot. Soon one will no longer be able to afford this luxury.

INGO FLIESS: At the beginning of the conversation you said that when you started planning for "Heimat 3" you felt a certain reluctance about going back to the Hunsrück. What caused that?

EDGAR REITZ: The Hunsrückers identifying so much with "Heimat" and the first series becoming so as to speak their national epic, that was due to having achieved worldwide recognition. Success gilds everything, but I mistrust that golden glow. In 1980 when we began to film "Heimat 1" there were still remains of the old conditions. There were still a large number of farm owners, it is true the employment structure was in crisis and the factors tending to its collapse were recognised everywhere, but there was still a whole generation of people who clung to the traditions and could well remember how it used to be. Today there are even fewer farmers, and industrial parks are growing on the edges of the villages. There is enormous mobility. The natives travel up to 200 Km to work everyday by car. In spite of all the sentimentality, the old situation cannot be restored. We did not want to stage any kind of idyll for our film. I set out to look the truth in the face and portray the currents of history faithfully, even if we don't like them. Those in the team who thought it would still be as heart-warming as it was before in "Heimat 1", soon had to realise that the Hunsrück is a region like any other in our time. Or was there really something else? The Hunsrückers have a history that suggests they have become something a little bit different from other regional populations in Germany. That comes perhaps from always having been a "land of passage", a land travelled through. Proximity to the borders of France and the Benelux states, the surrounding rivers of the Rhine and Mosel, has given it an openness that can be seen in the people. I have to my great joy experienced that the Hunsrückers are no haters of strangers. There is hardly any discrimination towards the Germans from Russia, who were settled with them. The capacity for integration is less among the incomers than among the natives. The Hunsrückers are interested in everything new, even in being surrounded by communications technology. I was very surprised how everybody "ebays" in the families and heads of households surf the internet. Almost every young couple have their own website. What has always enchanted us is that very beautiful landscape. Landscape is more than just a district. It speaks its own language, and envelopes us with a spirit of its own. Those slate mountains are permeated with fossils and treasures in the ground from millions of years of the earth's history. Also the ways and means by which people have wrung their living space out of this

landscape clearly produced a special relationship to it. The Hunsrückers have discovered their land. That is new. Formerly the countryfolk were indifferent to the beauty of the landscape. It was troublesome for them when it was too hilly, or when the meadows were too wet or stony, but they did not see it as beautiful. We should not forget that shooting pictures or making a film is something intrusive. You cannot make a film without causing harm or destroying something. The machinery that you use, and even the film script that you arrive with in your head, has something powerful about it, and is always in conflict with the real given situations. Film teams have a tendency to remove everything that gets in their way. When you are filming anywhere, in any street, you have to clear away everything that does not fit the story, life is expelled from the scene, entry is refused to everyone, cars are towed off. The location has to be emptied, so that it can be brought back to life. For me as a film maker that is somewhat wearing. Filming is often a crazy business.

Yet sometimes when the clapperboard is struck, one senses the magic of film. Everyone holds his breath, all stand silent and feel the inner stillness of the scene. My biggest problem is to create a picture of reality without destroying it. Reality as a product of art, that is the true process of filmmaking.