A Companion to German Cinema represents the cutting edge of German cinema studies that will force scholars to rethink their approach to the subject. Conceptually innovative and theoretically rigorous, the collection convincingly claims that the renewal of the field must occur from its margins.”

Roy Grundmann, Boston University

“This book is meant to re-envision what has been little seen, unsettle your thinking about German cinema and visual culture, and examine German cinema’s socially transformative potential.”

Dora Apel, Wayne State University

“Combining a path-breaking exploration of German cinema beyond the canon with a serious contribution to theories of nation and transnationalism, this collection is a much-needed addition to European film scholarship.”

Rosalind Galt, University of Sussex

Terri Ginsberg is a director and public programmer at the International Council for Middle East Studies in Washington, DC. She has taught film, media, and cultural studies at New York University, Rutgers University, Dartmouth College, Ithaca College, and Brooklyn College. She is author of Holocaust Film: The Political Aesthetics of Ideology (1997), and co-editor (with Kirsten Moana Thompson) of Perspectives on German Cinema (1998) and of several other volumes on global cinema and Middle Eastern film studies.

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Image from Edge of Heaven, 2007 (director Fatih Akın). Photo © Kerstin Stelter/corazón internacional.

Cover design by Nicki Averill Design and Illustration.

A Companion to German Cinema regards the shifting terrain of German filmmaking and film studies against their larger social contexts with twenty-two newly commissioned essays by well-established and younger scholars in the field. While several of these focus on desic topics such as Weimar cinema, Fifties cinema, New German Cinema and its legacy and Holocaust film, the collection is distinguished by its focus on new developments and the innovative light they may shed on earlier practices.

A Companion to German Cinema includes essays on Berlin Film, Neue Heimat Film, New Comedy, post-Wall documentaries, the post-Wende RAF genre, and Rabenmutter imagery, as well as on the persistently overlooked and under-theorized Indianerfilme, post-AIDS documentaries, exploitation films, and new multicultural and transnational films produced in Germany under the auspices of the European Union. Organized into three “movements” representing the significance of these developments for their aesthetic theorization, A Companion to German Cinema challenges its readers to address critical gaps in the field with the aim of opening it further onto new terrains of intellectual engagement.
A Companion to German Cinema
A Companion to 
German Cinema

Edited by
Terri Ginsberg
Andrea Mensch
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# Abbreviations

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<tr>
<td>AIDS</td>
<td>Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome</td>
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<tr>
<td>ARD</td>
<td>Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten der Bundesrepublik Deutschland / Consortium of Public-law Broadcasting Institutions of the Federal Republic of Germany</td>
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<tr>
<td>BBC</td>
<td>British Broadcasting Corporation</td>
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<td>BFI</td>
<td>British Film Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMW</td>
<td>Bayrische Motorenwerke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRD/FRG</td>
<td>Bundesrepublik Deutschland / Federal Republic of Germany</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCC</td>
<td>Central Cinema Company</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCTV</td>
<td>Closed-Circuit Television</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDU</td>
<td>Christlich Demokratische Union / Christian Democratic Union</td>
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<td>CIA</td>
<td>Central Intelligence Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>CNC</td>
<td>Centre national du cinéma / National Center for Cinema</td>
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<tr>
<td>DAAD</td>
<td>Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DDR/GDR</td>
<td>Deutsche Demokratische Republik / German Democratic Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEFA</td>
<td>Deutsche Film Aktiengesellschaft / German Film Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diffb</td>
<td>Deutsche Film und Fernsehakademie Berlin / German Film and Television Academy Berlin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDJ</td>
<td>Freie Deutsche Jugend / Free German Youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDP</td>
<td>Freie Demokratische Partei / Free Democratic Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIDMarseille</td>
<td>Festival International du documentaire de Marseille / International Documentary Film Festival of Marseille</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLN</td>
<td>Front de Libération Nationale / National Liberation Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRG</td>
<td>Federal Republic of Germany</td>
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Abbreviations

