Introduction

DISMANTLING THE DREAM FACTORY: GENDER AND SPECTATORSHIP IN POSTWAR GERMAN CINEMA

In 1947, Helmut Käutner, one of postwar cinema's key players, published a programmatic essay in the journal *Film-Echo* entitled "Demontage der Traumfabrik." In his essay, Käutner detailed the positive developments in the German cinematic landscape since the end of World War II. Filmmakers and technicians had overcome personal privation and want in their first attempts to create a new artistic postwar cinema, and they had also received a great deal of beneficial assistance from economic development agencies, cultural funds, and the occupation military governments. Yet despite the best efforts of individual artists and technicians and the help of so many agencies, German filmmakers had still failed to realize their common goal of "dismantling the dream factory," and for Käutner the reason was clear: "One decisive group has failed to join in the effort: the German audience."[1]

Käutner's essay introduced already in 1947 what was to become a commonplace in analyses of early postwar film: the cinema of the reconstruction and Adenauer eras ultimately failed to break with the Nazi past, offering little but generic entertainment fare in order to cater to the demands of a mass public that wanted "relaxation, conflicts instead of problems, superficial plot instead of experience, and … a world whose pleasant aspects belong just as unequivocally to the past as its unpleasant aspects."[2] In sum, how could filmmakers create a new German cinema when audiences demanded nothing short of escapist kitsch conforming to the dictates of Goebbels' Nazi filmmaking apparatus?

The history of postwar German cinema has most often been told as a story of failure, a failure paradoxically epitomized by the remarkable popularity of film throughout the late 1940s and 1950s.[3] According to this narrative, West German cinema only succeeded in breaking with the past and creating a new aesthetically legitimate cinema with the emergence of the Young German Film and then the New German Cinema in the 1960s and 1970s.[4] It was only when a new generation of postwar filmmakers was liberated from the commercial restrictions of studio filmmaking and,

more significantly, from the necessity of appealing to a popular audience, that this new cinema could emerge, enabled in large part by the generous and diversified subvention system established in the Federal Republic in the aftermath of the "Oberhausen Manifesto."[5] In this sense, then, the New German Cinema appeared not only to confirm but, indeed, to emerge directly out of the critique of the German audience articulated by Käutner and others throughout the early postwar period.[6]

However, this strategy of blaming postwar cinema's failures on its audience is at once symptomatic and disingenuous. Not only do Käutner and his followers resort to tired clichés and scapegoating mechanisms in order to explain the postwar failure to produce a newly legitimate cinematic language, but their accounts mask the complex reasons for this ostensible failure. In the wake of Nazism's exploitation of the cinematic apparatus, as well as the total collapse of German society at the end of World War II, postwar filmmakers faced not only a crisis in cinematic representation but also a social crisis of epic proportions. After the delegitimation of many conventional filmmaking practices and traditional social formations, it was necessary for filmmakers to reimagine both film form and content, a task that continued to occupy the emergent film production organs in both the Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic throughout the 1950s and beyond. As they sought to relegitimate cinema amidst the reconstruction of German society in the postwar period, filmmakers experimented with a wide array of genres, styles, plot structures, and star types in their attempt to address both issues of film form and contemporary social problems, while also appealing to postwar viewers.

Indeed, in a very short period of time, West German filmmakers (and not least Helmut Käutner himself) succeeded in creating a vital new cinema that was wildly popular with domestic audiences. By the 1950s, West Germany was the fifth largest producer of films in the world, and domestic receipts reached an all-time German high in 1956, when 818 million movie tickets were sold in the Federal Republic. Moreover, although the West German market was flooded with Hollywood films in the postwar period, German-language productions (including Austrian films) held a high market share throughout the 1950s, earning an average 75.4 percent of the revenue from the top ten films each year (compared to only 14.7 percent for Hollywood films).[7]

Yet from the beginning of the postwar period, the troubled question of spectatorship has vexed the critical reception of this immensely popular body of films. Writing about postwar viewers in his 1947 article, Käutner noted, "The *economic* help that comes from them is certainly significant, for never has attendance at the movie theaters been greater than it is today, but the *fundamental* help, the real genuine interest in the intellectual reformulation of the German film, has not yet materialized."[8] Käutner's argument is predicated on the notion that postwar German

audiences failed to support the project of dismantling the dream factory, a project that filmmakers could swiftly and readily complete were it not for the demands of the mass public. This tension between the artistic, and indeed *auteurist*, impulses of filmmakers and the retrograde tastes of an uninformed and unengaged public is certainly a staple of cinema debates dating back to the birth of film.[9] Yet the fact that it was articulated with a new currency in postwar Germany is no accident. For what implicitly underpins not only Käutner's characterization of the postwar public but also the many debates about film form and spectatorship that typified the postwar era is the fact that this postwar audience consisted largely of female viewers.

Indeed, well into the 1950s, women comprised 70 percent of cinema audiences in postwar Germany.[10] This gender disproportion resulted not only from the fact that women dramatically outnumbered men in the aftermath of World War II,[11] but also from the centrality of cinema to postwar women's lives: cinema constituted the primary leisure activity of the day and presented a public space where women could spend time unaccompanied.[12] Already a subject of public attention in the late 1940s and 1950s, when the iconic figure of "Lieschen Müller" became a stand-in for the average cinema spectator,[13] the association of early postwar German cinema with largely female audiences has continued to play a role in the denigration and exclusion of this body of films ever since the 1950s.[14] As Tassilo Schneider has perceptively argued, it is no accident that until recently, the early postwar period has been systematically marginalized by film scholars in the U.S. and Germany alike:

> On the textual level, it is noteworthy that the period of German film history that … is the most maligned and ridiculed (if it is not simply ignored), the 1950s and 1960s, is, at the same time, the period whose genres and films arguably afforded German women the most prominent roles and voices. Very possibly, the fact that the "feminine" genres that dominated German theater screens during the immediate postwar decades—the domestic melodrama and the *Heimatfilm*—have thus far failed to attract much critical attention, is not exclusively a function of institutional and methodological constraints.[15]