FSK Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle der Filmwirtschaft/Organization for Voluntary Self-regulation (Film Classification Board of the German Film Industry)
GAYVN Gay Video News
HFF Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen/College for Film and Television
HIB Homosexual Interest Community of (East) Berlin
HIV human immunodeficiency virus
KHM Kunsthochschule für Medien/Academy of Media Arts
MEDIA Mesures d’encouragement pour le développement de l’industrie audiovisuelle/Measures for Encouraging Development of the Audiovisual Industry
MFA Master of Fine Arts
MoMA Museum of Modern Art
NATO North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NRW Nordrhein-Westfalen
OED Oxford English Dictionary
ORF Österreichischer Rundfunk/Austrian Broadcasting Corporation
PFLP Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
RAF Rote Armee Fraktion/Red Army Faction
RAI Radiotelevisione Italiana
RTL Radio Television Luxembourg
SDS Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund/Socialist German Student Union
SED Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands/Socialist Unity Party of Germany
SPD Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands/Social Democratic Party of Germany
SPIO Spitzenorganisation der Filmwirtschaft
SS Schutzstaffel/Protection Squadron
SSHRC Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
Stasi Ministerium für Staatssicherheit/Ministry for State Security
 UAE United Arab Emirates
UFA Universum Film Aktiengesellschaft/Universum Film Corporation
UK United Kingdom
UN United Nations
UNRWA United Nations Relief and Works Agency
US United States
USSR Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WiG Women in German
ZDF Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen/Channel Two German Television
ZIJ Zentralinstitut für Jugendforschung/Central Institute for Youth Research
Introduction
Terri Ginsberg and Andrea Mensch

If local war and global immiseration have now become the grossest manifestations of nation, race, gender, and class – note the continuing dismemberment of Bosnia/Herzegovina and the sustained decimations of Haiti, Rwanda, and Iraq – then the polis of postnational disorderliness has already become the site of a violent and bloody graveyard. In view of this social fact, we conclude our introduction by stressing our belief that a public, political reengagement of these issues by the German cinema studies reader and the postmodern academy is eminently necessary at this time, the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II and the liberation of Auschwitz – July 1995 (Ginsberg and Thompson, 1996: 15)

By the time anyone is able to read the present volume, more than fifteen years will have passed since the above words were written as concluding remarks to an editorial collection on German cinema which stands as the authorial precursor to A Companion to German Cinema. Largely an arranged compilation of reprinted, canonical articles and essays, Perspectives on German Cinema (1996) served at once to consolidate what until that moment, with few exceptions (e.g. Kracauer, 1947; Elsaesser, 1989; Fehrenbach, 1995), had been a generally undertheorized mélange of journal articles and book chapters concerning one of history’s most important and challenging national cinemas. German cinema studies, like the New German Cinema on which it had come centrally to focus and in which it was institutionally and politically invested, shared no consistent ideological orientation or discursive framework, while offering often conflicting and contradictory analyses of the aesthetic, philosophical, historiographic, and political-economic structures and implications of films made by persons self-identified as German, usually with the support of German public and, especially during earlier years, private industry funding, primarily in Germany but often for international more than local audiences.
Notwithstanding their discursive and ideological inconsistencies, these analyses had come veritably to define and delineate an academic-institutional field with certain disciplinary assumptions which *Perspectives on German Cinema* aimed to locate, grapple with, and problematize with respect to new and entrenched scholarly practices articulating variously and contradictorily to the “German.” The volume assembled 43 articles – seven of them newly commissioned – along a contestational, or “differential,” axis conceptualized in the tradition of ideology-critique and updated in postmodern context, calling for a “stereoscopic reader” who, as one reviewer (Knapp, 1997: 427) put it, “will be able to recognize the totality of meaning within the seemingly contradictory array” and in turn might be prompted to ask some anticipated difficult questions about the nascent field: What, after all, has “German cinema studies” come to mean for the US academy that is its institutional origin and platform? Who “speaks” this field, to whom, and for what purpose? Which perspectives are lent centrality within its disciplinary interpellation, which have been marginalized – and how? How might the contemporary film scholar theorize these implied enabling and constitutive conditions and their structuring absences? In effect, insofar as it was interested in “a more ideologically interventionist, socially critical configuration of scholarly inquiry” (Ginsberg and Thompson, 1996: 15), *Perspectives on German Cinema* pleaded that German cinema studies should not ignore or marginalize the social legacy of global conflagration – Imperialism, World War One, National Socialism, World War Two, the Holocaust, and the Cold War – for which German cultural scholarship more broadly speaking had long taken critical responsibility in a variety of useful, if limited ways.

*Perspectives on German Cinema* could only begin the daunting task of eliciting, much less answer such questions. As a scholarly compendium, moreover, it faced and symptomized ineluctable structural contradictions – the real and ideological limitations of academic centrism (e.g. Hake, 1998; cf. Fisher and Prager, 2010). Although its editors were criticized superficially by an H-Net review (Denham, 1998: para. 3) for apparently “not lik[ing] German film very much,” their call, explicated succinctly by Gerhard Knapp in a prior review (1997: 426–427), was taken up within the field by serious scholarly endeavors (e.g. Reimann, 2003: 177) that have evidenced a determined pursuit of the volume’s suggestion to register and reengage the “silent zone” (Ginsberg and Thompson, 1996: 15) of German cinema studies’ disciplinary meanings and social import.

A good number of these key works are referenced, integrated, and critiqued by and within the contributions to *A Companion to German Cinema*, the aim of which is to rehearse while intellectually resituating the critical developments that have occurred in and around this field since the turn of the twenty-first century, a moment when German cinema studies, in its historically uneven relationship with German film production, began to experience a first post-Wall reinvigoration and institutional expansion beyond the US academy. Whereas the latter has seen a relative decrease in German studies generally, the albeit belated establishment and acceptance of cinema studies as a legitimate area of academic inquiry within
German higher education (in addition to its longer presence in the vocational Hochschulen für Film und Fernsehen) has led to a growth of inquiry there, where scholarly publishing on German film has also noticeably increased.

*A Companion to German Cinema* also emerges at a moment in which the global conflagrations marking, but certainly not confined to, the German social legacy have not diminished, as Ginsberg and Thompson (1996: 15) had hoped they would when stressing a belief in the potential role scholarly inquiry could and should play in signaling “the formation of intellectual alliances along lines drawn toward ending (neo)fascism and (neo)nationalism, and toward ending prevailing assumptions that a radical theory of culture is no longer possible.” Instead the world has seen – literally by means of new digital media as well as film and television – the totalities of nation, race, gender, and class manifest in many additional local wars and greater global immiseration than might previously have been imagined. Indeed, the decade preceding the present writing is marked by casualty and death far outstripping that which marred the years that produced the New German Cinema, its often avant-garde aesthetics and its critiques of US-led Western imperialism and neocolonialism. As the newly minted European Union has proceeded with much difficulty, and in the face of ongoing resistance, to consolidate economically in relation to these developments (see Habermas, 2010; Krugman, 2011), the neoliberal interests it represents as well as caters to and fosters, more often than not with the full backing of the United States, have redirected cultural and scholarly practices toward areas more fully concentrated on postcolonial regions. The ensuing sociocultural embrace of “otherness,” to which Kira Kosnick (2007: 14) writing on Turkish-German media refers, quoting Aysa Çağlar, as “ethnomarketing,” has been a belated yet in many respects reductive and exploitative immersion by Europe, and the West generally, in renewed orientalisms and xenophobias disguised as benevolent multiculturalism.2

While German cinema studies throughout this period has by no means abandoned – in fact it has increased critical attention to – *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (mourning and coming to terms with the Nazi past),3 the late 1990s and 2000s have seen a modest growth in the field’s engagement with cultural studies areas such as feminism;4 (homo)sexuality;5 class politics, economic structures, and the former East Germany;6 and race, (post)colonialism, globalization, and transnationalism.7 These multi- and crosscultural foci have occasionally been addressed, if sometimes less directly and forcefully, in the context of more generic concerns, for instance reunification,8 the ongoing legacy of West German film traditions and *Autoren,*9 Weimar cinema,10 and German cinematic/cultural relationships with Hollywood11 and Austria.12 Many of these investigations reflect a contemporary shift in German filmmaking away from international art-house and independent vehicles toward more sustained commercial-industrial, locally and regionally directed production. However, as several contributions to the present volume indicate, this turn to the local nonetheless articulates and implements larger structural shifts in the European film and media spheres to *transnational* schemes and collaborations.
Based upon the principle of subsidiarity “borrowed from the practices of Catholic Canon Law” (Norman Davies, quoted in Rivi, 2007: 28), these collaborations reenvision post-reunification Germany as a “heterogeneous, hybrid, and polycentric space” (Rivi, 2007, 6, 36) that stands ostensibly to overcome previous monolithic national configurations through the proliferation of popular regional markets.