Indeed, Schneider points out that the symptomatic exclusion of popular cinema from German film historiography goes hand in hand with the failure of film scholars to investigate adequately questions of spectatorship and address, despite the propensity, born from the influence of Siegfried Kracauer, to draw sweeping conclusions about German national identity and social psychology.[16]

Yet questions of spectatorship proved pivotal for the reconstruction and eventual boom of postwar German cinema. Filmmakers engaged in an ongoing quest to redefine both filmic representation and modes of audience perception in the wake of cinema's thorough delegitimation in

the Third Reich, and the renewal of cinema was the subject of intensive public debate. Far from remaining a speculative debate, however, the struggle to relegitimate cinema found its way into postwar films themselves. As a result, these films often exhibit clashing codes, disparate styles, generic inconsistencies, and metacinematic moments resulting from experiments with new narrative styles and formal languages. Given the centrality of formal concerns to postwar films, it is striking how little attention questions of form have received from those scholars (often historians or sociologists) who have published groundbreaking work on early postwar West German cinema.[17]

At the same time, the search for legitimate aesthetic forms in postwar cinema was inseparable from the narrative attempt to imagine solutions for social problems.[18] Notably, both of these pursuits crystallized around issues of gender and sexuality. Not only were gender and sexuality implicated in many of the social problems facing reconstruction Germany, but issues of representation were charged with gender politics during the postwar period as well. Writing about the postwar United States, Kaja Silverman has argued that Hollywood films from the late 1940s attest to a crisis of masculinity occasioned by the historical trauma of World War II. According to Silverman's influential psychoanalytic reading, certain historical moments mark a collapse of the phallic authority that normally compensates for the fundamental lack or castration of all (male) subjects. At these moments of historical trauma, there is a loss of collective belief in ideal masculinity (usually figured by the equation of the phallus with the penis), as well as a concomitant loss of belief in the "dominant fiction" that underpins and sustains all social formations.

Silverman demonstrates how, in postwar films, "the 'hero' returns from World War II with a physical or psychic wound which marks him as somehow deficient, and which renders him incapable of functioning smoothly in civilian life. Sometimes the veteran also finds himself strangely superfluous to the society he ostensibly protected during the war; his functions have been assumed by other men, or—much more disturbingly—by women."[19] Moreover, these films not only overturn or invert conventional specular relations (in which the man is typically the subject of the gaze and the woman is the object), but also depart in other ways as well from the standard codes of classical cinema. While Silverman finds examples in postwar Hollywood films of inverted gender roles that are also reflected by inverted cinematic codes, she argues that the Hollywood films largely work to reestablish male authority. They do so in part through mechanisms of fetishism and disavowal that require female characters to "uphold the male subject in his phallic identification by seeing him with her 'imagination' rather than with her eyes."[20] Despite the return to order ultimately demonstrated by these films, Silverman sees the examination of the marginal, nonphallic masculinities they exhibit as "an urgent feminist project": "To effect a large-scale

reconfiguration of male identification and desire would, at the very least, permit female subjectivity to be lived differently than it is at present."[21] Nonetheless, she stops short of examining the effects of such marginal male subjects on the filmic representation of or appeal to women.

Much like the Hollywood films analyzed by Silverman, postwar German films also exhibit marginal male subjectivities and attest to a loss of faith in the dominant fiction, as a number of important studies have documented. Drawing directly on Silverman's work, Jaimey Fisher has argued that the rubble films of the early postwar era exhibit "the ruins of the German male" by decentering the male protagonist (often a *Heimkehrer*, or soldier returning home from war) and demonstrating his loss of authority and privilege:

> The films are infused with the sense that the Heimkehrer is now superfluous to the society whose center he once occupied—and without this traditional center, the films depict a kind of dephalliation, a weakening of traditional social relations that generally privilege the male. Such a sociocinematic shift requires a rethinking of key differences regarding the male protagonist, which should include both generational and gender differences.[22]

Fisher's work focuses particularly on the former, arguing that, in the rubble films, youth (especially male children) often come to occupy the central position held by the male protagonist in classical cinema. Because the films reflect a weakening of both social relations and filmic codes as a result of the decentering of male authority, Fisher terms early postwar German film a "cinema of dispersion."[23]

While Robert Shandley primarily focuses on the representation of the Nazi past in his important study *Rubble Films*, the conspicuously passive, marginal male protagonist also emerges as a central character in his taxonomy of the genre. As Shandley concludes, rubble films ultimately addressed the problems of postwar life, most particularly troubled gender relations, at the expense of adequately confronting the heritage of the Holocaust and the Third Reich: "Rather than question the very foundations of subjectivity upon which Germans' understandings of themselves were based, rubble filmmakers attempted to rapidly recoup traditional gender positions."[24] According to Shandley, they did so by aggressively seeking to reestablish male authority and to redomesticate women, often via the genre conventions of the love story, "one of the most common tropes for integrating people, usually men, into the social order."[25] In so doing, they laid the groundwork not only for the popular genre cinema of the 1950s—which so often appears to erase all traces of recent German history—but also for the more critical attempts to engage cinematically with the troubled German past that emerged in the 1960s and beyond.

Gender roles and especially the "crisis of masculinity" also figure as a central facet of postwar German reconstruction in Heide Fehrenbach's

comprehensive account of the renewal of the West German film industry after World War II, *Cinema in Democratizing Germany*. Fehrenbach recounts the ways in which masculinity was implicated in the devastating destruction of traditional culture and social ideologies as well as in the reconstruction of national identity after Hitler, and her analysis emphasizes both the instability of masculinity and the search for stable male figures to lead Germany into the future in postwar films from the rubble period well into the 1950s. Her invaluable historical account attends to "the redefinition of social (and gender) identities and the role cinematic representation and film spectatorship were assumed to play in this process" together with extensive discussions of Allied film policies and of German debates about the regulation and development of postwar culture.[26] Importantly, Fehrenbach does note the significance of female spectatorship for understanding the popularity of postwar cinema, and she emphasizes both the appeal to the female consumer and the restoration of the bourgeois family as important tropes of 1950s films, in particular those of the *Heimatfilm* genre.