In her analysis of contemporary European cinema’s relationship to transnationalism, Luisa Rivi (2007) argues against such visions and practices, for instance those proffered by Tim Bergfelder (2005) writing on 1960s popular European co-productions. For her, these shifts toward localization have simply entailed further disenfranchising European culture’s traditional “others.” Recalling Thomas Elsaesser’s (2005) concern that Germany’s contemporary focus on (multi)culture, which was mandated by Article 151 of the revised Maastricht Treaty of 2001, is serving to position cultural production as a primarily commodificatory enterprise, Rivi (2007: 48, 56–57), following Foucault, sees the transnational turn not as a means of European “opening” but of its retrenchment. On her argument, dominant power structures and practices persist and proliferate by way of their “decentralization and ubiquitous occupation” (p. 29); because, that is, they acknowledge otherness only to contain it (p. 48), they actually “safeguard … nationality at the core of supranationality” (p. 63) and therefore reinforce the very borders and exclusivisms which the so-called postnational, “deterritorialized” (Davidson, 1999) system purports to overcome.

The recent publication of several Germanophone books concerning animation, cinema technology, and digital media (DEFA-Stiftung, 2006; Kohlmann, 2007; Schenk, 2007; Brandlmeier, 2008) is conceivably related to this veritable postmodern systemics, even as philosophical interest continues in traditional German film aesthetics and avant-garde praxis and their legacy. The increasingly transdisciplinary composition of German cinema studies, as evidenced by the bibliography to this Introduction and symptomatized by the departmental mergers referenced in note 1, likewise attests to this problematic structural turn. The transnational shift in post-Wende Germano-European film production has itself been enabled by sophisticated structural mechanisms of the new economic order. These include Mesures d’encouragement pour le développement de l’industrie audiovisuelle (Measures for Encouraging Development of the Audiovisual Industry) (MEDIA), which operates under the auspices of the European Commission of Cinematographic Co-Production and funds Europa Cinemas, an inter-European exhibition network promoting European films, the European Film Academy, an award-granting body modeled after the American Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, and Euromed Audiovisual, an uneven “partnership” between the European Union and ten “Mediterranean” countries/regions, including Turkey, the Palestinian Authority, Israel, and Algeria (Rivi, 2007: 60). This EU-based restructuring also includes Eurimages, a cinematic funding mechanism commonly decried for having fostered so-called “Europudding” films, well-intentioned popular-commercial fare that tends nevertheless to “replace
national conflicts with a sweet but ultimately bland narrative than can only appeal to a least common denominator of culture” (Halle, 2008: 48; see also Wayne, 2002: 13–19; Galt, 2006: 103–105; Rivi, 2007: 64). Whereas these mechanisms have enabled a noticeable increase in the production of films addressing Germany’s social and political-economic peripheries and their popular (re)locations within national borders (re)defined as “European” and endowed with “European values” (Kosnick, 2007: 13), the imperative to turn a profit through mass appeal has frequently served to reproduce violently abstract cultural tropes and formal structures that encourage reactionary spectatorial positionings and ideological irredentism. In effect, the new Germano-European cinematic funding system is premised – as are some of Rivi’s (2007: 9, 35) Jamesonian assumptions – upon the Euro-Western nation-state as the very foundation of culture, and thus upon measuring the success of multicultural integration on the degree to which immigrants assimilate and “become locals” within the so-called European value-system (Kosnick, 2007: 18; see also Milward, 2000). As Mike Wayne (2002: ix, 2–3) remarks in his political critique of new European cinema, these premises serve to confuse and confl ate the systemic proliferation of local and regional media with the very differences such media presume to represent. As a result, what Guido Rings and Rikki Morgan-Tamosunas (2003: 15), writing on European film and identity, refer to as “other definitions of the ‘postcolonial’ developed by the periphery,” for example the “subaltern oppositional practices” which Kosnick (2007: 19, 183) argues entail “actual minority participation and sharing of power,” are implicitly excluded.

Although post-Wende German cinema studies has concerned itself more consistently with sociocultural “otherness,” the revision of theoretical frameworks necessary to the genuine integration of intellectual differences entailed by such concerns has been less forthcoming (Rings and Morgan-Tamosunas, 2003: 15; see also Wayne, 2002: vii, 3–4; Galt, 2006: 3–7). As a partial antidote, Kosnick (2007: 6) proposes that German cultural scholarship link semiotic analysis, political and economic data-gathering, and historiographical investigation rather than continuing to separate them methodologically. The effect of this persisting nonintegration, echoing film production tendencies, is a plethora of lip-service paid to differences understood implicitly as capital surplus rather than, more constructively we believe, as genuinely transformative intellectual resources.

Perhaps most symptomatic of this problem is the array of above-referenced scholarly texts circulating on the state-run East German film studio, DEFA (Deutsche Film Aktionsgesellschaft). According to Dennis Broe’s contribution on East German Westerns, or Indianerfilme, which launches the present volume, and as David Brandon Dennis’s ensuing paper on Heiner Carow’s cinematic oeuvre stands to counter, contemporary DEFA scholarship has for all intents and purposes tended to throw out the socially emancipatory baby with the politically oppressive bathwater. As Meta Mazaj (2011) suggests in another context, Western European critics have continued to position Eastern European films as relatively transparent
allegories of Communism and its legacy, thereby eliding through a process of metonymic projection the indigenous value of such films as well as the myriad forms of oppression and exploitation visible in and promoted by Western cinema that are critiqued variously, in often noteworthy fashion, by Eastern European cinema. While Broe questions Western scholarly resistance to the Indianerfilme’s critiques of European colonialism and racism in the Americas, and as Dennis theorizes Carow’s protoqueer cinema as a call for more genuinely democratic configurations of socialism, Julia Knight’s contribution on immediate post-Wall documentaries regarding the effects of the Wende in Eastern Germany carries the tenor of such critiques into the post-reunification era, asking further, if implicitly, in relation to filmic examinations of nationalist identity formations on both sides of the former Berlin Wall, whether it is even possible any longer to answer such a call in light of the dire economic conditions faced by Eastern residents, their ongoing experiences of trauma, and the West’s continued selective, veritably mythological viewing of their deteriorating situation.

For Anthony Enns, the answer to this implied question is a qualified “yes.” Enns sees critical resistance to the failures and limitations of reunification inscribing the recent wave of German Ostalgie (postsocialist nostalgia) films. In contrast to widespread views deriding these films primarily as commercial compromises, Enns examines how they nonetheless illustrate the moral bankruptcy of a capitalist system that has been unable to address current economic and cultural challenges and a desire to reevaluate the state of a country still in flux fifteen years after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Similarly David Clarke’s analysis of interstitial space within films of the post-Wende “Berlin School” demonstrates the extent to which these likewise popular, often internationally successful films undertake a critique of the post-reunification social and economic order by in some respects returning to the kind of political auteurism that characterized the New German Cinema and now is characterized by modes of territorial – and ideational – reappropriation. By the same token, but on the other hand, Jennifer Ruth Hosek’s critique of post-Wende “Neue Heimat” (New Homeland) films, including but not limited to Berlin Films, locates and historicizes nostalgic “spaces of belonging” in this nascent genre in terms of their “isms of propinquity,” that is, their venerations of sameness which hearken to uncannily familiar nationalisms, racisms, sexisms, and classisms from within contemporary neoliberal conditions of crossborder capital flow and (de)regulation.

The prevalent, hotly contested issue of (post)national border-crossing is taken up in this context. While Hosek demonstrates the reinscription of neonationalist Heimat in popular German films of the post-Wende era, Gayatri Devi’s appreciation of one such film, Unveiled (Fremde Haut, Angelina Maccarone, 2005), implicitly extends David Clarke’s thesis to the register of critical spectatorship, in turn deconstructing and resituating Heimat as a matrix of radical social transformation in the era of neocolonialism. Likewise rethinking the cinematic articulation of national (un)homeliness is Claudia Pummer’s critique of the canonized critical reception of the Alsatian avant-garde filmmaking team Straub–Huillet. Pummer retrieves and revisits the French
auteurism that has begun to be mined by scholars in relation to Straub–Huillet’s “German” cinematic oeuvre, in turn arguing for an anticolonialist as well as antinationalist allegoricality at its experimental core, and furthermore rejecting abstract formalist claims that these directors’ biographical narratives and discursive-historical conditions are without significance for their materialist aesthetic concerns.