The 1950s incarnation of the *Heimatfilm* dominates Johannes von Moltke's history of the genre, which emphasizes the dialectical processes of modernization and nostalgia at play in these films. As von Moltke suggests, the *Heimatfilme* became so popular in part due to their deployment of a "cinema of attractions" that treated the viewer to an array of visual and aural pleasures. At the same time, the genre of the *Heimatfilm* represented a key site for negotiating the contradictions and ambivalences of the 1950s, a decade that saw both a restoration of conservative values and a rapid modernization of the economy, culture, and society. In many ways the most emblematic films of the Adenauer Era, the *Heimatfilme* exhibit qualities shared by other postwar German films, not least the tendency to cast women "as agents of modernization" who must "overcome entrenched expectations about gender, which invariably results in a partial restoration of gender norms by the film's end."[27] Thus, to the extent that he addresses postwar gender trouble, von Moltke's analysis focuses far less on the crisis of masculinity than on the dynamic but often ambivalent representation of femininity found in the *Heimatfilme*, thereby laying the groundwork for a reexamination of women in postwar German cinema.

In *Dismantling the Dream Factory*, I draw from the extensive scholarship documenting marginal masculinity in postwar film, while taking a cue from the compelling but brief forays into postwar cinematic femininity offered by Fisher, Fehrenbach, Shandley, and von Moltke. While marginal male protagonists are conspicuous and indeed ubiquitous in postwar German films, they have attracted scholarly attention far more often than the troublingly ambivalent but intriguing female characters with whom they share screen space.[28] Thus, I shift the focus of my analysis away from the decentered males of postwar German film and towards the

women who emerge as the new focal point both in the stories and formal codes of the films themselves and, extradiegetically, in the cinema audiences. As I suggest, postwar filmmakers seeking a new cinematic language after the delegitimation of film in the Third Reich often experimented with cinematic conventions in making films that addressed female experience. On the one hand, female experience offered a seemingly less problematic alternative to male experience, which was contaminated by its links to fascism, militarism, and Germany's defeat.[29] On the other hand, the attempt to address female experience arose from the concerted effort to create a commercial appeal to the largely female viewing public of the postwar era.

Focusing on the centrality of spectatorship in the quest for a new film language after Nazism, this book proposes a new history of West German popular cinema from the end of World War II through the early 1960s, arguing along with Frank Stern that, "the New German Cinema began in 1946 and not in the late 1960s."[30] While the history of postwar film has often been told as a series of ruptures and breaks, the version I offer here emphasizes continuities, not only retrospective continuities between postwar filmmaking and Third Reich cinema, but, more importantly for this project, prospective continuities between the popular cinema of the late 1940s and 1950s and the emergent Young German Cinema of the 1960s.[31]

Representing themselves as part of an Oedipal struggle against the "grandfather's generation" responsible for producing the *Papas Kino* (Daddy's cinema) of the early postwar period, the young filmmakers and critics responsible for the "Oberhausen Manifesto" made explicit the extent to which the search for a new language of cinema in postwar Germany was cast in familial and gendered terms.[32] Yet the patriarchal and masculinist metaphors proposed by so many postwar commentators—which situated men as active, embattled producers of cinema, while resorting to age-old clichés of a feminized mass audience of passive consumers—have too often conditioned the way film scholars have continued to apprehend this period ever since the 1950s.

By contrast, this book re-reads postwar West German cinema as a women's cinema, understood in the broadest terms as a filmmaking practice seeking to appeal to female spectators. Not simply a gesture of turning the tables on the master narrative, my argument here accords with the notion that national cinema—particularly in the German context—may be productively redefined and understood at the site of consumption rather than exclusively at the site of production.[33] Thus I return here to the original context of early postwar cinema's consumption, deploying the notion of women's cinema both as a means of examining the contested status of popular film during the immediate postwar period and of explaining the lacuna in film history that this era still represents.

While I argue that the turn to female experience and the appeal to female spectators was a conscious strategy on the part of postwar

filmmakers, which served the function of relegitimating the cinema at large while also contributing to the popularity of individual movies, I do not suggest that the popular cinema of the postwar period was feminist in intention or result. As we have seen, Johannes von Moltke proposes that postwar cinema was characterized by a dialectics of restoration and modernization, which, I would add, applies as much to ideologies of gender as it does to the representation of space.[34] While this book therefore contributes to the project of writing postwar cinema back into German film history, it does not seek to recuperate this cinema as a good object of feminist analysis. Rather, I also read postwar cinema as a site of conflict and contradiction. Following Tassilo Schneider, I seek to establish the heterogeneity of this cinema, including its often incongruous and ambivalent qualities, in order to reinscribe "into the historical scenario those discourses (of marginalized social groups, of contradictory ideological positions, and so forth) that <the> historical reconstruction <of German film history> has thus far succeeded in writing out of it."[35]

Postwar German cinema is characterized by incongruity and conflict at the level of both form and content, and nowhere are its contradictory qualities more evident than in its encoding of gender roles and ideologies. As Erica Carter has noted, many early West German films "are directed toward the transformation of feminine identity" in the postwar period.[36] Indeed, most of the films I discuss point toward the reconstruction of traditional gender roles and the increasing prominence of the public/private divide in postwar German society, suggesting that personal happiness is ultimately to be found in the private sphere. Notably, however, these films virtually always stop short of portraying that harmonious domestic sphere, revoking the fulfillment of private desires by failing to provide the "happy end" promised by marriage and family (and thereby avoiding mention of the repressive consequences of this return to the private sphere as well). Over the course of the late 1940s and 1950s, West German films chart the ambivalent—though central— positions occupied by women during the restoration period and in the *Wirtschaftswunder*.

As I argue in this study, it is in this sense above all that the popular West German cinema of the postwar period closely resembles the mid-century Hollywood "woman's film." A catalyst for much important scholarship in feminist film theory during the 1970s and 1980s, the woman's film is characterized by genre and star choices meant to appeal to female viewers, but also, more importantly, by its emphasis on ambivalence and contradiction surrounding gender roles.[37] In her influential study of the 1940s Hollywood woman's film, Mary Ann Doane defines the genre thus:

> The films deal with a female protagonist and often appear to allow her
> significant access to point of view structures and the enunciative level of

filmic discourse. They treat problems defined as "female" (problems revolving around domestic life, the family, children, self-sacrifice, and the relationship between women and production vs. that between women and reproduction), and, most crucially, are directed toward a female audience.[38]

In contrast to some readings of the genre that seek to recuperate the woman's film as a positive locus for the unfolding of female subjectivity, however, Doane emphasizes the "difficulties and blockages" confronted by the genre's "attempts to trace the contours of female subjectivity and desire within the traditional forms and conventions of Hollywood narrative," which produce "perturbations and contradictions within the narrative economy" of the woman's film.[39] Such blockages and contradictions, a result of the attempt to represent women's subjectivity and desire within dominant cinematic conventions and also of the related attempt to create a new postwar cinematic language, are a primary characteristic of West German films of the late 1940s and 1950s.

Undertaken several decades ago, the work of Doane and others contributed to a productive rethinking of women's genres and questions of spectatorship and address in dominant Hollywood cinema, which has proved crucial to subsequent scholarship in film studies. Feminist film theories of women's cinema have been productive for this book as well, for several reasons. First, much of this theoretical work emerged from the project of rediscovering women's cinema as a central genre of mid-century Hollywood cinema. In returning to the same period of cinematic production in postwar Germany, I have participated in a similar project of rediscovery surrounding this understudied body of films. While the social and historical context that shaped German film production after Nazism differed substantially from that in the United States, nonetheless the insights of Anglo-American feminist film theory about genre, spectatorship, and address in particular shed light on the ambiguities and contradictions, successes and failures of postwar German filmmaking strategies.

Second, as Alison Butler has argued, women's cinema may be said to constitute a "minor cinema" that is "not 'at home' in any of the host cinematic or national discourses it inhabits, but … is always an inflected mode, incorporating, reworking and contesting the conventions of established traditions. <Woman's films> can be situated within at least one other context (such as a national cinema or an international mode of representation) besides that of women's cinema; few of them, however, are fully comprehended by their other contexts."[40] In as much as women's cinema presents a hybrid formation drawing on transnational influences, the return to influential theories of women's cinema that emerged from other cultural contexts proves essential to understanding this "minor cinema."

As I have argued elsewhere, women's cinema also constitutes one of the primary genres of German national cinema across the twentieth century; despite different historical inflections, the turn to women's genres and the address to female spectators represents a moment of

continuity in a filmmaking practice that has otherwise followed the vicissitudes of political and social change.[41] Thus this study relies not only on the insights of feminist scholarship about mid-century cinema in the Anglo-American context, but also on the important contributions of feminist scholars of German cinema to reconstructing the history of women's genres in the German context.[42]

Building on theories of women's cinema, feminist film theorists in the 1980s and 1990s turned to the study of cinema spectatorship, proposing various paradigms for apprehending the process of spectatorship that seek to bridge the gap between the imagined spectator constructed by the text, the interpellated subject of ideology, and the sociohistorical subject in the audience.[43] Particularly useful for this study is Christine Gledhill's conception of spectatorship as a process of negotiation among texts, institutions, and audiences. As Gledhill suggests,

> <T>he term negotiation implies the holding together of opposite sides in an ongoing process of give-and-take. As a model of meaning production, negotiation conceives of cultural exchange as the intersection of processes of production and reception, in which overlapping but non-matching determinations operate. Meaning is neither imposed, nor passively imbibed, but arises out of a struggle or negotiation between competing frames of reference, motivation, and experience.[44]

Similarly, my understanding of spectatorship focuses on the complex interactions of textual address, institutional contexts, and audience reception in reconstructing the relationship between viewer and film. Reading postwar West German cinema as women's cinema, I trace the history of this cinema through close readings of ten emblematic films, which all sought to appeal to female spectators through genre and star choices, narrative content, and formal language, as well as through extratextual effects such as promotional and publicity materials, film programs, spreads in fan magazines, and advertising campaigns. These films are emblematic in a larger sense as well, for all of them clearly exhibit the ongoing postwar search for legitimate aesthetic forms, coupled with a narrative attempt to imagine solutions for postwar social problems such as the pervasive anxiety surrounding gender.

As I suggest in the first part of the book, the quest to solve representational and social problems began with the very first postwar German films. The so-called *Filmpause* following the end of World War II, when German film production ceased for over a year, provided an opportunity for filmmakers and critics alike to debate about the shape the new cinema should take. Thus commenced a discussion that would last for years to come, encompassing virtually every aspect of cinematic production and consumption as well as the connections between film aesthetics and social issues. The postwar cinema debates proved quite influential in the reconstruction of postwar cinema, even finding their way into the films themselves.

In the four chapters that comprise part I, I address different facets of these debates over cinema in order to shed light on the larger social and representational context out of which postwar filmmaking emerged. The films I address in this section all respond explicitly to these debates; at the same time they all display a clear appeal to female experience, which is a central facet of their search for a new cinematic language. Already during the *Filmpause*, commentators on cinema expressed concern about the ability of postwar cinema to break with the past and adequately represent the social problems of the present day. Wolfgang Staudte's *Die Mörder sind unter uns* (The Murderers Are Among Us, 1946), the movie that ended the *Filmpause*, responded to these concerns, addressing the different war experiences of men and women and the strained gender relations of the postwar period by endowing its male and female protagonists with different generic codes, visual styles, and formal qualities.

As the *Filmpause* came to an end, critics and filmmakers turned their attention to the *Filmdichter*, or artistic screenwriter, who was cast as the potential savior of postwar filmmaking, a figure who would break with the styles and ideologies of Third Reich cinema and assist in the creation of a newly legitimate German cinema that could contend with contemporary realities. Rudolf Jugert's *Film ohne Titel* (Film Without a Title, 1948) uses a metacinematic frame story featuring a director, writer, and actor engaged in the process of making a film to comment on the problem of writing scripts that will appeal to female film viewers; at the same time, the film within a film addresses changing class and gender roles from the Weimar Republic through the Third Reich and into the period of occupation.