Not unpredictably, these investigations converge at the theoretical intersection of transnational cultural and economic conditions within post-reunification Germany and their implications for the country’s public and intellectual spheres. How, in effect, they ask, to recall Rivi (2007: 1), does German totality “break down”? Implied, that is, by several of this volume’s contributions is the radical potential of grounding the fetishistic mise-en-abyme of “otherness” promoted by European ethnomarketing in the situated coordinates of material history. Hence Peter Limbrick analyzes the experimental documentary work of Kamal Aljafari, whose cinematic critiques of national home extend from Germany to Iraq to Palestine/Israel, at once symptomatizing and critically negotiating the Germano-European training and funding enabling and overdetermining such revisioning in the context of exilic diaspora. Similarly Savaş Arslan reunderstands the Turkish-German films of Fatih Akın as delineating a new, if evidently less oppositional post-reunification subjectivity located within, and to some extent against, predominant (trans)national formations because traceable historico-aesthetically to a really existing “other” home whose im/possible attainment stands to challenge the interests of the German self-same. For Priscilla Layne, such a critical redirection of the transnational marks a crucial missing link within Fassbinder scholarship. Layne argues that predominant privileging of the paradigmatic New German Cinema Autor’s reappropriation of Hollywood melodramas directed by exiled German filmmakers has served to neglect his appropriation of the popular genre’s critique by the US Blaxploitation genre, as epitomized by Fassbinder’s “least successful film,” Whity (1970) – like the Indianerfilme a critical take on both Hollywood and revisionist Westerns and their nostalgic quests for racialized Lebensraum.

By contrastive extension, the relative dearth of sustained scholarly attention to historical German popular-commercial cinema is lent redress by Harald Steinwender and Alexander Zahlten’s critical survey of the 1960s–1970s German sexploitation genre. Steinwender and Zahlten explore the contours of this underexamined genre, revealing its limited deconstruction of Germany’s post-Marshall Plan, Cold War-era attempts to invigorate European national film cultures via intracontinental co-productions funded by television. Sexploitation’s ironical destabilization of Euro-Western nation-statism marks the dialectical center of this ostensibly international and undeniably taboo-breaking endeavor, whereupon it serves as an instructive occasion for gauging the ideology-effects of popular-commercial cinematic innovation transnationally. On the other hand, the critically sidelined documentaries of Jochen Hick, made largely in and about gay male and transgender sex cultures in the post-AIDS United States and former Soviet bloc, break the ideological boundaries of their filmed subjects, even while arguably appearing structurally and stylistically
rather conventional. According to Robert M. Gillett, these independent, internationally interested films at once historicize and problematize erotic and sexual exposure and the desire for it, its often simultaneous exploitation and suppression, while, recalling David Dennis on Heiner Carow’s “third way,” acknowledging the basic human need for sexual expression in its recognized manifold forms.

In this critical spirit, Nadja Krämer’s critique of the post-Nazi era remasculination of German culture via the immensely popular and successful 1950s *Sissi* films exposes the ideological role these studio products played in advocating Cold War-era German rearmament. In turn Silke Arnold-de Simine supplies a crosscultural analysis of well-known German crossdressing films of the 1930s (Weimar period) and 1950s, and of their immensely popular and successful US remakes by European directors during the 1950s and 1980s. Both essays stand to recognize the contemporary tendency, marked by the post-Wall scholarly turn to popular-commercial German films, toward normalization, while proposing, apropos of Jennifer Hosek on *Neue Heimat* films, to critique it. The significance of feminism and queer theory for and within these endeavors cannot be overlooked, nor should their developing relationship to critical race and post-/anticolonial theories – which Krämer in turn exemplifies when highlighting the role played by enforced postwar family formations in facilitating German hegemony within the Western Germanophone bloc (in this instance Austria), and which Arnold-de Simine pursues when revealing the relative limits of cinematic gender-bending in comparative (inter)national contexts.