Taking up the challenge of postwar demands for a new, socially responsible and aesthetically progressive film practice, production companies such as Filmaufbau Göttingen experimented with new styles and forms of address. Their first production, Wolfgang Liebeneiner's *Liebe 47* (Love '47, 1949), based on Wolfgang Borchert's famous drama about soldiers returning from war, *Draussen vor der Tür* (The Man Outside), alters the narrative structure of the play to incorporate a female perspective and expands Borchert's focus on male subjectivity to address female experience and the problematic gender relations of the postwar period. A colossal failure with postwar audiences, *Love '47* tells us as much about the state of popular filmmaking in the postwar period as do many of the box office smashes considered in this study.

The return to conventional genre cinema was one strategy adopted by filmmakers seeking to appeal to audiences while also addressing the complex social and representational problems at stake in postwar cinema. One of the few early postwar films to address issues of race and ethnicity, Helmut Käutner's *Epilog* (Epilogue, 1950) is an elaborate allegory of the political situation as well as the status of image making and story telling in postwar Germany; gender plays a central role in the film's explication of political responsibility, authorship, and spectatorship.

In the second part of the book, I turn to a series of films from the 1950s that construct metacinematic narratives surrounding visual artists, who are omnipresent protagonists in German films from this era. Beginning with characters like Susanne in *The Murderers Are Among Us* and Leata in *Epilogue*, painters, graphic artists, and fashion designers appear again and again across genres, in rubble films, suspense thrillers, *Heimatfilme*, problem films, and melodramas. Often invested with special visionary abilities or plagued by disturbances of vision, these characters generally set in motion metacinematic narratives that explicitly address questions of representation, perception, and difference. The device of the visual artist allows films to inscribe a series of diegetic spectator positions through which characters in the films look at and respond to varying kinds of visual representations.

As Angela Dalle Vacche has written, "<T>he history of art is *in* film, even though, by evoking high art and creativity, rather than technology and mass culture, painting for the cinema constitutes a forbidden object of desire."[45] It should perhaps come as no surprise, however, that this forbidden object of desire returns with a vengeance in the West German cinema of the early postwar period. After fascism, the relationships among high art, mass culture, creativity, and technology were both overdetermined and in flux. These relationships were implicated in any attempt to create a new visual culture, including a relegitimated cinema, yet a direct theoretical or representational apprehension of the political and ideological complexities at stake in these relationships only began to emerge slowly.

The most straightforward attempt in the early postwar era to address the heritage of Nazi art and cultural policies was the extensive public debate about abstract painting that took place in the Federal Republic in the late 1940s and 1950s, a debate that took place under the sign of Cold War anti-communism. This debate found its echo in the films of the era. By incorporating painting and other visual arts into their narratives and *mise en scène*, films commented on and attempted to come to terms with cinema's disputed status.[46] Thus the explicit visual and narrative thematization of other arts was another step in the ongoing attempt of postwar filmmakers to relegitimate the cinema and find a new film language.

The three chapters of part II address popular films that engage questions of representation and perception through the metacinematic introduction of visual art—in particular abstract art—into the filmic narrative. Like the early postwar films discussed in the first section of this book, these films from the heyday of the 1950s cinema boom continue to address postwar representational problems in tandem with contemporary social problems, in particular ongoing anxieties surrounding gender and sexuality. In these films, abstract artists are imagined as representatives of a perverse, disturbed mode of vision that must be retrained, cleansed, even cured. In each instance, the subsumption of the abstract artistic gaze

into a healthy realist gaze is accomplished in tandem with the artist's reintroduction into a normative, bourgeois, heterosexual economy. However, this narrative trajectory is not achieved without producing larger tensions in the films. These tensions are reflected in the ambiguity of closure offered by the films, but also in a certain ambivalence at the metacinematic site of enunciation: the milieu in which modern, abstract art is produced is discursively figured as perverse, but its *mise en scène* is often reproduced in such dense detail that it becomes at the same time the site of visual and aural pleasure for the spectator of the film.

Like many postwar films beginning with *The Murderers Are Among Us*, Willi Forst's *Die Sünderin* (The Sinner, 1951) endows its male and female protagonists with different modes of vision that figure the ongoing gender trouble in postwar Germany. In this case, the male artist's tendency to paint abstractly is explained by the fact that he has a brain tumor that impairs his ability to see clearly, while his lover, who sees things "as they are," seeks to cure him so that he may paint in a realist mode again. Alfons Stummer's 1955 Austrian film *Der Förster vom Silberwald* (The Forester of the Silver Wood), which was one of the most popular *Heimatfilme* of the decade in West Germany, represents an exception to dominant trends by telling the story of a *female* abstract artist. Her turn to realist painting parallels her return from Vienna to her native town in rural Austria and her rejection of decadent, modern urban life (embodied by her Viennese boyfriend), in favor of the natural landscapes and traditional culture of rural Austria (embodied by her new boyfriend, the local forest ranger). Veit Harlan's 1957 *Anders als du und ich* (Different from You and Me) is a social problem film about homosexuality, which tells the story of a teenage boy whose abstract paintings are linked to his attraction to homosexual men. His parents seek to "cure" him of homosexuality by encouraging their maid to sleep with their son; after drawing a realist portrait of the maid, the son makes aggressive sexual advances towards her. All of these films employ abstract art in order to investigate questions of representation, perception, and difference, and their connections to gender roles, sexuality, and family politics. Recent German history, though rarely addressed head on, is also implicated in each narrative, as the extradiegetic production and reception contexts of these films also reveal.

The final part of the book examines the shifting status of cinema in the late 1950s and early 1960s, as the popular genre films of the previous decade gave way to a new filmmaking practice that was more explicitly critical on both political and aesthetic levels. As I argue, issues of gender continued to be strongly implicated in the production and reception of cinema during this period, when ticket sales began to decline sharply and the postwar cinema entered a new phase of transition in its thematization of both formal concerns and social problems.

Helmut Käutner's 1957 film *Die Zürcher Verlobung* (Engagement in Zurich) is a romantic comedy and self-critical spoof of the film industry.

A transitional film, *Engagement in Zurich* resuscitates many tropes of *Film Without a Title*, which Käutner co-wrote and produced ten years earlier. *Engagement in Zurich* addresses the status of filmmaking in 1957 through a metacinematic story about a female screenwriter; gender plays a central role in its explication of questions of authorship and spectatorship, representation and perception. Rolf Thiele's blockbuster 1958 film *Das Mädchen Rosemarie* (The Girl Rosemarie) was one of the most popular *and* most socially critical films of the decade. *The Girl Rosemarie* appeals to audiences by blending familiar strategies of popular 1950s genre cinema with new innovations in the deployment of image and especially of sound. Based on the sensational true story of the murdered prostitute Rosemarie Nitribitt, Thiele's film articulates a biting critique of the West German consensus culture of the *Wirtschaftswunder* years through an analysis of gender relations at the level of both social problems and cinematic representation. In the final chapter of this book, I turn to Herbert Vesely's *Das Brot der frühen Jahre* (The Bread of Those Early Years). Released in 1962, Vesely's film is situated historically and aesthetically between the popular West German cinema of the 1950s and the emergent European avant-garde cinema of the 1960s. *The Bread of Those Early Years* was the first new wave film to be released after the "Oberhausen Manifesto," which was signed not only by Vesely, the film's director, but also by its producer Hansjürgen Pohland, its cameraman Wolf Wirth, and its male lead Christian Doermer. Anxiously awaited by audiences and critics alike, the film was ultimately deemed a resounding popular and critical failure. As I suggest, the extensive public discourse surrounding this film presents a useful case study for unpacking not only the gendered anxieties surrounding the transition from popular to avant-garde filmmaking, but also the larger social and political anxieties at stake in West Germany during this period of intense economic and social transformation. Finally, my analysis of Vesely's film and the anxieties it unleashed sheds light on larger issues of German film history, in particular on the vexed relation of the New German Cinema to its more popular precursors.

All of the films I examine seek to address female spectators not only through conventional textual effects, but also by departing from dominant cinematic conventions in ways designed explicitly to appeal to women. At the same time, all of them deal metacinematically with the dilemmas of filmmaking in the early postwar period. By attending closely to the formal issues at stake in these films—and the ways in which they closely mirror social problems—I seek to add another dimension to the important work on German popular cinema that has commenced in recent years, fusing the insights of German studies and cultural studies.[47] At the same time, by articulating an explicitly feminist analysis of early postwar cinema, I hope to revitalize attention to issues of gender in the "new film history" out of which much of this work on popular cinema has emerged.[48]

Notes

1. Helmut Käutner, "Demontage der Traumfabrik," *Film-Echo* 5 (June 1947). Rpt. in *Käutner*, ed. Wolfgang Jacobsen and Hans Helmut Prinzler (Berlin, 1992), 113. All translations from the German are my own unless otherwise noted.

2. Käutner, "Demontage der Traumfabrik," 113.

3. For a comprehensive survey of film history texts that represent early postwar West German cinema as a failure, or overlook this cinema entirely, see Tassilo Schneider, "Reading Against the Grain: German Cinema and Film Historiography," in *Perspectives on German Cinema*, ed. Terri Ginsberg and Kirsten Moana Thompson (New York, 1996), 32–37. Particularly noteworthy texts in this regard include Roger Manvell and Heinrich Fraenkel, *The German Cinema* (New York, 1971); Hans Günther Pflaum and Hans Helmut Prinzler, *Film in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Munich, 1979); John Sandford, *The New German Cinema* (London, 1980); Timothy Corrigan, *New German Film: The Displaced Image* (Austin, 1983); James Franklin, *New German Cinema: From Oberhausen to Hamburg* (Boston, 1983); Eric Rentschler, *West German Film in the Course of Time* (Bedford Hills, NY, 1984); and Julia Knight, *Women and the New German Cinema* (New York, 1992).

4. For a history of the rise of the New German Cinema, and for the distinction between Young German Film and New German Cinema, see Thomas Elsaesser, *New German Cinema: A History* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1989). Although Elsaesser suggests that the "Oberhausen Manifesto" "belongs at least as much to the 1950s as it does to the 1970s" (2), his argument is primarily economic, and his discussion of continuities does not include issues of representation, perception, or intellectual tradition. In general, Elsaesser gives short shrift to West German cinema of the pre-Oberhausen era, though he does praise certain technically proficient and socially critical directors (he mentions Helmut Käutner, Wolfgang Staudte, Kurt Hoffmann, Gerhard Lamprecht, and Rolf Thiele) (14). He also concedes that, "some films from the 1950s are due for a reevaluation" (17).

5. On the development and finer points of film subsidies in the Federal Republic, see Elsaesser, *New German Cinema*, esp. 18–46.

6. Enno Patalas and the other students who founded the important journal *Filmkritik* in 1957 took up the critique of the German audience and the demand for a new *Autorenkino* beginning with their earliest publication, *film 56: Internationale Zeitschrift für Filmkunst und Gesellschaft*. The economic and psychological arguments articulated in the Oberhausen Manifesto have their origins in the publications of the *Filmkritik* collective. In their influential history of film, first published in 1962, *Filmkritik* writers Patalas and Ulrich Gregor devoted a mere two pages out of nearly 500 to the West German cinema of the 1950s, which they portrayed in devastating terms. See Gregor and Patalas, *Geschichte des Films* (Gütersloh, 1962). Other well-known writers from this period who indicted postwar cinema, blaming the audience for the poor quality of German films and demanding a new *auteur* cinema, include Wolfdietrich Schnurre, *Rettung des deutschen Films: Eine Streitschrift* (Stuttgart, 1950); Walther Schmieding, *Kunst oder Kasse: Der Ärger mit dem deutschen Film* (Hamburg, 1961); and Joe Hembus, *Der deutsche Film kann gar nicht besser sein* (Munich, 1981 <1961>).