These issues are also of import to contemporary German cinema, whether commercial or art-house, where they have prompted public debates over key, ongoing German concerns about the Nazi period. Sally Winkle tests former New German Cinema Autorin Margarethe von Trotta’s *Rosenstrasse* (2003) against critical claims that this film’s portrayal of “Aryan” women’s resistance to the Nazi-era arrests and deportations of their Jewish husbands instances a co-opted feminism in the service of apologetic right-revisionism. By contrast, Domenica Vilhotti discusses post-New German Cinema Autor Andres Veiel’s post-Holocaust documentary, *Balagan* (1994), with respect to that film’s provocative simulation of the “femininized” (see Vukadinović, Chapter 18, in this volume) abjection performed critically by Israeli/Palestinian avant-garde stage actors likewise engaged in reunderstanding the Holocaust for and in the present day. The abiding questions here of historical German violence and its cinematic inscriptions extend in turn to the post-Wall wave of RAF films, a veritable genre propagating revisionist views of the now-defunct Rote Armee Fraktion (Red Army Faction) and its controversial policy of *Linksterrorismus* (“leftist terrorism”). In his paper on the international box-office hit, *The Baader Meinhof Complex* (2008), Vojin Saša Vukadinović offers an immanent critique of mainstream/centrist criticisms of this phenomenon, especially its tenuous relationship to feminism and the popular mass base, thus contributing to current debates in the German public sphere, and across the political spectrum, over these issues and the function of moving-image culture in fostering critical thinking about political activism and social change.
Indeed the possibility that moving-image aesthetics and their modalities of (re)production are effective public intellectual occasions and vehicles for transformation in the transnational era comprises the problematics of Frances Guerin’s appreciation of Harun Farocki’s avant-garde documentary, *Videograms of a Revolution* (*Videogramme einer Revolution*, 1992), which supplies an aesthetic analysis of the televisual (mis)representation of the Romanian Revolution of 1989. The possibility that images are conceivable as nonlinguistic forms of communicative expression wielding objective power bespeaks rationales for their containment and censorship, as Terri Ginsberg discusses further within the context of critiquing a German academic feminist listserv debate over the “Jewish-German” film comedy, *Go for Zucker!* (*Alles auf Zucker!* 2004). Ginsberg’s concern that objectivity not be misrecognized as ideology, and hence foreclosed, echoes an ironical comment by Michael Haneke, the internationally most renowned and celebrated of the post-Wende Autoren, who states in an interview that

> The demand for “objectivity” is quite strange in a medialized world in which the majority is concerned simply with reassuring and glossing over. Why not allow cinema to speak about the neglected areas of reality? Violence and emotional coldness are dominant characteristics of our neoliberal dog-eat-dog society – is it really one-sided to portray them in an exemplary way accordingly? We are living in a violent world. (Grabner, 2010: 19; our emphasis)

Via his contribution on the viscerally disturbing films of Eastern German filmmaker Aelrun Goette, whose oeuvre focuses a materialist feminist lens on violent mothers and their neglected children, David James Prickett fittingly reminds that cinema can – indeed must – intervene literally into a dysfunctional public sphere in order to prevent or ameliorate social injustice. This possibility may be what Tara Forrest likewise means to suggest as she extends Critical Theory to a reading of “utopianism” in Haneke’s *71 Fragments of a Chronology of Chance* (*71 Fragmente einer Chronologie des Zufalls*, 1994); it is at least what we mean to suggest with the present anthological compilation.

In fact the socially transformative potential signified by the present volume’s attention, by way of its 21 newly commissioned contributions, to marginalized, misunderstood, and neglected films, genres, directors, discourses, and theories marks what we believe is a necessary shift in the field away from overriding concerns with internal subjective states and spectator-effects toward reclaiming and (re)theorizing the objective orientation and significance of the larger moving-image apparatus and its filmic (and video and digital) occasionings. While by no means abandoning textual analysis, for instance – the majority of the contributions to this volume engage in this essential practice, through formalist and/or thematic methodologies – and while recognizing as well the nontextual determinants of any cinematic reading – all of the volume’s contributions supply some form of contextual and/or structural historiography – *A Companion to German Cinema* aims
To redirect the study of German cinema toward the question of its social-material vanishing point, a horizontal location through whose spectral scope the field may be repositioned to perform what Rivi (2007: 1) has called “Europe ‘on the verge of a nervous breakdown,’” that is, to ramify a radically unsettled reenvisaging of that persistently contested geocultural place.