7. Joseph Garncarz, "Hollywood in Germany. Die Rolle des amerikanischen Films in Deutschland: 1925–1990," in *Der Deutsche Film: Aspekte seiner Geschichte von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Uli Jung (Trier, 1993), 173.

8. Käutner, "Demontage der Traumfabrik," 113.

9. See for example Anton Kaes, ed., *Kino-Debatte: Texte zum Verhältnis von Literatur und Film 1909–1929* (Munich, 1978).

10. The statistic of 70 percent is commonly quoted in many sources from the late 1940s and 1950s, although it is not attributed to confirmed survey data. See for example "Die Mörder sind unter uns. Der erste deutsche Film der Nachkriegszeit," *Film Revue*

Sonderablage <n.d., probably 1947>, photocopy in file on *Die Mörder sind unter uns*, Schriftgutarchiv, Stiftung Deutsche Kinemathek, Berlin. See also Kurt Wortig, *Ihre Hoheit Lieschen Müller: Hof- und Hinterhofgespräche um Film und Fernsehen* (Munich, 1961), 15.

11. On the "surplus of women" and the public anxieties and discourses that surrounded this notion, see Elizabeth Heineman, "The Hour of the Woman: Memories of Germany's 'Crisis Years' and West German National Identity," *American Historical Review* 101.2 (1996): 354–95; Robert G. Moeller, ed., *West Germany Under Construction: Politics, Society, and Culture in the Adenauer Era* (Ann Arbor, 1997); and Moeller, *Protecting Motherhood: Women and the Family in the Politics of Postwar West Germany* (Berkeley, 1993).

12. See Angela Delille and Andrea Grohn, *Blick zurück aufs Glück: Frauenleben und Familienpolitik in den 50er Jahren* (Berlin, 1985), 90; see also Erica Carter, *How German Is She?: Postwar West German Reconstruction and the Consuming Woman* (Ann Arbor, 1997), 175. The key theorization of the role of cinema spectatorship in the changing status of women in the public sphere can be found in the work of Miriam Hansen. See for example "Adventures of Goldilocks: Spectatorship, Consumerism, and Public Life," *Camera Obscura* 22 (1990): 51–71, and *Babel & Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge, 1991).

13. For further discussion of "Lieschen Müller," see chapter 8.

14. Tim Bergfelder also asserts that it is "suggestive to read the critical decline of the German cinema from the late 1940s onwards in connection with its perceived 'feminisation.'" Bergfelder, *International Adventures: German Popular Cinema and European Co-Productions in the 1960s* (New York, 2005), 35.

15. Schneider, "Reading Against the Grain," 43.

16. Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film* (Princeton, 1947).

17. See for example Gerhard Bliersbach, *So grün war die Heide … Die gar nicht so heile Welt im Nachkriegsfilm*, abridged ed. (Weinheim and Basel, 1989); Bärbel Westermann, *Nationale Identität im Spielfilm der fünfziger Jahre* (Frankfurt, 1990); Barbara Bongartz, *Von Caligari zu Hitler – von Hitler zu Dr. Mabuse? Eine "psychologische" Geschichte des deutschen Films von 1946 bis 1960* (Münster, 1992); Heide Fehrenbach, *Cinema in Democratizing Germany: Reconstructing National Identity After Hitler* (Chapel Hill, 1995); and Bettina Greffrath, *Gesellschaftsbilder der Nachkriegszeit: Deutsche Spielfilme 1945–1949* (Pfaffenweiler, 1995). On the lack of attention to questions of methodology and film form in scholarship on the early postwar period, see also Johannes von Moltke, *No Place Like Home: Locations of Heimat in German Cinema* (Berkeley, 2005), 82–83.

18. Jaimey Fisher notes this imbrication of social and cinematic crises in his study of youth in postwar Germany, emphasizing the way that children and young people were deployed to help resolve social and representational problems in many postwar cultural contexts, including rubble films. See Fisher, *Disciplining Germany: Youth, Reeducation, and Reconstruction after the Second World War* (Detroit, 2007), esp. 175–80.

19. Kaja Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (New York, 1992), 53.

20. Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*, 47.

21. Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*, 2–3.

22. Jaimey Fisher, "On the Ruins of Masculinity: The Figure of the Child in Italian Neorealism and the German Rubble-Film," in *Italian Neorealism and Global Cinema*, ed. Laura E. Ruberto and Kristi M. Wilson (Detroit, 2007), 30. See also Fisher, "Deleuze in a Ruinous Context: German Rubble-Film and Italian Neorealism," *iris* 23 (1997): 53–74; and Fisher, *Disciplining Germany*, 178–85.

23. Fisher, *Disciplining Germany*, 179.

24. Shandley, *Rubble Films: German Cinema in the Shadow of the Third Reich* (Philadelphia, 2001), 186.

25. Shandley, *Rubble Films*, 187.

26. Fehrenbach, *Cinema in Democratizing Germany*, 6.

27. Von Moltke, *No Place Like Home*, 26.

28. The scholarly emphasis on the trope of "male subjectivity in crisis" in German cinema can also be attributed in part to the influence of Kracauer, who extensively analyzes the centrality of this trope in Weimar cinema in *From Caligari to Hitler*.

29. See Heineman, "The Hour of the Woman."

30. Frank Stern, "Film in the 1950s: Passing Images of Guilt and Responsibility," in *Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany, 1949–1968*, ed. Hanna Schissler (Princeton, 2001), 267.

31. A number of important studies have contributed to the reevaluation and rediscovery of postwar German cinema, while also emphasizing its continuities with the past and future. In addition to the work of Fisher, Fehrenbach, Shandley, and von Moltke outlined above, see also Hilmar Hoffmann and Walter Schobert, eds., *Zwischen Gestern und Morgen. Westdeutscher Nachkriegsfilm 1946–1962* (Frankfurt am Main, 1989); John Davidson and Sabine Hake, eds., *Framing the Fifties: Cinema in a Divided Germany* (New York, 2007); and Bergfelder, *International Adventures*. Bergfelder rightly emphasizes the ongoing popularity of mainstream commercial genres in the 1960s, pointing out that the German art cinema never took hold with domestic audiences.

32. The journal *Filmkritik* first imported the phrase *Papas Kino* from the French journal *Arts*, which ran a review of Alain Resnais's *Last Year at Marienbad* (1961) under the title "Le cinéma de papa est mort." See Hans Dieter Roos, "Papas Kino ist tot," *Filmkritik* 1 (1962): 7–11. Originally a catchphrase for the French New Wave, *Filmkritik* adopted the term as part of its call for a new German cinema that would break with the past, and the term quickly came to symbolize everything that was wrong with German film, historically and in the 1950s. Although it responded to the journal's call for a break from *Papas Kino*, the "Oberhausen Manifesto" itself does not use the term. However, its declaration, "The old film is dead. We believe in the new one," partakes of the same Oedipal language that informs the notion of *Papas Kino*, and the Oberhausen movement was repeatedly associated with the break from *Papas Kino* in public discourse. The "Oberhausen Manifesto" is reprinted in German in *Augenzeugen. 100 Texte neuer deutscher Filmemacher*, ed. Hans Helmut Prinzler and Eric Rentschler (Frankfurt am Main, 1988) and in English in *West German Filmmakers on Film*, ed. Eric Rentschler (New York, 1988).

33. See the classic essays on national cinema: Andrew Higson, "The Concept of National Cinema," *Screen* 30.4 (1989): 36–46; and Stephen Crofts, "Concepts of National Cinema," in *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*, ed. John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (Oxford, 1998), 385–94. See also Schneider, "Reading Against the Grain."

34. Von Moltke, *No Place Like Home*, esp. 115–21.

35. Schneider, "Reading Against the Grain," 44.

36. Erica Carter, "Deviant Pleasures? Women, Melodrama, and Consumer Nationalism in West Germany," in *The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective*, ed. Victoria de Grazia and Ellen Furlough (Berkeley, 1996), 361. Carter also calls for further investigation of questions of form and spectatorship in postwar films in order to examine the inscription of feminine identity transformations: "Entirely absent from my discussion here, for instance, is the important question of textual positioning of the female spectator via the organization of point-of-view and the female gaze in postwar popular cinema. If, as I have implied, these films are directed toward the transformation of feminine identity, then we need an analysis of the mechanisms of identification and/or of the organization of visual perception that engage the attention of the female audience" (361).

37. For important contributions to the theorization of women's cinema, see for example Claire Johnston, "Women's Cinema as Counter Cinema," *Movies and Methods I*, ed. Bill Nichols (Berkeley, 1976), 208–17; Annette Kuhn, *Women's Pictures: Feminism and Cinema* (1982), 2nd ed. (London and New York, 1994); E. Ann Kaplan, *Women & Film:*

Both Sides of the Camera (New York, 1983); *Re-Vision: Essays in Feminist Film Criticism*, ed. Mary Ann Doane, et al. (Los Angeles, 1984), esp. contributions by Judith Mayne, Doane, and Linda Williams; Mary Ann Doane, *The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940s* (Bloomington, 1987); Constance Penley, *Feminism and Film Theory* (New York, 1988); Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Bloomington, 1989); Teresa de Lauretis, "Rethinking Women's Cinema: Aesthetic and Feminist Theory," *Issues in Feminist Film Criticism*, ed. Patricia Erens (Bloomington, 1990), 140–61. For a useful recent contribution, see Alison Butler, *Women's Cinema: The Contested Screen* (London and New York, 2002). On the definition of the woman's film in the German context, see Christiane Riecke, *Feministische Filmtheorie in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Frankfurt am Main, 1998), 71–76.

38. Doane, *The Desire to Desire*, 3.
39. Doane, *The Desire to Desire*, 13.
40. Butler, *Women's Cinema*, 22.
41. Hester Baer, "From Riefenstahl to Riemann: Revisiting the Question of Women's Cinema in the German Context," *The Cosmopolitan Screen: German Cinema and the Global Imaginary, 1945 to the Present*, ed. Lutz Koepnick and Stephan Schindler (Ann Arbor, 2007), 193–202.
42. See for example Patrice Petro, *Joyless Streets: Women and Melodramatic Representation in Weimar Germany* (Princeton, 1989); Richard W. McCormick, *Gender and Sexuality in Weimar Modernity: Film, Literature, and "New Objectivity"* (New York, 2001); Antje Ascheid, *Hitler's Heroines: Stardom and Womanhood in Nazi Cinema* (Philadelphia, 2003); and Susan E. Linville, *Feminism, Film, Fascism: Women's Auto/ Biographical Film in Postwar Germany* (Austin, 1998).
43. Important studies of spectatorship that have influenced my conceptualization of this project include Judith Mayne, *Cinema and Spectatorship* (New York, 1993) and Jackie Stacey, *Star Gazing: Hollywood Cinema and Female Spectatorship* (New York, 1994). See also a number of essays collected in Linda Williams, ed., *Viewing Positions: Ways of Seeing Film* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1995).
44. Christine Gledhill, "Pleasurable Negotiations," in *Female Spectators: Looking at Film and Television*, ed. E. Deidre Pribram (London and New York, 1988), 67–68.
45. Angela Dalle Vacche, *Cinema and Painting: How Art Is Used in Film* (Austin, 1996), 1.
46. See Brigitte Peucker, *Incorporating Images: Film and the Rival Arts* (Princeton, 1995).
47. See Randal Halle and Margaret McCarthy, eds., *Light Motives: German Popular Film in Perspective* (Detroit, 2003); see also Bergfelder et al., eds., *The German Cinema Book* (London, 2002).
48. See Thomas Elsaesser, "The New Film History," *Sight & Sound* 55.4 (1986): 246–51; Anton Kaes, "German Cultural History and the Study of Film: Ten Theses and a Postscript," *New German Critique* 65 (1995): 47–58; and Bergfelder et al., "Introduction," *The German Cinema Book*, 1–12