With this in mind, we have organized the contributions to this volume, with a nod to Michel Pêcheux (1982), into three barely marked, chronologically unordered “movements,” each meant to signify a relative ideational moment in this proposed dialectics of objective vanishing: (1) destabilization; (2) dislocation; (3) disidentification. The reader will note in this respect that the contributions have not been selected in strict conformity with the disciplinary boundaries or protocols typically associated with the study of German cinema and culture; A Companion to German Cinema introduces several new scholars, some from fields traditionally not centered, conceptually or historically, upon the study of German cinema or visual culture. Whereas we do not necessarily agree with or condone all of their premises, approaches, or conclusions, we aim for each of these contributions to be judged, together and apart, on the basis of the potential it brings to exemplify and elaborate the delineated moments of German cinema’s suggested reenvisaging and thus to transpose the theoretical vanishing point, structured by the volume, into its transformative reprise: a requiem for cinematic voices previously unheard and for cinematic images previously unseen, now at l(e)ast (re)emergent and projecting loudly and clearly from the vantage of their objective (un)timeliness – what Walter Benjamin might have called their Jetztzeit.

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Notes

1 An evident symptom of this decrease is the spate of German departmental and program closures and interdisciplinary mergers – or plans for such – across the United States in recent years. Affected institutions include Illinois Wesleyan University, Minnesota State University–Mankato, University of Iowa, University of Nevada–Reno, SUNY–Albany, and Virginia Commonwealth University – and numerous others.

2 Perhaps the public height of this sociocultural arrogance was reached in October 2010 by German Chancellor Angela Merkel of the conservative Christian Democratic Union, who, shortly following the release of a study by a German think-tank which revealed that more than 30% of Germans believe their country is “overrun by foreigners” (Christian Science Monitor, 2011), declared that multiculturalism in Germany “has utterly failed” (Weaver, 2010) – and blamed this purported failure on immigrants themselves for allegedly not having learned enough German to justify their sustained employment in the country. For another, by now notorious example of concomitant anti-immigrant discourse in the German public sphere, see Sarazzin, 2010. For a critical review of Sarazzin, see Ash, 2011.


Introduction


6 E.g. Müller-Bach, 1997; Allan and Sandford, 1999; Gemünden, 1999; Meurer, 2000; Fox, 2001; Feinstein, 2001; New German Critique, 2001; Naughton, 2002; Potrying, 2004; Pike, 2004; Steinmetz and Viehoff, 2004; Dittmar, 2005; Imre, 2005; Berghan, 2006; Stoica, 2006; Dewald, 2007; Enns, 2007; Pinkert, 2008.


10 E.g. Levin, 1998; Robinson, 1998; Gleber, 1999; Steakley, 1999; Wager, 1999; Elsaesser, 2000; Calhoon, 2001; Ward, 2001; Aspetsberger, 2002; McCormick, 2002; Prawer, 2002; Kester, 2003; Knight, 2003; Mennel, 2003; Roper, 2003; Scheunemann, 2003; Winkler, 2003a; Pike, 2004; Roberts, 2004; Currid, 2006; Jelavich, 2006; Cowan, 2007; Ganeva, 2007; Asçárate, 2008; Ashkenazi, 2008; Hall, 2008; Richter, 2008; Roberts, 2008.


13 E.g. Wedel, 1999; Wege and Böger, 1999; Welsch, 1999; Koch, 2000; Strathausen, 2000; Szaloky, 2002; Halle and Steingrüber, 2008; Elsaesser, 2004; Hansen, 2004; Nieberle, 2004; Claussen, 2005; Guerin, 2005; Vollmer, 2006; Bernhard, 2007; Ostermann, 2007; Schönfeld and Rasche, 2007; Stilwell and Powrie, 2007; Wheatley, 2009; Grundmann, 2010; Ornella and Knauss, 2010; Price and Rhodes, 2010; Speck, 2010.
Kosnick here avers, quoting Dominic Boyer, that such values are designated and promoted as “European” rather than “German” due to the perceived persisting need by Germany to shed its Nazi (violent racist) associations. For Kosnick, such “shedding” has become little more than disavowal in the context of multicultural ethnomarketing.

**References**


